Survey on rates, pricing methods, and income satisfaction for translation, revision, and post-editing services in Switzerland

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of an online survey conducted in 2024 among freelance language professionals based in Switzerland. The aim of the survey was to gather detailed insights into pricing practices, rates and income satisfaction levels of freelancers offering translation, revision and/or post-editing (PE) services.

The questionnaire was designed to be fully anonymous. It comprised five key sections: a profile section collecting demographic and professional data, three service-specific sections (translation, revision and post-editing), and a final section on satisfaction. In the service-specific sections, respondents reported on pricing methods, rates charged, and satisfaction with these rates for up to three direct clients and/or up to three translation agencies. To accommodate the wide range of practices, respondents could select from seven predefined pricing methods: source or target word rate, source or target line rate, source or target page rate, and hourly rate, along with an open *Other* category. The final section of the questionnaire assessed satisfaction with pricing methods, income, and profession in general.

The questionnaire included up to 172 questions, many of which were optional or shown conditionally based on prior responses. The survey was administered via the LimeSurvey platform and launched on October 8, 2024. It remained open until January 12, 2025. Distribution was carried out through the *Association suisse de traduction, de terminologie et d'interprétation* (ASTTI) and the authors' social media channels, with two reminders issued during the survey period. Prior to launch, the questionnaire underwent several rounds of pre-testing involving ASTTI members and university colleagues who are also active freelance translators.

In total, 194 valid responses were collected in Switzerland, of which 150 were complete and 44 partial. To be considered valid, responses had to originate from freelancers based in Switzerland and include at least one completed service-specific section. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and responses to the fifteen open-ended questions were analyzed thematically.

This report focuses exclusively on the Swiss data. However, it is important to note that the survey was also conducted in Belgium in collaboration with the Belgian Chamber of Translators and Interpreters (CBTI/BKVT) and in France with the support of the French Society of Translators (SFT). Country-specific findings from Belgium and France are reported independently.

Genève and Louvain-la-Neuve, November 2025
Sabrina Girletti and Marie-Aude Lefer

Foreword

It gives me great satisfaction to write this brief introduction. Translation is a time-honoured profession, but the market for our services is changing fast, and empirical research on current conditions comes by only rarely.

In this report, Dr Sabrina Girletti (University of Geneva) and Professor Marie-Aude Lefer (UCLouvain) succeed in providing a highly relevant snapshot of the translation profession in Switzerland, in all its linguistic diversity. That parallel surveys conducted in Belgium and France made comparisons with other European countries possible is particularly useful.

Rates, pricing methods and income satisfaction are extremely important topics for the language services industry. This was true when translation was first starting as a profession in its own right, and it will remain true in the future – especially given the inroads made by machine translation and GenAI. If you are a professional translator working in Switzerland, you should read this report.

I will not dwell on the survey itself here, since the authors make their case far more eloquently than I ever could. However, three findings are worthy of mention.

First, across all three types of service analysed (translation, revision and post-editing), job satisfaction among respondents is relatively high, at 73%. This is encouraging when we consider how undervalued our profession is in the business world and in society as a whole.

Next, and unsurprisingly, the degree of satisfaction with income from post-editing (PE) services is a mere 53%. More striking still, income satisfaction with PE assignments handed out by agencies is an “alarmingly low” 4%, as the authors rightly point out. Respondents would clearly like to be paid by the hour (not by the word or the line) for this type of service, which is also what ASTTI recommends.

The figure indicates that substantial awareness-raising is still needed. Many customers – including agencies – have yet to grasp that post-editing (i.e. the comparative review of machine-generated pre-translation output by qualified specialists) is often just as labour-intensive as traditional revision duties and therefore should be remunerated on the same basis.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the age groups among the respondents. It is noticeable that more than four-fifths are 40 or older; the proportion of respondents under 40 is relatively low (17%). At the same time, average professional experience is a lengthy 22 years. All this suggests that graduates in translation studies generally need several years of professional experience and skills development before they can make a living as freelance translators. Additionally, two-thirds of respondents are members of a professional body. Of that number, almost half are ASTTI members. In short, professional organizations need to work harder to foster new talent. These figures also justify our strategy to continue focusing on growing our membership.

I want to express my gratitude to the authors for shining a light on our profession – for producing a report brimming with insights that, I am sure, will prove useful to many of my peers. ASTTI provided some funding for the German translation of the questionnaire – which in my opinion was money well spent.

In closing, I hope you enjoy reading this fascinating and informative report as much as I did — and that you find many insights and inspirations for your professional career.

Antonio Suárez

ASTTI President

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a survey conducted in 2024 among freelance language professionals based in Switzerland. The study aimed to shed light on their pricing models, rates and levels of income satisfaction across three services: translation, revision and post-editing. A total of 194 valid responses were **collected** between September 2024 and January 2025 through an online questionnaire distributed via the *Association suisse de traduction, de terminologie et d'interprétation* (ASTTI) and the study authors' professional networks.

Participant profiles and services offered

The survey gathered responses from 194 freelance translators, primarily experienced practitioners aged 40 and above (82%), with an average of 22 years in the industry. The predominant working languages are German, French, Italian and English, with German into French as the most common language combination (40%). Most respondents (97%) offer translation services. Revision and post-editing are also widely offered (76% and 47%, respectively). A large majority (74%) specialize in one or more domains, most notably legal, medical and economic translation. Nearly two-thirds (64%) belong to at least one professional association, most commonly ASTTI. Respondents primarily serve direct clients rather than agencies, with most clients and agencies located in Switzerland.

Pricing methods

Pricing preferences and practices vary by service type. Respondents generally regard line rates as the most appropriate pricing method for translation, while hourly rates are preferred for revision and post-editing. In practice, line rates (equally divided between source and target text) are the dominant pricing method for translation services, followed by page and hourly rates. For revision and post-editing services, the hourly rate prevails.

Satisfaction with pricing methods

For translation services, respondents express the highest satisfaction with line rates and page rates, especially when calculated on the target text, and with hourly rates. In revision and post-editing, hourly rates generate the strongest satisfaction, while word-based pricing is viewed as least satisfactory.

Rates

Across all language pairs, the survey shows that Swiss agency rates are substantially lower than those freelancers charge direct clients. On average, agency translation rates are CHF 0.10 lower per word (−38%) and CHF 1 lower per line (−32% for target lines and −41% for source lines). For revision services, agency hourly rates are CHF 30 lower (−36%). Due to limited data, no reliable comparison could be made for PE rates. However, the data indicate that freelancers charge similar hourly rates for PE and revision when working with direct clients, averaging around CHF 90 per hour in both cases.

Income satisfaction

Income satisfaction varies sharply by client type. Across all services, freelancers are more satisfied with income from direct clients than from agencies:

- Translation: 70% satisfied with direct clients vs. 35% with agencies;
- Revision: 72% vs. 21%;
- Post-editing: 53% vs. only 4%.

Rates perceived as too low, difficulty negotiating increases, irregular demand, and global price pressure are the main sources of dissatisfaction. Overall, 60% of respondents are satisfied with their income, but many express concern about declining workloads and the impact of AI.

Overall job satisfaction

Despite economic pressures, 73% of respondents report being satisfied with their work. Freelancers highlight intellectual fulfillment and autonomy as key positive factors. Job dissatisfaction (reported by 18%) centers on low or unstable income, the undervaluation of the profession and growing uncertainty linked to AI. While many find meaning in their work, concerns about long-term viability and recognition temper this overall positive outlook.

Profiles of the respondents

This section describes the profiles of the **194 respondents** who took part in the survey, in terms of age, language combinations, years of experience in the language services industry, domain specialization, affiliation to professional associations, and language services offered, among translation, revision and post-editing.

Age ranges

Most respondents are experienced professionals aged 40 and above, who together account for 82% of the sample (Table 1). The largest age group is 50-59 (30%), followed by those aged 60 and over (28%) and 40-49 (24%). Younger respondents are less represented, with 14% aged 30-39 and only 3% aged 18-29.

AGE RANGE	N	%
18-29	6	3%
30-39	27	14%
40-49	46	24%
50-59	59	30%
60+	54	28%
I do not wish to share this information	2	1%
TOT.	194	100%

Table 1 – Respondents' age range (N=194).

Language combinations

In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate their main language combination based on workload. However, some participants listed more than one combination. Table 2 presents all the language combinations reported. The most frequently cited were **German into French** (40%), **French into German** (19%), **German into Italian** (18%), and **English into French** (8%). All other language combinations account for 5% of respondents or fewer.

LANGUAGE COMBINATION	N	%
DE>FR	77	40%
FR>DE	36	19%
DE>IT	34	18%
EN>FR	15	8%
EN>DE	10	5%
unclear answer	10	5%
FR>EN	8	4%
FR>IT	5	3%
DE>EN	4	2%
ES>FR	3	2%
EL>FR, EN>IT, ES>DE, IT>DE, IT>FR	2 mentions each	1% each
DE>ES, DE>JA, ES>EN, EN>ES, FR>ES, FR>SQ, NL>FR, PL>FR, RU>DE, RU>FR, SQ>DE, UKR>DE, ZH>EN	1 mention each	Less than 1% each

Table 2 – Respondents' main language combinations (N=194).

