

2014

Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)

Sign Language Interpreters Survey



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Produced by DSHS Research and the Research and Data Analysis Division



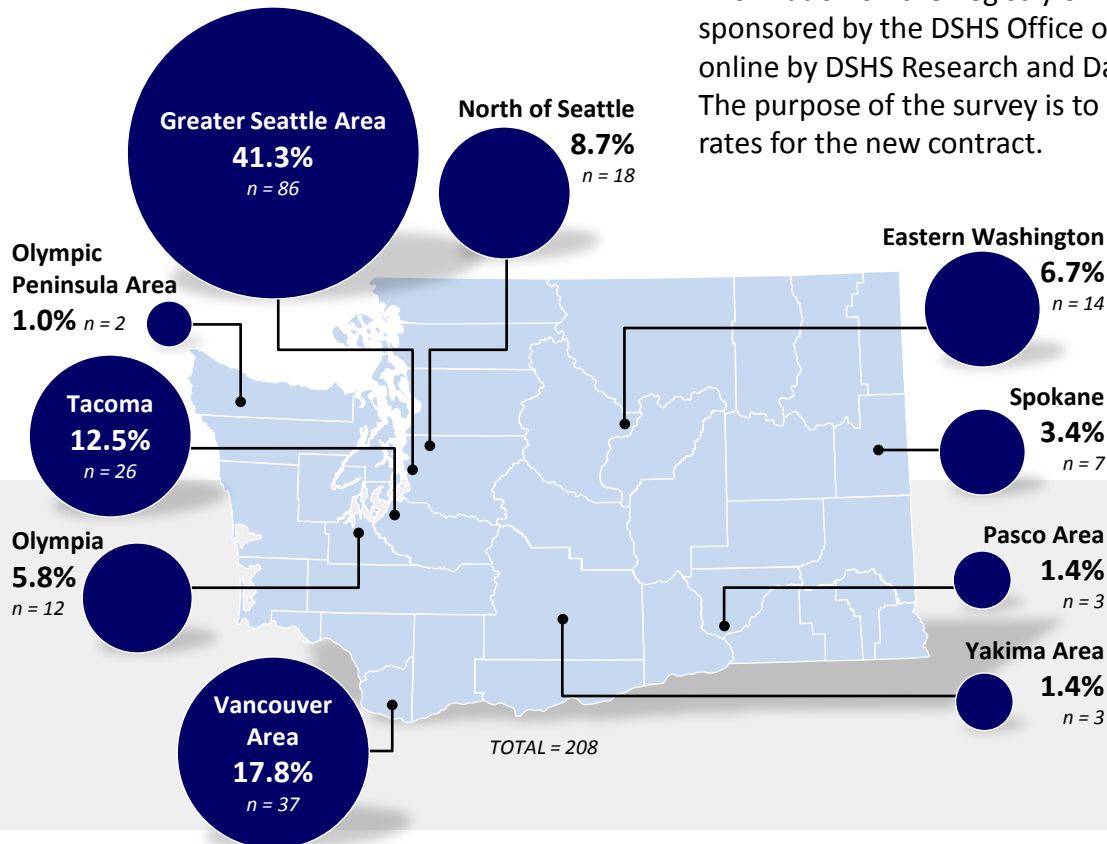
Overview

▶ A total of 219 sign language interpreters participated in this brief survey.

When: From November 4, 2013, to January 27, 2014

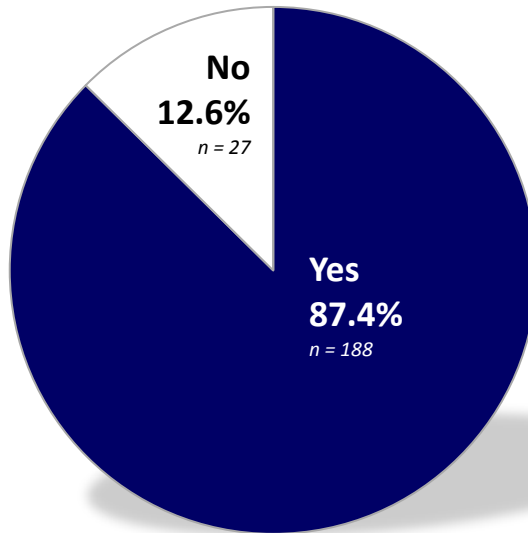
Who, How and Why: More than 300 surveys were sent to DSHS and non-DSHS sign language interpreters through e-news, posted through the Washington State Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (WSRID), and emailed to interpreters who reside in Washington and have email information on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. The survey was sponsored by the DSHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing and conducted online by DSHS Research and Data Analysis through a Survey Monkey tool. The purpose of the survey is to determine fair and effective terms and rates for the new contract.

