



THE COUNCIL OF IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (CISLI)

INTERPRETER FEES SURVEY REPORT

DECEMBER 2019

Researched and Compiled by Leanne Saurin

on behalf of the CISLI committee

Preface

This study was undertaken by CISLI, the national representative association for sign language interpreters in Ireland. This report has been written in an attempt to shine some light on interpreters' fees.

This survey was created by the Chairperson- Leanne Saurin, who has six years' experience of professional ISL/ English interpreting.

Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017- 2021 and in response to the Irish Sign Language (ISL) Act 2017, Sign Language Interpreting Services (SLIS) has been assigned the task of establishing a quality- assurance and registration scheme for sign language interpreters. As well as this, SLIS has been appointed by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as the body to administer the "Social Inclusion Fund", previously known as the ISL Voucher Scheme.

As a result of concerns raised by the CISLI committee and its members over the interpreters' fees allocated under the ISL Voucher Scheme, CISLI have chosen to investigate what interpreters charge for their work currently.

As has been previously stated in Cormac Leonard's report on "ISL/ English Interpreter Income Survey Report, 2016"; there is a misapprehension about interpreters' fees due to the fact that the majority of interpreters operate as freelancers. This resulted in an agreement that the collation of factual data was required to counter rumours of interpreters fees and present a more transparent, truthful account of interpreters fees.

Methodology

This survey was carried out in August 2019 using an online survey known as SurveyMonkey. The survey contained nine questions that all consisted of qualitative open- ended questions where the participants were asked to type their response into a comment box. Participants were required to answer all questions.

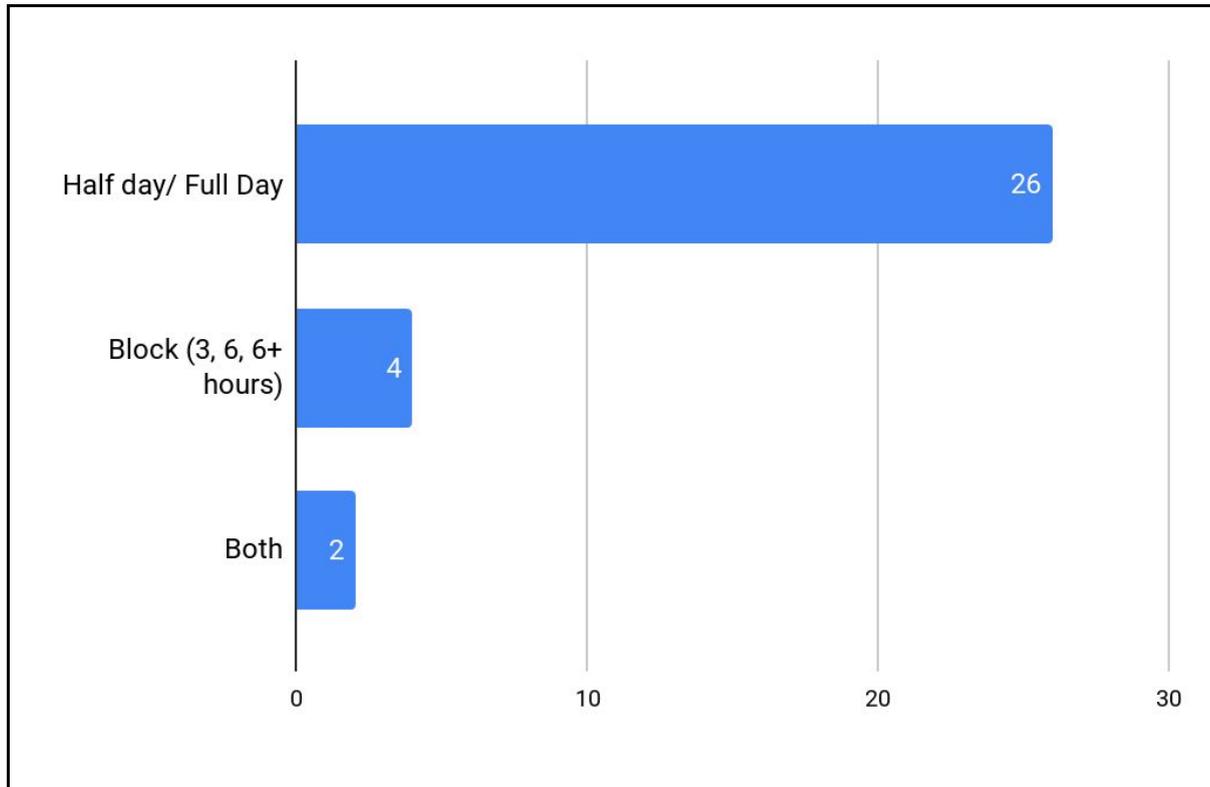
The survey was then distributed to members via Email and WhatsApp. Interpreters were encouraged to forward to colleagues and a reminder was sent over the duration of the month to complete the survey.