Years of experience as a professional translator

Respondents reported between 1 and 50 years of translation experience, with an average and median[1] of **22 years**, indicating that the sample consists of a highly experienced professionals.

Translation as main professional activity

Translation is the main professional activity for 152 of the 194 respondents (78%).

Domain specialization

A total of 144 respondents (74%) reported having a specialization in at least one domain. Among these, 16% indicated a single area of expertise, 47% cited two or three domains, 24% mentioned four or five, and 9% reported being specialized in more than five domains. Five respondents did not indicate their domain(s) of specialization.

Respondents cited a remarkably wide range of specializations – 89 different domains – ranging from broad fields to niche sectors (Table 3). The most cited areas were **legal** translation (25% of respondents), **medical** translation (14%) and **economic** translation (13%), followed by financial and insurance (both 12%), marketing (11%), and technical translation

[1] The median is the middle value in a set of numbers, found by arranging the numbers from smallest to largest. Unlike the average (mean), which can be distorted by very high or very low values, the median shows the typical "middle point" of the data.

(7%). All other domains were cited by 5% or fewer respondents.

DOMAIN	N	%
law	**48**	**25%**
healthcare	**28**	**14%**
economics	**26**	**13%**
finance	24	12%
insurance	23	12%
marketing	22	11%
technical	14	7%
art	10	5%
environment	10	5%
politics	10	5%
culture	9	5%
education	8	4%
food	8	4%
IT	8	4%
tourism	8	4%
agriculture	7	4%
energy	7	4%
pharma	6	3%
pensions	6	3%
administration	5	3%
history	5	3%
logistics	5	3%
sport	5	3%
certified translation	5	3%
watchmaking	5	3%
automotive, advertising, communication, construction, CPD, creative content, electronics, human rights, lifestyle, management, migration, music, NGO, news, enology, public health, theatre, surveys	2 mentions each	1% each
art history, audiovisual, biodiversity, design, copyright, engineering, fashion, GDPR, international aid, literature (non-fictional), mechanical engineering, patent, life sciences, electricity, retail, safety, ophtalmology, geothermal, solar heating, psychoanalysis, technology, insulation, theology, meteorology, NLP, statistics, luxury goods, PR, veterinary, food safety	1 mention each	Less than 1% each
Domain not specified	5	2%
No specialization	50	26%

Table 3 – Respondents' domain specializations (N=194).

Legal translation ranks as the most common specialization, cited by 48 respondents. However, it is worth noting that the survey did not ask whether participants were sworn translators. Among the 23 freelancers who reported working in only one field, only 6 indicated that they specialize exclusively in legal translation. For the other 42 respondents, legal translation appears in combination with other domains, including healthcare, marketing, technical, and finance.

Affiliation to a professional association

Out of 194 respondents, 124 (64%) reported being members of at least one professional association. Among these, 71% (88) indicated affiliation with only one association, 26% (32) cited two or three associations, and 3% (4) reported being member of four or more associations. Table 4 provides an overview of respondents' professional affiliations.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	N	%
ASTTI	96	49%
AIT/DÜV	18	9%
ASTJ	10	5%
juslingua	6	3%
AITC	4	2%
BDÜ	4	2%
VBGD	4	2%
Textverband	3	2%
AIIC, AITGE, CIOL, DTT, Suissetra, Tecom Suisse, VKD im BDU	2 mentions each	1% each
ACL, ACM, AITI, AkDaF, ASETRAD, ATLF, CBTI, EAMT, FIT, FMH, IAPTI, interpret, ITI, MET, ProCopywriters, RFA, UTS, VSAO, ZKTS	1 mention each	Less than 1% each
No affiliation	70	36%

Table 4 – Respondents' affiliations to a professional association (N=194).

As expected, ASTTI is the most represented association among participants (49% of respondents). Other associations with notable representation include AIT/DÜV (9%), ASTJ (5%), and juslingua (3%). The remaining associations were cited by 2% or fewer of the respondents.

Services offered

Translation

The vast majority of respondents, 188 out of 194 (97%), declared offering translation services.

What percentage of your workload as a freelance translator does it represent?[2]

172 respondents answered this question. On average, translation assignments represent **65% of their workload** (median: 70%).

Revision

148 out of 194 respondents (76%) declared offering revision services. Among respondents who do not offer such services, the most commonly cited reason is a simple lack of client demand. Other reasons reflect personal preferences or professional focus: some respondents reported that they do not enjoy revision tasks and prefer translating, while others choose not to offer revision services because they feel they lack sufficient skills in

[2] For 9 respondents, the sum of the three services exceeds 100%. These responses were discarded from the results reported in this section.

this area. A few also mentioned concerns about the quality of translations they are asked to revise, which can make the task particularly time-consuming. Financial considerations were noted as well, including the perception that revision work is poorly paid relative to the effort it requires.

What percentage of your workload as a freelance translator does it represent?

131 respondents answered this question. On average, revision assignments represent **19% of their workload** (median: 10%).

Post-editing (PE)

Of the 194 respondents, **47%** (N=91) reported offering post-editing (PE) services. Among those who do not, a lack of client demand was by far the most frequently cited reason for not offering such services. Financial considerations also play a significant role, as many respondents view PE as poorly paid. Personal preference is another important factor: several respondents stated that they do not enjoy PE or have little interest in it, while others explained that they prefer traditional translation and avoid machine translation workflows on principle. Some indicated that they see no need to offer PE services, given a steady flow of translation work. Additional reasons include a lack of suitable tools or knowledge, concerns about the low quality of machine-translated output, and the perception that PE is overly time-consuming or leads to suboptimal results.

What percentage of your workload as a freelance translator does it represent?

77 respondents answered this question. On average, PE assignments represent **20% of their workload** (median: 10%).

PE sold as translation

In the survey, respondents were asked how often they had presented PE services as translation services – that is, MT was used in the workflow, but the client was not informed and was billed at the standard translation rate. The percentage distribution of responses is shown in Figure 1.

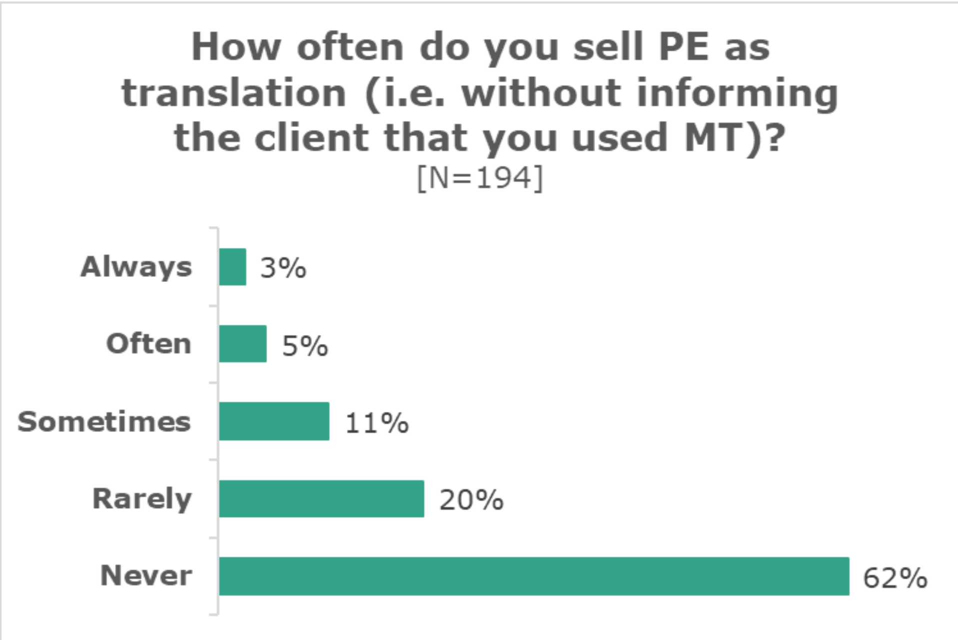

Figure 1 – Responses to question "How often do you sell post-editing as translation services, i.e. without informing the client that you used MT?" (N=194).

The survey results show that a majority of respondents (62%) report never selling post-editing as translation. Smaller shares indicate doing so rarely (20%) or sometimes (11%), while only 5% report doing it often and 3% systematically.

Working as a freelancer for the Swiss Confederation

Less than a quarter of the surveyed freelancers (23%, N=44) reported having responded to a call for tender issued by the Swiss Confederation within the past five years. Among those who participated, 28 had won at least one tender. However, not all successful bidders were subsequently assigned translation work: only 22 freelancers reported receiving any assignments, and some noted that the volumes were relatively low.

Most of those who received assignments indicated that the work was remunerated at the proposed rates (11 respondents), while four reported being paid at a lower rate and one at a higher rate. Respondents also provided information on the pricing methods and rates they proposed when participating in the calls for tender, which included page rates (mean = CHF 118.20, N=23), line rates (mean = CHF 3.64, N=14), and hourly rates (mean = CHF 113.33, N=3).

Translation services

This section presents the survey results for **translation services**.

Almost all respondents offer translation services to **direct clients** (Figure 2). The percentage is much lower for **agencies** (41%), indicating that many freelancers work exclusively with direct clients for translation projects.

