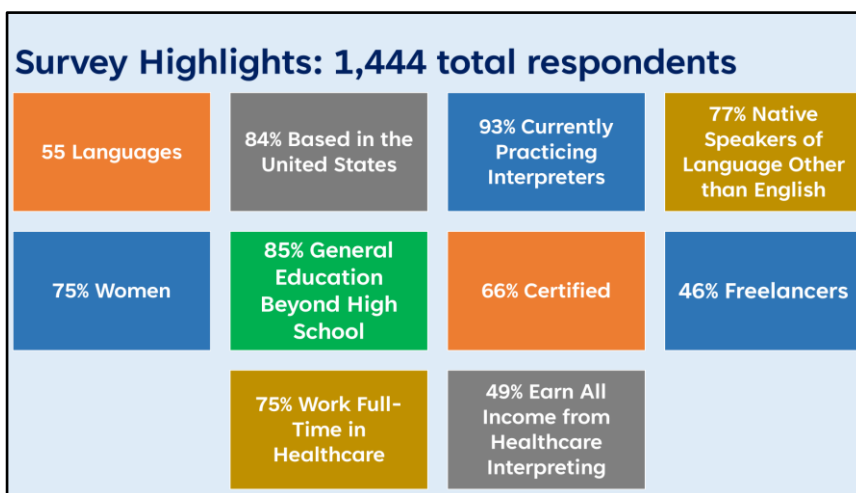




The Executive Summary of the Report

This **Report**¹ presents the findings of the first-ever **Global Workforce Survey of Healthcare Interpreters**,² conducted by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI). The survey's core purpose was to enhance understanding of the healthcare interpreting profession, focusing on the demographic makeup and day-to-day realities of interpreters serving U.S. patients and healthcare providers. The data, collected from currently practicing interpreters who serve U.S. healthcare systems, is intended to empower various stakeholders – including interpreters, employers, interpreter educators, professional associations, and certifying bodies – to make evidence-based decisions that will improve healthcare interpreters' working conditions.

The survey was designed with the help of the national Survey Advisory Council, beta-testers, and CCHI Commissioners, and was led by Natalya Mytareva, CCHI's Executive Director, with data analysis conducted by James P. Henderson, PhD. Disseminated in January - March 2025, the survey received 1,444 valid, anonymous responses, a quantity deemed sufficient for generalizing to the target population.



Understanding the Healthcare Interpreter Workforce

The survey provides a critical lens into the complex professional landscape of healthcare interpreters, revealing defining characteristics and disparities shaped by employment type, residence, modality, and certification status.

¹ The full text of the **Report** is available at https://cchicertification.org/uploads/CCHI_GlobalWorkforceSurveyHCI_Report_2025.pdf

² See the full text of the survey in **Appendix A** at https://cchicertification.org/uploads/CCHI_Report-Appendices-A-K8_GlobalWorkforceSurveyHCI_2025.pdf

1. Professional Background and Demographics

Geographic Diversity

The majority of respondents (84%) reside in the United States, representing 46 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico, with California (16%) and Texas (7%) having the highest representation. A statistically substantial 16% (232 respondents) reside outside the U.S. in 59 countries, with Argentina (15%) and Peru (10%) as the top two.

Employment Status

The most prevalent employment types are freelancer (46%) and staff interpreter in a healthcare organization (33%). The remaining respondents represent substantially smaller segments such as staff in a language service company (9%), a combination of a healthcare organization staff and freelancer (6%), and dual-role interpreters (2% combined clinical and non-clinical). While nearly all staff interpreters (99%) reside in the U.S., over a quarter (26%) of freelancers reside overseas.

Working Status and Modality

Almost three quarters of respondents interpret full-time (30-40 hours per week). ASL (81%) and Spanish (77%) interpreters are more likely to work full-time than other spoken languages (63%). Less than half of respondents (47%) work for a single employer. Staff interpreters predominantly work in-person (85% at least half the time), with 41% working exclusively in-person. In contrast, freelancers exhibit a more balanced distribution across modalities. Overseas respondents primarily work in remote modalities (92% in OPI, 66% in VRI). Most respondents (63%) experienced a change in their work modality in the last five years, largely shifting towards remote work, although 13% started doing more in-person interpreting.

Experience

The workforce is highly experienced, with 68% of the healthcare interpreting workforce having over 5 years in the field, and 43% having practiced for 11 or more years. U.S.-based interpreters (76%) have significantly more experience (over 5 years) than overseas interpreters (27%). Likewise, staff interpreters (52%) have more experience (11+ years) than freelancers (35%).