There was a total of 32 responses out of a possible 52 Active members as per CISLI update on 15th July 2019. This suggests that the response rate stands at 61%.

Responses

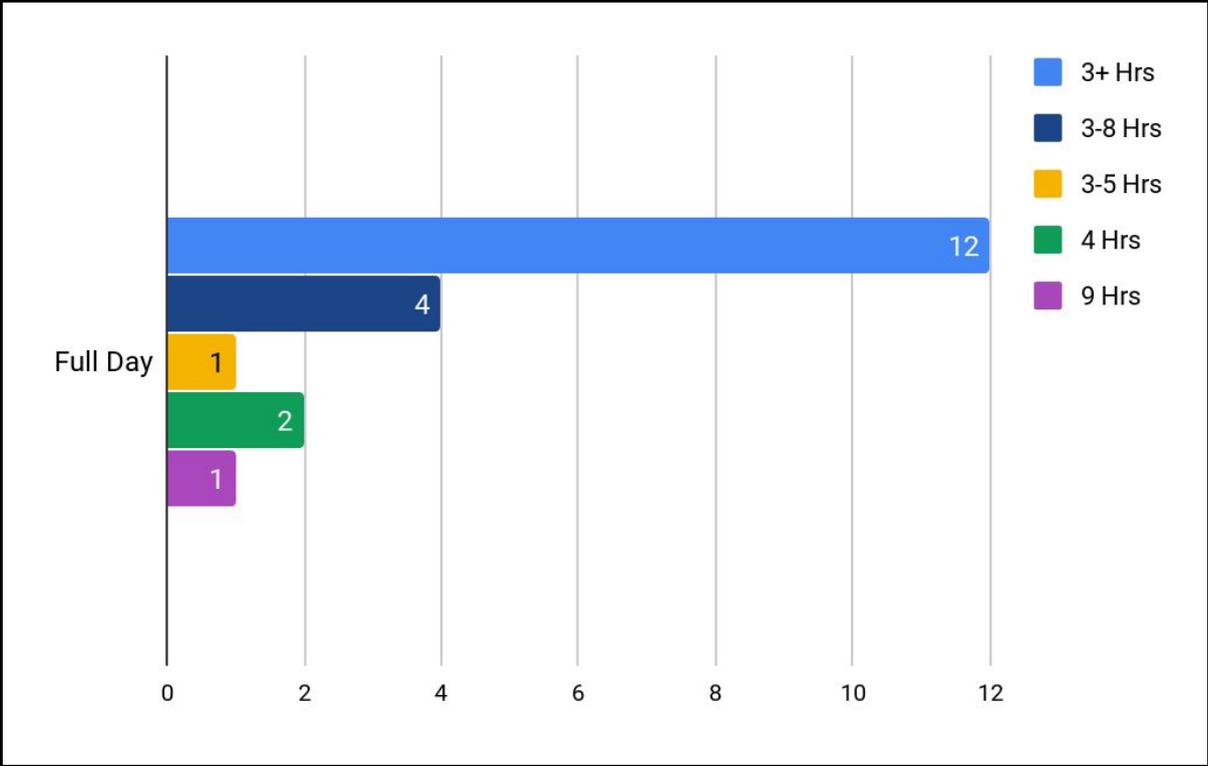
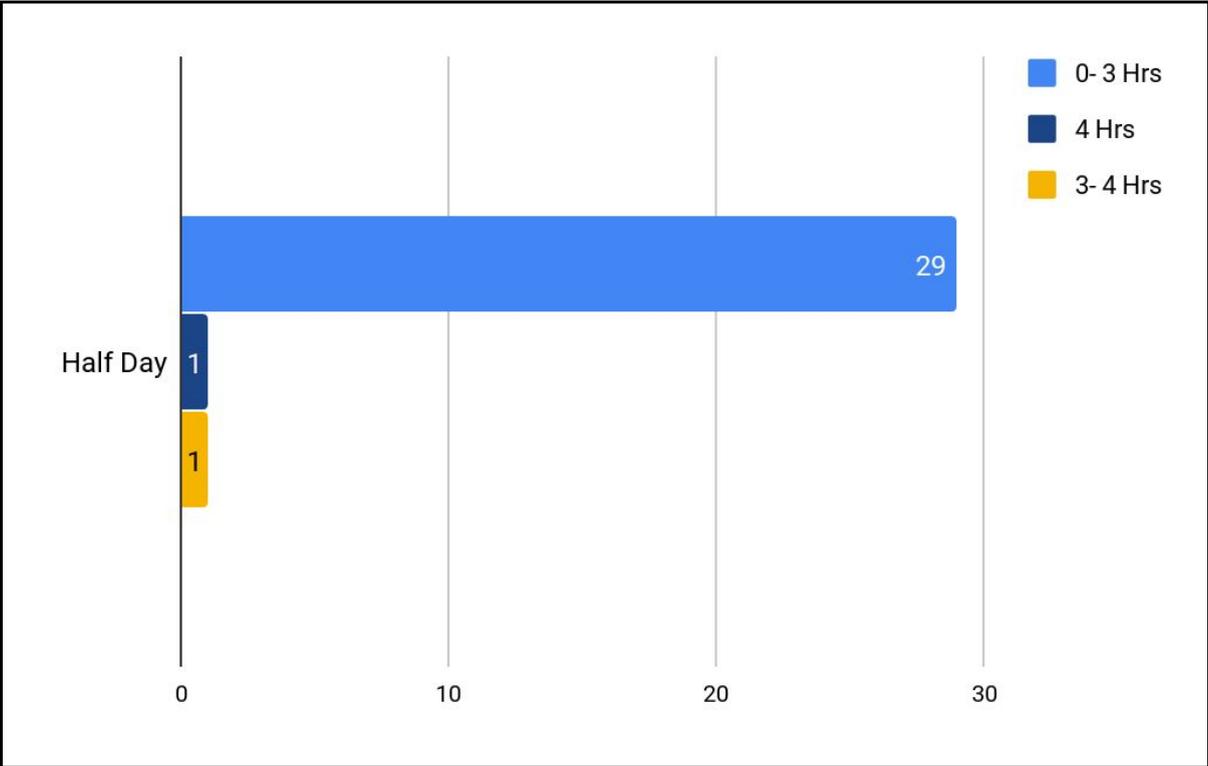
Question One

