Current Usage, Sentiment, and Future Expectations of AI

Among Language Service Providers and Remote Interpreters

boostlingo

Contents

Executive Summary

Amidst the rapid technological advancements and concerns over AI, this study of over 250 language industry stakeholders found that AI's integration into language services is still in its formative phase.

It also concluded that there are significant benefits around a well-integrated AI system in language services. Perhaps more importantly, it identified key trends and patterns around AI that could be used to help plan for integration and to enhance language service operations.

Stakeholders across the industry are interested in and optimistic about AI tools in all areas surveyed.

The areas where AI tools saw the most positive feedback were:

- Operation workflows

- Decision making for providers

- Customer experience enhancements during services

- Aid for human interpreters and translators

Creating a plan for integration and dedicating resources to AI leads to greater awareness of and success when using the new technology, leading to increased internal efficiency and greater customer satisfaction.

Organizations looking to implement AI into their operations or language services should consider:

- Investing in AI education and training for their staff, given the newness and unfamiliarity with specific AI tools.

- Engaging in transparent marketing and client education about the strengths and limitations of AI in language services to set realistic expectations.

- Collaborating with tech companies like Boostlingo and other LSPs to share insights and best practices for AI integration.

- Prioritizing AI tools that augment human skills rather than attempting to replace them, keeping in mind the value of cultural and emotional nuances offered by human interpreters and translators that AI cannot adequately capture.

- Conducting regular feedback sessions with both in-house teams and customers to continuously improve AI-powered services and address concerns.

The Boostlingo "State of AI in Language Services" Whitepaper offers a fresh view of the language industry's perspective on AI. This report provides readers with insights into the challenges and concerns around the integration of AI into language services but also demonstrates the potential value of the technology.

The Whitepaper was driven by Boostlingo's commitment to enhancing and reimagining language services through innovative technology, and by recognizing that AI's integration presents both opportunities and challenges that industry stakeholders need to be prepared for. It's essential to differentiate between "smart technology" and "artificial intelligence." While smart technology operates based on predefined algorithms, AI learns from data, mirroring human-like learning and problem-solving. In language services, smart tech can enhance workflows, but AI offers transformative advancements. **This report will be examining the industry's perspective of AI and not smart technology.**

Research Objectives, Methodology, and Demographics

Boostlingo set out to identify current usage, sentiment towards, and future expectation of AI in the language services industry.
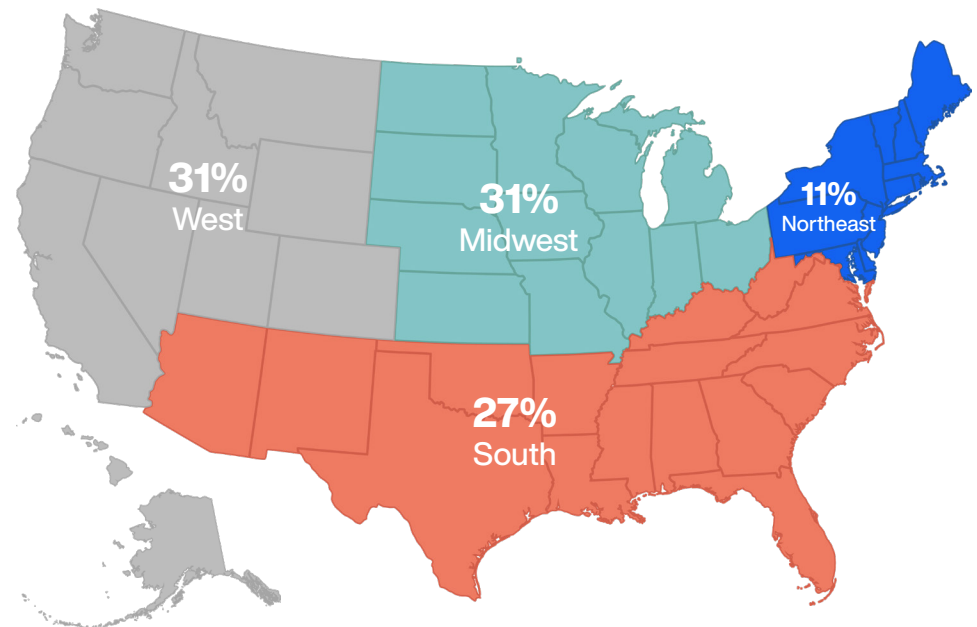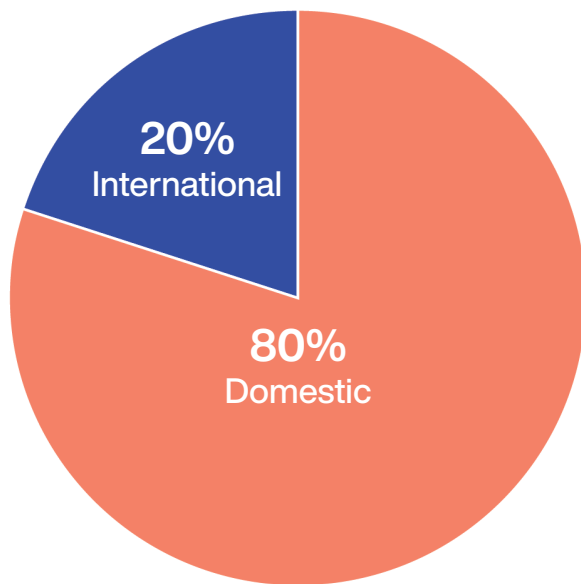
To drive this survey, we asked more than 250 language industry stakeholders – language service providers and on-demand remote interpreters from around the world – a series of questions about how AI is currently being integrated into their workflows, their perceptions and feelings towards it, and their predictions for how AI might shape the future of the language services industry. This comprehensive inquiry aimed to capture both the quantitative metrics of AI adoption and the nuanced, qualitative perspectives of those actively engaged in the field.