Locations:





1. Are you a Certified Interpreter?



TOTAL = 215

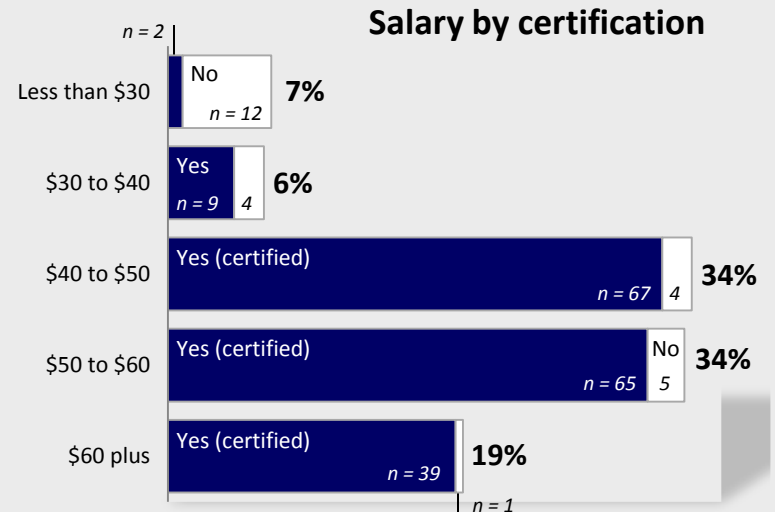
Survey participants said . . .

“I hope DSHS will address this issue in a fair way that recognizes the increased cost of doing business we interpreters face daily. Thank you!”

“My concern is...should rates not increase...your qualified, skilled interpreters will begin to turn down the DSHS work due to the financial limitations created by the current contract.”

“Thank you for taking time to create this survey. It is incredibly important that the DSHS rates be increased for interpreters with the next contract renewal.”

What is the average hourly rate you earn for non-DSHS contract work?



TOTAL = 208 responded





2. What is your highest current Certification Level? Pick one.

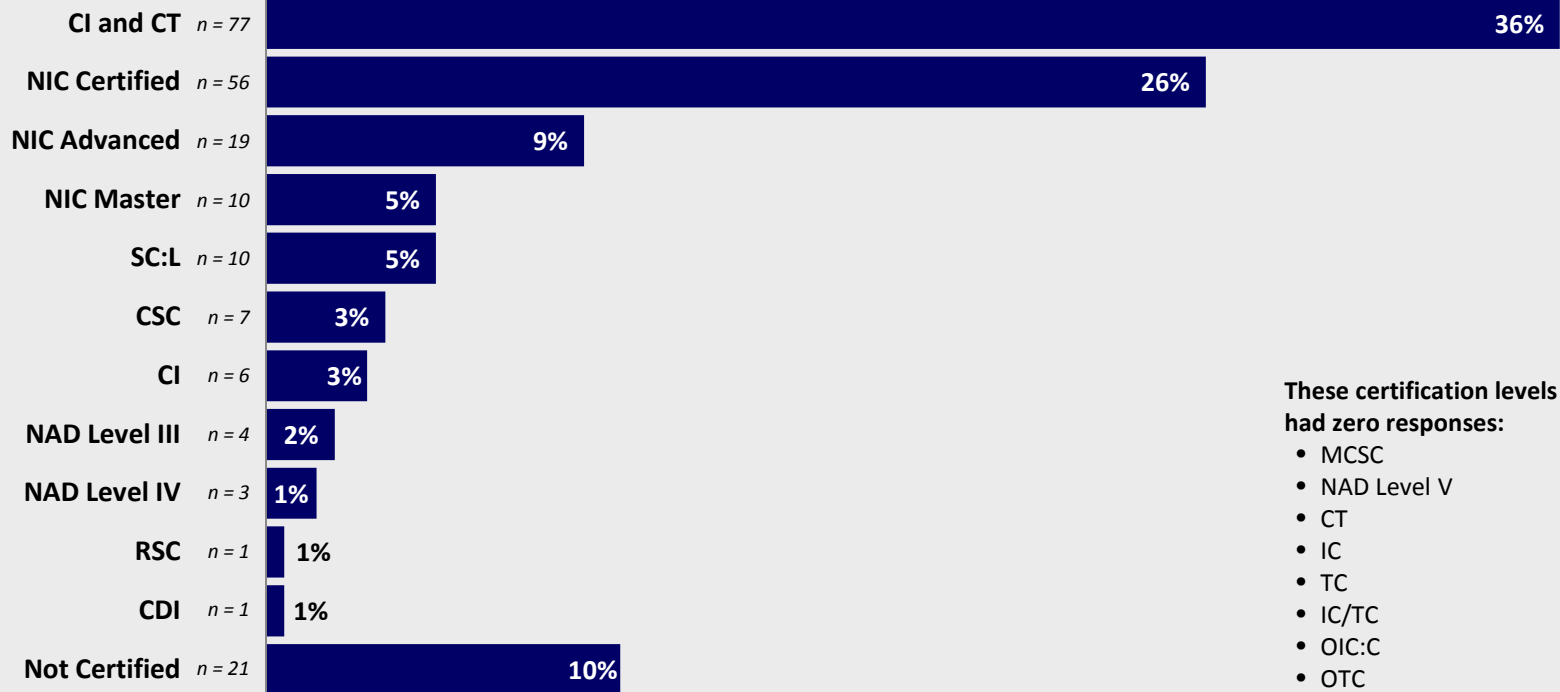
Survey participants said . . .