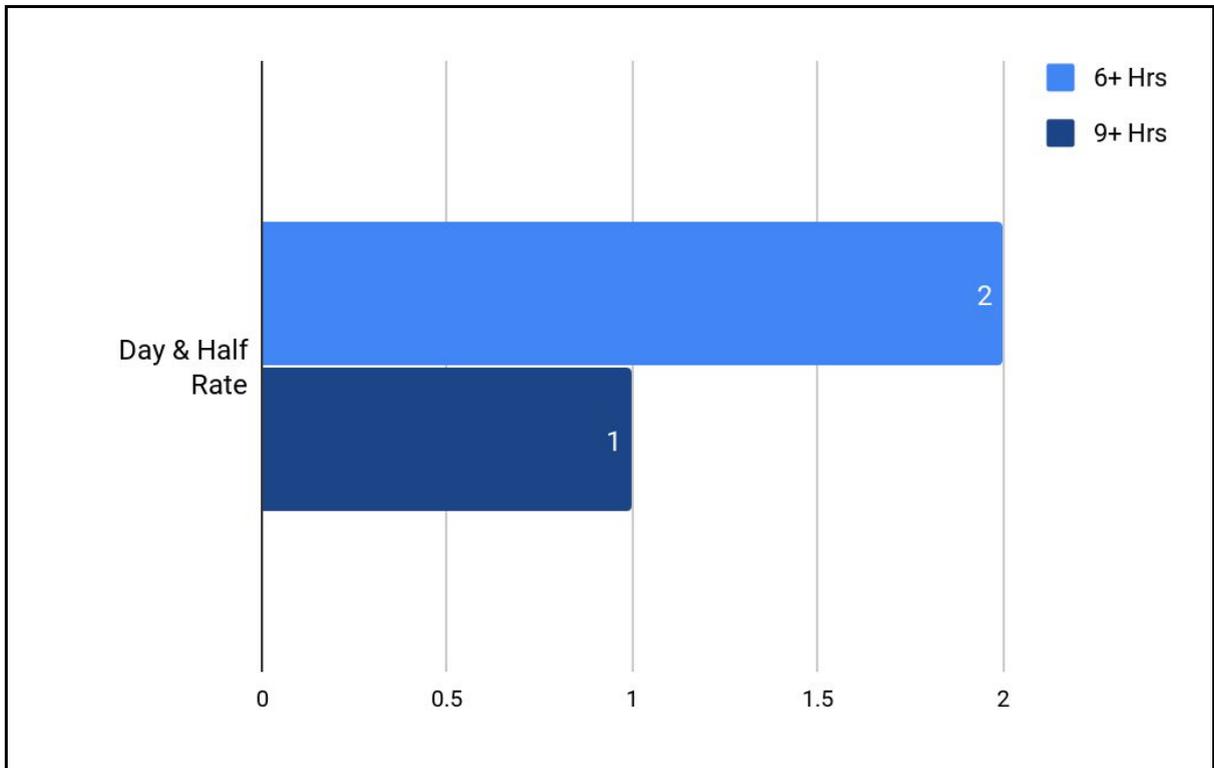
“For your freelance work (outside of agencies, and direct with clients), do you use a “Half-day” / “Full-day” system for charging fees? Or do you use a system which charges fees on the basis of blocks of hours? e.g. 3 hours, 6 hours, 6+ hours?”



