

Quebec Translators in the Age of AI: Perceptions on the Evolution and Sustainability of the Translation Profession

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Abstract

AI-based tools are disrupting the translation profession. The European Language Industry Survey reports annually on the situation in Europe but less is known about the effects of AI-based tools on professional translators working elsewhere. This study presents a survey conducted with support from Quebec's professional translators association (*Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec*). We analyzed 175 completed surveys, along with additional partial responses, and we present results relating to two broad categories: general perceptions about AI's influence on the translation profession, and the evolution and sustainability of the profession. We also compare our results to those from other regions. Findings show that while Quebec translators face many similar issues to those faced by translators in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Europe more generally, there are subtle differences also, such as the tendency of many Quebec translators to work as generalists, the comparatively low number of Quebec translators working in the entertainment, arts, and culture domains (which are growing elsewhere), and the large number who are hesitant to supervise student work placements.

1 Introduction

The translation profession has experienced a period of intense transformation and destabilization over the past decade, since the emergence of neural machine translation (NMT)

tools in 2016, followed by the introduction of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in 2022. The effects have been well documented in certain parts of the world, such as through the annual European Language Industry Survey (ELIS, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026), a survey by the *Société française des traducteurs* in France (SFT, 2022), a survey on translator's work-related quality of life in the United Kingdom (UK) (Sakamoto et al., 2025), and surveys of income satisfaction among translators in Belgium, Switzerland, and France (Girletti and Lefer, 2025, 2026). However, to date, the situation beyond Europe has been less well studied. This article reports on a survey undertaken with support from the *Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec* (OTTIAQ), which is Quebec's professional translators association.

Canada's two official languages (English and French) are not used evenly across the country, so translation activity is not evenly dispersed either. The most recent census shows that 22% of Canadian residents use French as their dominant official language, and they live mainly in Quebec. Meanwhile, 76.1% of Canadian residents use English and live mainly outside of Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2022). Accordingly, more documents are produced in English initially, and translation activity is higher into French (CAPE, 2025).

In Canada, individual translators do not belong to a national association but to the one in their home province or territory, although it is possible to belong to one in another region, or in multiple regions. With roughly 2,750 members, OTTIAQ

is Canada's largest translators association and one of four provincial associations that gives the option of qualifying for the reserved title *certified translator* (OTTIAQ, 2026). It would be informative to conduct a pan-Canadian study, but since most translation in Canada is into French, and most translators work into their dominant language, and most Canadian French speakers live in Quebec, we believe that OTTIAQ members are well placed to offer initial insights that are representative of ways that AI is affecting translation in Canada.

This article is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the methods, while section 3 presents preliminary results for the questions that focus on general perceptions about AI's influence on the translation profession and on the evolution and sustainability of the profession. Section 4 discusses the main findings and compares them with findings from other parts of the world where English and French are key translation languages, including the UK, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Europe more broadly. Finally, section 5 offers initial conclusions and considers implications for translation education.

2 Methods

This section describes the recruitment process and the participants, the design and development of the questionnaire, and the approach used to analyze the data. Ethical approval was granted by the Université Laval Research Ethics Committee (No. 2025-198).

2.1 Participants and data collection

Respondents were recruited through OTTIAQ's mailing list. They were informed that the study was conducted independently of OTTIAQ and that participation (or non-participation) would not affect membership within the organization. All members (approximately 2,750 at the time of the study) were invited to participate in the online survey in November 2025; the survey remained open until end of December 2025. A total of 499 (18%) members started the survey. We suspect some members were not reached due to incorrect or out-of-use email addresses. Note that respondents could have been counted twice in this number if they started the survey, did not complete it, and then started it a second time.

Personalized reminders were not sent to avoid linking contact information with responses.

One hundred and seventy-five respondents completed the survey (i.e., at least the 29 mandatory questions). Because the survey was anonymous and participants were free to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time, all available responses, including partial responses, were retained for analysis. For open-ended questions, between 41 and 244 respondents provided answers, although the open-ended responses are not analyzed in the present article. Lower response rates were observed for questions that did not apply to all respondents (e.g., "*Why are you thinking of leaving the translation profession?*"). Between 107 and 307 participants provided responses to the closed-ended questions. This variation reflects both skipping optional questions and survey attrition: more respondents answered the initial set of closed-end questions but did not continue through the later sections. Analyses were conducted using all available responses.

The survey was estimated to require 45 minutes to complete. Because respondents could pause and return to the survey later, an overall average completion time could not be calculated, and some participants completed the survey over multiple days. Among those who completed it on the same day, the mean completion time was 37 minutes. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no identifying information was collected.