“I found it difficult to know my certification level because the newest NIC testing is only pass/fail—there are no level categories any longer.”

“A Certification Level should NOT determine a rate of pay...the NIC testing that came out several years ago was ridiculous and workshops all across the country were teaching how to pass the test rather than testing the skills of the individual.”

Certification Levels

TOTAL = 215



These certification levels had zero responses:

- MCSC
- NAD Level V
- CT
- IC
- TC
- IC/TC
- OIC:C
- OTC





3. How long have you been working primarily as a Sign Language Interpreter in Washington State?



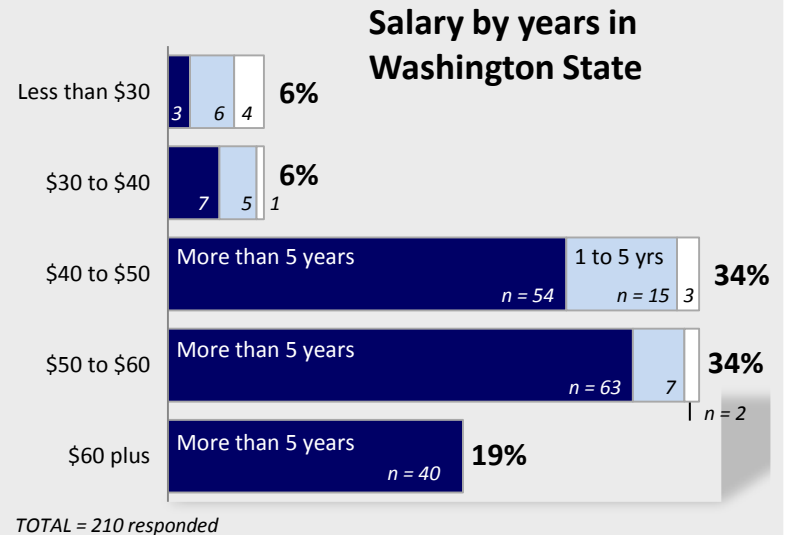
Survey participants said . . .

“There are many interpreters with multiple certifications, but a piece of paper isn't the same as years of experience, especially in one community. Local, experienced interpreters deserve better compensation.”

“Your classifications do not take into consideration years of experience. Although I ‘only’ have a CSC certification, I have been interpreting for over 40 years and consider myself at an ‘advanced’ level.”

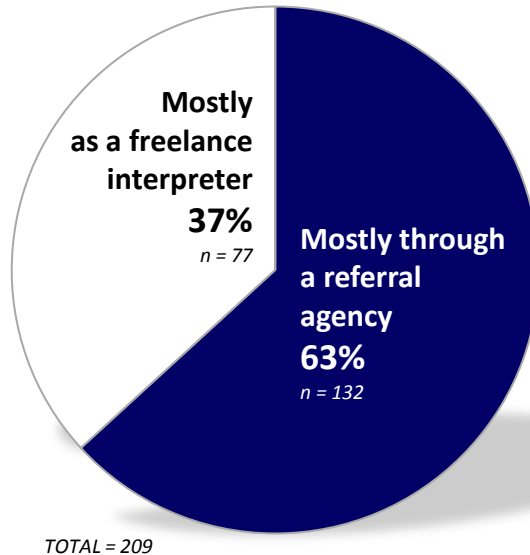
“Years of experience should be considered. New interpreters can come out of school, get certified and still have no experience. They may look the same as an experienced, certified interpreter but they have no experience under their belt. Something to consider.”

What is the average hourly rate you earn for non-DSHS contract work?

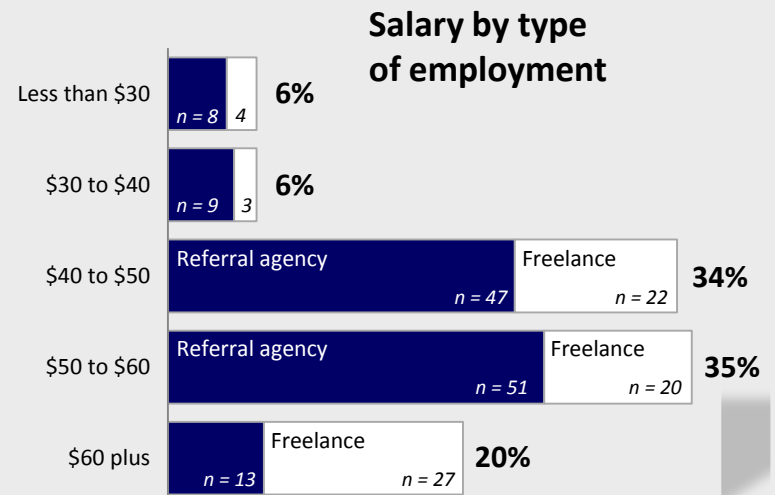




4. Do you work primarily (80 percent of your assignments) through a referral agency or are you a freelance interpreter?



What is the average hourly rate you earn for non-DSHS contract work?



