

ARE YOU AVAILABLE? INTERPRETER SURVEY AND EMPLOYER SURVEY 2018 RESULTS

**ASLIA National Conference Brisbane
“Partners in Practice”
Saturday 21 September 2018**

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PURPOSE

Reasons for undertaking research:

- Ideas related to local and national workforce capacity to meet current and future community demand were largely anecdotal based assumptions,
- Lack of workforce planning, supply and development.

National research provides a snapshot of:

- Interpreters' views, experiences and needs,
- Interpreting agencies' situation

Examined insights regarding:

- Oversupply or undersupply of interpreters,
- Meeting future demand.

Also considered:

- Support of interpreter career longevity,
- Training industry responses,
- Impact of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rollout.

METHODS

Two online written surveys open from 2 – 23 May 2018:

1. Interpreters – past (26 Questions) and current (27 Questions),
2. Employers (19 Questions).

Interpreters approached via:

ASLIA sent survey link to 440 people

NAATI sent survey link to 669 people

Facebook promotions and personal contacts (# unknown)



cross-postings



Survey Monkey

337 current
interpreters

37 past
interpreters

374 responses

Employers:
14 agencies directly approached

12 responses

METHODS

Mixed methodology: quantitative and qualitative

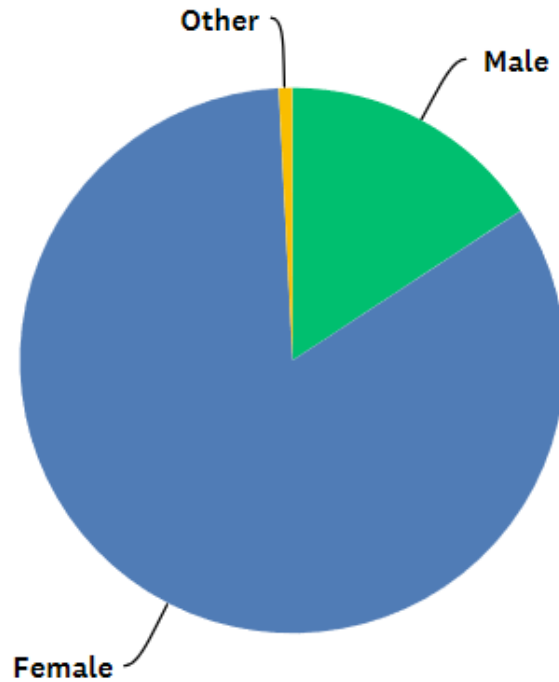
Quantitative: questions related to things such as demographic and employment profiles of interpreters, and agencies' abilities to meet demand, and busiest periods.

Qualitative: Questions related to the lived experiences and opinions of participants.

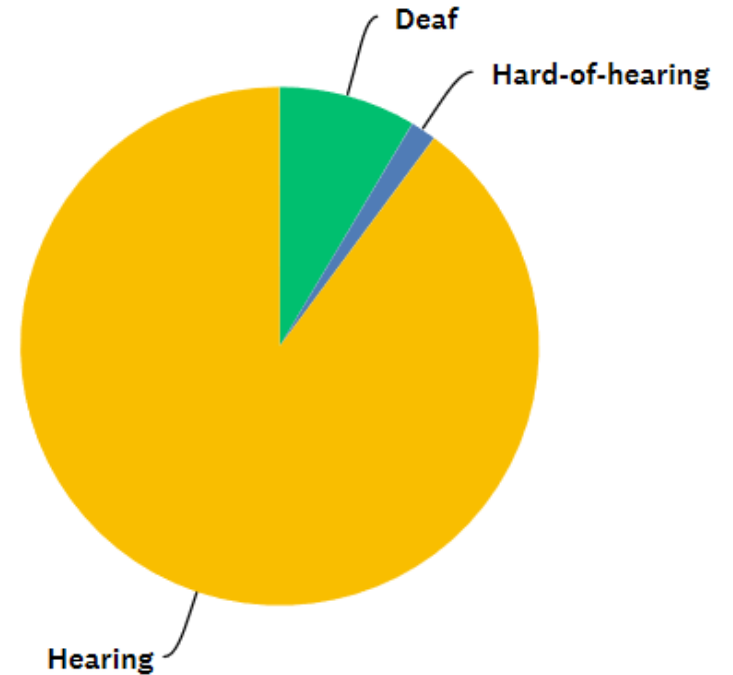
Thematic analysis of qualitative questions:

- Identifying major themes,
- Clustering of themes within responses to individual questions, and of those that appeared within multiple questions to detect patterns (some of these we quantified),
- Possible significance.

ARE YOU AVAILABLE? INTERPRETER SURVEY RESULTS: WHO ARE THE INTERPRETER RESPONDENTS?