2.2 Questionnaire design

Based on academic and professional literature, social media posts, and informal conversations with translators, we identified some challenges facing translators in a context where AI-based tools are widely accessible, and we considered possible professional consequences of this technological shift, including changing client expectations, loss of work, diversification of services, and threats to the long-term sustainability of the profession. On that basis, we designed a two-tier instrument combining open- and closed-ended questions. This was done so that key constructs could be approached from more than one angle. In survey methodology, combining open- and closed-ended items is useful because the former allow respondents to raise

unanticipated issues and express themselves in their own terms, whereas the latter support standardization, comparability, and prevalence estimates across respondents (Ballou, 2003; Marsden and Wright, 2010). Asking related questions in different formats also reduces dependence on any single wording and facilitates assessing whether patterns converge across item types.

The survey was edited iteratively until the questions were judged to capture the constructs of interest adequately. Next, the survey was reviewed by an academic with industry experience, who has expertise in both translation and survey design but was not part of the research team. Revisions were made in response to their feedback. The revised questionnaire was subsequently pilot tested with four professional translators in Canada, each with three or more years of professional experience, but none of whom were members of OTTIAQ. Minor edits were made after the pilot to improve clarity and usability.

Block	Theme	Format
1	Initial attitudes toward AI; early indicators of workplace/client impact	Multiple choice
2	Open-ended reflections on day-to-day practice	Open-ended
3	Support systems & resources for adapting to change	Open-ended
4	Views on the role and value of translators	Open-ended
5	Outlook on the profession; possible intentions to leave	Multiple choice
6	Training, mentorship, and the future of the profession	Mixed
7	AI-based tool use, confidence, client relations, market expectations	Likert matrix
8	Work impact, professional identity, professional development, career outlook	Likert matrix

Block	Theme	Format
9	Tool use, perceived limits, current uses, career-sustainability strategies, support needs	Multiple response
10	Demographics	Mixed

Table 1. Questionnaire structure.

The final version consisted of 40 questions, of which 29 were mandatory. Of the 40 questions, 16 were open-ended, 16 were closed-ended (i.e., multiple choice, multiple response, or Likert-type statements), and 8 were demographic.

Data collection ended recently and analysis is ongoing. As such, while the survey included both open- and closed-ended items, this article presents only the closed-ended ones, focusing on questions concerned with general perceptions of AI's influence on the translation profession, as well as questions addressing the profession's evolution and long-term sustainability. These questions are in Appendix A.

A message on page one of the questionnaire gave descriptions of NMT and GenAI tools and stated: "We use the term *AI-based translation tools* to cover both NMT and GenAI tools, whether they are standalone or integrated with another tool." Most questions addressed AI-based translation tools as a group without distinguishing between NMT and GenAI tools. The survey was administered using LimeSurvey v 6.14 and was available in both French and English. Most participants responded in French.

2.3 Analysis approach

Closed-ended items were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. For multiple-response questions, results were reported as the percentage of respondents selecting each option; percentages therefore do not sum to 100. Likert-type items were summarized by response distribution and, where useful for readability, by collapsed agreement and disagreement categories.

3 Results

3.1 Demographic profile of respondents

One hundred and eighty-six respondents completed the demographic section of the questionnaire. As illustrated in Table 1, almost all

respondents translate between Canada's two official languages, with most (81.2%) translating from English to French, and 12.9% working from French to English. Most (91.9%) respondents are certified translators, with just 1.1% indicating that they are interpreters, none identifying as terminologists, and 7% noting that they are not yet certified. Since the survey title and most questions specifically referred to *translators* or *translation*, it is not surprising that few respondents from other categories participated.

Participant characteristics	Number of respondents	Percent of total
Language pair and direction		
EN-FR	151	81.2%
FR-EN	24	12.9%
Other	11	5.9%
Certification category		
Translator	171	91.9%
Interpreter	2	1.1%
Terminologist	0	—
Not certified	13	7.0%
Type of employment		
Independent	97	53%
Agency or LSP	67	36.6%
In-house	16	8.7%
Other	3	2.1%
Years of experience		
0–2 years	4	2.2%
3–5 years	14	7.5%
6–10 years	21	11.3%
11–20 years	56	30.1%
21+ years	91	48.9%

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents.

Most (91.9%) respondents are certified translators, with just 1.1% indicating that they are interpreters, none identifying as terminologists, and 7% noting that they are not yet certified. Since the survey title and most questions specifically referred to *translators* or *translation*, it is not surprising that few respondents from other categories participated.

Just over half of respondents are independent (i.e., freelance) translators, while an additional third are employed directly by a translation agency or Language Services Provider (LSP) (i.e., employee). Just under 10% work as an in-house translator at a non-translation organization (e.g., an insurance company or a bank), while a final

2.1% indicated that they work in another capacity (e.g., academic).

With regard to experience, the majority are senior or mid-career translation professionals with almost half of respondents having 21 or more years of experience, and an additional 30.1% having 11 to 20 years of experience. A much smaller proportion of respondents are at an early stage of their career, with just over 20% having fewer than 10 years of experience, and only 2.2% being newly arrived in the profession with less than 2 years of experience.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their area(s) of domain specialization. The categories were drawn from the list of over 20 specializations that OTTIAQ provides to its members. In our survey, respondents could select one or more categories. As Figure 1 shows, the most common response was generalist, followed by specializations in administration or management, and then communication. Specialists in human resources, law, and finance came next, and these three categories were quite evenly matched in terms of numbers. Health and medicine, humanities and social sciences, and industry, engineering and technical translation followed, with economy rounding out the top ten.