TOTAL = 204 responded

Survey participants said . . .

“There is quite a disparity between DSHS pay vs freelance pay. Although I don't expect the two pay scales to be parallel, I do expect DSHS to calculate for cost of living and the general increase that occurs within the field (as happens in all fields).”

“I cant even give my card to offer freelance work because you need to have won that contract or bid and must go through the language company that won.”

“...at least 80% of my interpreting work is through an employer as a staff interpreter, but that was not a choice given in your survey. :-)”

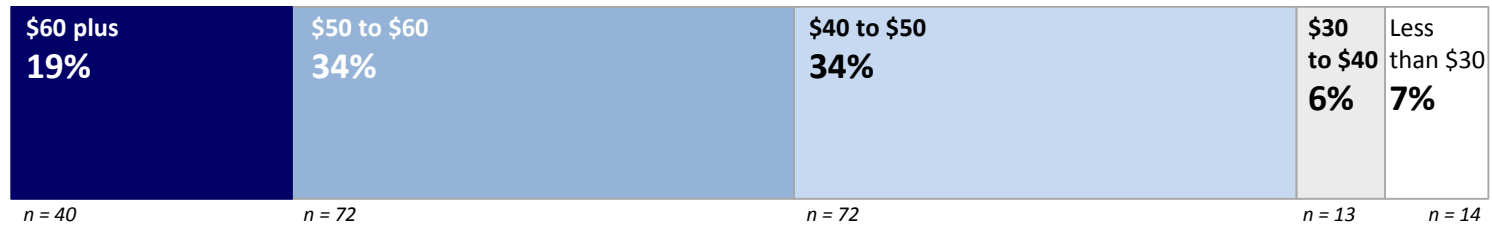




5. Please indicate best response.

Average hourly rate for non-DSHS contract work, rates 5 years ago, rates 10 years ago.

Average hourly rate today



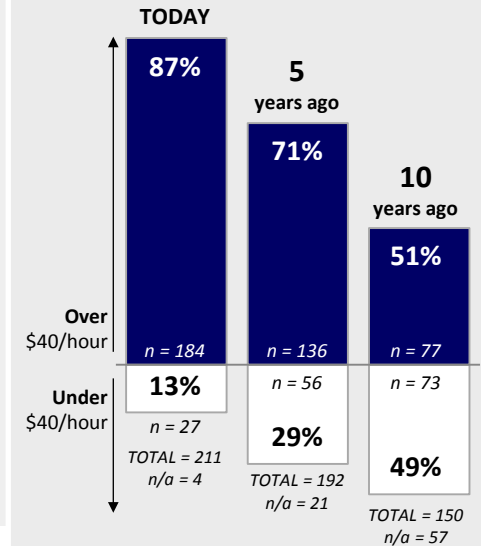
Survey participants said . . .

“In this area there has been an average increase of \$5 per hour over the 16 years I have lived here. In almost all other areas of the country the rate increase over that same time period has gone up about 50 percent of what their rate was 15 years ago. I know the economy is tight but the rate of pay and increase just does not compare to the national standards.”

“...interpreter's hourly rates should be subject to increases in order to adjust for inflation/cost of living increases. Historically inflation has been around 3-4% annually. It would make sense to have rate increases be on some sort of adjustment schedule (every 5 years, for example).

“40-50 is a huge range. There is so much involved in rate setting: market rate, pre/post certification, referral/direct contract... I think better answers would come from a focus group.”