Question Two

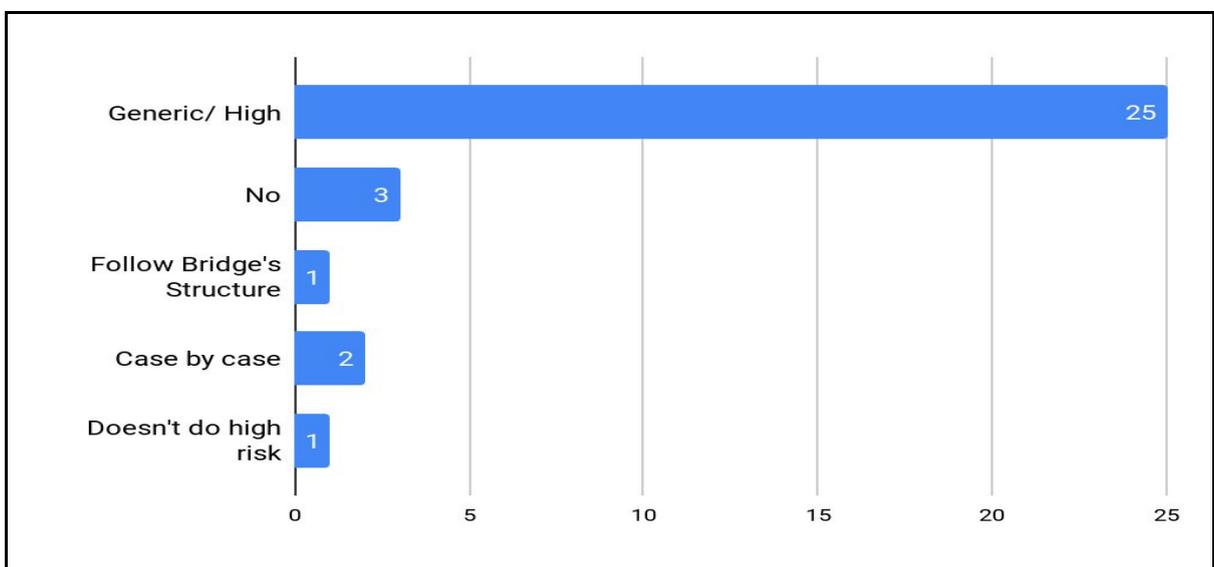
“If you use a 'Half Day' / 'Full Day' fee structure, how many hours do you define a 'half day' and 'full day' to be?”





Question Three

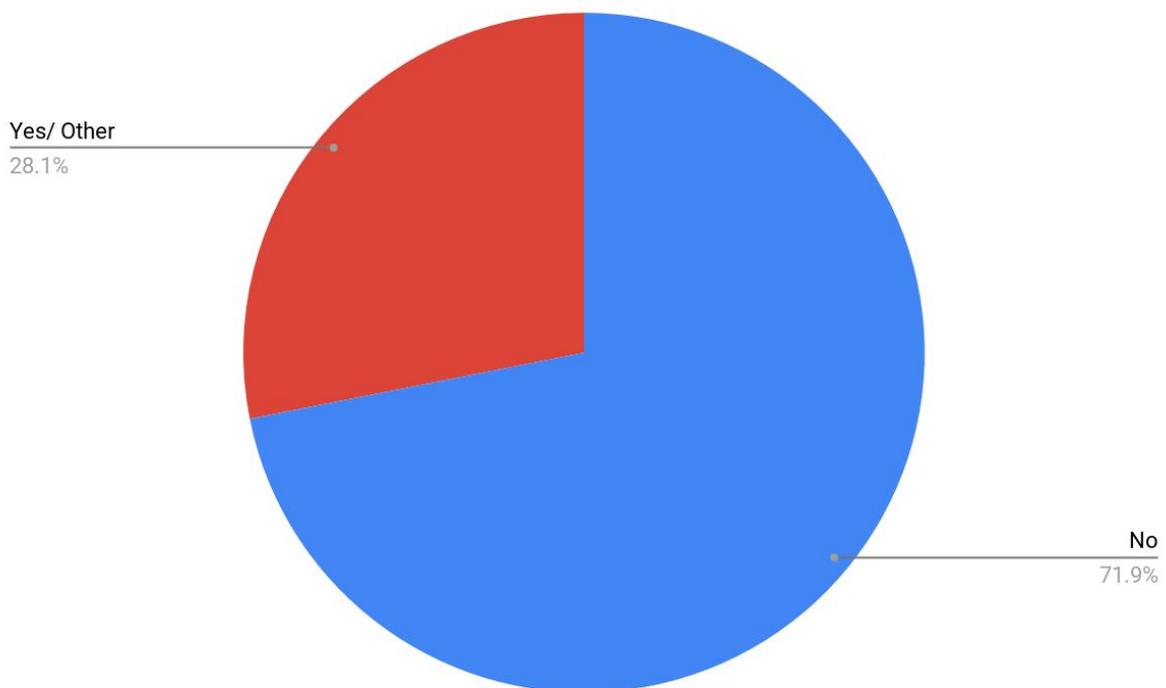
“For your freelance work (outside of agencies, and direct with clients), do you charge for interpreting using a two-way “Generic” / “High Skills” fee structure, depending on the kind of work? If not, do you use a different fee structure that distinguishes between categories of work?”