Education and Certification

Most healthcare interpreters are college-educated, with 41% holding a bachelor's and 23% a master's degree. Most interpreters (77%) have received 40 to 60 hours of specialized training in healthcare interpreting, though 6% have less than 40 hours or none at all. U.S.-based respondents have almost double the average training hours (200) compared to their overseas counterparts (113). Similarly, staff interpreters have an average of 267 hours of specialized training compared to 126 hours for freelancers. 82% of responses indicate that interpreters have completed additional professional training either in language- or healthcare-related areas (e.g., linguistics, general interpreting, translation, clinical health care).

Staff interpreters (76%) have a higher certification rate than freelancers (59%). Certified interpreters are also more likely to work in-person (69%) compared to remote modalities (30% OPI, 28% VRI). Of non-certified interpreters, 77% are interested in certification, with cost (63%) as the main barrier. Currently, 35% of employers require certification.

Personal Characteristics

The survey's demographic data reveals a workforce predominantly composed of women (75%) and individuals between 41 and 60 years old (52%). With only 10% of interpreters being under 30, the data indicates an experienced professional base. The industry also demonstrates significant ethnic diversity, with 55% identifying as Hispanic or Latino, followed by White (30%) and Asian (11%).

2. Interpreting Job Complexity

Cognitive Demands

The healthcare interpreter job is demanding, with its cognitive load stemming from several factors beyond the act of meaning conversion itself. These include navigating numerous healthcare specialties and settings, working across different domains (e.g., health care, education, court), interpreting for various age groups, and a lack of advance information about assignments.

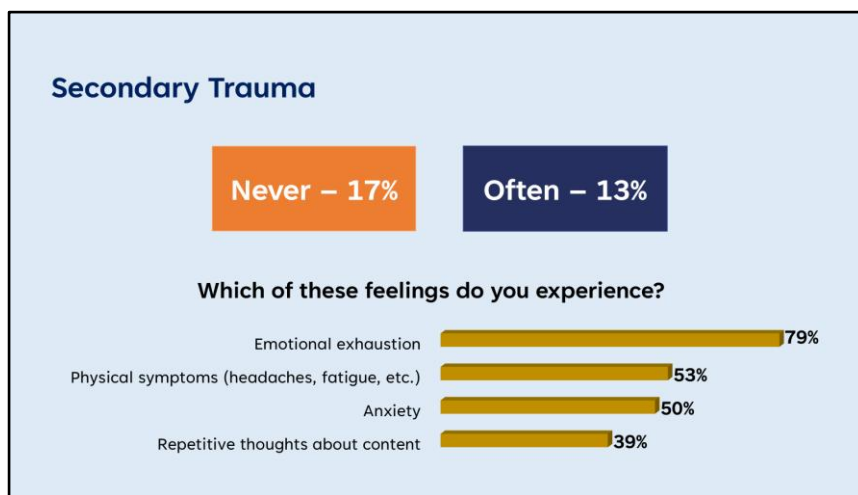
The findings reflect these challenges: 58% of interpreters regularly work for 6 or more healthcare specialties or settings weekly, and an even greater 84% interpret for more than two. This workload is particularly intense for remote (71%) and staff interpreters (77%), who switch specialties more frequently than their in-person (56%) and freelance (45%) counterparts. Additionally, remote interpreters and freelancers switch interpreting domains (e.g., from health care to education to banking), which adds a remarkable cognitive burden to their work.

The demanding nature of the job is further compounded by the varied age of patients, which requires constant adaptation of communication styles. At least 90% of respondents regularly work with more than one age group.

The survey revealed the lack of advance information about assignments. 20% of respondents never receive advance information, and 28% receive it only occasionally. This issue is more pronounced for remote interpreters (61%) and freelancers (56%). Interpreters desire to receive the following information prior to assignments: medical history, patient demographics, communication challenges, logistical details, and sensitive situations.

Emotional Impact

A stark reality of the job is the emotional impact that may lead to secondary traumatization. Only 17% of interpreters report *not* experiencing secondary traumatization symptoms. Remote (86%) and staff interpreters (86%) report these symptoms at slightly higher rates than their in-person (82%) and freelance (81%) counterparts. The most common issues are emotional exhaustion (79%), physical symptoms (53%), and anxiety (50%). Over a third of respondents experienced repetitive thoughts about the interpreted



emotionally difficult content and difficulty concentrating or staying focused. 63% experienced three (3) or more symptoms, including 13% who experienced six (6) or more symptoms.

Organizational support for coping with this emotional impact is remarkably low. Across all respondents, less than 10% have access to debriefing opportunities or mental health counseling. Additionally, 26% are *not* permitted to take breaks after emotionally difficult sessions, a critical mechanism for coping with secondary traumatization.