Percent over/under \$40 per hour now versus to 5 and 10 years ago





6. Where is your primary work location?

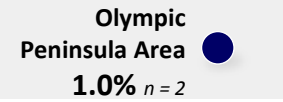
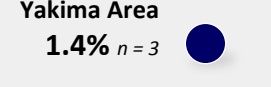
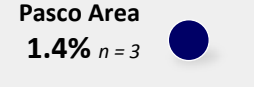
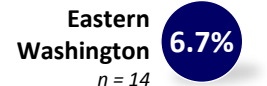
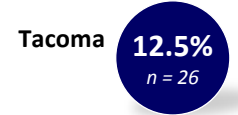
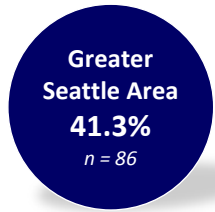
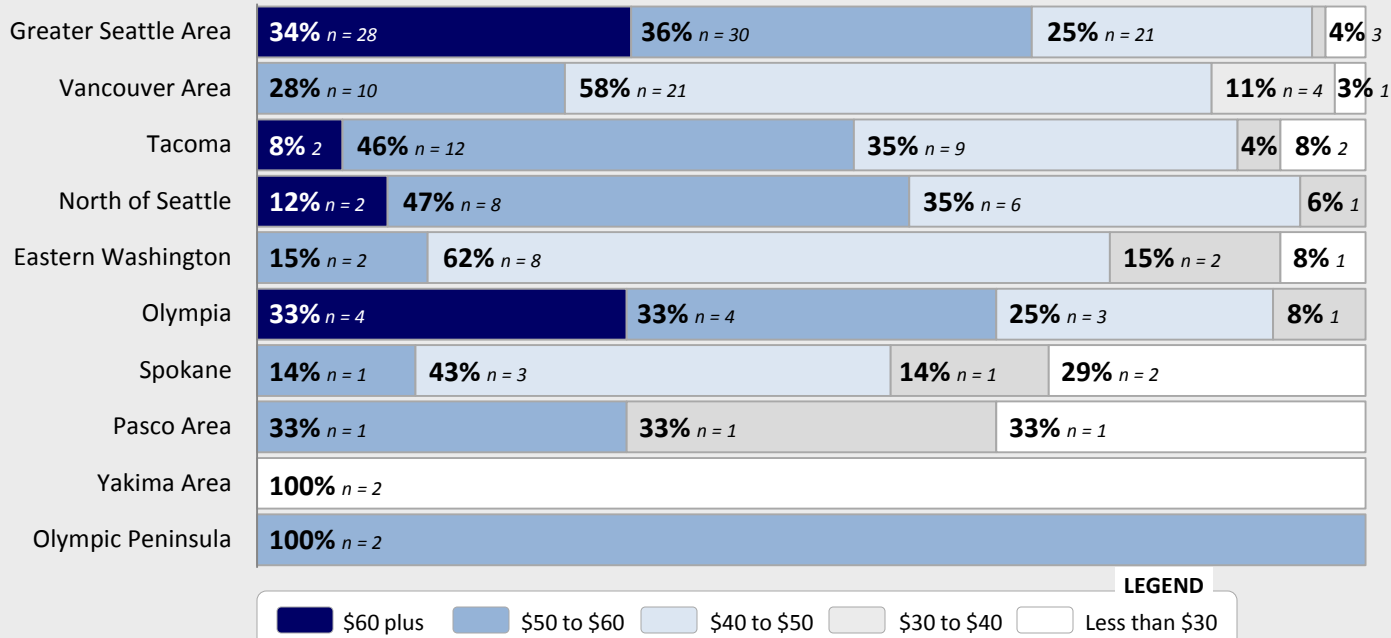
The survey asked respondents to pick one.

Survey participants said . . .

“One pay rate does not fit for interpreters state wide. At a minimum, there should be separate pay rates for those working in the Seattle area, vs those working in Eastern WA.”

“The DSHS contract needs to take into account rural areas needing service.”

Primary work location by average hourly rates for non-DSHS contract work





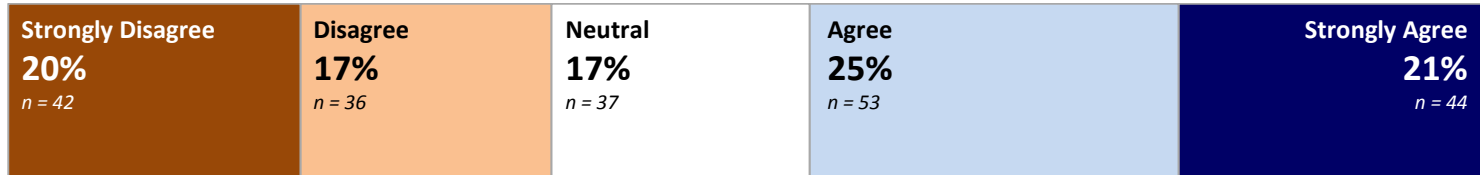
7. We have classified Interpreter hourly rate into 4 tiers: Advanced, Intermediate, Novice and non-certified.

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following definitions for those classifications:

Do you agree with the following classification: Advanced?

Consistency of SC:L, NIC Master, NIC Advanced, MCSC, NAD Level V

Agree or Strongly Agree = **46%**

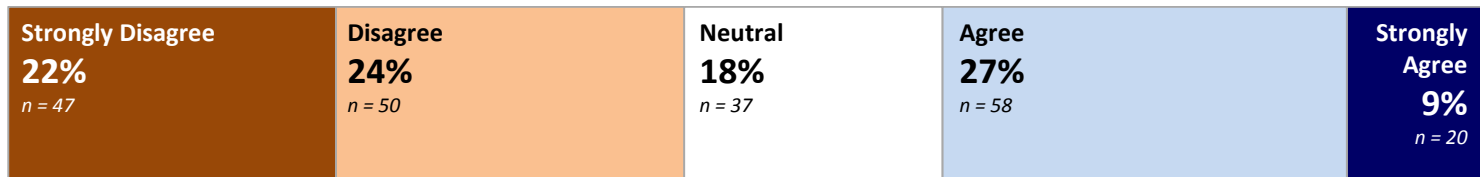


TOTAL = 212

Do you agree with the following classification: Intermediate?

Consistency of NIC, CSC, CI and CT, NAD Level IV

Agree or Strongly Agree = **37%**



TOTAL = 212

Do you agree with the following classification: Novice?

Consistency of CI, CT, IC, TC, IC/TC, OIC:C, OTC, NAD Level III

Agree or Strongly Agree = **27%**



TOTAL = 211



Responses.