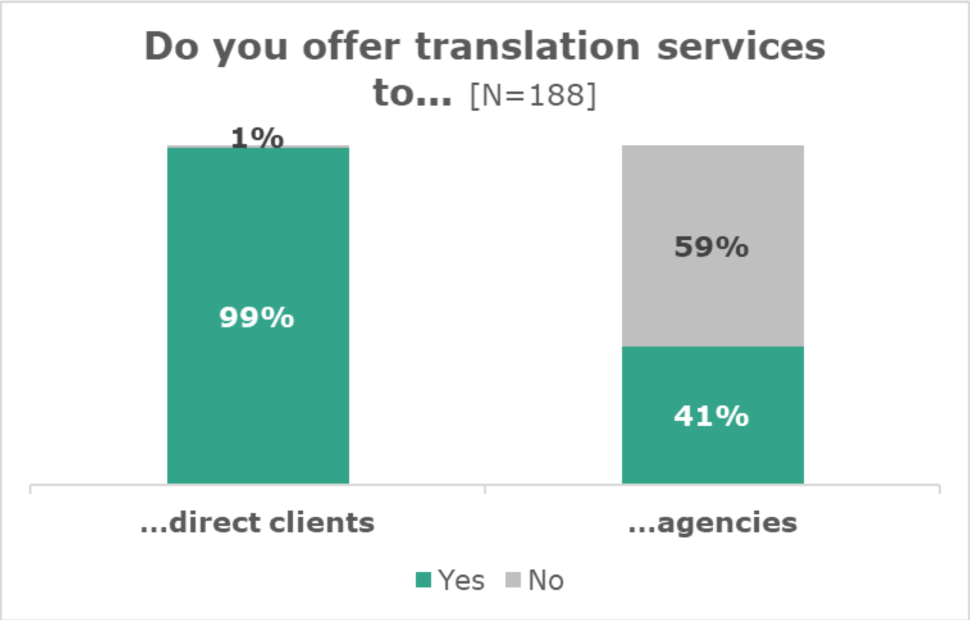

Figure 2 – Translation services offered to direct clients and agencies (N=188).

Table 5 provides the number of respondents who reported data for one, two or three clients or agencies, respectively. The data show that respondents work with a greater variety of direct clients than agencies. For instance, 116 respondents reported data on three direct clients, while only 15 participants provided information on three agencies.

TRANSLATION SERVICES		N
Direct clients	*One client*	25
	Two clients	27
	Three clients	116
Agencies	*One agency*	39
	Two agencies	12
	Three agencies	15

Table 5 – Number of respondents who provided data for one, two or three clients, per client type (translation services).

Direct client type

The majority of respondents providing translation services work directly with **companies** (205 mentions), by far the most common direct client type (Table 6).

Direct client type (translation services)	N mentions
Company	205
Colleague	17
International organization	18
Swiss Confederation	66
Other	121

Table 6 – Type of direct clients for translation services.

The Swiss Confederation also features prominently, with 66 mentions. International organizations and colleagues were cited less frequently, with 18 and 17 mentions respectively. Among the *Other* category of direct clients, the most frequently mentioned were cantonal and municipal authorities. Other commonly cited client types included associations and foundations, private individuals and educational or academic institutions. Less frequently, respondents also mentioned judicial and law enforcement bodies, non-governmental or humanitarian organizations, and a few sectoral, cultural or professional organizations (e.g. notaries, publishers, and trade unions).

Direct client location

Ninety-five percent of the direct clients for translation assignments are based in Switzerland (Figure 3).

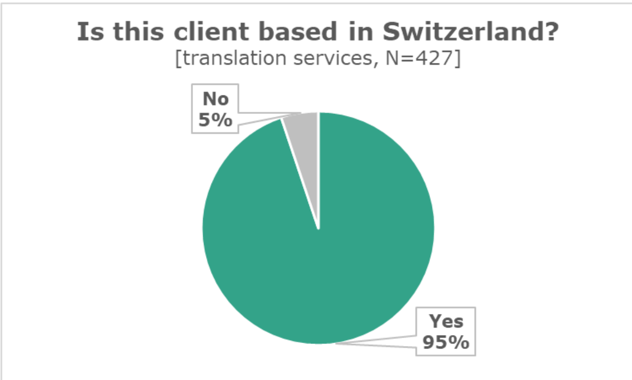

Figure 3 – Direct client location, translation services (N=427).

Agency location

Among the agencies respondents work with for translation services, 86% are based in Switzerland, while the remaining 14% are located abroad (Figure 4). This proportion is lower than for direct clients, highlighting a somewhat stronger international dimension in agency collaborations.

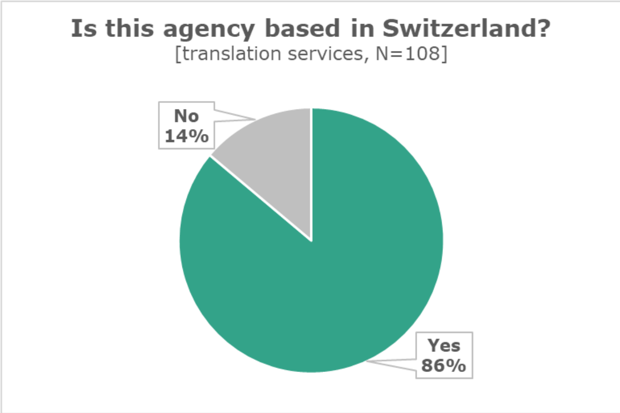

Figure 4 – Agency location, translation services (N=108).

Best pricing methods

Among the 149 respondents who answered this question, the majority (N=60) consider the **line rate** to be the most suitable pricing method for translation, making it the clear frontrunner. The **hourly rate** follows at a considerable distance, with 36 responses, while page rate and word rate each received 14 mentions. Per-character pricing was cited by 9 respondents, and project-based pricing by 5. An additional 11 participants reported other methods, such as character-based pricing, daily rates, or a mix of pricing methods.

Most common pricing methods

The most commonly used pricing methods for translation vary across client types (Table 7). For **direct clients**, line rates clearly predominate, with an almost equal distribution between rates calculated on the source text (112 mentions) and on the target text (111 mentions). Line rates are followed by page rates, word rates, and hourly rates. For **agencies**, word and line rates based on the source text rank first, with 34 and 32 mentions respectively, followed by line rates calculated on the target text (21 mentions). Page and hourly rates are far less common among agencies. [3]

Pricing method	Direct clients	Agencies
Word rate (source)	51	**34**
Word rate (target)	11	5
Line rate (source)	**112**	**32**
Line rate (target)	**111**	21
Page rate (source)	57	3
Page rate (target)	17	2
Hourly rate	42	5
Other method	26	6

Table 7 - Most common pricing methods for translation services (number of mentions).

[3] Respondents specified that line rates mostly correspond to either 55 characters (N=196/236) or 60 characters (N=25/236), including spaces. Page rates mostly correspond to 1800 characters including spaces (N=56/62).

Are CAT discounts applied?

The results indicate that CAT discounts are more frequent with agencies than direct clients, with 65% and 42% respectively (Figure 5).

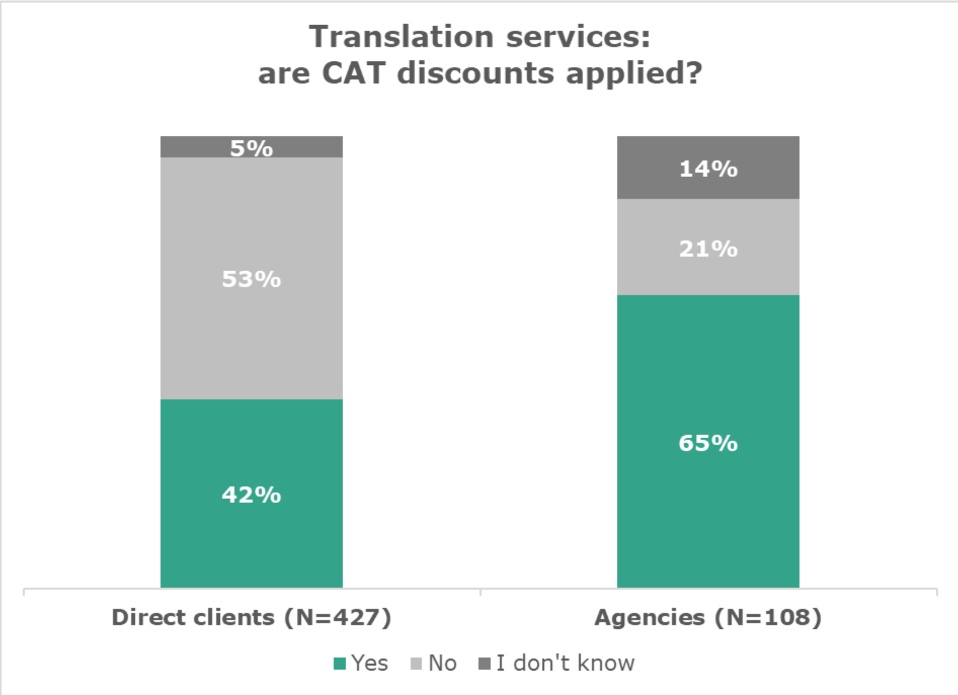

Figure 5 – CAT discounts (translation services).