Figure 1. Respondents' areas of domain specialization, with bubble size representing the proportion of respondents selecting each category. $N = 186$.

3.2 General perceptions about AI's influence on the translation profession

Respondents' overall sentiment toward the use of AI in the translation profession was characterized primarily by ambivalence (i.e., mixed feelings; 44%) rather than by clearly positive or clearly negative evaluations (see Figure 2). This item used a 6-point scale that distinguished between neutral (no strong feeling) and ambivalent (mixed feelings), as these represent psychologically distinct states—indifference versus holding simultaneous positive and negative evaluations (Hu and Gasper, 2022; Priester and Petty, 1996). The low rate of neutral responses (4%) relative to ambivalence (44%) suggests this distinction was meaningful. Over a quarter of the sample felt positive and just over 20% of the sample had negative feelings. Taken together, these results suggest that respondents viewed the growing role of AI-based translation tools with caution and complexity rather than with straightforward acceptance or rejection.

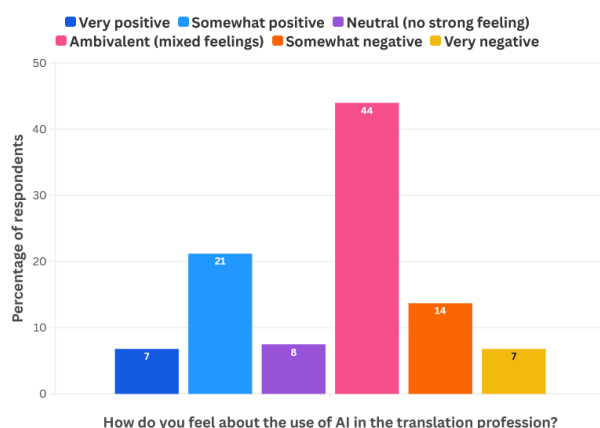


Figure 2. Overall sentiment toward the use of AI in the translation profession. $N = 307$.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which AI-based translation tools influenced their work as a translator. Figure 3 indicates that most respondents thought that AI-based translation affected their professional activity as translators. Responses were concentrated in the middle-to-higher range of the scale (*somewhat*; *quite a lot*; *a great deal*), whereas only a small minority indicated no influence.

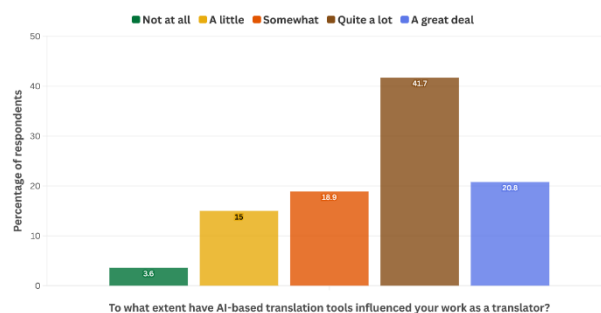


Figure 3. Perceived extent of AI-based translation tools' influence on respondents' work as translators. $N = 307$.

Respondents also reported several client-related effects associated with AI-based translation tools (see Figure 4). Reports of lost work were common, although a proportion of respondents also expressed uncertainty on this point. Client insistence on the use of AI-based translation tools likewise appeared to be a recurring experience. In contrast, reports that clients returned after an unsuccessful experience with AI were more mixed and were accompanied by considerable uncertainty, suggesting that this pattern was less consistently observed across the sample.

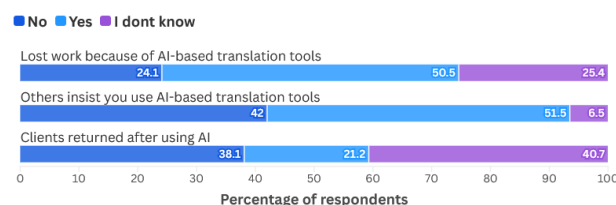


Figure 4. Reported client-related impacts of AI-based translation tools. $N = 307$.

3.3 Evolution and sustainability of the profession

As shown in Figure 5, respondents generally perceived a shift in their work away from translation from scratch and toward machine translation post-editing. Agreement responses outweighed disagreement responses, indicating that this change was a common experience in the sample. At the same time, the distribution was not uniform: a smaller subset of respondents remained neutral or rejected this characterization, suggesting that the extent of this shift varied across professional contexts. Overall, the pattern is consistent with the view that AI-based translation tools are associated with a reconfiguration of translators' work, with greater emphasis being placed on downstream intervention in machine-generated output.