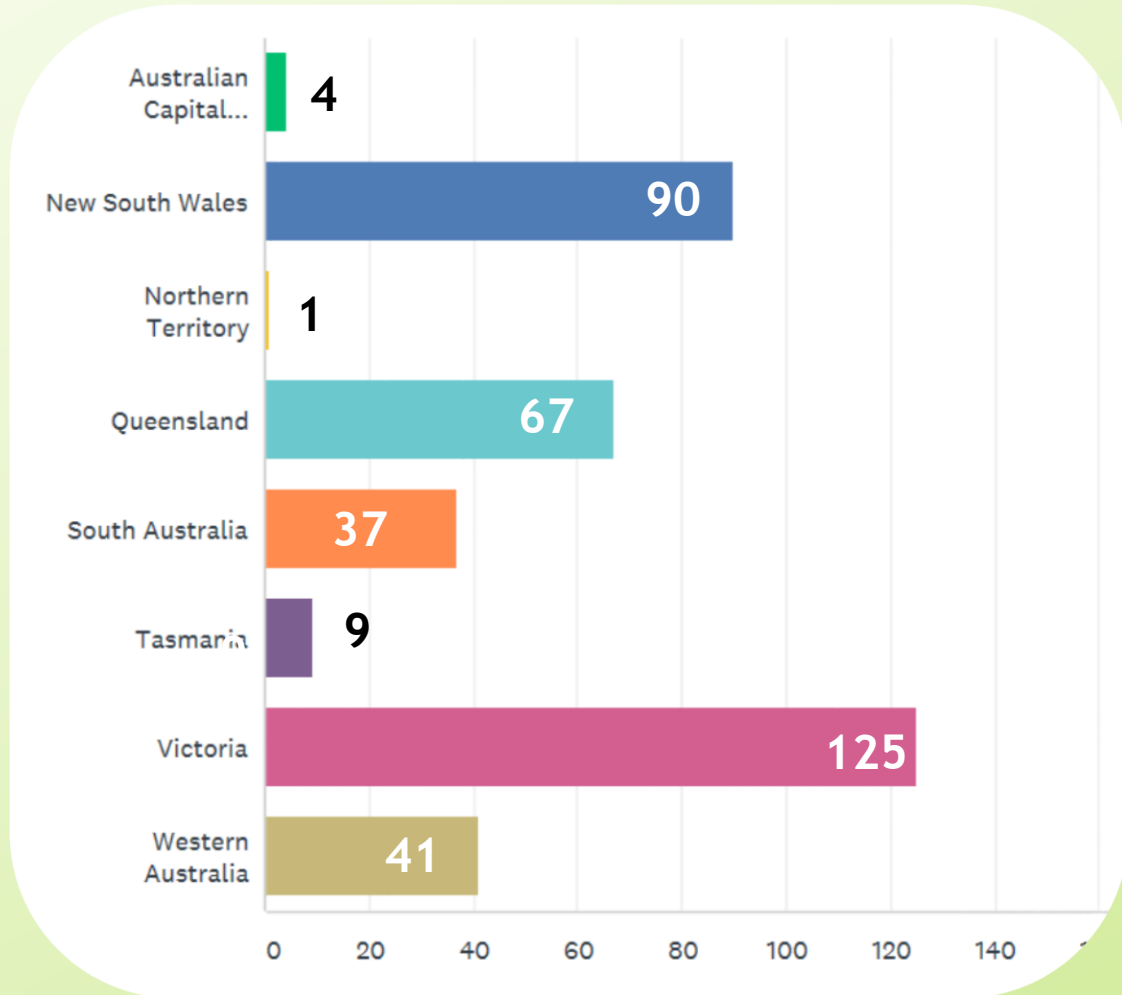


Female: 312
Male: 59
Other: 3

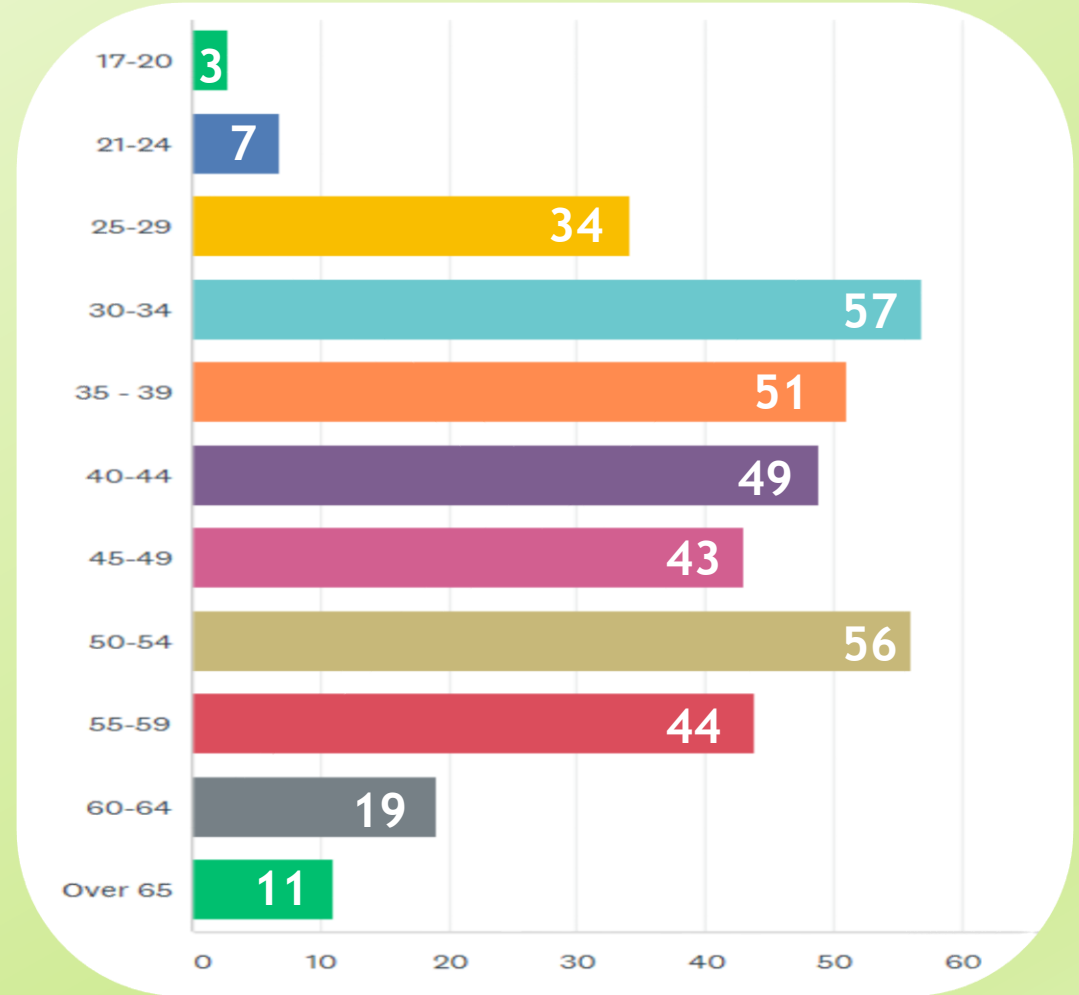


Hearing: 336
Deaf: 32
Hard-of-Hearing: 6

WHO ARE THE INTERPRETER RESPONDENTS?