Revision services

Of the 127 respondents who offer revision services, 86% work with **direct clients**, while only 35% collaborate with **agencies** (Figure 6).

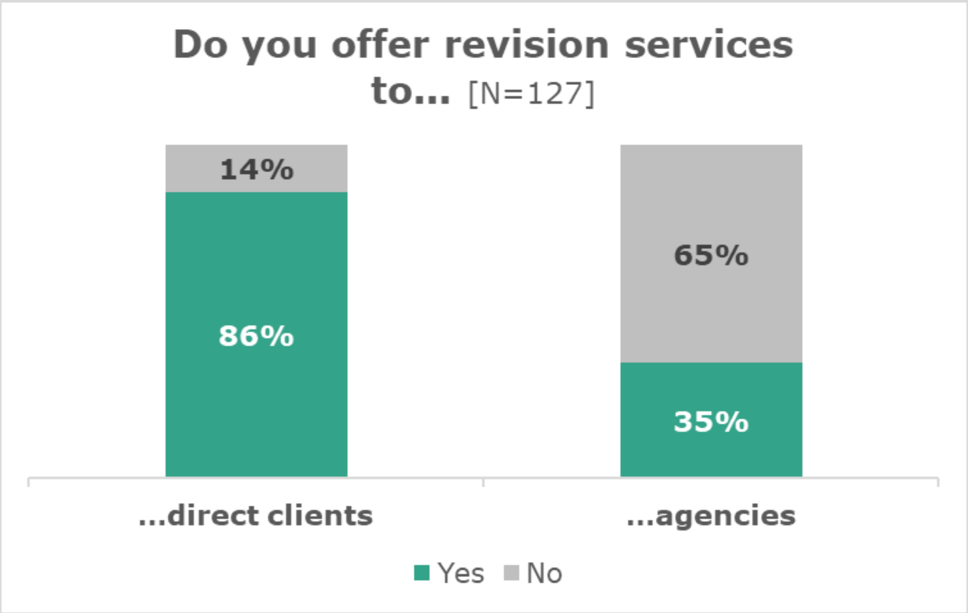

Figure 6 – Revision services offered to direct clients and agencies (N=127).

Table 8 shows the number of respondents who reported data for one, two or three direct clients or agencies for revision services. Among those who collaborate with direct clients, 39 respondents provided data on revision services for one client, 26 for two clients, and 37 for three clients. In contrast, collaboration with agencies appears more concentrated: 34 respondents reported data on revision assignments with one agency, while just three respondents each reported data about two or three agencies.

REVISION SERVICES		N
Direct clients	*One client*	39
	Two clients	26
	Three clients	37
Agencies	*One agency*	34
	Two agencies	3
	Three agencies	3

Table 8 - Number of respondents who provided data for one, two or three clients, per client type (revision services).

Direct client type

Among respondents offering revision services, **companies** are the most frequently cited type of direct client, with 101 mentions (Table 9).

Direct client type (revision services)	N mentions
Company	101
Colleague	34
International organization	7
Swiss Confederation	19
Other	41

Table 9 - Types of direct client for revision services.

Colleagues also represent a significant share, mentioned 34 times, reflecting peer collaboration in revision work, followed by the Swiss Confederation (19 mentions). International organizations were mentioned less often (7 mentions). The *Other* category, with 41 mentions, mainly includes cantonal and municipal authorities, as well as associations and non-profit organizations. A smaller number of respondents mentioned foundations, educational institutions, or sectoral and professional organizations, and a few cited individual clients.

Direct client location

The majority of direct clients for revision work (94%) are based in Switzerland (Figure 7).

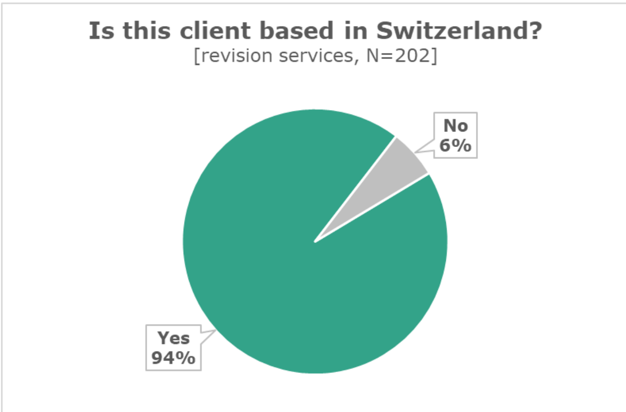

Figure 7 – Direct client location, revision services (N=202).

Agency location

As shown in Figure 8, 90% of the agencies for which translators perform revision services are located in Switzerland, a pattern that mirrors the situation for direct clients described above.

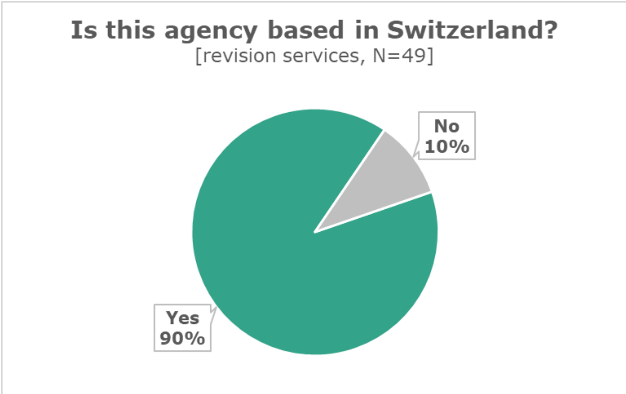

Figure 8 – Agency location, revision services (N=49).

Best pricing methods

Among the 112 respondents who answered the question, the vast majority (N=97) consider the **hourly rate** to be the most appropriate pricing method for revision. Other pricing methods – line, character, page and word rates – were mentioned only rarely.

Most common pricing methods

As shown in Table 10, the **hourly rate** overwhelmingly dominates as the pricing method for revision services, mentioned by 164 respondents for direct clients and 30 for agencies. All other methods, such as line, word and page rates, are used by a minority of respondents. These results align with the strong preference for hourly billing observed above.

Pricing method	Direct clients	Agencies
Word rate (source)	6	6
Word rate (target)	1	0
Line rate (source)	9	3
Line rate (target)	9	5
Page rate (source)	4	1
Page rate (target)	0	1
Hourly rate	**164**	**30**
Other method	9	3

Table 10 - Most common pricing methods for revision services (number of mentions).

Post-editing services

This section focuses on post-editing (PE) services, which are offered by around half of the survey respondents.

Among the 73 participants who provided detailed information about PE, 60% offer these services to **direct clients**, while only 34% do so for **agencies** (Figure 9).

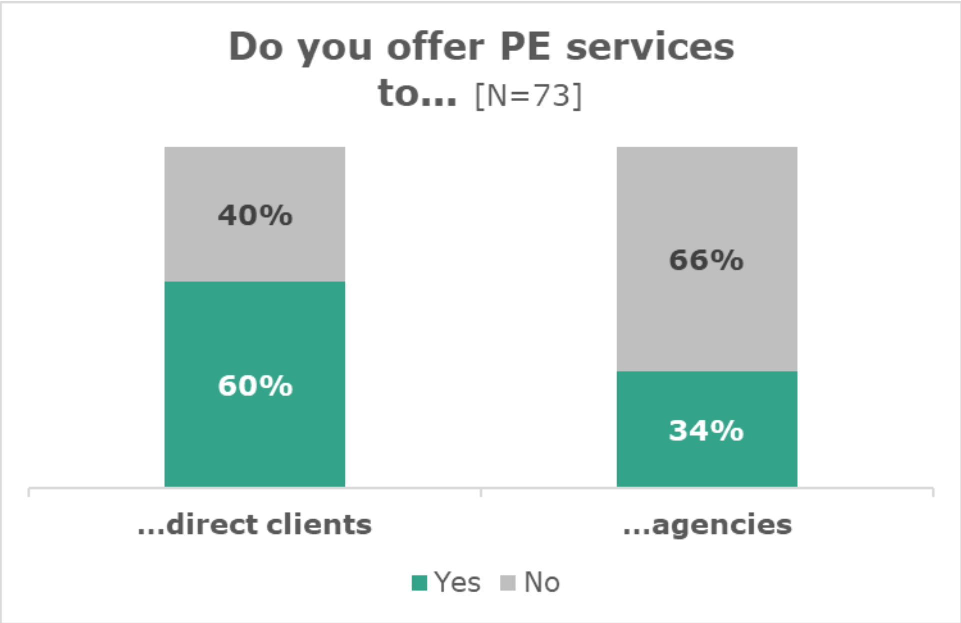

Figure 9 – PE services offered to direct clients and agencies (N=73).

Table 11 presents the number of respondents who reported working with one, two or three clients or agencies for PE services. The data indicates that many respondents rely on just one direct client or agency for this type of work.

POST-EDITING SERVICES		N
Direct clients	***One client***	29
	Two clients	6
	Three clients	7
Agencies	***One agency***	23
	Two agencies	1
	Three agencies	1

Table 11 – Number of respondents who provided data for one, two or three clients, per client type (PE services).

Direct client type

As shown in Table 12, demand for PE predominantly comes from the corporate sector.