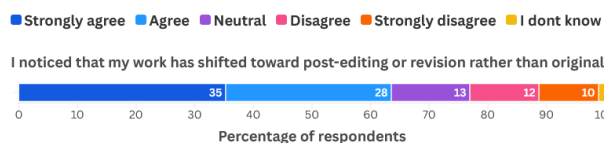


Figure 5. Reported shift of work towards post-editing. $N = 187$.

Respondents were asked whether they were thinking of leaving the translation profession owing to the arrival of AI-based translation tools. Out of 197 responses, 52.8% said no, 29.4% said yes, and 17.8% were undecided. As shown in Figure 6, respondents most frequently reported adopting proactive adaptation strategies to sustain their careers in the context of AI-related change. The most commonly endorsed approaches emphasized professional differentiation and capacity building, particularly through specialization and additional training. A substantial proportion also reported broadening their service offerings and educating clients about the value of human translation. By contrast, collaborative strategies among translators were mentioned less often, and only a small minority selected either no strategy or uncertainty. It should be noted that it is unclear whether those selecting *none of the above* are respondents considering leaving the profession or those who intend to remain but have not yet adopted formal sustainability strategies; ongoing analysis of open-ended responses may help clarify this point. Overall, the pattern suggests that respondents were more likely to emphasize individual professional adaptation than disengagement or indecision.

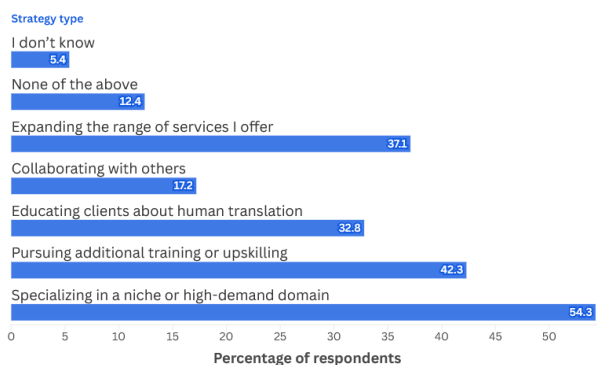


Figure 6. Reported strategies used to sustain career. $N = 186$. *None of the above* is the only mutually exclusive response. For all other responses, participants could select all that apply.

Finally, we asked respondents how AI-based translation tools affected their willingness to supervise student work placements. A large majority

(75.5%; $N = 148/196$) of respondents reported that this did not apply to them, presumably because they are not currently in a supervisory position. However, of the 48 respondents who felt that they were in a position to offer supervision, 27.1% were no longer willing, 20.8% were less willing, 37.5% were equally willing, and 14.6% were more willing than before.

Taken together, the findings depict a profession in transition. Respondents did not present AI-based translation tools as either wholly beneficial or wholly threatening; instead, they described a more complex landscape in which experimentation, pressure, adaptation, and skepticism coexist. The survey therefore points not only to technological uptake, but also to a broader renegotiation of professional value, working conditions, and career sustainability among translators in Quebec.

4 Discussion

In this section, we discuss the results of the Quebec survey, and where relevant, compare them to the findings of other recent surveys of professional translators that have been carried out elsewhere, with a focus on countries where English and French are key translation languages: France (SFT, 2022; Girletti and Lefer, 2026), Belgium and Switzerland (Girletti and Lefer, 2025), the UK (Sakamoto et al., 2025), and Europe more broadly (ELIS, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026). As noted in the introduction, most translation in Canada takes place from English into French. This aligns with the language direction reported by respondents, and it was the expected response profile for translators working in Quebec, since most residents in Quebec are Francophone (Statistics Canada, 2022), and most translators work into their dominant language. Given that English and French are high-resource languages (Giagkou et al., 2023), these are among the language pairs for which AI tools currently perform relatively well (Robinson et al., 2023), which may place more pressure on translators working with these languages.

Just over half of the respondents to the Quebec survey reported working as independent translators, a characteristic that is shared with respondents to the ELIS surveys, where the number of independents typically makes up very close to or just over half of the total number of respondents

(ELIS 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026). Sakamoto et al. (2025) also indicated that an overwhelming majority of respondents to their survey identified as independent workers, while the studies by Girletti and Lefer (2025, 2026) focus specifically on this group. While many independent translators have deliberately chosen this type of role, it may leave them vulnerable to some risks in the face of AI. For instance, a company that combines in-house translation and outsourcing may choose to eliminate or limit the outsourcing work first (RWS, 2025). Similarly, an in-house translator may have an opportunity to pivot to a new role related to implementing technology (e.g., data curation) within the larger organization (Stasimioti, 2023).