Research Objectives, Methodology, and Demographics

Four-fifths of LSP respondents work for organizations that are headquartered in the United States, while the remaining 20% are headquartered internationally.

Providers working at organizations within the US have a fairly even distribution across different regions: Northeast (NE) at 11%, South (S) at 27%, Midwest (MW) at 31%, and West (W) also at 31%. This diverse sample ensures a comprehensive understanding of the language service industry across various scales and regions.
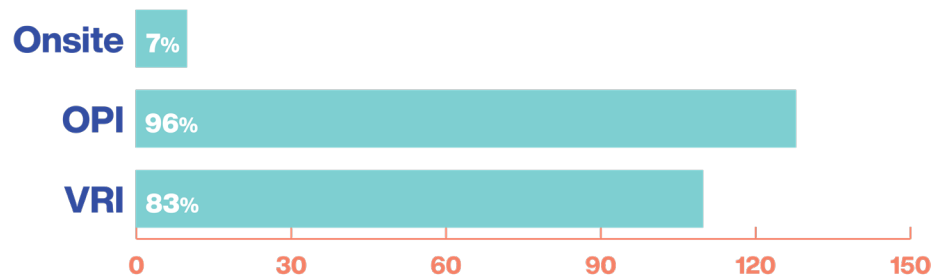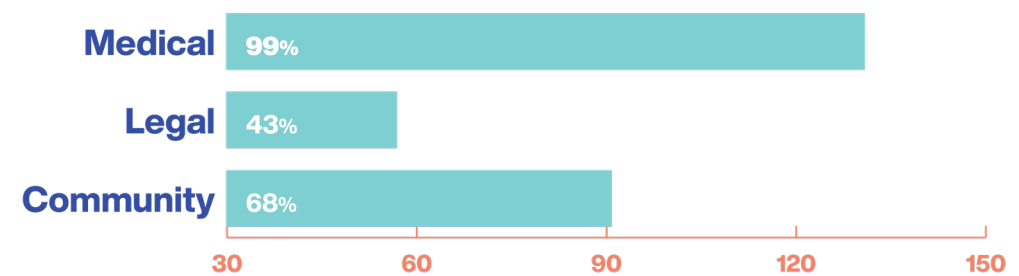
Every interpreter reported working remotely, while only 7% reported also delivering services onsite.

The majority of practitioners deliver services via over-the-phone interpreting while a significant amount also deliver through video remote interpreting. **Almost 80% of the feedback came from interpreters who work full-time as an interpreter.** The survey also gathered input on what industries interpreters work in and what languages they interpret in.

In what contexts do you deliver interpretation services?

Context	Value
Onsite	7%
OPI	96%
VRI	83%

What industry do you interpret?

Industry	Value
Medical	99%
Legal	43%
Community	68%

An Overview of
AI in Language Services

With the adoption of AI becoming more mainstream through translation tools like DeepL and others like ChatGPT that aid in operations, AI is moving from novelty to a key part of workflows for language service providers.

The adoption of AI in language services is becoming more mainstream as LSPs understand AI tools can significantly improve efficiency in a number of tasks and processes.

The survey revealed that of Language Service Providers, 44% of respondents reported integrating AI tools into their operations, of which 75% are leveraging AI predominantly for translation services, while a significant 34% use it to streamline operations.

Are you currently using any AI-powered tools in your language service operations?

What AI tools are you using?

86% of LSPs that have integrated AI in their workflows noted a marked improvement.

"AI tools for written translation in combination with human translators speeds up the workflow and turnaround time for document translation jobs. In addition, AI provides faster support when utilizing thesaurus and dictionary."

Has the incorporation of AI improved your workflows?

8%
N/A

6%
No

86%
Yes
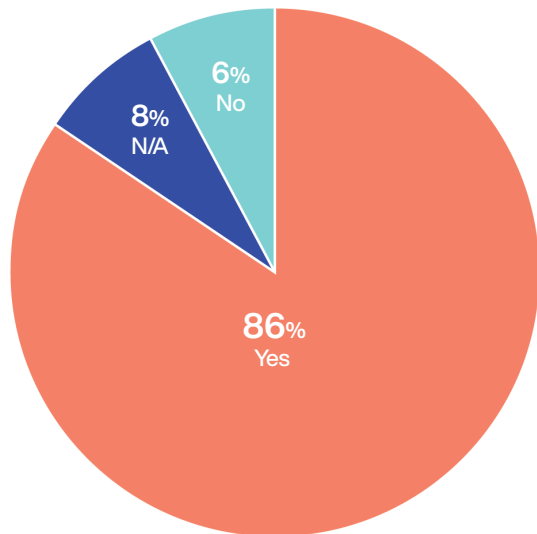
Has AI improved the quality of interpretation and translation services that you deliver?

30%
N/A

60%
Yes

10%
No
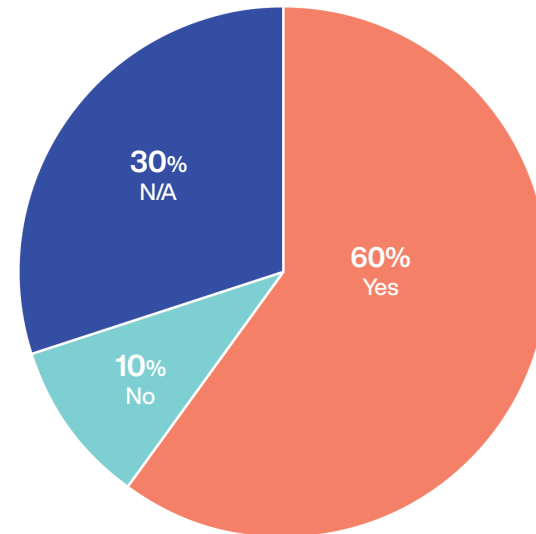
Key takeaways from LSPs that are currently integrating AI

Efficiency and Speed

- AI has streamlined workflows and reduced repetitive tasks, enabling professionals to handle more projects rapidly.