Direct client type (PE services)	N mentions
Company	37
Colleague	3
International organization	5
Swiss Confederation	1
Other	16

Table 12 – Type of direct client for PE services.

Direct client location

Direct clients for PE services are primarily based in Switzerland (Figure 10).

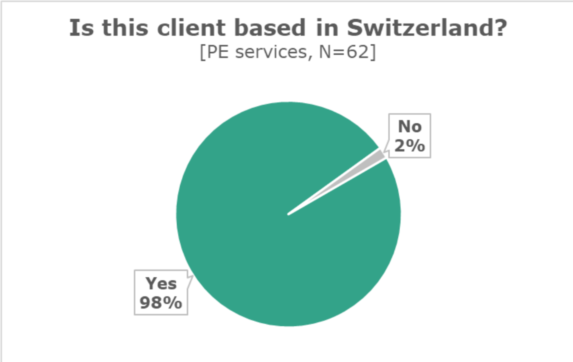

Figure 10 – Direct client location, PE services (N=62).

Agency location

While almost all direct clients are based in Switzerland, about one fifth of the agencies to which respondents provide PE services are located abroad (Figure 11).

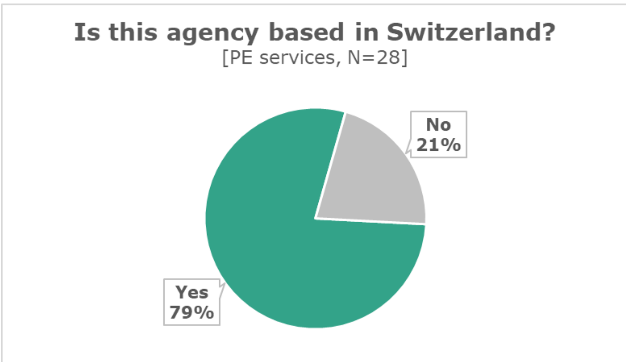

Figure 11 – Agency location, PE services (N=28).

Best pricing methods

Among the 94 respondents who answered this question, the majority (N=76) consider the **hourly rate** to be the most appropriate pricing method for PE. Line rate (N=6), page rate (N=3), word rate (N=3) and per-character rate (N=1) rank far behind. This preference closely mirrors that observed for revision services, suggesting a consistent view among professionals that time-based compensation is better suited to tasks such as revision and post-editing, where the level of effort can vary widely depending on translation quality and the quality of raw machine-translated output, respectively.

Most common pricing methods

Table 13 shows the pricing methods used in professional practice.

Pricing method	Direct clients	Agencies
Word rate (source)	6	**11**
Word rate (target)	0	1
Line rate (source)	3	2
Line rate (target)	0	0
Page rate (source)	1	1
Page rate (target)	2	1
Hourly rate	**44**	**10**
Other method	6	2

Table 13 – Most common pricing methods for PE services (number of mentions).

While respondents overwhelmingly favor hourly rates for post-editing and apply this pricing method with direct clients, agencies tend to rely on source word rates (mentioned by 11 respondents), followed closely by hourly rates (10 mentions).

Are CAT discounts applied?

CAT tool discounts are regularly imposed by agencies for PE work, accounting for 61% of mentions (Figure 12). Such discounts are far less common in work with direct clients (21%).

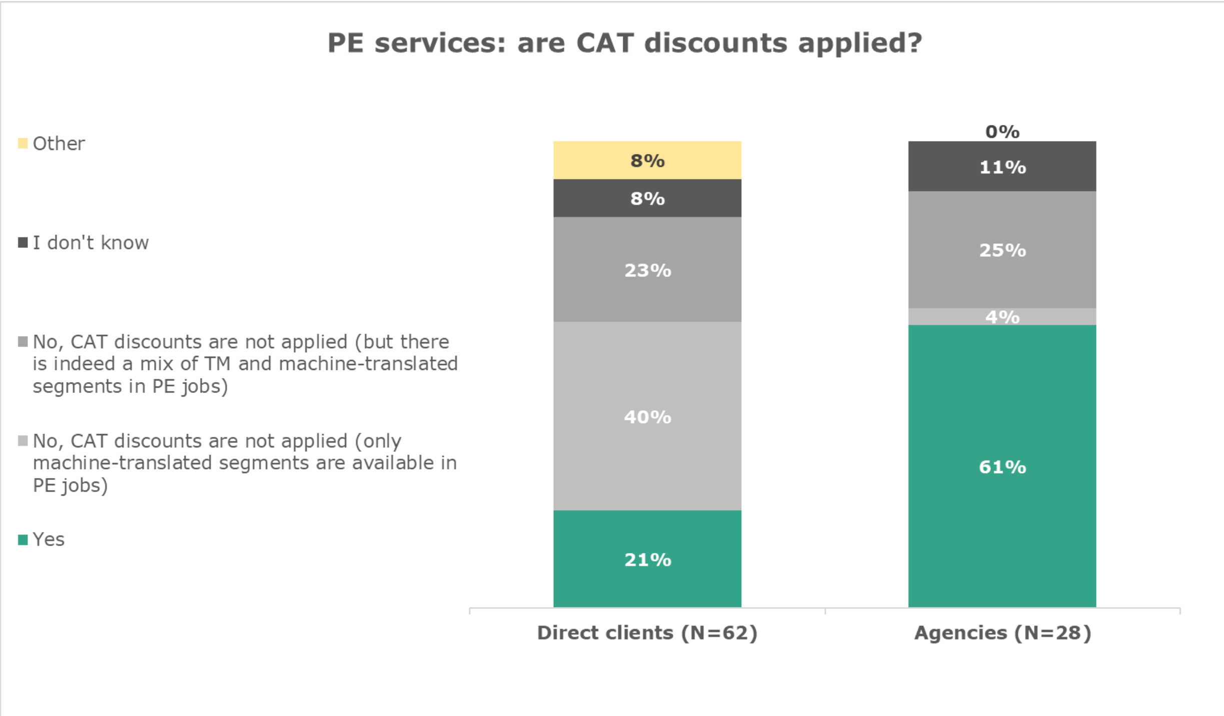

Figure 12 – CAT discounts (PE services).

Rates

This section presents data on rates, distinguishing between **precise figures** and **ranges**. We limited the analysis to participants who reported a single language combination at the start of the survey, in order to ensure that the rates could be accurately linked to specific language pairs.

Rates – overview

Tables 14 to 23 below present the rates (in Swiss francs) for the three services surveyed, broken down by direct clients and Swiss agencies. For respondents who provided multiple rates (associated with different clients or agencies) expressed as precise figures, we calculated an average rate per respondent. The tables indicate the number of respondents (N). Rate ranges are provided separately, whenever available. Rates and rate ranges based on a single respondent for a given language combination were omitted from the tables, since they cannot be considered representative.

Overall, taking all language pairs into account, we found that Swiss agency rates are significantly lower than those that freelancers charge direct clients for both translation and revision tasks: CHF 0.10 lower for word-based translation rates (−38%), CHF 1 lower for line-based translation rates (−32% for target lines and −41% for source lines), and CHF 30 lower for revision hourly rates (−36%). Due to insufficient data on agency PE rates, no meaningful comparisons can be made with direct client rates. Interestingly, however, the data indicate that when working with direct clients, freelancers charge similar hourly rates for PE and revision, i.e. approximately CHF 90 in both cases.

Translation rates

Direct client rates (translation)

Pricing method	Language pair	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	N
WORD RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.30	0.32	0.17	0.45	9
	DE>IT	0.22	0.20	0.11	0.34	3
	EN>FR	0.22	0.24	0.17	0.25	3
LINE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	3.25	3.50	1.70	4.20	23
	DE>IT	3.15	3.12	2.50	3.85	8
	FR>DE	3.05	2.90	2.50	3.83	8
	DE>EN	3.67	3.58	3.50	4.00	4
LINE RATE (TARGET)	DE>FR	3.43	3.45	2.00	4.50	20
	DE>IT	3.36	3.50	2.40	4.20	11
	FR>DE	3.42	3.50	3.00	3.80	11
PAGE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	116.24	117.50	85.00	130.00	13
	DE>IT	110.44	113.00	87.50	126.00	9
	FR>DE	113.83	112.50	108.00	120.00	6
PAGE RATE (TARGET)	DE>FR	108.00	106.50	90.00	130.00	6
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	110.21	118.33	85.00	140.00	12
	DE>IT	53.50	53.50	32.00	75.00	2
	EN>DE	72.50	72.50	60.00	85.00	2
	FR>DE	120.00	120.00	120.00	120.00	2

Table 14 – Translation rates with direct clients,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, precise figures).

Pricing method	Language pair	Ranges
LINE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	2.0-2.8 3.0-3.2 3.0-4.2 3.2-3.5 3.2-3.6 3.5-3.8 4.0-4.2
	FR>DE	3.0-3.5 3.4-3.8 3.5-3.9 3.5-4.2
	DE>IT	2.0-3.0 3.0-4.0 3.0-4.5
LINE RATE (TARGET)	DE>FR	3.0-4.2 3.2-4.0
PAGE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	50-80 90-110 100-114 123-126
HOURLY RATE	EN>DE	85-125 90-125

Table 15 – Translation rates with direct clients, per pricing method and language combination (at least two respondents, ranges).