In terms of experience, the results from Quebec align with those of Sakamoto et al. (2025) in that both sets of respondents are relatively experienced professionals, with roughly 20% in both cases having fewer than 10 years of experience. Less experienced professionals also represent a minority of respondents to the ELIS surveys (2023, 2024): in 2023, approximately 30% of respondents had fewer than 10 years of experience, while in 2024, 25% of respondents were in this category. The average number of years of experience reported in France was 15 years (Girletti and Lefer, 2026), while in Belgium it was 16.5 years, and in Switzerland it was 22 years (Girletti and Lefer, 2025). The analysts of the ELIS survey (2025, 2026) note that the average age of language industry workers is quite high, meaning that many may be exiting the profession soon, raising concerns about succession planning and the long-term sustainability of the translation profession if younger workers are not attracted to the field. Currently, fewer students are registering in translation programs in Canada (Afou, 2023), which suggests that these programs would benefit from undertaking a campaign to raise awareness about the need to maintain human participation in translation industry workflows moving forward.

As regards domain specialization, there is sizeable overlap between the areas of specialization identified by respondents from Quebec and those from France, including law, industrial and technical, medical and health sciences, communication, economy and finance, which appear in the top specializations of both groups (SFT, 2022; Girletti and Lefer, 2026). Likewise, the responses

from Quebec overlap with those from Belgium and Switzerland, where legal and medical translation were the top two specializations in both countries, while the third most common specialization was marketing (communication) in Belgium and economy in Switzerland (Girletti and Lefer, 2025). Meanwhile, ELIS (2025, 2026) respondents also showed strong overlap, with healthcare, law, government (administration) and marketing (communication) holding the top places. A notable difference between the ELIS and the Quebec respondents is that the former are more active in the entertainment, arts and culture domains. In particular, the ELIS (2026) survey reports an uptick in business in this sector, and Girletti and Lefer (2026) indicate that tourism translation, video game localization, and audiovisual translation are in the top ten specializations reported in France. Meanwhile, fewer than 30% of the Quebec respondents report a specialization in entertainment, arts or culture. This could signal an opportunity for Canadian translation programs to introduce more specialized training opportunities in these areas. For instance, while specialized master's programs exist in other countries, such as the MA in Audiovisual Translation and Localisation in the UK (University of Leeds, 2026), existing translation education programs in Canada take a broader approach and do not currently offer a fully specialized program in the entertainment domain.

Another potential concern signalled by the responses to the Quebec survey is the number of respondents who indicate that general translation is part of their profile. Indeed, this was the most common response among the Quebec respondents, although it is important to note that participants could select multiple options. In Belgium and Switzerland, nearly three-quarters of the respondents self-identified as specialists, with about half of the respondents in those two countries indicating that they specialize in two or three domains (Girletti and Lefer, 2025). Given that AI-based tools are getting better at handling general texts, translators are being encouraged to develop specializations in areas where the training data for these tools may be less plentiful (ELIS, 2026; Smialek, 2026). Therefore, Quebec translators who have previously been receiving work as generalists may need to consider developing a more specialized profile if the portion of their income

stream that comes from general translation drops off. Currently, relatively few formalized opportunities for developing specializations exist in Canada, since undergraduate programs, which remain the key professionalizing programs for translation, focus on breadth, rather than depth. An opportunity is available through the McGill University School of Continuing Studies (McGill University, 2026) to obtain a graduate diploma in legal translation. However, other Canadian universities may wish to contribute to a more robust continuing education offering that would allow practicing translators to further specialize.

Turning to the questions relating to translators' general perceptions about AI's influence on the translation profession, it was revealed that the majority of translators responding to the Quebec survey agree that their work has been affected in some way by AI, with most respondents indicating that it has been affected quite a lot. Nevertheless, the influence of AI is not entirely negative; close to half of the respondents to the Quebec survey had mixed feelings about this technology. This is not surprising: the comparator surveys have already revealed that AI-based translation tools offer opportunities on the one hand (e.g., increased productivity for some subtasks), while presenting some challenges on the other hand (e.g., pricing pressure). Girletti and Lefer observe that the level of job satisfaction among translators in Belgium and Switzerland (2025) and France (2026) varies depending on a range of factors. For example, job satisfaction can be affected by AI because some translators find post-editing to be less stimulating than translation. As summarized by Sakamoto et al. (2025: 25), "translators' work satisfaction and motivation are complex constructs, which are affected both positively and negatively by a variety of factors". For instance, many respondents to the Quebec survey felt that the presence of AI-based translation tools has resulted in a drop in the volume of work available – a feeling that echoes reports from translators in Europe (ELIS 2025, 2026; SFT, 2022; Girletti and Lefer, 2025, 2026). Overall, it is encouraging to see that translators are approaching and evaluating the technologies in a complex and nuanced way, unlike the more binary representations of these tools that have appeared in the popular press (Vieira, 2020). However, there remains a need to help peo-

ple outside the language industries to develop a more nuanced view of AI-based translation, which means that there is still a significant need for machine translation literacy training in society (Bowker, 2025)—a type of training that translators or translation education units are well equipped to offer.