- Tools like Machine Translation (MT) have accelerated the document translation process, and in some cases, significantly reduced turnaround times.

Sales and Communication

- AI-driven chatbots are increasingly employed for customer interactions and service promotions.

- In sales roles, AI has assisted in composing various communications, from cold emails to call scripts.

Operational Enhancements

- Automation tools, especially those linking different software, remove the need for manual repetitive tasks, allowing for better time management.

- AI assists in connecting systems and ensuring consistency across operations.

Document and Media Processing

- AI aids in the transcription of audio and video, and its translation.

- It's being employed for auto-captioning videos, though with varying levels of accuracy.

Areas for Caution or Improvement with AI in Language Services

Our survey uncovered several themes among LSPs currently integrating AI around its limitations in language services:

- While AI offers speed, its accuracy can sometimes be compromised.

- Using AI requires thorough post-processing checks, especially in translation tasks.

- LSPs view AI as a complementary tool to human expertise, but are not confident in it as a replacement.

- Some areas, like American Sign Language, remain largely untouched by AI, but there's potential for future development.

- The learning curve of implementing AI can initially impact productivity

Current Usage of AI by Remote Interpreters

Remote interpreters, given the unique challenges of their global distribution, exhibit a specific pattern in AI adoption. While a majority are less aware of AI's existence, those who have embraced it recognize its capacity to significantly enhance their services and streamline workflows.

Current Usage of AI by Remote Interpreters

The survey revealed that 1 out of 2 on-demand remote interpreters are not familiar with AI tools in interpreting. 90% are not using AI-powered tools in their interpreting encounters. Those that are reported using terminology management and live captioning tools.

Are you using any AI-powered tools in your interpreting encounters?
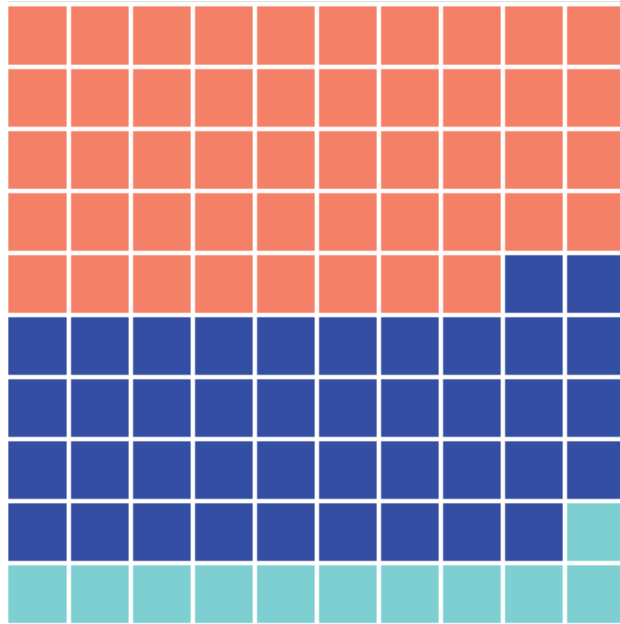
- I'm not familiar with AI Tools in interpreting (48%)
- No (41%)
- Yes (10%)

If you answered yes to using AI-powered tools, which tools do you use?

Terminology management tools	Live captioning tools	Chat GPT or other AI tools	Speech recognition software	Fake background AI	Google Translate/ Search	DeepL
42%	39%	23%	8%	8%	8%	8%
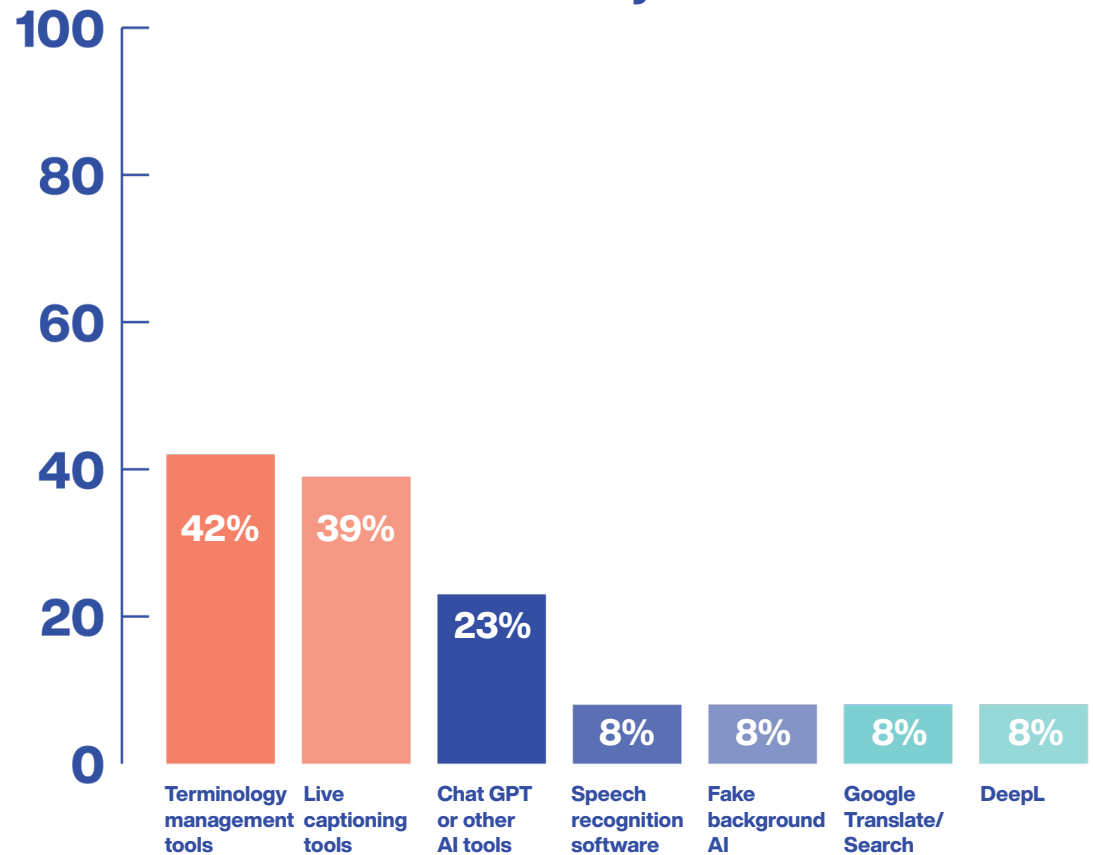
84% of remote interpreters that use AI tools noted a marked improvement in their workflows and quality of interpretation services.