** Of those that responded Generic/ High skills, seven elaborated on what high skills included i.e. legal, medical, tv media, conference.

Question Four

“Do you use a fee structure that features an hourly rate? If so, when do you charge an hourly rate and how much is it?”

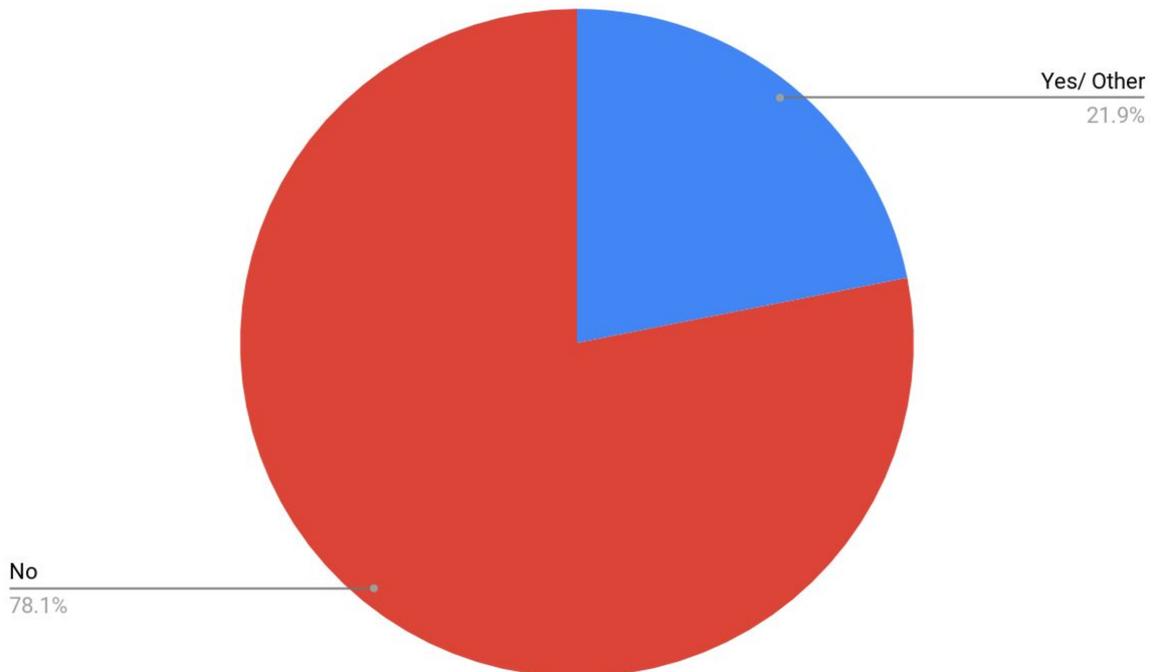


- 1. I would charge an hourly rate if a booking went significantly overtime without being previously agreed. For example, if a job was booked for 3 hours but on the day it ran for 3 hours and 45 minutes, I would charge for an additional hour at a rate of €50.*
- 2. €60 - 90 , local job that would be under an hour. Primary school parent teacher meeting. Community group with minimum funding*
- 3. No hourly rate but a minimum call out rate that covers up to 2 hrs.*
- 4. Hourly rate of €35 after 6 hour full day*
- 5. If a job is 3.5 hours I charge a half day +1 hour*
- 6. Not normally only under special circumstances i.e. for local interpreting that is up to 1 hour*

7. *Yes depending on organisation.*
8. *No unless working with Deaf individual directly (community Interpreting)*
9. *Generally not. However if a Deaf person is forced to pay for an interpreter, I am willing to charge them per hour as opposed to per half / full day.*

Question Five

“Do you use a different fee structure than the examples given above? If so, please outline your structure for us:”