LOCATION

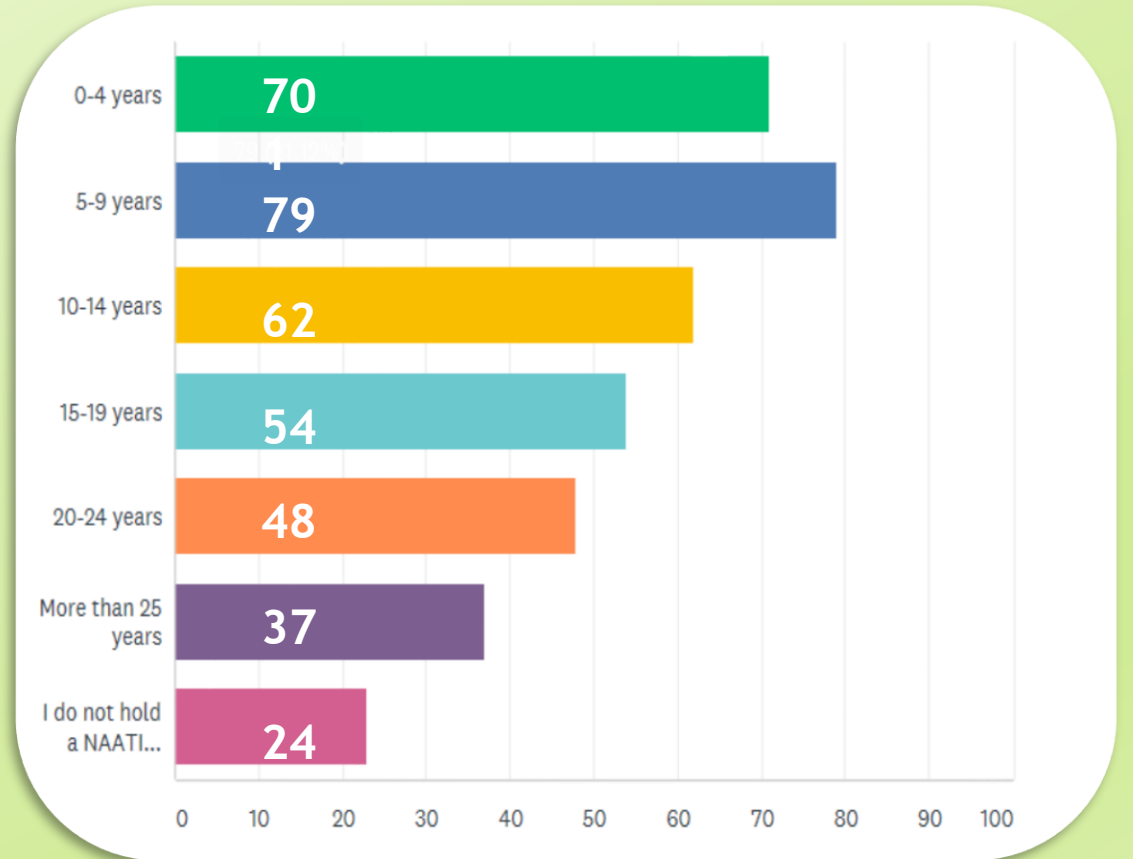


AGE

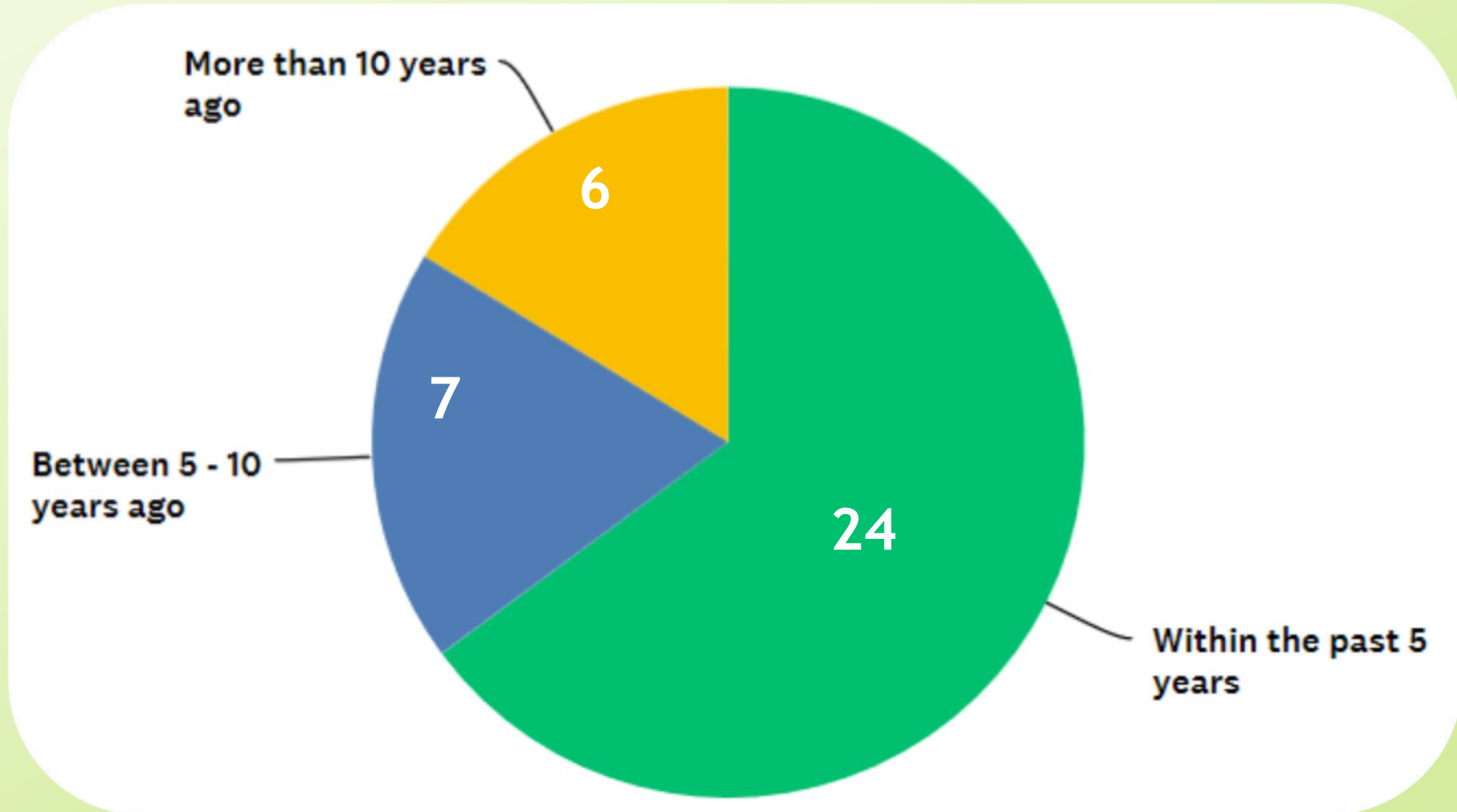
WHO ARE THE INTERPRETER RESPONDENTS?

| TYPE OF CREDENTIAL | |
|--|------------|
| DEAF: | 28 |
| Recognised Practising DI (Certified) | 5 |
| Recognised DI (Accredited) | 8 |
| Certified Provisional DI | 8 |
| Paraprofessional DI (Accredited) | 7 |
| HEARING: | 346 |
| Certified Provisional Interpreter (HI) | 112 |
| Paraprofessional Interpreter (HI Accredited) | 96 |
| Certified Interpreter (HI) | 80 |
| Professional Interpreter (HI Accredited) | 32 |
| Certified Conference Interpreter (HI) | 2 |
| DO NOT HOLD NAATI | 24 |

LENGTH OF TIME CREDENTIALS HELD



Q 11 PAST INTERPRETERS: HOW LONG AGO LEFT INTERPRETING?



Q 16 3 MAIN THINGS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO LEAVING?

Financial issues (7):

“Risk to sole income if switching from full-time other work to full-time interpreting.”

Insufficient work (7):

“Lack of employment opportunities and demand for DI.”

Work conditions (7):

“Lack of stable work conditions/pay and suitability for life as a solo mum with a baby.”

Work Health and Safety (7):

“Injuries to my wrists and hands from OOS, or other health condition (still investigating).”

Q 17 3 THINGS THAT MIGHT HAVE KEPT YOU WORKING?

1. Better pay (11):

“Better pay in educational settings.”

“Being able to be reimbursed somewhat for travel time for distances...”

2. Being recognised and appreciated (6):

“Appropriate professional recognition, respect, and valuation within the field of education.”

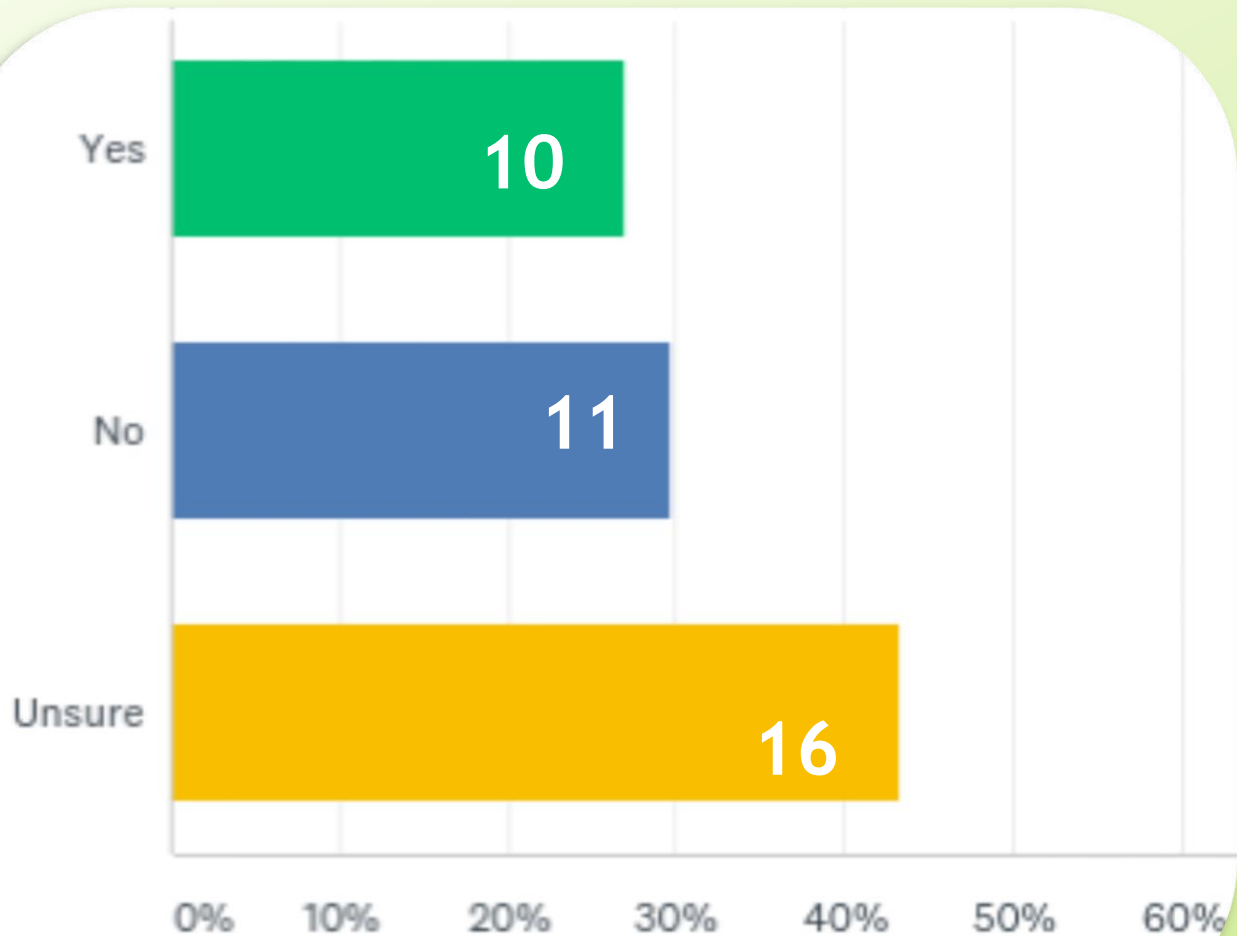
“Better appreciation for paraprofessional interpreters.”

