

Survey study

On translation and interpretation

In MEXICO 2017

Survey study on translation and interpretation Mexico 2017 Executive Summary

Presentation

The [Italia Morayta Foundation](#) identified the need for the translation and interpretation industry in Mexico to have a study that would allow the actors who make it up to get to know each other better. With the assistance of [InterpretAmerica](#), the collaboration of [Interpreters and Translators in Public and Community Services](#) and the support of educational institutions, professional associations, agencies and individuals, the Foundation sponsored a survey study managed by an independent research team in order to document the scale and diversity of interpretation and translation in the country. Using the “action research” methodology of Lewin, and based on similar experiments carried out in other latitudes, the study was applied throughout 2017 and brought together, in equal conditions, the experience of 1,087 interpreters and translators from the 32 states of Mexico with linguistic combinations that included Spanish and one or more foreign languages, indigenous languages, or sign language. It should be noted that, although the characteristics of the subject of study were more conducive to the use of convenience sampling, if a random methodology had been selected, 382 responses—the initial objective—would have been enough for the study to be statistically significant.

The first chapters of the study are devoted to the introduction, background and methodology. Chapter 4, *Principal Findings*, is divided into the four sections described below and consists of 82 tables or annotated graphs that correspond to the same number of data cross-references. It is important to note that, without sacrificing the privacy of the respondents, all information is public and is available in disaggregated form on the open data platforms *datamx* and *CKAN*.

Chapter 5, entitled *Vox Populi*, brings together a selection of the comments that the respondents shared in open answers. Finally, in the remaining chapters references are cited and a description of the organizations involved in the project is offered.

Principal Findings

1. Translators and interpreters: an integrated perspective

- The number of women is greater, although this is slightly more the case in translation and less marked in the field of indigenous languages.



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- - Approximately 80% of the respondents have an educational level equal to or greater than a bachelor's degree in any of the groups of linguistic combinations studied.
- - The difference in the range of income per day between those who are affiliated to a professional association and those who do not belong to one is minimal. However, the number of working days is higher among members of a professional association than among non-members.
- - Those who practice these professions do not make their living exclusively from interpretation or translation, but complement their income with other sources of work.
- - The number of interpreters and translators of indigenous languages who work unpaid is very high, especially among interpreters.
- - The majority of interpreters and translators have volunteered to contribute to a social cause, for reasons of professional development, or because of need in their community. Those who have never done voluntary work are in a minority.
- - Translation and interpretation agencies are not the main source of income for interpreters or translators.
- - The majority of translators and interpreters considered that their income in 2016 was higher than in 2015, and expected that it would be higher in 2017 than in 2016.
- - The main factors having a negative impact on income are competitors who charge less, lack of respect for the profession, and lack of awareness about the importance of these services.
- - In general, both interpreters and translators think that technology will have an increasing impact on how the profession is practiced, and that this will be positive for the most part, although translators are slightly less optimistic.

2. Translators

- - The most common target languages, apart from Spanish, are English, French, Italian, Nahuatl, Maya and Tzeltal, in that order.
- - Most work bi-directionally with their first pair of working languages. The bi-directionality rate decreases as more working languages are added.
- - In addition to translation, the kinds of work carried out most frequently by translators are editing, proofreading and transcription.
- - Translators working in indigenous languages take the lead in certain audiovisual areas such as adaptation for people with disabilities and voiceovers.
- - The subjects most commonly translated are law, education, medicine and pharmaceuticals.
- - The additional services most frequently offered by translators are interpretation and training or language teaching.
- - Overall, most respondents have at least 6 years of work experience.
- - More than 50% of those who use a computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool reach or exceed productivity rates of 2,500 words per day, while only a third do so without using a CAT.



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- - 60% of translators have at least one client abroad, including translators working in indigenous languages, and around 7% depend exclusively on clients outside of Mexico.
- - The most common way of preparing quotes is by page for written translation assignments; by hour for subtitling, dubbing and voiceover; by source word for post-editing and localization; while transcreation or adaptation for people with disabilities is usually quoted for by project.
- - DTP is not usually charged as an additional service.
- - Regardless of experience, most translators earn up to MX\$1,000 per day, except among those with longer careers.
- - Although several respondents stated that they had training in fields related to translation (philology, languages, interpretation), more than a fifth say they are self-taught and have not taken any type of workshop, course or program specifically in translation.
- - The three accreditations most frequently sought from translators of indigenous and foreign languages are expert translator certification, a diploma in translation, and affiliation to a professional association. Nevertheless, these accreditations (except the expert certification) and a professional certificate are more frequently requested from those who work with indigenous languages.
- - The most frequently used technologies are CAT tools, automatic translation tools and voice recorders. Their frequency of use is uniform regardless of age.

3. Interpreters

- - The working languages with the highest demand, measured in the number of working days per month, are English, Spanish, Nahuatl and Mexican Sign Language.
- - Bidirectional combinations are more common than in translation, although their incidence decreases after the third combination.
- - The subjects that are most frequently covered are education, medicine and law.
- - Although conference interpreting is the most widely known, it is not as common as community, court or escort interpreting.
- - Consequently, the most common modalities are, in order, bilateral, consecutive and simultaneous.
- - Most interpreters do not work without support for more than 2 hours. Those who most often benefit from the support of a colleague after short periods are those who work with sign language, tactile interpretation and transliteration.
- - The additional services most frequently offered by interpreters are translation, coordination of interpreter teams and teaching or language training.
- - The major groups within the community of interpreters are split between those with a long career and those who have shorter experience. A smaller number are found in the intermediate group.
- - Interpreters usually work within their town, within their own state or from home. Overseas travel is not common.



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- - Charging per day is the most common way of quoting for interpreting services, especially in the conference interpreting field; per hour or minute in remote areas; and for a fixed salary in community settings.
- - The highest earnings per day are associated with the most experienced interpreters.
- - The most common training options are courses, diplomas and workshops. A significant number of interpreters have received their training through experience, rather than through formal education in the field.
- - A small percentage of interpreters have received distance interpretation training.
- - It is more common to require any kind of certification from interpreters of foreign languages, except in the field of medical interpretation, where certification is more frequently requested from interpreters of indigenous languages.
- - Almost half of the respondents do not use any technological tools to perform their work.

4. Translators and interpreters: occupational health

- - Almost three-quarters of the surveyed population does not have any type of health insurance.
- - The most recurrent conditions are notably anxiety and stress, musculoskeletal and voice disorders. However, almost one-third of the respondents reported not suffering any work-related conditions.
- - The most common way to counteract the harmful effects of work is by engaging in sports. This is followed by recreational and social activities. However, almost 20% of respondents do not perform any activity to improve their health.
- - Only one-fifth of the respondents employ a proactive emotional management strategy to deal with labor uncertainties.



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