- 1. No. Use market rates. Also, offer reduced rate for some organisations that have difficulties in funding and often waive fees altogether.*
- 2. If you mean do I do a lower price if I do an hours job, no would be the answer..but as in life they are exceptions..but as a general rule it's no to an hourly rate*
- 3. Generic half/full 135/260 High skills has a higher half /full day rate 160/320 TV media higher cost 200/ 400 charity rate used with discretion 100/ 200 or gratuitous free!*
- 4. Yes, I usually charge less to schools, because their money is tight and if they are willing to book then I want to acknowledge that in some way. Also I may charge some regular customers less, or very occasionally I will charge a lower fee if I think the cost will mean the assignment doesn't go ahead, and I think the assignment is particularly important for some reason.*
- 5. When booked through agencies or direct*

6. *If i work for European agencies, then I charge the going rate offered in that context. For example, efsli has a set rate for conference work with them; the European institutions do too.*
7. *I do a reduced fee for Deaf charities with no government funding and for Deaf service providers that have had funding cut.*

Question Six

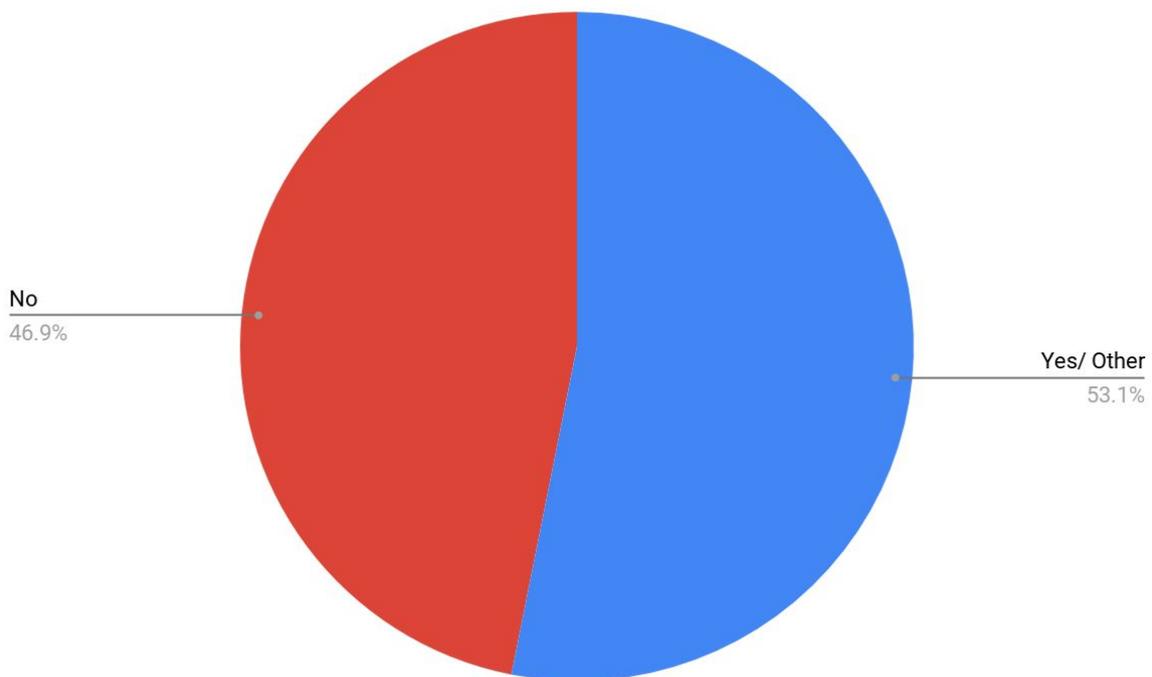
*“For your freelance work (outside of agencies, and direct with clients), what is the minimum rate you charge for the various categories of work you do? Please enter the charges that you would apply for *both* a half day and a full day assignment, in each category of work, below.e.g. 'Meeting, generic: €140 / €280”*

	Half Day	Full Day
General Interpreting (Generic)	€130.00	€260.00
General Interpreting (High Skilled)	€150.00	€300.00
Meeting (Generic)	€130.00	€260.00
Education (Generic)	€125.00	€250.00
Education (High Skilled)	€135.00	€260.00
Conference	€150.00	€320.00
Employment	€130.00	€160.00
Medical (GP)	€135.00	€300.00
Medical (Hospitals/ Surgery)	€150.00	€310.00
Legal (Solicitors Consultations)	€150.00	€310.00
Legal (Courtroom)	€160.00	€330.00
Legal (Garda Interviews)	€155.00	€320.00
Prison Services	€155.00	€320.00
Religious Interpreting	€125.00	€260.00
Theatrical/ Performance	€150.00	€500.00
Broadcast/ Media Interpreting	€150.00	€300.00
Work for Deaf Community Organisations	€120.00	€240.00
Counselling	€150.00	€300.00
Mental Health	€150.00	€300.00

** There was one outlier in the figures provided by participants, as a result, these calculations are based on the median of all figures that have been provided by participants rather than the average. The committee felt that by calculating the average with the outlier included would negatively impact the results. Also to note some responses gave an amount "plus travel expenses", or "plus VAT"; it was decided to go with the amount given and note VAT and travel expenses in one of the other questions in relation to extra fees charged.