3. Regular work (6):

“Permanent work/annual contracts that financially continued during holiday sessions.”

“Stability.”

Q 18 DO YOU SEE YOURSELF RETURNING TO INTERPRETING WORK WITHIN THE NEXT THREE YEARS?

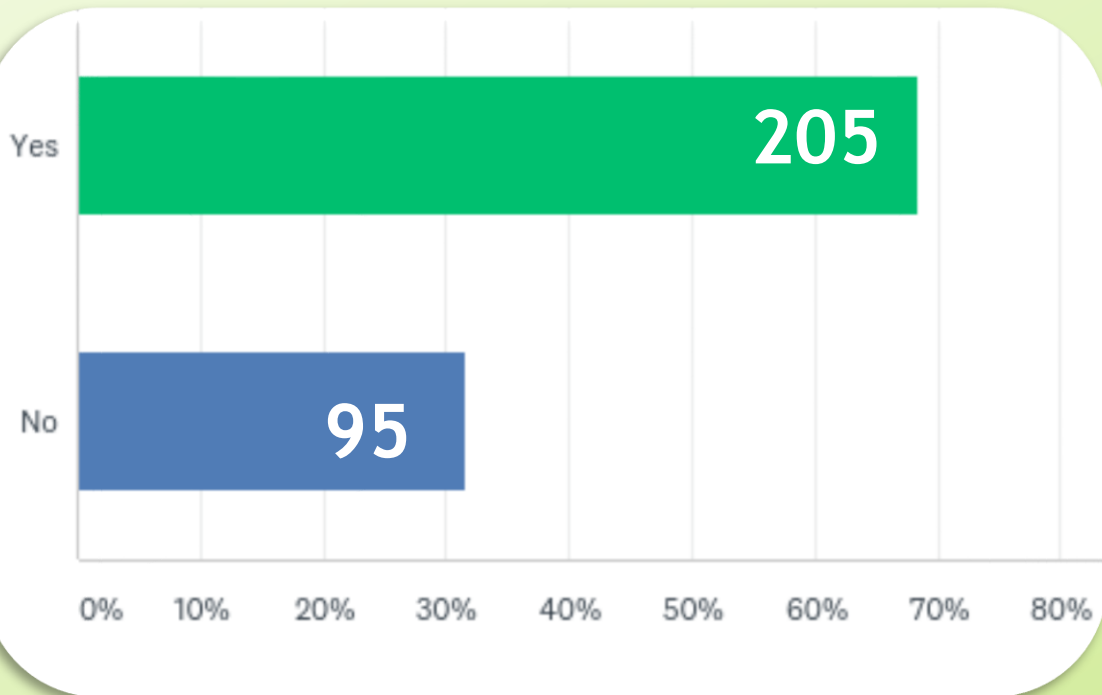


"I was interpreting some 20 odd years ago and am now re-skilling and getting back into it."

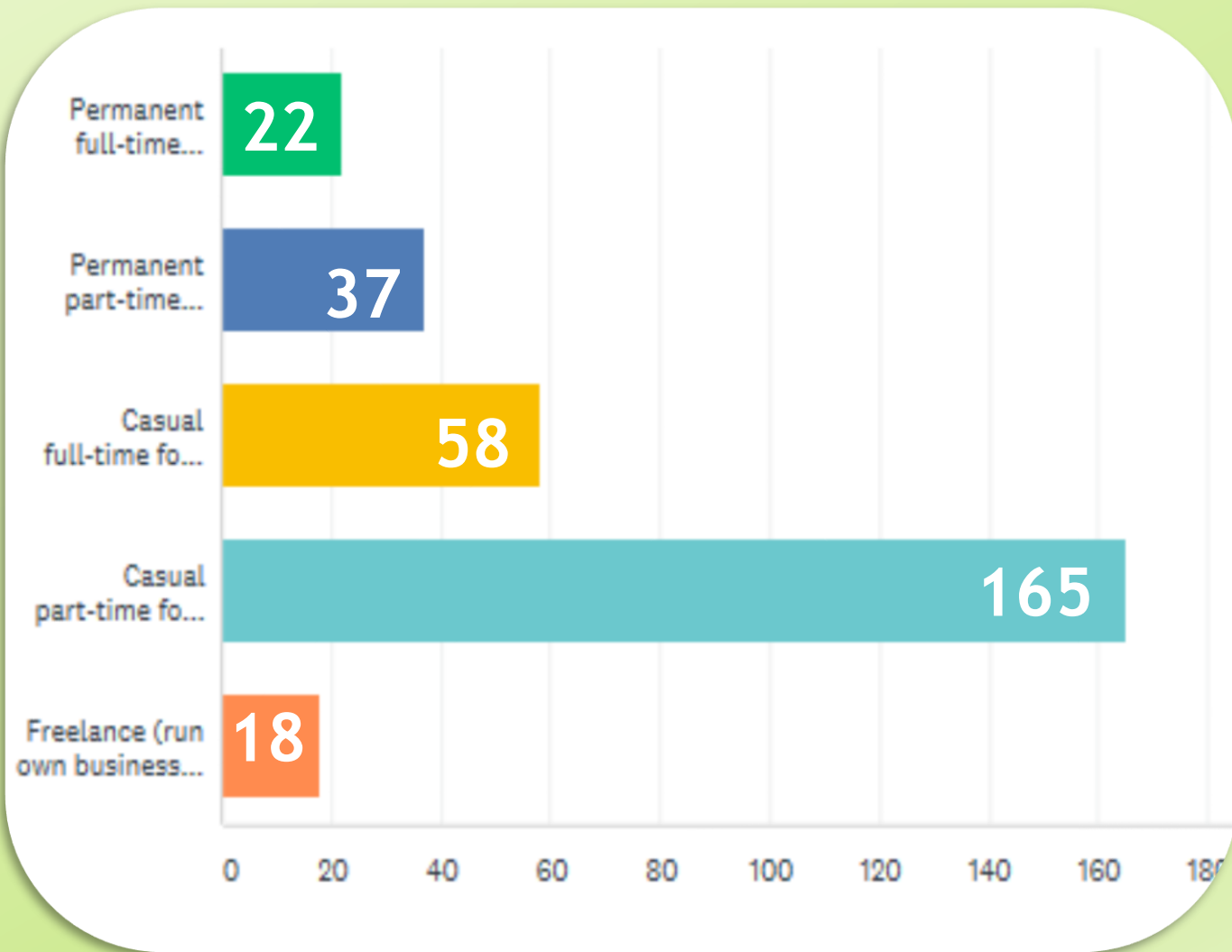
"I work full time...nothing to do with deaf ."

"I would be happy to consider work within my skill level without judgement or expectations in areas that are more low key."