Additional Roles and Responsibilities

Over 40% of all respondents take on additional jobs and roles beyond direct interpreting in healthcare settings, such as translator (53%), interpreter in other settings (37%), and interpreter trainer (27%). Staff interpreters (55%) are more likely to take on additional roles than freelancers (30%). Certified interpreters (70%) are significantly more likely to perform additional roles and nearly 69% perform more than one additional role, highlighting certification as a strong predictor of versatility.

Translation of written documents is a distinct task in the interpreter job description for 28% of respondents, especially for certified interpreters (73%). However, only 59% receive specialized training in written translation.

The job's complexity is further increased by auxiliary, non-interpreting tasks like navigating patients or data entry, which are performed by 28% of respondents. These tasks are more likely to be performed by in-person, certified, and staff interpreters.

Only **18% of interpreters currently use AI tools**. Overseas interpreters are far more likely to use AI for real-time assistance during interpreting than their U.S.-based counterparts. Specifically, a total of 66% of overseas interpreters use AI for this purpose (either solely for real-time interpreting, 20%, or for both real-time interpreting and research, 46%), compared to only 36% of U.S.-based interpreters (6% solely, 30% both). Only 6% of all respondents have been asked to monitor AI during interpreting.

3. Working Environment

Workload and Autonomy

Only 42% of interpreters work 30 or more hours per week in health care. Staff interpreters (69%) are much more likely to work this much than freelancers (25%). 52% of interpreters work fixed hours. The most frequent shift duration was 8 hours. Respondents who work flexible hours work almost evenly in 2-hour, 3-hour, 4-hour or 1-hour sets. The vast majority of freelancers (77%) typically handle 1-5 in-person assignments per day or shift. While this volume is also common for staff interpreters, its proportion is significantly lower (56%), and their workday pattern is more likely to have any number of assignments from 5 to 20. Remote interpreters are almost equally likely to have any range of calls between 1 to 40 per day or shift. For in-person assignments, the most common duration is 31-60 minutes (51% of respondents). The most common duration ranges for remote calls are 16-30 minutes and 11-15 minutes (40% of respondents each).

While 79% of all respondents can decline assignments, 78% "almost never" do so. Remote (84%) and staff (91%) interpreters are even less likely to decline. 57% of remote interpreters and 67% of freelancers who cannot decline assignments desire this option.

Just over half (53%) of interpreters can take breaks between assignments, but 27% report breaks are unpaid, and 10% feel taking breaks may negatively impact their job. Remote interpreters (11%) are more

than twice as likely to have breaks lasting less than one (1) minute compared to in-person interpreters (5%). Only 35% of organizations have a formal break policy.

Organizational Support

Organizational support is notably low. Only 12-13% of all respondents receive terminology resources, technology assistance, or continuing education. Staff interpreters receive significantly more support across most categories, e.g., equipment support (11% vs. 3% for freelancers), physical well-being services (9% vs. 0.7%). 18% of freelancers receive no support at all, compared to just 1% of staff. Most U.S.-based (84%) and staff (90%) interpreters are provided with interpreting equipment (headset, camera, computer/laptop), while most overseas (77%) and freelance (56%) interpreters must purchase their own. Similarly, most overseas (76%) and freelance (72%) interpreters must pay for their own internet connection.

Employer Requirements & Monitoring

The survey included several questions aimed at identifying specific hiring requirements and monitoring protocols since they contribute to ensuring quality of interpretation.

Over a quarter of organizations (26%) do *not* require **language proficiency testing**, and another 12% of respondents are unaware of such a requirement. Only a third of organizations (34%) require such testing for both working languages. Overseas interpreters (50%) are more likely to be tested for English proficiency, while U.S.-based interpreters (48%) are tested for LOTE proficiency. U.S.-based freelancers (37%) are more likely to have *no* language proficiency testing requirement than staff (21%).