Agency rates (translation)

Pricing method	Language pair	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	N
WORD RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.15	0.15	0.09	0.27	9
	DE>IT	0.16	0.16	0.12	0.20	2
	FR>DE	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.23	2
LINE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	1.81	1.80	1.40	2.20	8
	FR>DE	1.67	1.75	1.30	1.87	4
	DE>IT	2.40	2.50	2.00	2.70	3
LINE RATE (TARGET)	DE>FR	2.16	2.00	1.40	3.00	5
	FR>DE	2.49	2.75	1.70	3.00	5
	DE>IT	2.20	2.30	2.00	2.30	3
	DE>EN	1.85	1.85	1.80	1.90	2

Table 16 – Translation rates with agencies,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, precise figures).

Revision rates

Direct client rates (revision)

Pricing method	Language pair	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	N
WORD RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.21	0.16	0.16	0.30	3
LINE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	2.00	2.00	0.80	3.20	2
LINE RATE (TARGET)	DE>FR	1.25	1.25	1.00	1.50	2
	FR>DE	0.55	0.55	0.50	0.60	2
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	93.71	93.33	40.00	140.00	39
	DE>IT	79.61	80.00	30.00	113.33	15
	FR>DE	94.72	95.00	80.00	120.00	9
	DE>EN	103.33	103.33	103.33	103.33	2
	EN>DE	71.25	71.25	57.50	85.00	2

Table 17 – Revision rates with direct clients,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, precise figures).

Pricing method	Language pair	Ranges
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	50-80 60-90 90-110 130-140
	FR>DE	80-120 120-150
	DE>IT	30-40 60-70 80-100

Table 18 – Revision rates with direct clients,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, ranges).

Agency rates (revision)

Pricing method	Language pair	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	N
LINE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.78	0.78	0.45	1.10	2
LINE RATE (TARGET)	FR>DE	0.55	0.55	0.50	0.60	2
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	56.11	52.50	35.00	120.00	14
	DE>IT	63.75	67.50	40.00	80.00	4
	DE>EN	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00	2

Table 19 – Revision rates with agencies,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, precise figures).

Pricing method	Language pair	Ranges
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	30-45 35-55

Table 20 – Revision rates with agencies,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, ranges).

PE rates

Direct client rates (PE)

Pricing method	Language pair	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	N
WORD RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.11	0.11	0.05	0.16	2
LINE RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	1.57	1.57	0.94	2.20	2
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	104.85	105.00	80.00	140.00	11
	DE>IT	80.00	77.50	70.00	100.00	6
	FR>DE	93.75	92.50	80.00	110.00	4

Table 21 – PE rates with direct clients,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, precise figures).

Agency rates (PE)

Pricing method	Language pair	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.	N
WORD RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.49	0.49	0.09	0.90	2
	EN>DE	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.10	2
HOURLY RATE	DE>FR	50.60	45.00	43.00	60.00	5

Table 22 – PE rates with agencies,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, precise figures).

Pricing method	Language pair	Ranges
WORD RATE (SOURCE)	DE>FR	0.10-0.15 0.10-0.20

Table 23 – PE rates with agencies,
per pricing method and language combination (at least 2 respondents, ranges).

Happiness with rates (all services)

Most respondents report feeling either satisfied or neutral with the rates offered by direct clients (Figure 13). This accounts for 88% of mentions for translation (N=425), 86% for revision (N=201), and 77% for PE (N=62). In contrast, the situation with agencies is markedly less positive: the majority express dissatisfaction regarding agency rates. This discrepancy is particularly pronounced for post-editing, where dissatisfaction is highest (71%, N=28), compared with revision (53%, N=49), and translation (42%, N=108).

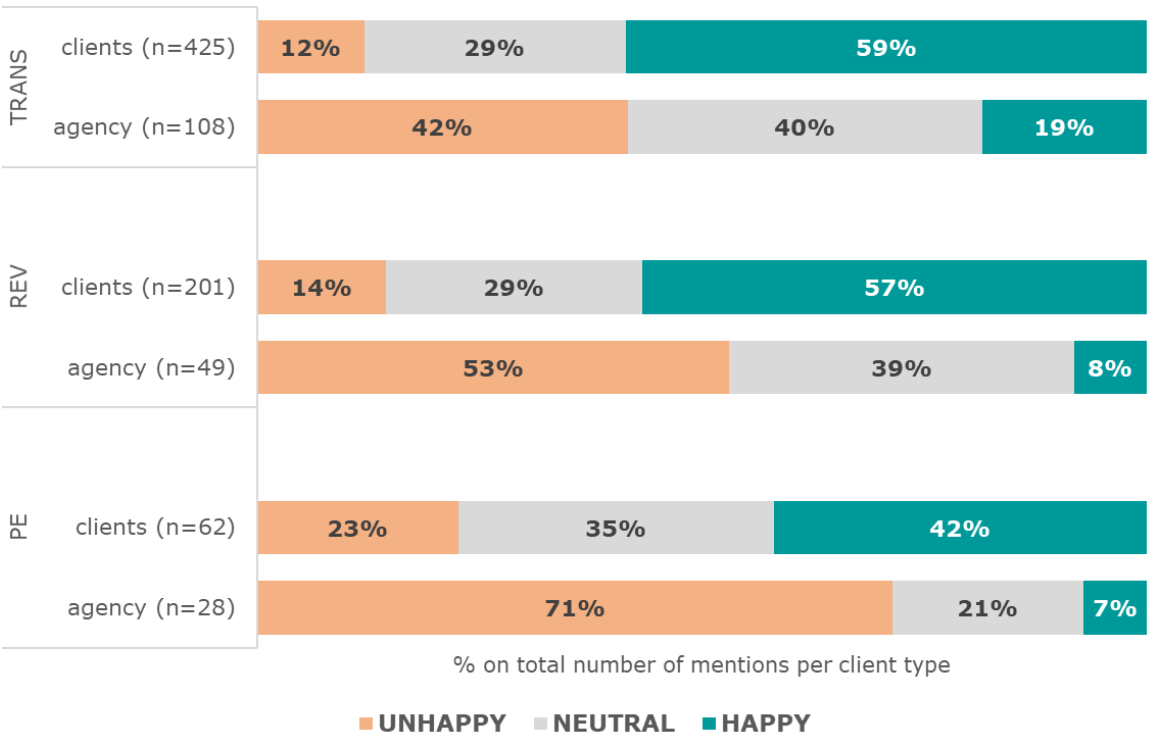

Figure 13 – Satisfaction with rates, per service and client type.

Satisfaction

This final part of the report presents survey results related to various aspects of satisfaction, including satisfaction with pricing methods by service type, income satisfaction (per service type and overall), and job satisfaction.

Satisfaction with pricing methods

This section discusses satisfaction with pricing methods by service type, focusing on the pricing method itself rather than on the specific rates charged.

Translation services

Respondents are generally satisfied with **line-** and **page-based pricing** (130 and 48 respondents in total, respectively), especially when rates are calculated based on the **target text** rather than the source text (Figure 14). **Hourly billing** is also viewed favorably (28 respondents in total). Satisfaction levels are comparatively lower for **word-based pricing**, at only 40%.

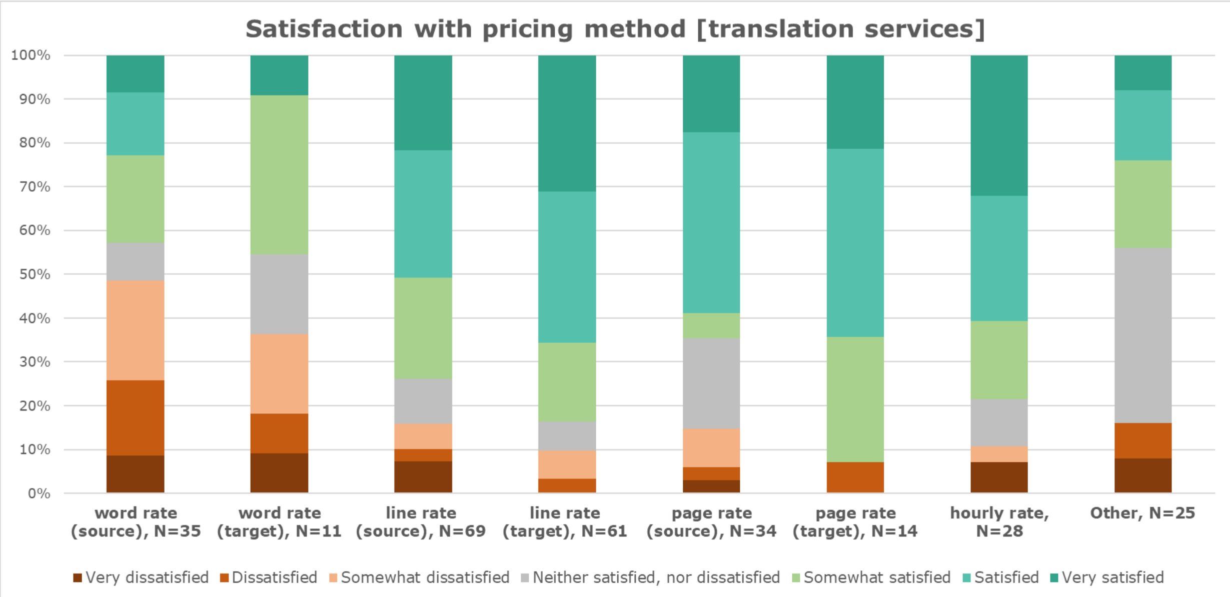

Figure 14 – Satisfaction with pricing method (translation services).