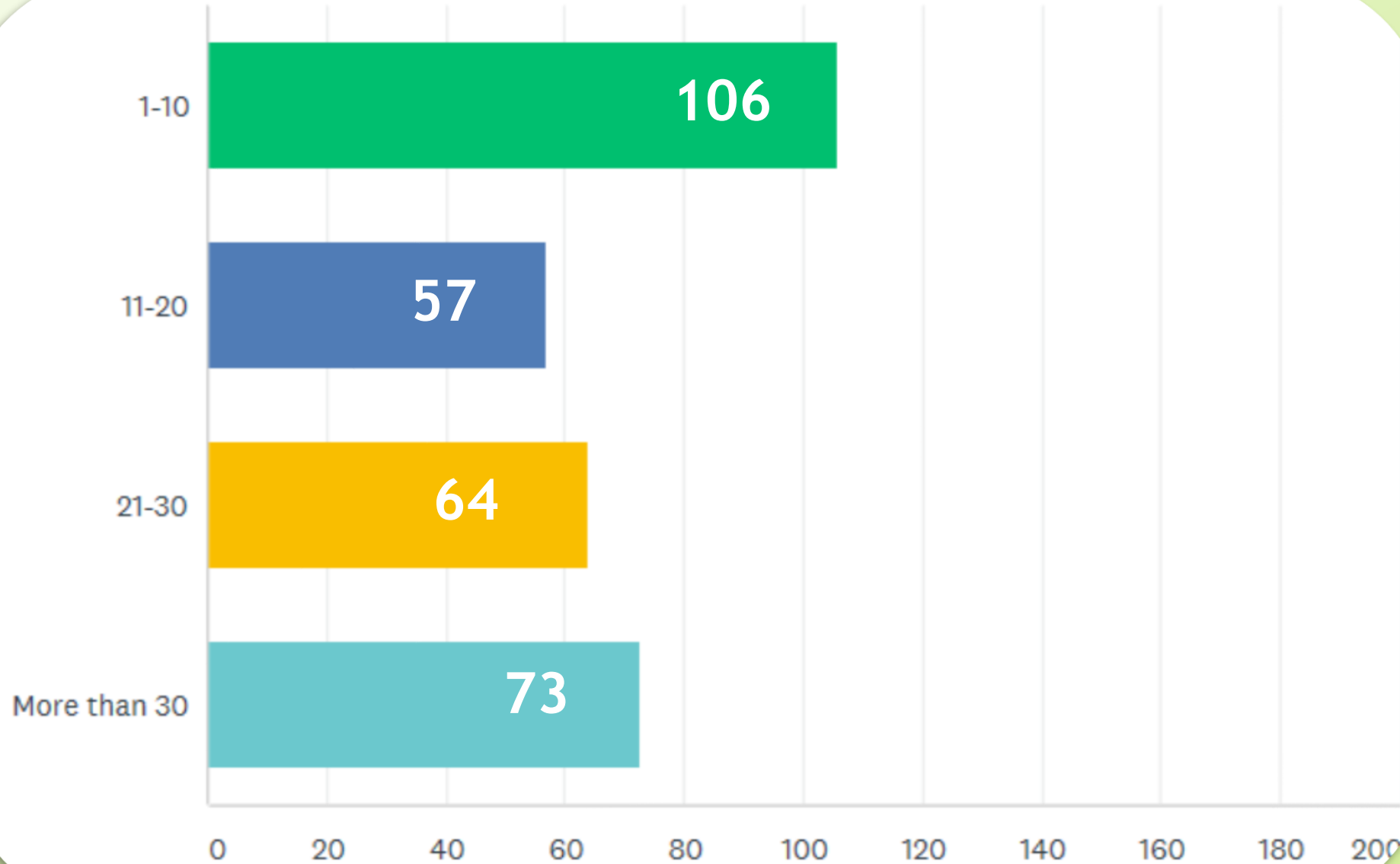
Q 19 CURRENT INTERPRETERS: IS INTERPRETING YOUR MAIN SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT?



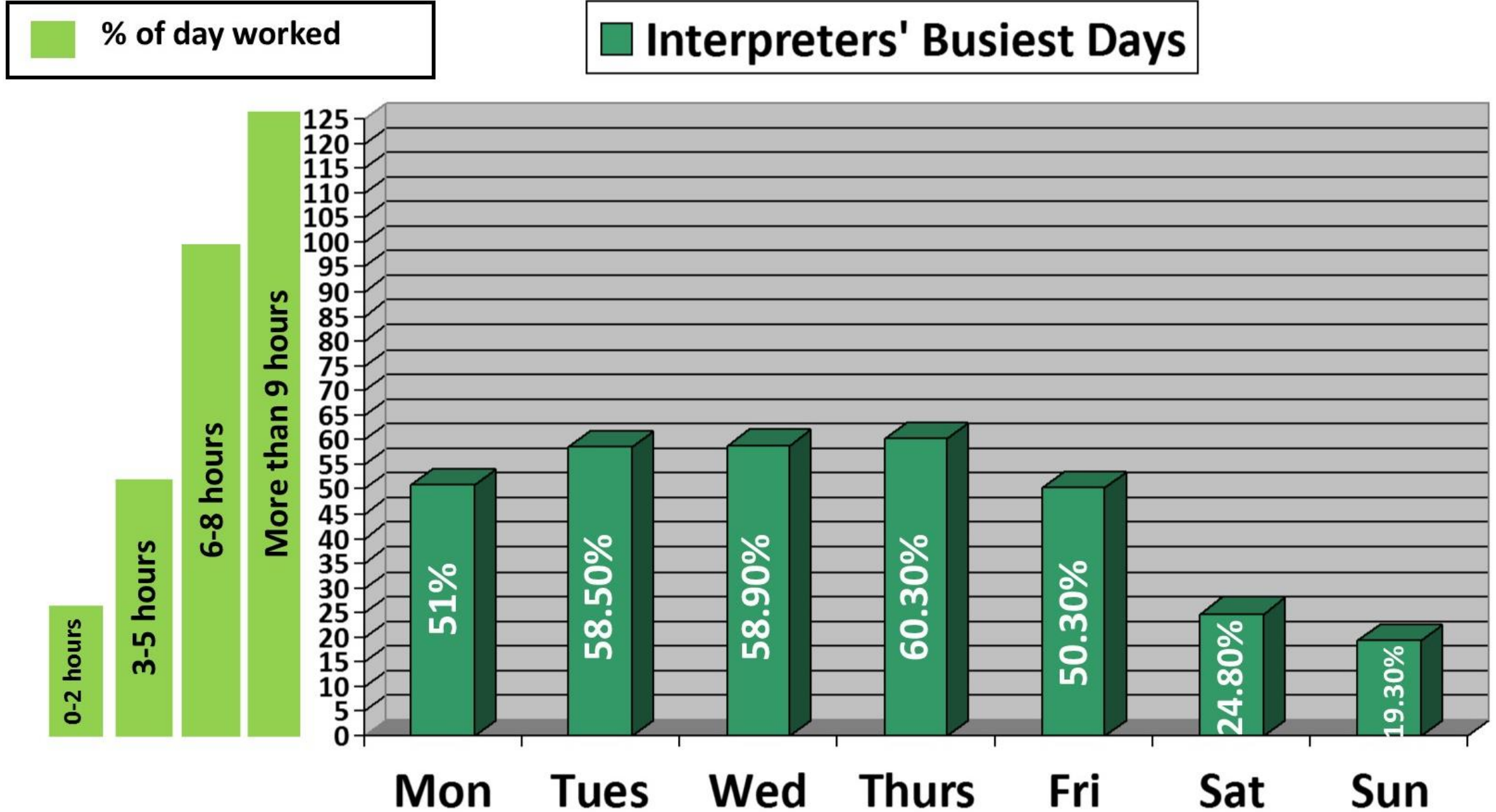
Q 20 CURRENT INTERPRETERS: WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT WORK STATUS AS AN INTERPRETER?