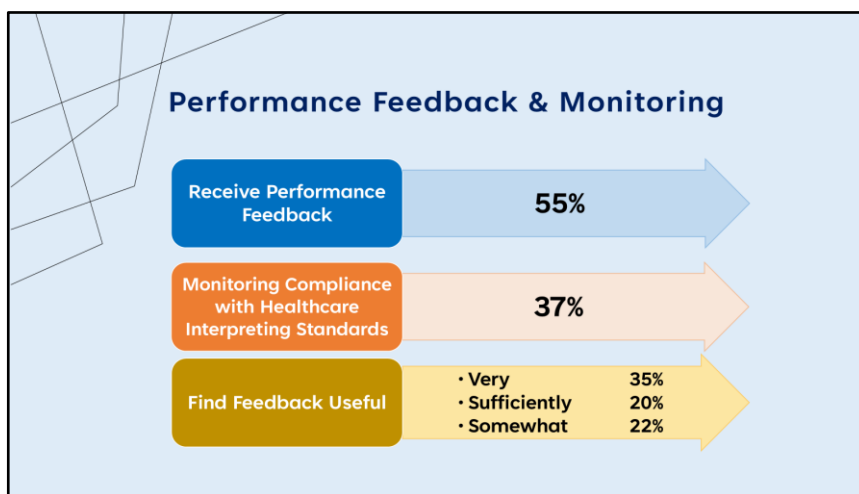
Less than half (43%) of all respondents report their employers require **specialized healthcare interpreter training**. Overseas interpreters (74%) are more likely to receive training from their contracting organizations compared to their U.S.-based counterparts (29%). While 40-hour training is the most common requirement (50% of all respondents), followed by 41-60 hours (20%), 14% of interpreters receive less than 40 hours of training, and only 9% receive more than 60. Short-duration training (under 40 hours) is significantly more common among overseas interpreters (29%) than their U.S.-based counterparts (10%).

The survey asked several questions regarding **contractual agreements**. 65% of U.S.-based respondents report signing a contract compared to 92% of their overseas counterparts. Only 18% of U.S.-based freelancers who signed a contract report being required to establish an LLC. Exclusivity or non-compete clauses are rare, affecting only 19% of U.S.-based interpreters and 15% of overseas interpreters.

Questions regarding performance evaluations and monitoring were included in the survey in order to understand quality control processes deployed by employing and contracting organizations. Only 55% of all respondents receive performance evaluation. Overseas (75%) and staff interpreters (77%) are more likely to receive evaluations than U.S.-based interpreters (51%) and freelancers (39%), respectively. Freelancers (49%) receive only occasional feedback, while staff (75%) receive annual evaluations. The survey was interested in identifying the *type* of interpreter performance evaluation offered. Only 16% of U.S.-based interpreters report receiving feedback specific to an interpreting session, with 10% of that feedback being language-concordant. While overseas interpreters fare slightly better, with 19% receiving session-specific feedback and 15% of it being language-concordant, these

numbers remain critically low. These low numbers highlight the lack of more specific evaluation practices.

Compliance with professional standards is monitored for only 37% of all respondents. This is higher for overseas (53%) and staff (47%) interpreters compared to U.S.-based interpreters (34%) and freelancers (31%). Roughly a quarter (23%) of all respondents find feedback "not quite useful" or "not useful at all," with freelancers (29%) being more likely to find it unhelpful than staff (15%).



4. Compensation and Benefits

Income Share and Pay Rates

Pay Differential by Certification Status

- 30.5% respondents stated that **certified interpreters are paid more than non-certified**.
- In general, the **pay differential** is:

Pay difference	Respondents N	%
1-5%	79	19.5%
6-10%	52	12.8%
11-15%	28	6.9%

Certified interpreters consistently earn higher annual salaries (57% earn \$61,000+) and hourly rates (21% earn \$46-\$50/hour) than non-certified interpreters (33% earn \$61,000+; 8% earn \$46-\$50/hour). Non-certified interpreters are far more likely to be paid \$20 or less per hour (37%). 76% of certified interpreters are paid in the \$0.31–\$1.00 per minute range, compared to only 35% of non-certified interpreters. This disparity is more pronounced at the lowest pay scales: 35% of non-certified interpreters are paid in the \$0.05–

\$0.15 per-minute range, while only 8% of certified interpreters fall into this range.

By Employment Type: Staff interpreters are much more likely to derive 100% of their income from healthcare interpreting (71%) than freelancers (34%). Staff are more likely to receive a fixed annual salary (153 of 212 salaried positions) and hourly pay with no minimum (47%), while freelancers more often have per-minute pay (164 of 200) or hourly pay with a 2-hour minimum (36%). Staff interpreters consistently earn higher hourly rates (62% in \$21-\$30/hour range vs. 26% of freelancers).

By Residence: 28% of overseas interpreters derive between 75-99% of their income from it, compared to just 17% of their U.S.-based counterparts. In contrast, U.S.-based interpreters are slightly more likely to derive 100% of their income from this field (50% vs. 43%). U.S.-based interpreters are paid significantly higher hourly and per-minute rates. 78% of overseas interpreters earn \$10 or less per hour, compared to only 1% of U.S.-based interpreters. A combined 39% of overseas interpreters are paid \$0.15 or less per minute, compared to only 4% of their U.S.-based colleagues.