Has AI improved the quality of interpretation services that you deliver?

8% N/A

8% No

84% Yes
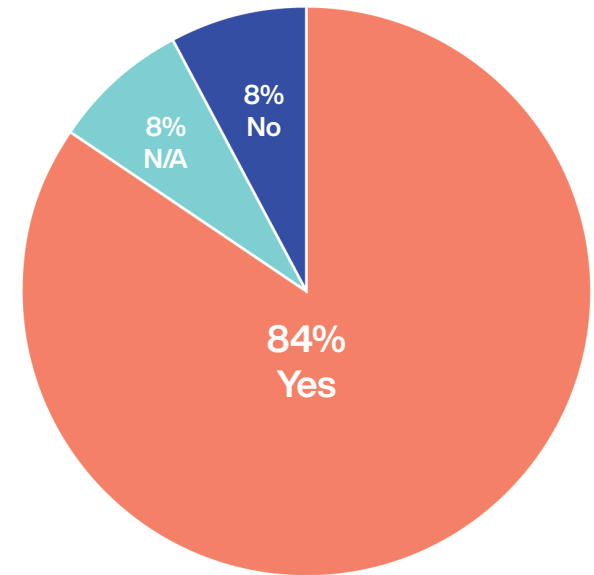
Benefits:

- **Enhanced Vocabulary Assistance:** Respondents appreciate AI's capability to quickly identify and provide new terms during live sessions. This feature is especially handy when confronted with unfamiliar words or terminologies.

- **Effective Note-taking:** For longer sessions or speeches, AI-driven live captioning tools, like Google Live Caption, allowed respondents to capture spoken content verbatim. They later refer back to these captions in their interpretations.

- **Accent Clarification:** In instances where speakers have heavy accents or use idiomatic phrases, AI tools can assist in clarifying the spoken content. This reduced the need for respondents to repeatedly ask for clarifications.

- **Support in Medical Interpretation:** The ability to quickly search for medical terminology provides added accuracy in specialized interpreting scenarios.

Challenges and Considerations

AI in Remote Interpreting

The integration of AI tools into remote interpreting, albeit in its early stages of adoption, has highlighted a few challenges around using the technology in the delivery of language services. Our survey identified the following challenges when adopting AI in remote interpretation:

- **Reliability Concerns:**
  While AI tools can be invaluable, there's a shared sentiment of caution. Respondents often double-check the information provided by AI, recognizing that it's not infallible. Many choose not to solely rely on AI due to potential inaccuracies.

- **Context Sensitivity:**
  Certain tools might struggle with nuanced, context-sensitive interpretations. While specific term translations can be beneficial, respondents find the results to be a mixed bag. The semantic construction and contextual significance of phrases often challenge AI's current capabilities.

- **Distractions:**
  On some occasions, AI tools might provide out-of-context terms that don't align with the conversation's flow. This can distract respondents and potentially disrupt the interpreting process.

Sentiment towards AI in the Language Industry

Sentiment towards AI in the Language Industry

As AI continues to make its way into various parts of the language industry, understanding the sentiment of stakeholders towards this technology can serve as a gauge for how well it's meeting their needs and expectations. For this section of the survey, we asked respondents to react to statements about their experiences and feelings towards AI.
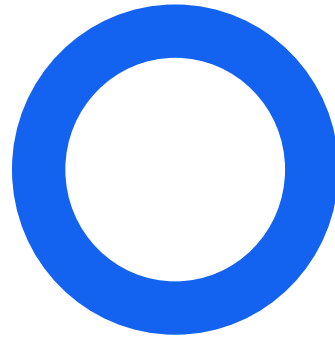
Challenges and Considerations

LSP Sentiment Towards AI

A majority (57%) of Language Service Providers agree or strongly agree that there are significant challenges or issues related to the implementation and use of AI in the language industry. This points towards a need for further refinement in AI tools, resources, and safeguards catering to this industry.