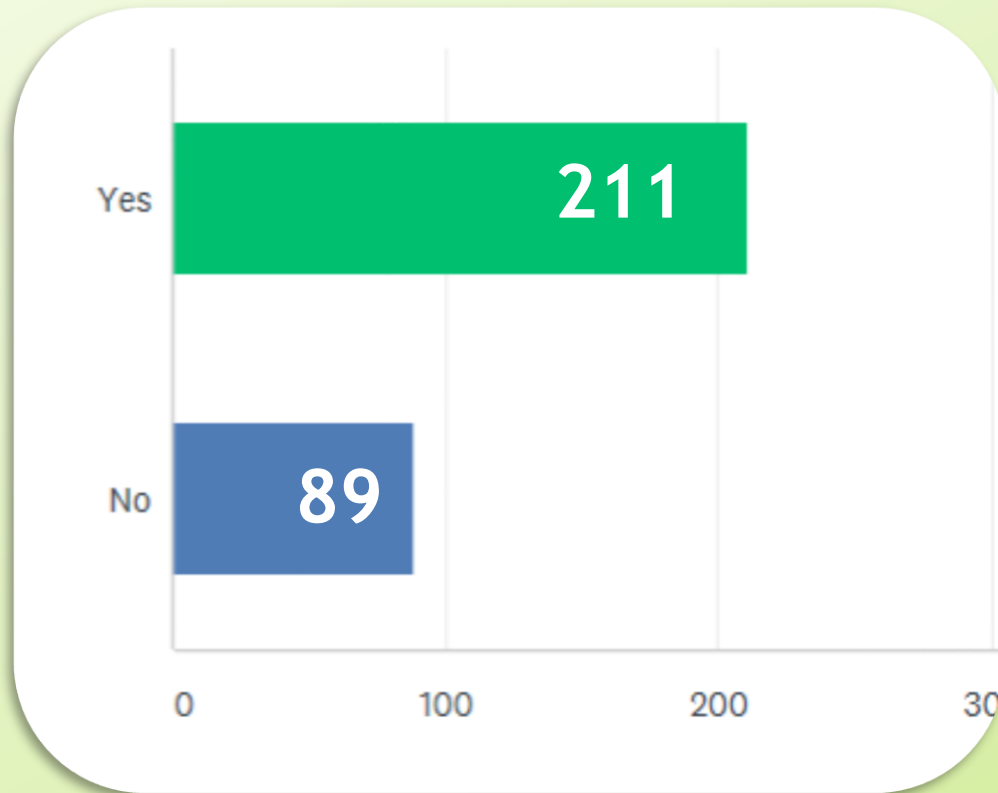
Q 22 WEEKLY AVERAGE HOURS OF PAID INTERPRETING WORK DURING THE PAST MONTH?



Q 23 BUSIEST DAYS?



Q 24 SATISFIED WITH AMOUNT OF PAID WEEKLY WORK?



“I study full time, so 10 hours of interpreting per week is enough.”

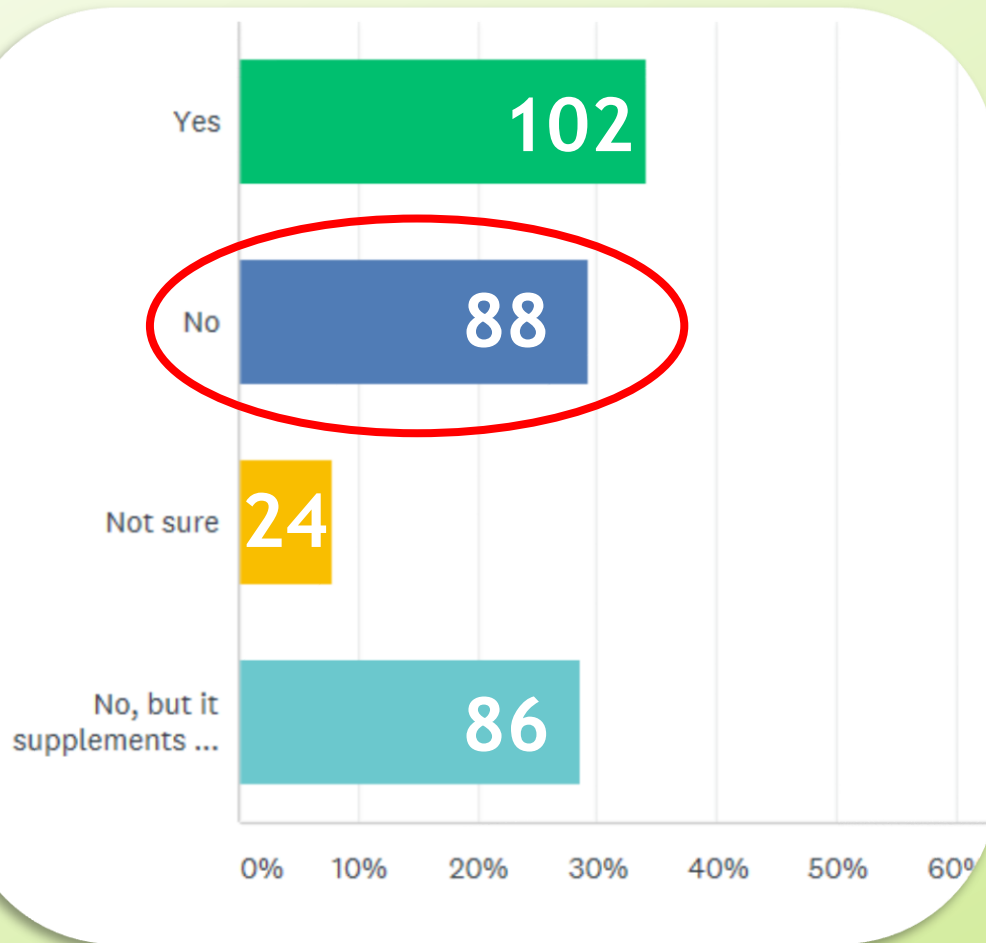
“I am happy doing 3 to 4 jobs a week as I already have a full time job.”

“I am in transition to retirement, so I do not pursue work with any vigor [sic].”

“I could do a lot more.”

“Very little demand. I have had around two offers in 3 months.”

Q 25 DOES INTERPRETING PROVIDE YOU WITH SUFFICIENT PAID WORK TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT YOURSELF, AND ANY DEPENDENTS, THROUGH THE YEAR?



“Only because I take on another part time job to supplement.”

“Only just, it feels like this is one of the reasons the industry is so cutthroat and some practitioners work against each other, rather than with each other.”

“Barely.”

“The income I earn from interpreting is supplementary to my husband's - it could not support my family on its own.”

Q 26 PLEASE DESCRIBE THE THREE MAIN THINGS THAT YOU BELIEVE WILL MOST SUPPORT YOU REMAINING IN THE FIELD INTO THE FUTURE?

1. Working conditions (171):

“Leave entitlements.”

“Paid parking/travel.”

2. Professional development / training / skill development / mentoring (150):

“Accessible PD events i.e. ability to live stream.”

“Having access to a team of professional mentors both Deaf and hearing.”

3. Solidarity (Colleagues and Deaf Community) (69):

“Better interpreter & deaf community solidarity less bullying.”

4. Other themes:

WHS and debriefing

Agency job allocation decisions and processes

NAATI Recertification concerns

VRI work

NDIS concerns

Job satisfaction

Respect for credentials and years of experience

Q 27 THREE MAIN THINGS THAT HAVE MADE YOU CONSIDER STOPPING, OR REDUCING INTERPRETING AVAILABILITY?

1. Working conditions (71):

“Appropriate remuneration for my skill level.”

“The pay is unreliable and work is sparse.”

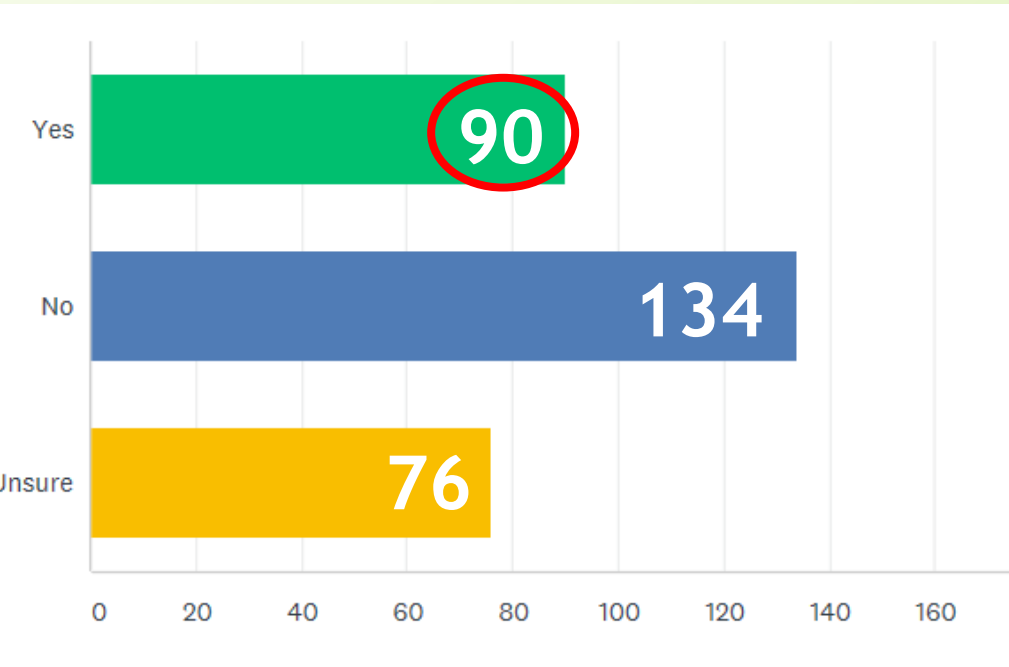
2. Professional development / skills (39):

“Lack of support. I have worked on my own in this area for over 12 years. Access to PD and mentoring is limited.”