Revision services

An overwhelming majority of respondents report being satisfied with **hourly billing** (90 respondents in total) (Figure 15). The sample sizes for the other pricing methods (10 respondents or fewer) are too small to draw meaningful conclusions. However, the available data for **line-based pricing** suggests that it is less favored for revision than for translation services.

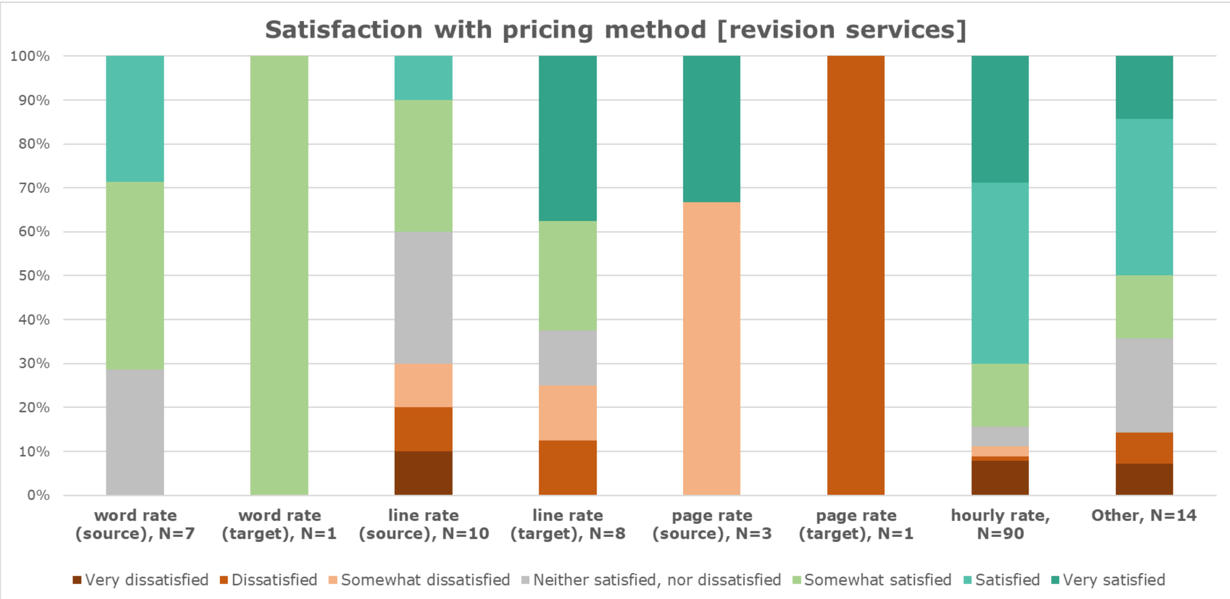

Figure 15 – Satisfaction with pricing method (revision services).

PE services

A sharp contrast emerges between hourly billing and word-based pricing for post-editing services (Figure 16): while 80% of respondents are satisfied with **hourly billing** (N=35), only 20% express satisfaction with **word rates** based on the source text (N=16). Data for the other pricing methods are insufficient to identify clear trends.

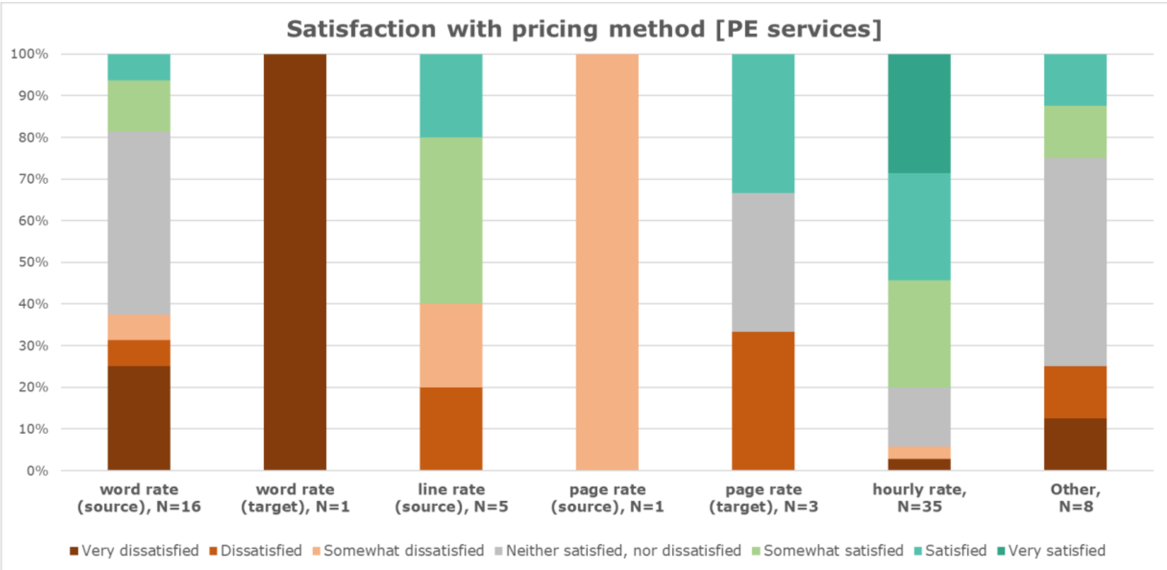

Figure 16 – Satisfaction with pricing method (PE services).

Satisfaction with income, per service and client

Two main trends emerge from the survey regarding **income satisfaction per service and client**[4] type (Figure 17). First, translators consistently report lower income satisfaction from agencies than from direct clients across all three services. Second, satisfaction levels are markedly lower for PE than for translation and revision, suggesting that PE work is less lucrative. The following sections examine each service in detail.

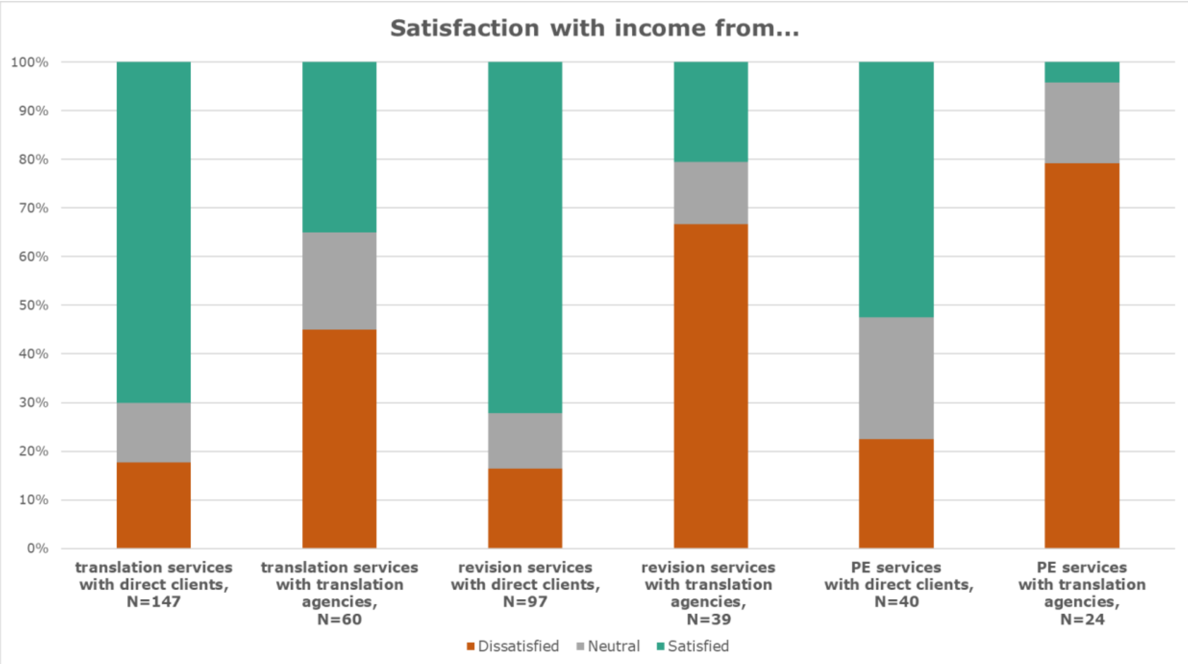

Figure 17 – Income satisfaction per service and client type.

[4] No distinction is made here between clients and agencies based in Switzerland or abroad.

Translation

Satisfaction with income from translation services varies significantly depending on the type of client. Among the 147 respondents who work with **direct clients**, **70%** report being satisfied with their income. In contrast, only **35%** of the 60 respondents working with **agencies** express satisfaction.

Although satisfaction levels are markedly higher with direct clients than with agencies, freelancers still reported several sources of dissatisfaction. Many noted that rates are too low, difficult to increase, or even declining despite current inflation. Demand from direct clients was also described as irregular, making income less predictable. In addition, competition from the global market, particularly from providers outside Switzerland, was perceived as exerting downward pressure on prices. Several respondents felt that the translation profession remains undervalued, while direct clients often require significant time and effort to manage, including extensive communication and administrative tasks. Some freelancers also reported a decline in workload, largely attributed to the growing use of AI. Finally, a few respondents mentioned that the pricing methods applied were not always appropriate.