There are perceived challenges with AI in Language Services with three segments:

- 12% Neutral
- 31% Disagree
- 57% Agree
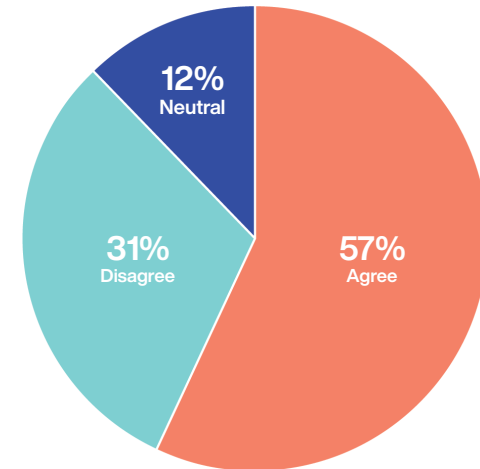
Despite challenges, LSPs remain cautious and optimistic about AI

The survey revealed both caution and optimism towards AI in the language industry. 42% of LSPs reported a positive impression towards AI, while 39% reported a neutral or cautious stance. Only 19% of respondents expressed a negative view on the technology, indicating a general openness to the potential benefits and applications of AI in their operations.

Impression of AI in Language Industry with three segments:

- 19% Negative
- 42% Positive
- 39% Neutral
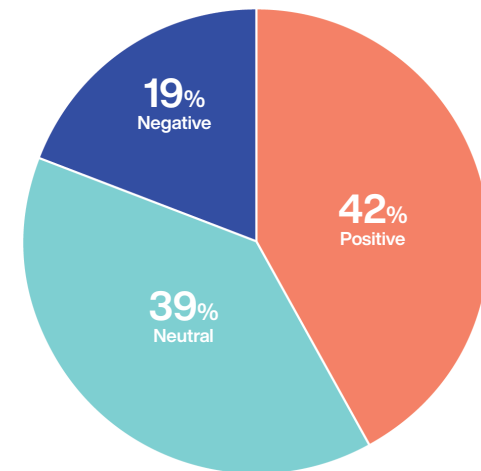
Client Demand for AI Services

This survey uncovered that 1 in 4 LSPs have clients who have shown interest in AI-services. While there is clear interest from customers in harnessing the capabilities of AI, a preference for human-led services persists. Among the AI services requested, there were:
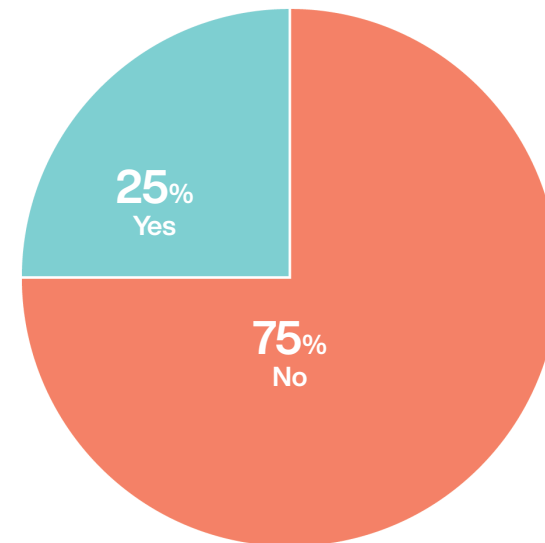
- **Translation Services:**
  - Generic translation
  - Machine-aided translations
  - Language recognition

- **Interpretation Services:**
  - For rare languages

- **Captioning and Transcription Services:**
  - Live captioning
  - Closed captioning
  - Multilingual transcription

Client demand for AI services from LSPs

25% Yes

75% No

Some clients are using AI apps or tools for on-the-spot translation when human interpreters aren't available. However, while the allure of cost savings and efficiency has driven some towards AI solutions, **there remains a significant segment that values human expertise, especially when it comes to capturing cultural nuances and language intricacies.**

Remote Interpreters Sentiment Towards AI

Our survey results reveal a notable gap in the understanding and awareness of AI among remote interpreters. Many respondents displayed either a neutral or uninformed stance on the technology's challenges and opportunities. Specifically, 44% of remote interpreters remained neutral when questioned about significant challenges or problems in interpreting, while 37% either agreed or strongly agreed.

Often, remote interpreters' only engagement with technology comes via their employer. For instance, while AI might be making headlines, a remote interpreter based in Guatemala, using only a company-provided laptop, may not have had the opportunity to explore the subject in depth. This underscores the need for dedicated resources

"I am a bit uninformed, I see people talking about AI on the internet but I don't have a ton of knowledge about it yet."

There are significant challenges related to AI in interpreting:

19% Disagree
44% Neutral
37% Agree
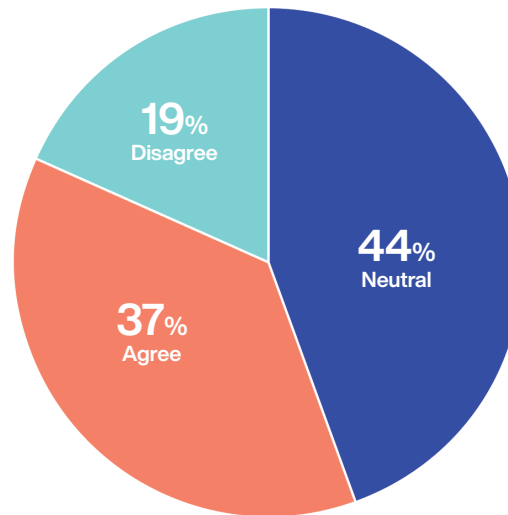
I am excited at the new opportunities AI represents for my work:

25% Disagree
40% Neutral
35% Agree
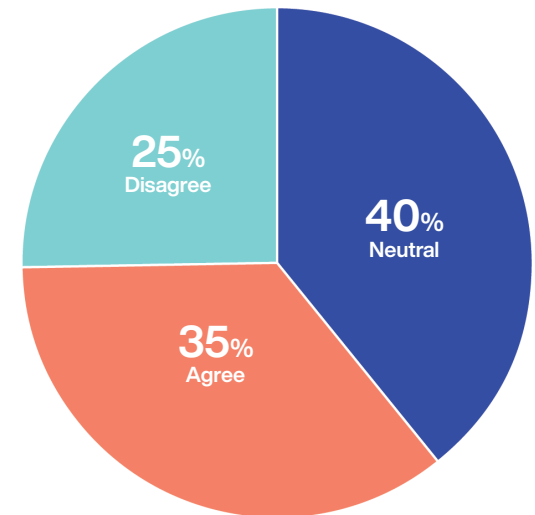
Fear of Being Replaced: Remote Interpreters Perceptions of AI

Remote interpreters have varied feelings about how AI fits into their profession. 40% of remote interpreters are concerned about AI's potential to jeopardize their jobs. 36% reported not being worried.

Others shared that AI is limited in capturing nuances in speech, cultural understanding, and emotional intelligence, and is not reliable in critical interpreting scenarios like medical interpreting. On the other hand, some respondents expressed curiosity and optimism about AI's potential to enhance efficiency in interpretation, suggesting a combination of AI and human expertise could be the way forward.

I am worried about AI replacing my work as an interpreter:

Pie chart:
- 40% Agree/Strongly Agree
- 36% Disagree/Strongly Disagree
- 24% Neutral

Bar chart:
- Strongly Agree: 20%
- Agree: 20%
- Neutral: 23%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly Disagree: 24%
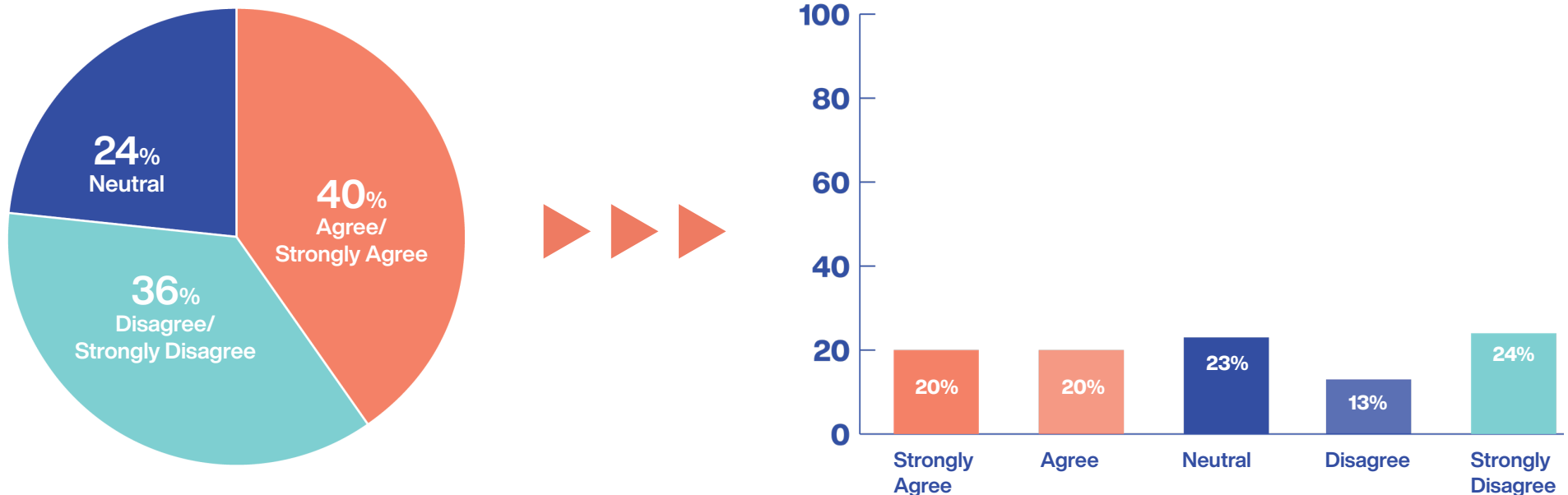
Reliability of AI in Language Services