3. Personal (36):

“I was not able to earn a living by interpreting alone, I needed a 'normal job' as I am a single income household... after 20 years I am getting tired.”

Q 28 LEAVING OR TAPERING DOWN WITHIN THREE YEARS?



Politics:

“Fatigue and frustration. ... Decreasing solidarity and unity within the profession.”

Work stress:

“Too much interpreting work leaves me stressed and tired and unable to enjoy life.”

NAATI Revalidation issues:

“...It’s very difficult to maintain my credentials while on maternity leave...”

Working conditions:

“...does not pay for sick leave or holidays, and a bank won't touch me for a loan.”

Retirement / Family life:

“I may scale back for a period of time to start a family.”

**Q 29 TWO WAYS THAT
AGENCIES COULD BETTER
SUPPORT INTERPRETERS TO
REMAIN IN CAREER?**

**1. Conditions, Pay and
Regular work (83):**

“Better conditions - holiday pay, sick pay, etc.”

“Provide more permanent positions to give stability and security.”

**2. Administration and Booking
systems (53):**

“Providing preparation materials.”

“Matching interpreters’ skills, credentials to the client and job accurately.”

**Q 30 TWO WAYS THAT THE DEAF
COMMUNITY COULD BETTER
SUPPORT INTERPRETERS TO
REMAIN IN CAREER?**

**1. Education, PD and Feedback
(53):**

“Acknowledge we need to work together and the hard work it takes to be a successful interpreter. Give good honest feedback.”

2. Appreciation (33):

“Supporting all interpreters new and old in their journey.”

**Q 31 TWO WAYS THAT ASLIA
COULD BETTER SUPPORT
INTERPRETERS TO REMAIN IN
CAREER?**

**1. PD, Mentoring and Help
with Credentials (191):**

**“Clearer more established mentor
program.”**

**2. Isolation, Networking and
Relationships (50):**

**“Networking/socialising events to
ensure interpreters dont [SIC] feel
isolated.”**

**Q 32 TWO WAYS THAT INDIVIDUAL
INTERPRETER COLLEAGUES COULD
BETTER SUPPORT INTERPRETERS TO
REMAIN IN CAREER?**

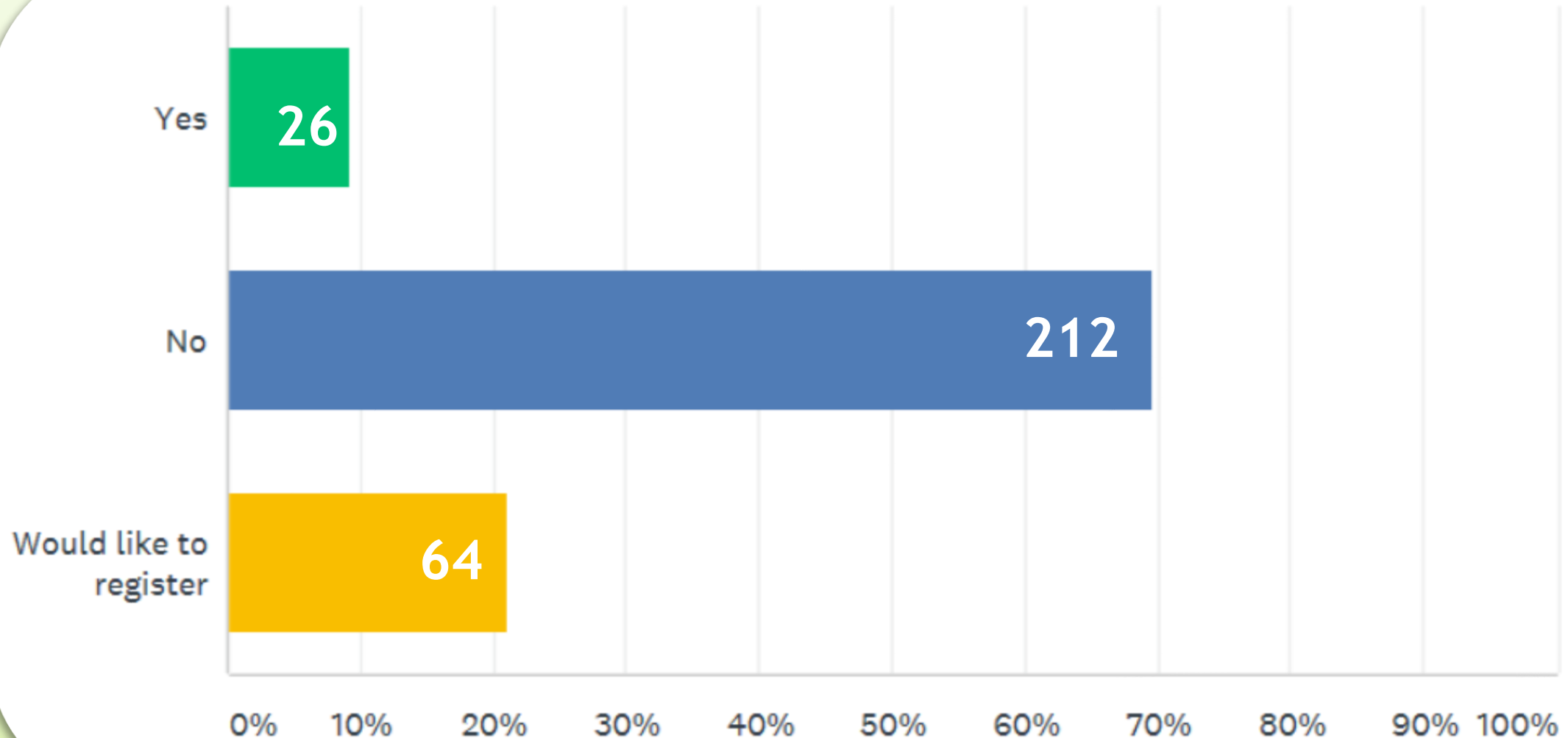
**1. Support, mentoring, feedback and
networking (158):**

**“Accept strengths and weaknesses of all of us. One
is no better than the other dependent on the
situation and it is our COMBINED worth on the
assignment.”**

2. Solidarity, PD and Team behaviour (37):

**“Solidarity! One word! Interpreters are shit at
solidarity!!! Why???”**

Q 35 IF THE NDIS HAS BEEN ROLLED OUT IN YOUR TOWN, HAVE YOU REGISTERED AS A DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDER?



EMPLOYER SURVEY 2018 RESULTS

Q 2 FROM 1 JANUARY 2018 UNTIL NOW (MAY 2018), HAS YOUR AGENCY HAD DIFFICULTIES IN MEETING DEMAND FOR INTERPRETING SERVICES?

Yes

100%

No

All 12 agencies reported
“increased difficulty filling jobs in
the January to May 2018 period”

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Q 3 ANY CHANGE IN THE AVAILABILITY OF SUPPLY FROM 1 JANUARY UNTIL NOW (MAY 2018)?

“...workforce supply can be impacted on the movements of just one interpreters [sic], shifts are felt profoundly.”

“This year along with last year we did not have a new cohort of interpreters graduating from TAFE...Most of the graduating interpreters go into the education setting. We have not been able to add to our community interpreters for the past two years. So for the last 3 years we have had the same amount of interpreters on our register but with approximately 30% increase in the workload.”