In the case of **agency work**, freelancers cited similar sources of dissatisfaction. The main concern relates to rates, which are perceived as too low, difficult to negotiate upward, or even declining over time. Some respondents also pointed to practices they consider unfair, such as agencies pushing prices down as much as possible and retaining a significant share of the payment. Competition from translators based abroad was likewise seen as a factor contributing to lower rates and reduced bargaining power. In addition, some reported irregular demand or a decline in workload.

Revision

Satisfaction with income from revision services also differs between direct clients and agencies. Among the 97 respondents working with **direct clients**, **72%** report being satisfied with their income. In contrast, only **21%** of the 39 respondents working with **agencies** express satisfaction, which reflects a pattern similar to that observed above for translation services.

For revision assignments, the reasons for dissatisfaction are largely consistent across client types and mirror those already mentioned in relation to translation. Rates are considered too low or difficult to increase. For direct clients, some respondents highlighted irregular demand and a declining volume of work, which some attributed to the growing influence of AI. In the case of agencies, freelancers again referred to unfair practices and competition from translators based abroad.

Post-editing

Satisfaction with income from PE services is the lowest among the three services surveyed: **53%** of the 40 respondents offering this service to **direct clients** report being satisfied, compared with only **4%** of the 24 respondents providing PE services to **agencies** – an alarmingly low figure.

For post-editing work, the main source of dissatisfaction lies in the rates, which are widely viewed as too low. Freelancers working with **direct clients** also mentioned a decline in workload, the difficulty of securing enough clients, and a general sense that the profession is undervalued. Among those working with **agencies**, several noted that post-editing services are not financially viable and do not allow for a decent living.

Satisfaction with income as language professional

Out of 153 respondents, **60%** report being **satisfied** with their income as language professionals, while 27% express dissatisfaction. The remaining 13% indicate a neutral stance (Figure 18).

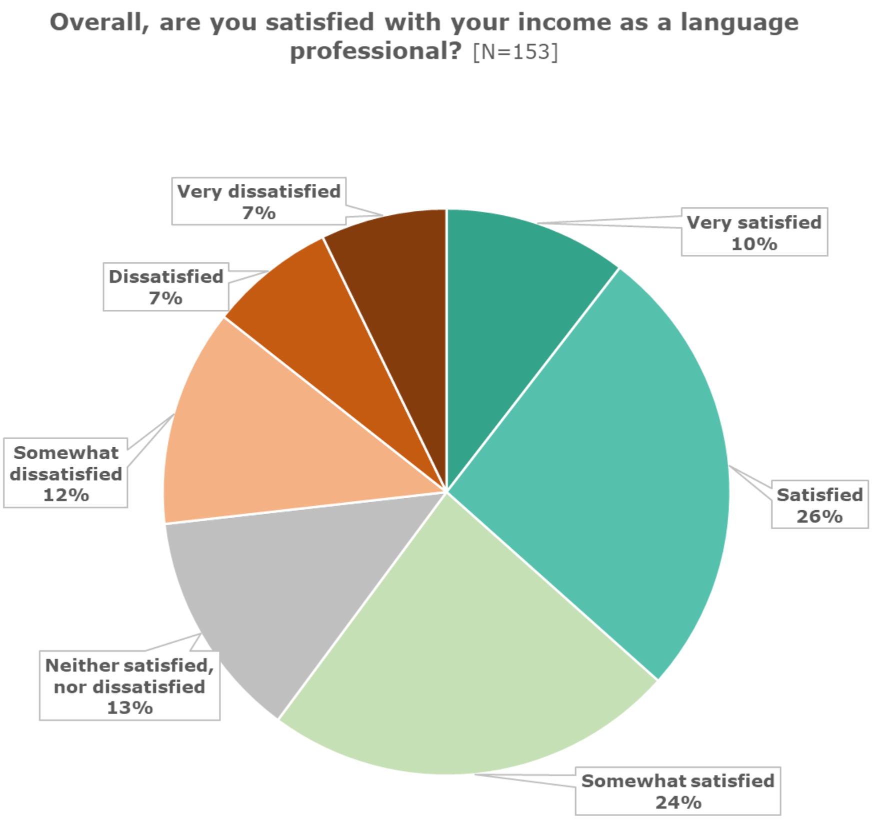

Figure 18 – Overall income satisfaction.

Although a majority of respondents report being satisfied with their income, those expressing dissatisfaction pointed to several recurring issues. The most frequently mentioned concern is financial: many feel that their income does not allow for a decent living, that rates are too low or difficult to increase, and that growing price pressure further undermines their earnings. Others cited irregular demand as a source of instability, as well as a perceived lack of recognition for their qualifications and for the profession as a whole. Some respondents also mentioned a decline in workload, largely attributed to the rise of AI, along with growing anxiety about its future impact. Finally, a few noted that their work-life balance has been negatively affected.

Overall job satisfaction

Despite some concerns about income, overall job satisfaction among language professionals is high. Of the respondents, **73%** report being **satisfied** with their work, 9% feel neutral, and 18% express dissatisfaction, most of whom are only somewhat dissatisfied rather than strongly discontent (Figure 19). This suggests that, while challenges exist, many freelancers find meaning and enjoyment in their professional lives.

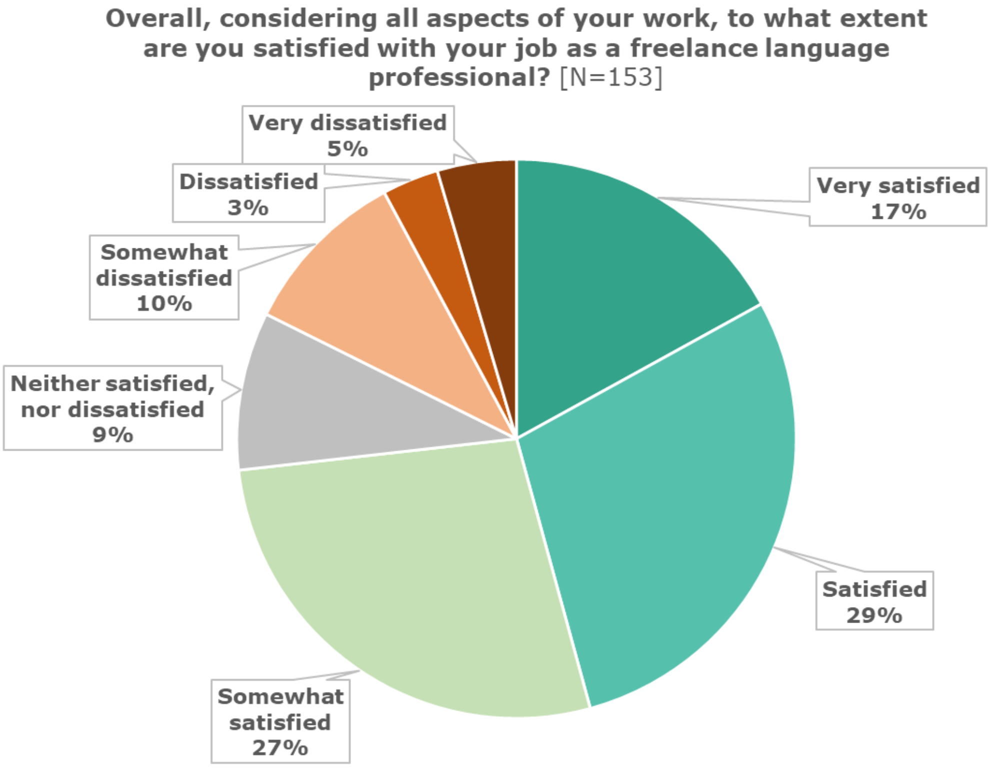

Figure 19 – Overall job satisfaction.

Positive aspects of the profession are frequently highlighted. Many respondents mentioned the rewarding and fulfilling nature of their work as language professionals. They emphasized the intellectual satisfaction derived from their tasks, as well as the freedom and flexibility that come with freelance work. For some, the profession is satisfying precisely because it is pursued on a part-time basis alongside salaried employment. Others noted that their freelance activity provides a decent living, reinforcing an overall sense of professional contentment despite certain challenges.

However, **reasons for job dissatisfaction** are quite significant and often tied to broader concerns about the future of the profession. The most prominent concern relates to the impact of AI, both its immediate effects on workloads and the anxiety it generates about the future of the profession. Low or declining income and the persistent undervaluation of qualifications and the profession as a whole were also frequently mentioned. Respondents described a general sense of uncertainty, sometimes accompanied by a negative impact on work-life balance and well-being, and a few even reported considering leaving the field altogether. Other recurring concerns included a declining volume of work, a loss of fulfillment in the profession, dissatisfaction with the entrepreneurial aspects of freelancing, and a perceived deterioration in working conditions.

Overall, the findings suggest that most language professionals derive satisfaction from their work, valuing its intellectual engagement and autonomy. Nonetheless, growing economic pressure, technological change and a sense of professional undervaluation temper this generally positive outlook.

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