Language service providers and remote interpreters play a pivotal role in the potential of AI in language services. They possess a hands-on understanding of the intricacies involved in translation, captioning, and interpretation. In our survey, we uncovered their perceptions and beliefs regarding the reliability of AI in these specific areas, shedding light on the confidence, skepticism, or ambivalence the industry holds towards this emerging technology.
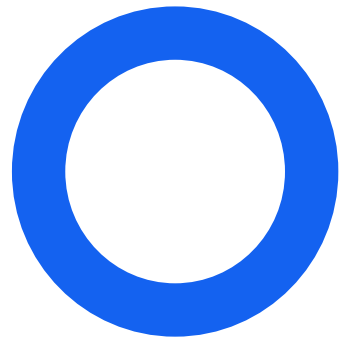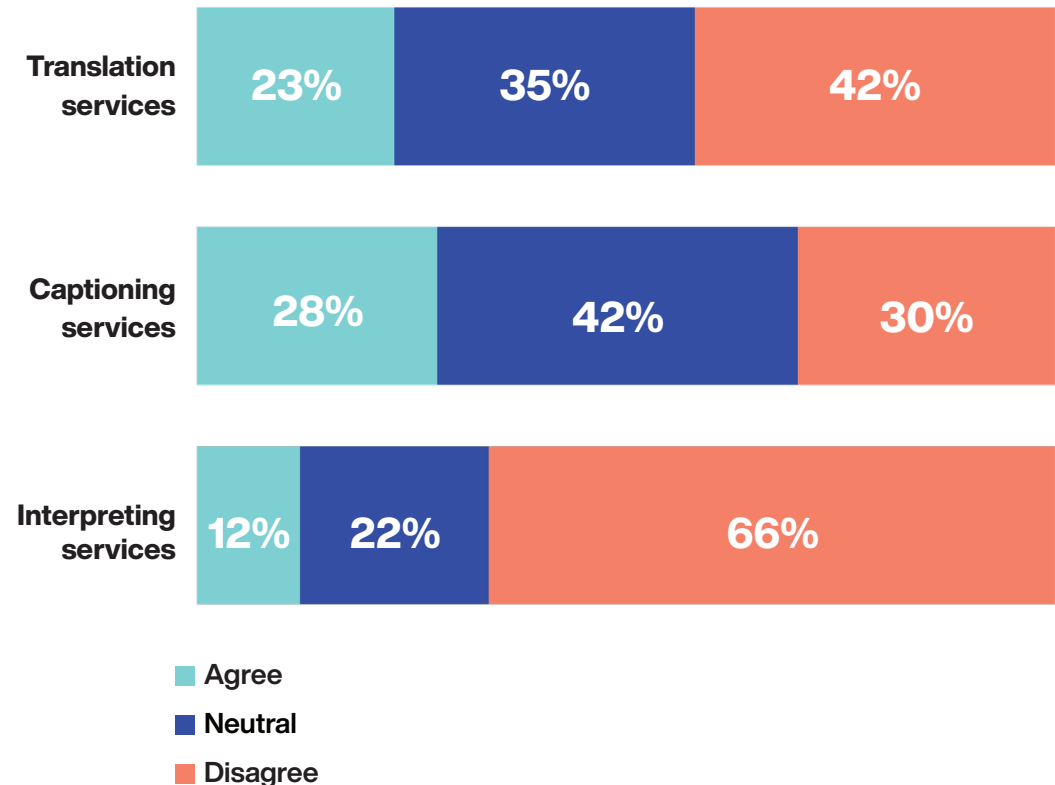
LSP Perspective: Reliability of AI in Language Services

AI's reliability in language services, according to LSPs, varies significantly depending on the specific service in question. Interpretation, which often requires nuanced understanding, cultural contexts, and real-time processing, is viewed with the most skepticism, with two-thirds of respondents doubting AI's effectiveness.

On the other hand, captioning, which can be more straightforward in comparison, sees a more balanced distribution of opinions, with roughly equal segments of respondents expressing positive, negative, or neutral views. Translation services, an area where AI has made significant strides in recent years, also faces skepticism but has a large undecided portion, possibly indicating that many LSPs are awaiting further advancements or evidence before making a conclusive judgment.

Can AI be relied on for:

| Service	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Translation services	23%	35%	42%
Captioning services	28%	42%	30%
Interpreting services	12%	22%	66%

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

Remote Interpreter Perspective: Reliability of AI in Interpreting

Remote interpreters, who are at the frontlines of real-time interpreting challenges, hold discerning views on the potential of AI in their profession. According to our survey, a substantial 55% of these professionals either disagree or strongly disagree that AI can be reliably deployed for interpretation services, hinting at reservations about the technology's current capability to handle the nuances and complexities of live interpretation. **Conversely, only 10% are in agreement, showcasing their confidence in AI's capabilities.**

A significant 35% remain neutral, perhaps indicating a wait-and-see attitude or a need for further information and experience before forming a solid opinion.

AI can be relied on for interpretation services:

10% Agree

35% Neutral

55% Disagree
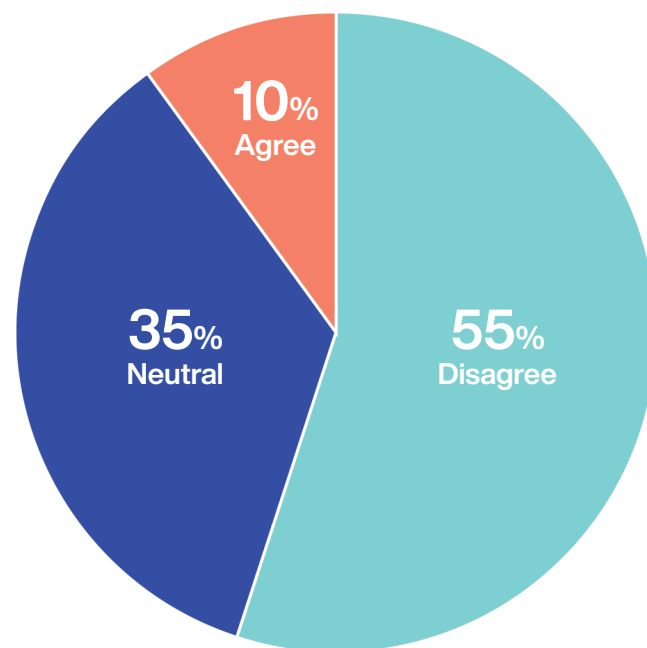
Future Expectations of AI in Language Services

As technology rapidly evolves, so do expectations about its integration into various sectors. In language services, stakeholders are keenly watching the trajectory of AI and its potential implications for the future. We asked LSPs and remote interpreters about their expectations of AI in the next 5 years, its impact on the job market, and whether or not they have plans to adopt it as a tool.

Evolution of AI over the next 5 years

The survey responses provide diverse insights into how LSPs perceive the evolution of AI over the next five years. While providers recognize the potential of AI, there's a consistent emphasis on the irreplaceable value that human professionals bring to nuanced, culturally-sensitive, and situation-specific language services. There are a few key themes and sentiments that emerge from these responses:

- **Cautious Optimism & Curiosity:** Many respondents believe in AI's potential as a tool but express uncertainty about how it will integrate into language services.