Question Seven

“Do you charge a different basic rate when you are working directly with clients, compared to working through an interpreting agency? If so please give details:”



- 1. I would charge the standard rates that the agency would provide, which is lower than what I would charge freelance. Education- 125/250, Generic- 135/270, High Skills- 165/330. I charge mileage according to the public service rates rather than the agency rates, which are per hour of travel.*

2. *Only for Deaf organisations and/or organisations with limited or problematic funding. Otherwise, keeping in mind remuneration ethics and not undercutting market rates, similar rates apply.*
3. *I would but it happens rarely or I don't charge at all*
4. *Yes often. Depends if it's an individual, a small company or a corporate organisation. I'm more lenient towards the first two!*
5. *yes if depends on the organisation if its a once off job or regular, may charge more for once off jobs*
6. *Sometimes, for civil legal cases where Deaf person has to pay themselves I usually lower my rate 125/250 150/300 for Freelance 135/270 165/330 through agency*
7. *Yes. Depends on the client and depends on the job.*
8. *No generally I used the same fee structure but sometimes I may add travel expenses if applicable.*
9. *My rates are different to agency rates, yes*
10. *Same fee applies*
11. *I charge slightly more when working freelance because clients don't need to pay the agency fee*
12. *Sometimes*
13. *Try to maintain fair and same pricing between all*
14. *Only where the agency has a set lower rate than my own*
15. *It depends. Sometimes do individual work on a pro-bono basis.*
16. *When working through a sign language interpreting agency, e.g. Bridge, I have to charge the rates that they offer. if I work directly with a client, I charge the rates I list above. Some agencies allow me to charge the rates above.*
17. *Yes I charge less and often do not charge travel.*

Question Eight

“Do you add other charges to your basic interpreting fee? Please enter the amount that you would apply for these additional charges, and tell us when you would apply these charges. E.g. 'Preparation time: €100 per hour, used when substantial preparation is required”

	Comments
Administration Charges	<p>No- 28 participants</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Previously charged 4% administration fee, however I removed this charged when I increased my fees. 2. 40 3. Depends €10 might apply of excessive time spent 4. 'if direct booking €20'
Travel Time or Mileage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mileage/ Travel Time- 5 participants 2. Civil Service rates- 21 participants 3. 15€ per hour of travel 4. depends on distance, i use AA as a guide 5. Same as agency 6. If applicable - ticket price 7. Negotiable 8. If outside greater Dublin area
Accommodation Costs	<p>No- 3 participants</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If an overnight stay is required- 13 participants 2. Exact cost of accomodation- 3 participants 3. Have never. Have always had accommodation booked by agency 4. Rarely this is needed 5. 100 6. Approx €60 + 7. depends on job 8. Negotiable 9. €60-€90 if applied 10. I charge around €50 accommodation costs when necessary. 11. Depends 12. For government funded job
Preparation Time	<p>No- 22 participants</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only with theatres/ performance and a rate has been agreed prior to assignment 2. Rarely 3. €60 per hour 4. Yes 5. Per half day high skilled rate for performances 6. Only if excessive ie conference legal medical 7. If preparations or theatre is required I would apply half day fee generic (€150) to cover time taken away from work. 8. Occasionally - eg an extra half day

	<p>9. <i>Only for e.g. performance interpreting or certain conferences, where significant preparation or practice is necessary.</i></p> <p>10. <i>Only theatre interpreting, 40 per hour</i></p>
Late Payment Surcharge	<p>No- 24 participants</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Have only received once under Prompt Payments Act rates</i> 2. <i>Not unless it's very late e.g over 6 months</i> 3. <i>I quote the prompt payments act but have never charged it</i> 4. <i>5%</i> 5. <i>10% surcharge after 30 days of the invoice date</i> 6. <i>10% after 30 days</i> 7. <i>Not normally, but on occasion</i>
VAT	<p>No- 25 participants</p> <p>Yes- 6 participants</p> <p><i>If required- 1 participant</i></p>
Other	<p>No- 28 participants</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Factor in supervision or counselling fees would be an ideal.</i> 2. <i>Subsistence</i> 3. <i>Surcharge for jobs of additional half day fee for jobs that are substantially over the booked time. Potentially subsistence for jobs requiring an overnight, depending on the accommodation/dining arrangements.</i> 4. <i>Subsistence when abroad</i>

Question Nine

“If you have any additional comments in relation to interpreter pay, fees, and charges, please let us know below.”