“This is hard to quantify. We have lost some of our more experienced interpreters to other (non-interpreting) employment or to interpreting in other sectors. We have also had a record number of recent interpreting graduates register with our service however as they are new to the sector, they are not suitable for all bookings.”

“Many interpreters are becoming unavailable, for what reasons we do not fully know. A couple of interpreters have changed career directions based on their experience working as an interpreter... (mostly negative). ”

| Q 12 PLEASE INDICATE WHICH DAYS YOUR AGENCY SEES A HIGHER OR LESSER DEMAND FOR INTERPRETING SERVICES IN YOUR STATE OR TERRITORY, AND NATIONALLY. | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| | MON | TUES | WED | THUR | FRI | SAT | SUN |
| ACT | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| NSW | | | | ✓ | | | |
| NT | | | | | | | |
| QLD | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| SA | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| TAS | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| VIC | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| WA | | | ✓ | | | | |
| NATIONAL | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |

Q 13 BASED ON THE DEMAND FOR INTERPRETING SERVICE HOURS IN 2017, DO YOU FORECAST A YEAR-ON-YEAR DECREASE, NO CHANGE, OR INCREASE IN DEMAND OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS TO 2020? IF SO, PLEASE DISCUSS.

Based on 2017 demand, the overall increase ranges from steady in 2018 up to increase of 266% by 2020

Two major themes were cited as driving future demand:

- 1. Greater access to mainstream community life opportunities “...rise in community acceptance and inclusion policy, employment of deaf people.”**
- 2. The partial roll-out of the NDIS throughout Australia, which is bringing in new clients, business and demands. “As more participants register the more demand there is on interpreters.”**

Q 14 BASED ON YOUR SUPPLY OF INTERPRETING SERVICE HOURS IN 2017, DO YOU FORECAST A YEAR-ON-YEAR DECREASE, NO CHANGE, OR INCREASE IN SUPPLY OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS TO 2020? IF SO, PLEASE DISCUSS.

Seven agencies collect and report Unable to Service (UTS) bookings. In 2017 the combined employer monthly UTS average rate was 11.1% with a high of 30% per month. This employer noted “About 30% of our jobs are UTS. We feel it will increase as the years go on due to the forecast of increase in demand which is not met by an increase in interpreter numbers.”

Five agencies do not collect or report Unable to Service (UTS) bookings. For example, “As a guesstimate I would say we were unable to supply 3% in 2017. This year 5% unable to supply. We find we are able to service more interpreting hours if we have access to interpreter’s diaries. This way we are able to juggle with the agencies, the interpreter and the Deaf clients. We have had to change the way we do bookings because of the demand...”

Q 16 FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A PROVIDER OF INTERPRETING SERVICES, DO YOU BELIEVE THERE TO BE A SHORTAGE OF AVAILABLE INTERPRETERS WITHIN YOUR REGION OF PROVISION?

11 of 12 employers reported a shortage of interpreters in their region

Q 17 DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS REGARDING THE CURRENT AND FUTURE BALANCE OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF AUSLAN-ENGLISH INTERPRETERS AND DEAF NCSL INTERPRETERS, OR SUGGESTIONS REGARDING SOLUTIONS TO ANY RELATED ISSUES THAT YOU PERCEIVE TO BE PRESENT?

**11 of 12 Employers want more people to train to become interpreters.
Responses fall into three major themes:**

1. Collaboration with key stakeholders to increase formal and informal interpreter training opportunities and supply

2. Exploiting technology

3. Better working conditions for interpreters

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS:

- 1. The data reveals an imbalance between the current demands of the Deaf/wider Australian community for NAATI credentialed interpreters in states and territories, and the supply of such. This imbalance appears to be greater in some locations than in others, and at some times than at others.**
- 2. Demand for interpreting service hours are trending upwards with employers predicting that they will be more severely strained over the next three years.**
- 3. Inaction will exacerbate current Unable to Service statistics, in particular the 90 of 374 working interpreters who reported considering tapering or leaving interpreting in the next three years.**
- 4. Out of 300 working interpreters, 90 are considering tapering or leaving interpreting in the next three years and a further 76 are 'unsure'. This will exacerbate current Unable to Service statistics all over Australia. Action must be taken to decrease this potential huge loss of capacity, increase retention levels and upskilling of the existing workforce, and growing the total supply.**
- 5. There is some capacity to increase current utilisation rates of available interpreters via:**
 - a) more internet-based service delivery,**
 - b) agencies negotiating job particulars with parties to mutually convenient times, and**
 - c) improvement of job allocation systems.**

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS:

6. Interpreters report that the following issues contribute to them leaving or considering leaving the profession, or reducing their commitment and availability:

- a) unreliable, insufficient, and casualised work;**
- b) less than desirable remuneration (including out of pocket expenses);**
- c) lack of structured professional support;**
- d) feelings of isolation, not being valued, and lack of connectedness with peers;**
- e) unaddressed WHS hazards (both physical and psychological), and**
- f) affordable and accessible Professional Development.**

7. Issues specific to rural, Deaf, and educational interpreters in schools were reported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Partners in Practice:

National interpreting strategy

1. Create a national interpreting strategy to attract, train and retain interpreters with the aim to increase the current size of the workforce to be able to meet the expected future growth of interpreting services, and maintain practitioner health and safety.

Ongoing professional support

2. Establish a national calendar of accessible, structured informal and formal Professional Development opportunities that are aligned to NAATI Recertification requirements as well as identified practitioner and community needs.

3. Make a range of affordable Professional Development opportunities available locally (including regionally) and nationally in real time, face-to-face, live-streaming and online self-access platforms.

4. Develop an enhanced professional support program for practitioners including structured mentoring, debriefing and networking opportunities for all NAATI certified interpreters in professional practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased interpreter training pathway opportunities

5. Commit to individually and collectively work together to increase the number of NAATI credentialled interpreters to work and better meet the growing demand for interpreting services in their region. This includes the establishment of clear, and realistically benchmarked goals in relation to the number of new interpreters to be trained in the coming years, along with strategic plans to achieve these goals. In the development of these plans, increased focus must be given towards the development of strong competency foundations required by interpreters.
6. Investigate and implement ways in which to re-train interpreters who have been out of the field for a while and wish to return to professional practice.
7. Work with Registered Training Organisations to ensure availability of affordable and flexible Diploma of Interpreting training program pathway opportunities in metropolitan and regional centres.
8. Continue to invest in and exploit internet-based technologies to maximise provision of interpreting services, and better utilisation of interpreter availability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Better working conditions for interpreters

9. Refine current strategies and practices related to safe interpreter work environments in order to maintain well-being and decrease the incidence of work-related injury. These must align with relevant legislation, employment agreements and policies, including the ASLIA Workplace Health and Safety Policy, as well as expressed WHS concerns of interpreters.
10. Conduct an annual review of Employment Agreements to ensure working conditions are more attractive to current and potential future interpreters including, but not limited to, reimbursement for all reasonable out of pocket work-related expenses.
11. Consider creating a mix of new permanent full-time and part-time positions, and contract positions in line with business needs to attract and retain interpreters.
12. Provide preparation materials, where required, to interpreters in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Develop reliable booking systems to ensure fair allocation of offers of work, and flexible scheduling, in order to better utilise current interpreter availability.

14. Carefully consider existing work commitments prior to making decisions regarding the acceptance of new work opportunities, in line with relevant legislation and policies. This is to include assessing personal physical and mental health in relation to the number and types of jobs accepted within a given timeframe.

Strengthen professional relationships and connection within communities

15. Commit individually and collectively to the establishment and implementation of strategies which actively support and foster healthy practitioner relationships, including a no-tolerance approach towards bullying.

16. Consciously model and display an expectation of supportive, and healthy collegial relationships.

17. Intentionally practice solidarity with each other to maintain and strengthen working relationships, and have a professional network to increase connectedness.

18. Welcome and value all interpreter practitioners.

THANK YOU

ASLIA

NAATI

**Interpreter and Employer
survey respondents**

QUESTIONS?