With regard to questions about the profession's evolution and sustainability, respondents from Quebec generally perceived their work shifting away from translation and towards post-editing, although this was not uniformly the case. This resembles the situation in France, where 57% of respondents to the SFT's (2022) survey said that they refused to accept post-editing work because they considered that it was uninteresting or that the remuneration was too low. Among those who did accept post-editing work, it accounted for approximately 20% of their business on average. Several years later, Girletti and Lefer (2026) observe that while some translators in France remain moderately optimistic about their translation career, others still find post-editing less attractive than translation, especially when it is imposed and has lower rates. The latter group has raised concerns about the way the market is evolving, particularly with regard to the rise of AI. The situation in the UK is similarly mixed: almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that post-editing accounted for less than 25% of their work; however, close to one-fifth said that more than half of their work consists of post-editing, while the average figure was 23.5% (Sakamoto et al., 2025). Meanwhile, a concerning issue noted in the UK survey is that the amount of post-editing work done by a translator negatively affects their perceived fairness of pay, their job fit, and their engagement with the work providers. This raises potential concerns for the translators in Quebec if the shift towards post-editing becomes more pronounced, suggesting that associations such as OT-TIAQ, as well as translation education programs, may need to consider offering additional support for translator wellbeing. Recent initiatives such as the workshop series on wellbeing organized by the UK's Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) could serve as inspiration (ITI, 2025).

Respondents to the Quebec survey were asked whether they are thinking of leaving the profession owing to the arrival of AI-based translation

tools. In response, 52.8% said no, 29.4% said yes, and 17.8% were undecided. This represents a situation that is somewhat starker than the one reported in the UK, where 66 % of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they will stay in the profession for at least the next 5 years, while the remaining one third are less certain. Given that barely half of the Quebec respondents seem clear about their intention to remain in the translation profession, and that the Government of Canada's Translation Bureau (the major employer of Canadian translators) has announced a layoff of 25% of their workforce by 2030 (Tunney and Côté-Sroka, 2025), we echo the concern expressed by Sakamoto et al. (2025: 26) when they observe that "pessimistic future outlooks appear to be growing among translators who fear that they will need to change their careers due to a rise in AI. If this trend continues, the long-term sustainability of the skilled translator workforce will be at risk". This may have ripple effects, such as a reduced availability of high-quality data for training future language models, leading in turn to poorer performance of AI tools and potentially even language model collapse (Shumailov et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, in France, 38% of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their situation, with the main causes being low rates and an insufficient volume of work (SFT, 2022). As a result, 9% of respondents to the French survey were considering a career change, while an additional 15% were planning to diversify their work activities so that translation was no longer their central focus. The Quebec respondents were also asked about their strategies for sustaining their careers, and their responses included an intention to pursue additional training or upskilling, expanding their range of service offering, and specializing in a niche or high-demand area. The last point is interesting given the high number of respondents who do general translation, along with the comparatively low number specializing in entertainment, arts, and culture—areas identified as having growth potential in the ELIS (2026). To help translators to diversify their service offering, translation education programs in Canada may need to integrate new content into the curriculum, such as teaching plain language (Bowker, 2026a), science communication (Bowker, 2026b), or transcreation (Benetello, 2021).

A final question linked to sustainability sought to uncover whether translators are willing to invest in supporting trainees, given the strong presence of AI in the translation market. Overall, the value placed on work-integrated learning is growing in Canada (Drewery, 2024), and many translation education programs encourage or require students to complete work placements (Gobeil-Roberge, 2026). Currently, OTTIAQ (2025) maintains a list of degrees conferring eligibility for the title of certified translator, and one of the requirements is that the degree program must include a work placement. In the past, trainees would be able to learn by working on general or straightforward texts, which are increasingly being translated by AI tools. Since students and new graduates are still learning, AI might outperform some of them in these early stages of their translation career, so what does this mean for translation education programs (and their students) who are looking for work placements, or for recent graduates seeking a first job? Are employers still willing to invest in trainees who show potential but cannot yet outperform AI?

For instance, in the journal *Science*, a university professor outlined why he is thinking of turning to AI instead of hiring a graduate student research assistant, noting that AI "can competently perform a lot of the work I need immediately; AI requires no ramp-ups, no meetings, and absolutely no emotional support" and adding "The issue is not whether my students are valuable. In the long run, they are invaluable. The issue is that their value emerges slowly, whereas AI delivers immediate returns." (Rosenfeld, 2026: np). A similar observation can undoubtedly be made about novice translators: with time, they can bring value to a human-centred translation workflow, but first they need opportunities to hone their judgement and skills. The ELIS (2025, 2026) results hint at a potential reluctance to accept translation interns that may be linked to the general downturn in the industry, but the report authors note that there is not yet sufficient data to show a trend. Meanwhile, the results of the Quebec survey show a mixed though somewhat concerning response. With close to half of the respondents showing a marked reluctance to supervise work placements, it suggests that incentive mechanisms for offering work placements are required before the number of su-

pervisors falls below the number of students who need a work placement opportunity.