- 1. We waive and are expected to waive a lot of fees over the course of our careers. Have never had direct educational work so answers were hypothetical and above current market rate (Market rate/Tender rate €120/240. I considered this low given the workload involved).*
- 2. Im charging VAT for the first time this year. I thought that it might prove a problem for some clients but so far there hasn't been any issue. I also thought it would be complicated but with the right accounting package it's very easy!*
- 3. It would be useful to be able to include fees for up line supervision ,mentoring and counselling to name a few , the type of work that we undertake require us to work through issues in a timely fashion.*
- 4. It is possible to offer an hourly or competitive rate for assured on going work*
- 5. Often unsure of additional fees eg travel time and when to apply prep rates.... looking forward to guidance*
- 6. SLIS were tasked with increasing the number of interpreters and retention in the profession. The current devaluation of our work will not entice interpreters to remain in the field and the mostly freelance nature of the work does not offer security or stability. There is a misconception that interpreters are very expensive but the reality is that interpreters do not have a salary scale to progress up the ladder. The fact that this new initiative is a chance to improve working conditions and income for interpreters, but isn't making an effort to do this, shows that attitudes to the value of our work are still those of a 'grudge economy'.*
- 7. Agencies don't negotiate appropriate rates for interpreters, asking for provisional rates does not comply with quality only quantity of money*
- 8. Agencies should have clear guidelines on their websites as to how much is being charged for administration. Attitudes can be very hostile towards interpreters when the deaf person has been informed of the fees which shouldn't be happening in the first place, as a right to access do hearing*

people get informed of all the overheads involved? another issue to be tackled!

- 9. If full day jobs go one hour plus over time a day and a half rate is charged*
- 10. Occasionally I would give a discounted rate to Deaf organisations or regular clients*
- 11. This is new work - unpaid until now - and I get to choose whether I take it or not - it might be a handy extra income stream in the summer - I would be open to taking on assignments (of 60-90 mins) for 100-120 euro*
- 12. I have not filled in my fee for gp as this is a fee decided by SLIS and not one I personally agree with and have therefore stopped taking gp jobs.*
- 13. Travel time is something that has come up in the past e.g job that is 2 hours long but involves up to 4 hours of driving (Rtn) makes it a 6 hour day. General mileage costs only cover fuel, wear and tear. Only my half day rate can be applied in cases like this which is fine but travel time can be an issue. Try to put a limit driving length to avoid long days like this.*
- 14. I understand we're all freelance but a more streamlined similar fee for all of us would be of benefit to everyone. Some interpreters are charging double the rates of the majority for the same work and it's creating a bad feeling then for Deaf clients and for the rest of us when arriving at a job after they've been charged the double rate.*
- 15. It's highly important that we discuss our rates of pay, terms and conditions. Without doing this we have no real idea what our colleagues actually do. I have heard so many conversations recently where it's said that "Interpreters would NEVER accept this" or "interpreters will ALWAYS do that"... and it's been something completely different to what I practice! We need to get over our preciousness about telling people what our fees are and what our charges are. It's simpler for the Deaf community and promotes myth-busting and clarity. And it means we have far more confidence in our ability to speak about what interpreters charge and when - which is becoming more and more important. I personally have no problems with displaying my fees, T&Cs on my personal website and would encourage other interpreters to do the same.*

16. Thank you for doing this survey

Findings from the survey

It proved time consuming collating the data as some participants gave vague responses or didn't answer the question that was being asked. For example, one question asked how much you charge for half day/ full day rate, and the response given was half day/ full day rate. Also one participant only noted their hourly rate as opposed to what they would charge for half day/ full day or generic versus high skilled. This could be a result of the fact that it was a comment box style survey, as opposed to other options such as multiple choice, tick the appropriate box etc.

It should also be noted that a number of areas were highlighted by interpreters that were not listed as a category of fees i.e. counselling, mentoring, supervision.

It is quite clear from some of the remarks that not all interpreters are happy with agencies deciding fee structures or provisionally booking interpreters at a specific rate agreed between the agency and the client only. Similarly, interpreters are not fully in agreement fixed-fee schemes, i.e. GP Access Scheme and the proposed ISL Voucher Scheme.

Conclusion

From the figures provided by interpreters, there was a broad range in terms of the fees being applied. Some interpreters are charging administration fees, VAT, travel, accommodation in addition to the interpreting fee while others are not. There is a need for interpreters to become more open and transparent around what they charge and for what reason. In fact, a number of interpreters have indicated that they would welcome a standard fee structure. It is an area that can cause a lot of debate but if there is more transparency it can only benefit the interpreting community, their clients and ultimately the Deaf community to which we are responsible for providing our services.

The figures provided in this survey can be used as a tool and guide for interpreters, interpreting agencies and organisations that may introduce interpreters' rates of pay going forward.