7. We have classified Interpreter hourly rate into 4 tiers: Advanced, Intermediate, Novice and non-certified (Comments)

Do you agree with the following classification: Advanced?

Consistency of SC:L, NIC Master, NIC Advanced, MCSC, NAD Level V

Survey participants said . . .

“The reason I picked ‘strongly disagree’ with your interpreter levels is because a lot of those tests such as the NAD test where you are granted levels and even the most recent NIC test where you were granted levels do not even exist any longer.”

“I think the highest pay rate category should apply to those who have specialized and/or additional certifications, such as SLC or additional certifications like CI/CT and Master level, and so forth.”

Do you agree with the following classification: Intermediate?

Consistency of NIC, CSC, CI and CT, NAD Level IV

Survey participants said . . .

“Since only NIC is now offered, and Legal is the only next certification available, I don't think its fair to say NIC is intermediate when there is only one other option to move up. Maybe we want to ‘move up to advanced’, but don't care to do legal.”

“You should not put a 20 year CI/CI as intermediate just because they did not spend hundreds of dollars to retest in a psychometrically flawed test.”

Do you agree with the following classification: Novice?

Consistency of CI, CT, IC, TC, IC/TC, OIC:C, OTC, NAD Level III

Survey participants said . . .

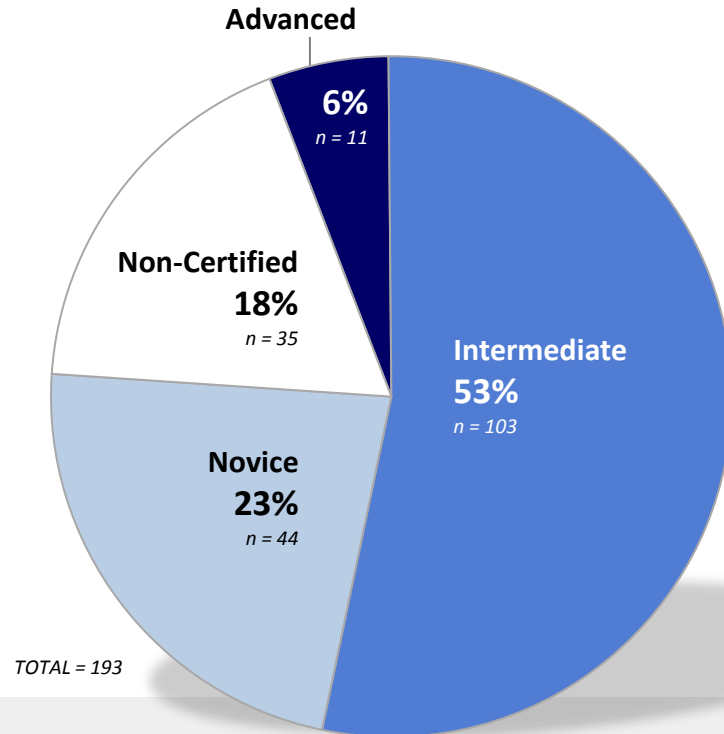
“An RID Certified interpreter isn't a novice. You need to change your categories. In addition, the changes in the certification names by RID doesn't lesson their level. CI and CT is equivalent to NIC Advanced. Special certifications such as legal, and Master should go together.”

“Novice should be restricted to anyone certified for fewer than 5 years.”





8. In your opinion, which category should the Ed: K-12 Certification be classified?



Survey participants said . . .

“Educational certification is for educational settings, not other settings. Unless I see evidence to the contrary, I don't think an interpreter with an educational certification should be interpreting outside of that scope.”

“DSHS/ODHH should not be thinking about the certification Ed: K-12 because this is ONLY for use in the K-12 school system and NOT for DSHS situations.”

“I do not feel this certification really fits into your classification structure because these K-12 certified folks should not be engaging in community based work unless they are also carry an RID certification CI/CT, CSC, NIC.”

“The Ed: K-12 question confused me. Are we talking about EIPA? In which case, 4.0 interpreters should be different than 5.0.”





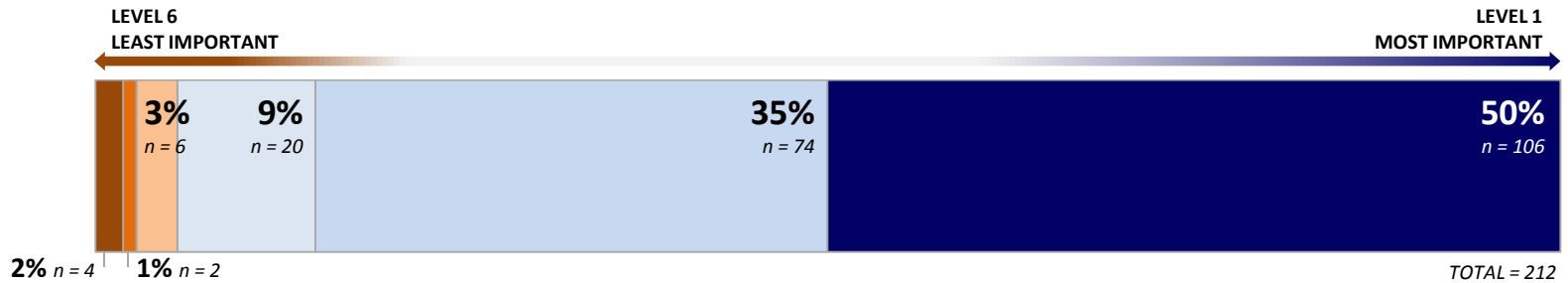
9. Should rates be determined by certification, years of experience, and/or job assignment?