One potential solution could be to encourage translators and translation companies to participate in government-supported short-term employment programs such as the Young Canada Works in Both Official Languages (YCWOL) program (Canadian Heritage, 2025). YCWOL provides funding to employers to create short-term (6 to 16 weeks) employment opportunities for Canadians aged 18 to 30 that will help them to gain work experience while improving their second official language (English or French). Employers propose projects that support YCWOL's objectives, which include:

- helping young Canadians gain practical work experience, develop skills, learn about career prospects, and improve their employability;
- increasing the pool of skilled, qualified, and diversified workers in the heritage, and arts and culture sectors, and provide opportunities to work in both official languages; and
- promoting awareness and appreciation of Canada's achievements and cultural heritage.

For employers who qualify, YCWOL may pay up to 50% of the costs associated with hiring a youth participant in a public or private sector organization, and up to 70% in a not-for-profit organization. Other employment support programs exist, such as the Student Work Placement Program (ESDC, 2023) and the Canada Summer Jobs program (ESDC, 2026). Such incentive programs could help translators or translation organizations to offset the cost of work placements and contribute to the sustainability of the profession, although translation educators may need to better inform potential work placement supervisors about these programs.

In addition, translation education programs may need to place more emphasis on developing or expanding more robust options for authentic internal practicums, such as simulated translation bureaus (STBs). According to Kontinen and Salmi (2025: 511) "STBs effectively address the skills gap in the translation market by offering hands-on experience in project management, translation, transcreation, revision, post-editing, and technical proficiency." STBs are typically introduced in the later stages of students' education

to aid a smooth transition from the academic to the professional environment. At present, the literature seems to indicate that STBs are more prevalent in Europe (e.g., Galán-Mañas et al., 2020), and while they present a promising framework to cultivate real-world skills relevant to today's translation industry, Kontinen and Salmi (2025) nonetheless warn that STBs may require a relatively high level of pedagogical effort for planning, monitoring, and controlling the learning environment. Canada's translation education programs must therefore reflect carefully on this possibility, weighing the potential costs and benefits of such an undertaking, particularly in a small program with limited resources.

The present study has some limitations. The number of responses is relatively small and comes mainly from experienced, independent translators, who represent only part of the industry, which limits generalizability. Respondents could have been counted twice if they started the survey, did not complete it, and then started it a second time. The present analysis is mainly descriptive and focused on closed-ended questions, but ongoing analysis of qualitative data from open-ended questions may later enrich discussions. Comparisons with other surveys are limited by the fact that the various surveys did not ask exactly the same questions.

5 Concluding Remarks

In many ways, the experience of translators in Quebec corresponds to the experience of translators in the UK, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Europe more broadly, which is not a big surprise given that these regions use some of the same language combinations (including English and French), may be faced with comparable official languages legislation requirements (e.g., Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and European Union), and belong to a similar Global North economy. In all of the surveys compared here, there is a marked prevalence of responses from independent translators—a group that may be particularly vulnerable in the face of increased use of AI tools, and so may be particularly motivated to respond to surveys. Similarly, there is an indication that the workforce that is currently offering translation services is composed of highly experienced

translators who are entering the mid or later stages of their career. At the same time, a non-negligible number of translators is thinking of leaving the profession for a different career. Taken together, these latter two points raise concerns about the sustainability of the profession on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Added to this, in Quebec in particular, but also to some extent in Europe (ELIS, 2026), there is an indication that many current translators are more reluctant than previously to supervise work placements—another factor that stands to erode the profession’s sustainability. For those who remain, it is clear that post-editing now represents a considerable portion of the work available in Quebec as well as in the other regions. Given the findings of Sakamoto et al. (2025), who note that the amount of post-editing work undertaken by a translator tends to be associated negatively with aspects of a translator’s general wellbeing, it will be vital to monitor this situation and to offer support as necessary.

While the different regions have many shared experiences, there are also some subtle differences. For instance, over half of Quebec respondents indicate that general translation is part of their profile, while translators in the UK, France, Belgium, Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe are more likely to indicate specializations. Thankfully, Quebec translators appear to recognize that domain specialization is one way to improve career sustainability, and a number of respondents plan to increase their level of specialization. At present, there are comparatively few Quebec translators working in the entertainment, arts, and culture domains, although this has been identified as a growth area in Europe, so it may be worthwhile for Quebec translators, as well as Canadian translation education programs, to investigate this area also.

It is evident that the translation industry in Quebec, as elsewhere, is living through turbulent times. Under these circumstances, professional associations have an important role to play (Lambert and Walker, 2024; ELIS, 2025). In Quebec, OTTIAQ already supports its members by providing regular continuing education and networking opportunities, and they stand ready to do more. An increased offering of support that specifically focuses on translator wellbeing may be needed if

post-editing work continues to grow. OTTIAQ has facilitated the data collection for this survey, and as the results and analyses become available, we will continue to collaborate with this group, as well as with other translators associations across Canada, to identify additional ways to support professional translators moving forward.