By Language: Spanish interpreters are the most likely to derive 100% of their income from interpreting (55%), a higher percentage than interpreters of other spoken languages (37%) or ASL interpreters (33%), the caveat for ASL group being a relatively small sample size of 49 ASL respondents. ASL interpreters are significantly more likely to receive a fixed annual salary (29%) than both Spanish (17%) and other spoken interpreters (12%). ASL interpreters who are paid hourly are highly concentrated in the highest hourly bracket, with 62% earning between \$41 and \$50 per hour. By comparison, the most common hourly rate for Spanish interpreters (50%) and other spoken interpreters (43%) is in the \$21-30 per hour range.

By Experience: More experienced interpreters generally earn higher compensation and are more likely to rely on interpreting as their primary income source. 21% of interpreters with less than two years of experience are paid \$10 or less per hour, a rate that is nearly non-existent for interpreters with more than 10 years of experience (3%). A significant 68% of interpreters with less than two years of experience are paid between \$0.05 and \$0.15 per minute. This contrasts sharply with the most experienced group (21 years and more), where 70% are paid in the top bracket of \$0.51-\$1.00 per minute.

Payment Logistics

Most remote interpreters are not compensated for weekends, holidays, or specific times of day. Overseas interpreters (74%) are more likely to be paid only for actual call time compared to U.S.-based (48%). Freelancers are more likely to receive cancellation fees (77%) and travel time pay (38%) for in-person assignments, while staff interpreters are more likely to have differential pay for time of day, day of week, and national holidays. U.S.-based and staff interpreters have more regular pay schedules (biweekly/twice a month), while overseas and freelancers are often paid once a month. Overseas interpreters (65%) and freelancers (60%) are more likely to experience payment delays than U.S.-based (29%) and staff (7%) interpreters, respectively.

Benefits

95% of staff interpreters receive benefits, compared to a mere 7% of freelancers. U.S.-based interpreters (53%) are also more likely to receive benefits than their overseas counterparts (19%). Paid time off (PTO), health insurance, and retirement plans are most common for staff interpreters.

The analysis shows that, while benefits are generally important, their perceived necessity is influenced by whether they are already part of an interpreter's compensation package. Freelancers are more likely to consider benefits relevant (52%) than staff interpreters (44%). This is probably because benefits are a standard component of staff compensation, so they are not viewed as a separate or desired addition. For freelancers, who are far less likely to receive benefits, benefits represent a significant and often missing part of their total compensation, perhaps making them highly relevant. Still, for nearly half of freelancers (48%), benefits are not an important factor.

Top benefit priorities for all interpreters are increased pay for holidays/special shifts (96%), healthcare insurance (93%), overtime pay (92%), and PTO (91%).

5. Job Satisfaction and Future Outlook

Interpreters define their purpose as facilitating communication, ensuring accurate understanding, and upholding confidentiality, accuracy, and impartiality. They also acknowledge the importance of advocacy and continuous professional development.

Job Satisfaction

Interpreters find satisfaction primarily in making a positive difference in patients' lives, bridging communication and cultural barriers, and receiving appreciation from patients and providers. They also value professional growth, intellectual challenge, and work flexibility. Frustrations include low pay, lack of respect, challenging working conditions, and burnout.

72% of staff interpreters are very satisfied with their work hours, compared to only 28% of freelancers. 41% of freelancers desire more hours, against 11% of staff. Staff interpreters (43%) are most satisfied with their pay increases over their careers, while only 19% of freelancers are.

Future Outlook

Almost 70% of all respondents expect to continue working as healthcare interpreters for the next five years. This positive outlook is consistent across employment status and residence. The long-term outlook shows a balanced perspective of commitment and uncertainty, with 43% expecting to continue practicing.

Looking ahead to the next two years, interpreters anticipate increased use of AI and remote interpreting modalities, raising concerns about job displacement but also hopes for AI as an assistive tool. There's a strong demand for stricter hiring requirements, mandatory certification, better compensation, and comprehensive benefits.



Conclusion

The Global Workforce Survey of Healthcare Interpreters provides a detailed portrait of the profession, highlighting significant variations in requirements, support, and professional stability between staff interpreters and freelancers.

Staff interpreters generally benefit from more robust organizational support, while freelancers often bear the full burden of managing equipment costs, professional development, and emotional well-being. These disparities extend to compensation, workload management, and job satisfaction, creating distinct professional realities that impact well-being and long-term career outlook.

This report serves as a vital resource for all stakeholders to understand and improve working conditions, enhance professional development, and advocate for better industry recognition and support, especially for freelance professionals. Continued participation in future surveys is crucial for building a truly representative dataset to advance the profession.

Read the full Report at

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