The survey asked respondents to check all that apply.

Certification Level



Years of Experience



Job Assignment



Responses.

9. Should rates be determined by certification, years of experience, and/or job assignment? (Comments)

Certification Level

Survey participants said . . .

“I believe a matrix approach is best. A combination of factors should be considered, including education, certification, years experience, specialty skills, and consumer preference.”

“I think certification can only be tiered to a certain extent. It is a lot about experience and time in the field.”

“I believe it is a mistake to look so strongly at certification. While I believe it is important, it isn't always an indicator of skill level. Experience plays a big part in that.”

Years of Experience

Survey participants said . . .

“I believe years of experience as a certified interpreter should be part of the equation too.”

“Experienced, qualified, and certified interpreters charge what they do because they are professionals who have the skills to do the job.”

“I believe that the years of experience as a freelance (NOT educational) interpreter is what is the best indication of skill level.”

Job Assignment

Survey participants said . . .

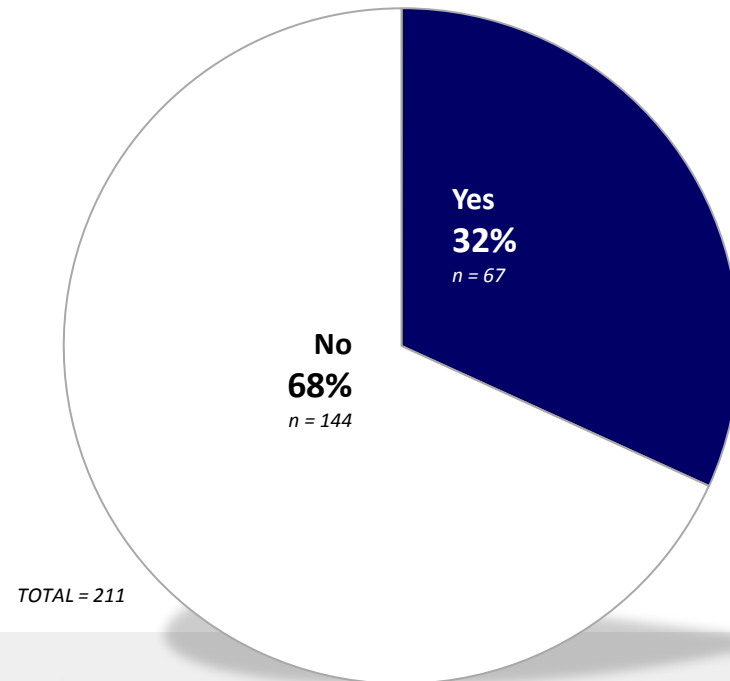
“Severity of the assignment, IE Legal, emergency medical DCFS. Years of experience in the field or subject matter of the assignment.”

“Perhaps take Oregon's system into account - Interpreters provide information about credentials, education, years of education, experience, professional development, specialty areas, etc. and enter that information into a calculator to determine the rate of pay that would be appropriate for the job.”





10. Should non-certified interpreters be permitted to work under the DSHS contract?



Survey participants said . . .

“Certification is the only tool (besides individual client preference) we have to measure quality in interpreting. We need to use it and I expect our State to use recognize it.”

“I strongly believe that certification should be a requirement for any government hired interpreter.”

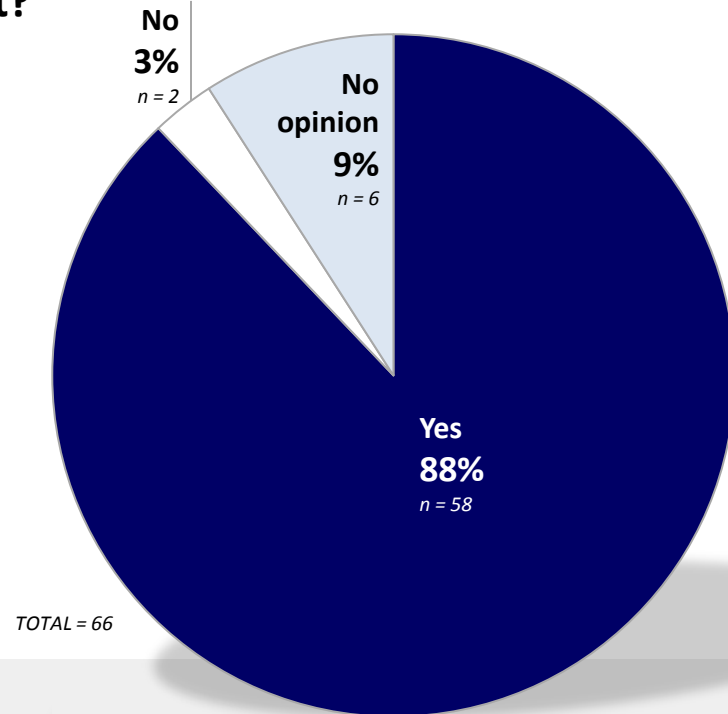
“We were told we could NOT work unless we got some NAD Level of certification. Now there many that are being ‘excused.’ This is NOT right or fair for those of us that had to pay out of our money to get certified then be pushed aside for non-certified.”