In addition, the survey results have several implications for translation education programs in Canada. Some ways that these programs might respond to the changes in industry include stepping up recruitment campaigns and conducting outreach to raise awareness about the continuing need for professional translators who can work responsibly with AI tools; offering machine translation literacy training to non-translators; raising awareness about work placement incentive programs for employers; integrating STBs or similar authentic and situated learning opportunities for students; developing specialized degree programs in growth areas (e.g., audiovisual translation); offering more continuing education opportunities in various domain specializations; and diversifying program content beyond translation to include other potential service offerings (e.g., plain language, transcreation, science communication).

Since the data collection for the survey finished only recently, we are still in the process of analyzing the data, hence the results presented in this article are only preliminary. Next steps include a more robust analysis of the complete data set, as well as potential interviews with some respondents. At the end of the questionnaire, participants could express interest in a follow-up interview by submitting their email address through a separate Microsoft Form, ensuring that contact information could not be linked to survey responses. Further down the road, there is potential to extend the study in other ways, such as expanding the scope to include translators in the rest of Canada and customizing the survey to get input from interpreters or terminologists about how AI is affecting their respective professions.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the OTTIAQ executive committee for their collaboration in distributing the survey to their membership as well as their members who took the time to respond to the survey. We extend our thanks to Emmanuel Blaise Tapon (C. Tr.),

Dr. Elizabeth Marshman, and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable contributions. This research was partly funded by a grant from the *Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines* at Université Laval, Canada.

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Appendix A: Survey questions

This appendix only contains the questions that were included in this reports.

BLOCK 1: Before we dive into the deep thoughts and hot takes, here are a few quick questions to get your brain warmed up.

Q1. How do you feel about the use of AI-based translation tools in the translation profession?

Very positive

Somewhat positive

Neutral

Somewhat negative

Very negative

Q2. To what extent have AI-based translation tools influenced your work as a translator?
Not at all

A little

Somewhat

Quite a lot

A great deal

Q3. Do you believe that you have lost work or clients because of AI-based translation tools?

Yes

No

Not sure

Q4. Do any of your clients now insist that you use AI-based translation tools, or specify which tools you must use?

Yes

No

I don't know

Q5. Have any of your clients returned to you after trying AI-based translation tools and having a negative experience?

Yes

No

I don't know

BLOCK 6: Training, Mentorship, and the Future of the Profession

Q21. How have AI-based translation tools affected your willingness to mentor or supervise student translators or interns?

More willing than before

Equally willing

Less willing

No longer willing

Not applicable (I don't mentor or supervise)

BLOCK 8: Your Evolving Role as a Translator: Work, Identity, and the Future of the Profession

For each statement below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree, based on your beliefs or experiences in a professional setting.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly Agree

I don't know

Q26. Work Impact + Identity

*I noticed that my work has shifted toward post-editing or revision rather than original translation (e.g., my client provides a pre-translated text and asks me to improve it).

*I believe that specializing in highly technical or niche subject areas helps translators remain professionally relevant in the face of AI.

*I believe that AI-based translation tools can enhance the quality of my translation work.

*I believe that sustaining a career in translation is becoming more difficult due to AI.

Q27. Professional Development, Collaboration, And Outlook

*I am interested in collaborating with peers to respond to AI-related changes.

*I think it is important for students to learn how to work with AI-based translation tools.

*I would benefit from professional development on how to integrate AI-based translation tools into my workflow.

*If I were to start my career over, I would still choose to become a translator.

*I feel comfortable recommending translation as a career to others.

BLOCK 9: Career-sustainability Strategies, and Support Needs

Q33. What strategies are you using to sustain your career? Select all that apply.

Specializing in a niche or high-demand domain

Pursuing additional training or upskilling

Educating clients about human translation

Collaborating with others

Expanding the range of services I offer (e.g., writing, editing, revision, post-editing, localization, transcreation, audiovisual translation, plain or easy or simple language writing, copywriting, training, consulting, media accessibility)

None of the above

BLOCK 10: Demographics

Q35. What is your primary working language pair and direction?

English to French

French to English

Other (please specify):

Q36. What is your age?

18–25

26–40

41–64

65 and over

Q37. How many years of professional translation experience do you have?

0–2 years

3–5 years

6–10 years

11–20 years

21+ years

Q38. What gender do you identify with?

Man

Woman

Non-binary

Prefer to self-describe:

Prefer not to answer

Q39. What is your employment status?

Independent translator

Translator at an agency or Language Service Provider (LSP)

In-house translator (not at an LSP or translation agency)

Academic

Other (please specify)

Q40. Do you specialize in any particular domain(s)? Select all that apply.

Industry, engineering and technical

Sports

Retail

Health and medicine

Finance

Administration and management

Communication

Real estate

Humanities and social sciences

Insurance

Tourism and leisure

Natural sciences

Media and entertainment

Environment

Law

Arts

Education

Information technology

Generalist

Economy

Human resources

Other (please specify)