“I have a friend who is a CODA but refuses to get certified and has amazing skills. I have also seen situations where my non-certified skills were a better than a certified interpreter due to my area of specialties. I get many customer referrals. It's about matching the right interpreter to the right job.”





11. Should working non-certified interpreters be required to pass a sign language assessment?



Survey participants said . . .

“To determine pay rates for an Interpreter based on certification level is complicated and kind of unfair in my opinion... I have worked with several interpreters who are not certified and are highly skilled, some are CODAs and some are not.”

“I am not a CODA but have worked with very gifted, skilled and qualified CODA interpreters who are not certified but by far seem like masters, their voicing skills are native and they voice accurate[ly].”

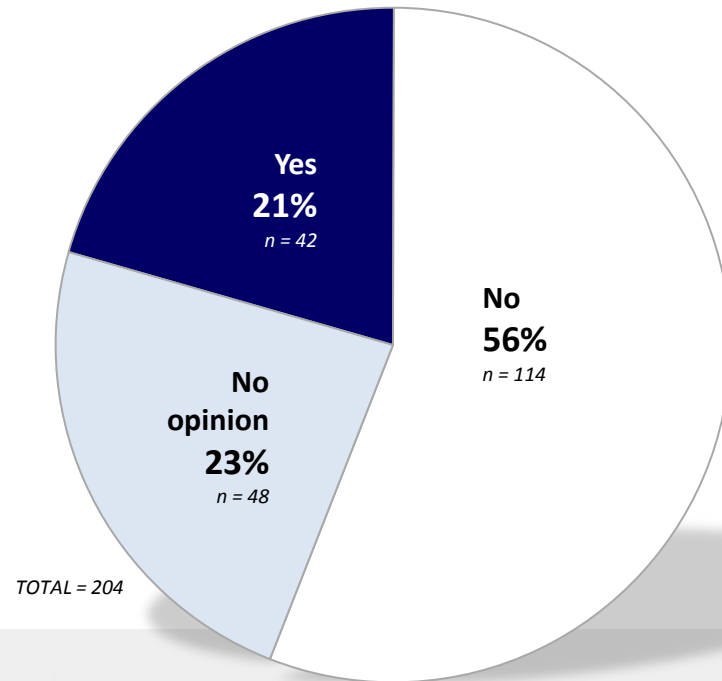
“I’m Deaf interpreter (highly qualified, but not certified) have had been working for more than 35 years in mental hospital, psychiatry fields, medical fields, and judiciary fields... My rate should be determined by my own experiences in dealing with sign language agencies.”

“My heart goes out to native and experienced signers who are older in age and possibly not be allowed to work.”





12. Do you believe that consumers of interpreting service should have input on rates?



Survey participants said . . .

“Consumers also don't know the schooling, training, etc. I've taken to be specialized in my field, therefore they should not set my price.”

“...deaf consumers should not have input into the rates because they see a big number per hour and do not know all the costs that go into that \$50.”

“Deaf customers should be given a postcard at each job with simple questions about the interpretation. If customers are consistently unhappy, the interpreter should be paid less or moved to a lower level.”

“Consumers should have input on rates if their own budgets are paying for the interpreters.”



13. Are there any other considerations we should know about to determine rates?

There were 107 comments. Many were categorized according to specific questions. The comments below reflect other general comments to be considered in determining rates.

Survey participants said . . .

“Know that excellent interpreters are expensive because of the economic forces of supply and demand.”

“There have been no DSHS rate increases for certified interpreters for many years and it is getting harder and harder to keep up with the increasing cost of living and travel expenses (gas).”

“Remember we pay our own taxes and insurance etc...It may look like we make a lot of money but after taxes it’s not what it should be.”

“It would be worth investigating the average number of unpaid hours sign language interpreters spend in their profession.”

“Please allow travel time (half hourly rate) to be charged along with mileage.”

“Evening/weekend work, DeafBlind work should be paid more.”

“Someone with an AA should not charge the same rate as someone with a MA. Additionally, an interpreter should charge more if his or her degree is in a related field.”

“I believe that a licensure system would be a great benefit to the deaf and hearing community. Making it easier for clients to make complaints and would set a standard state wide for interpreters.”

“We need to have an open forum to start providing feedback about these issues immediately and to continue through out the contract writing process.”

“Standard rates for standard of living in your area, time in car and time to complete billing paperwork all ‘unfilled’ time...Thank you for conducting this survey. The fact that you are even researching means a lot.”