- **Irreplaceability of Human Touch:** A prevalent sentiment is that while AI may assist with basic translations or tasks, it cannot replace the nuanced skills, cultural sensitivity, and situational adaptability of human translators and interpreters.

- **AI in Specific Language Services:** Some respondents highlighted specific areas within the language sector where they see AI having more influence, like translations, and expanding services to rural locations, while being skeptical about its role in others, such as interpreting, especially for encounters with nuanced cultural context, 3D expressions like sign language, or in critical situations like legal and medical.

- **Economic & Job Impact:** Concerns emerge about AI exerting pressure on human interpreters with regard to pricing and workloads. There's an acknowledgment that while AI could optimize processes and improve productivity, it might also lead to job losses, especially in segments like captioning or non-specialized tasks.

- **AI Limitations:** A recurring point is AI's current limitations, especially with handling accents, inaccuracies, and nuances in various languages. Many believe that while the technology might improve, it will require a human editor for accuracy and cultural competency.

- **Industry Disruption:** A few respondents see AI as a major disruptor in the language industry, potentially replacing human roles, especially as AI becomes more sophisticated. However, others see it as a complementary tool that will improve services but won't entirely replace human expertise.
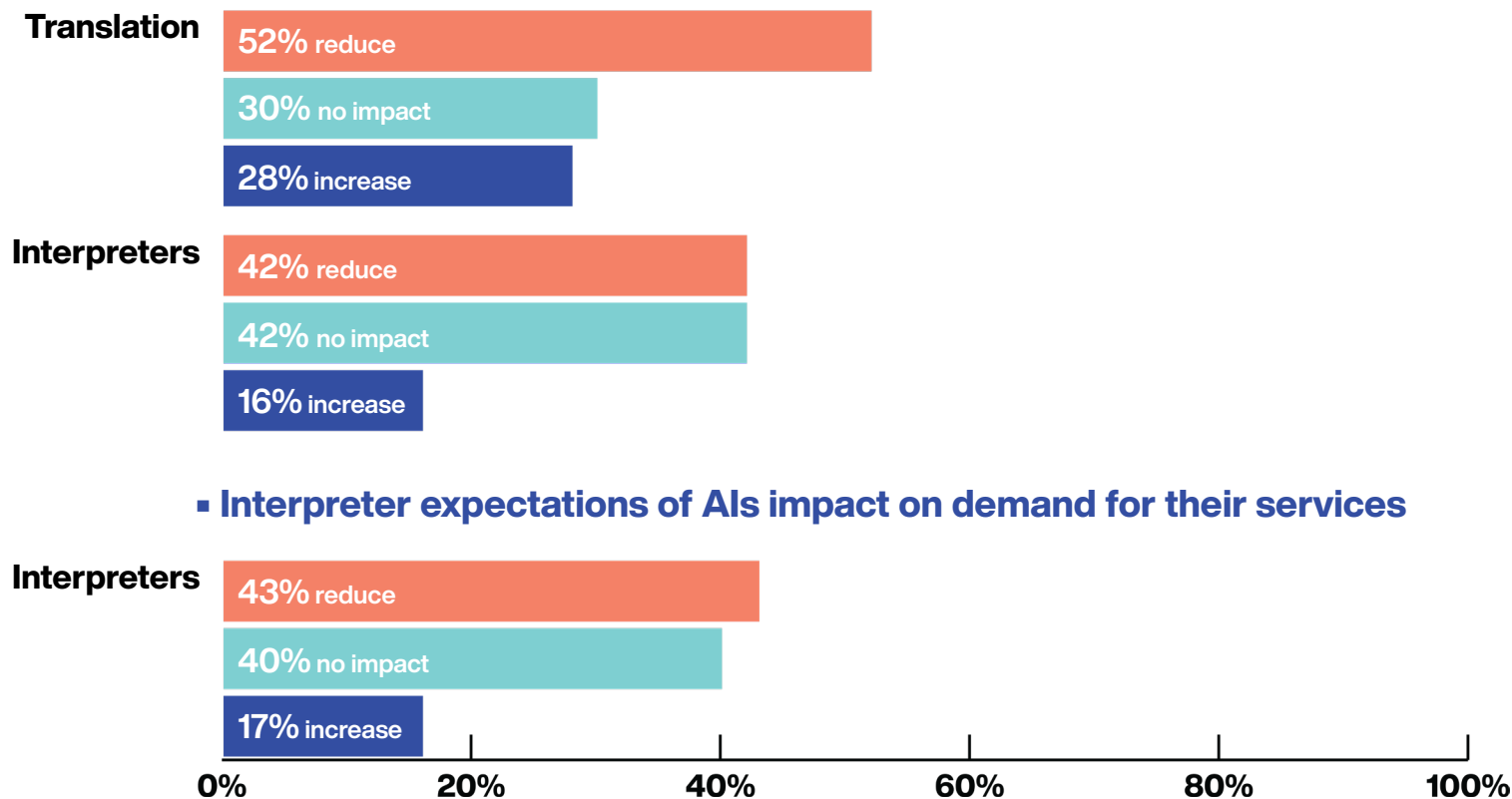
Job Market Impact

In comparing responses of stakeholders' future expectations for AI, we discovered some concern around AI replacing human jobs.

52% of LSPs responded they expect the advancement of AI will reduce or significantly reduce demand for human translators.

▪ LSP expectations of AIs impact on the demand for human services

Translation
- 52% reduce
- 30% no impact
- 28% increase

Interpreters
- 42% reduce
- 42% no impact
- 16% increase

▪ Interpreter expectations of AIs impact on demand for their services

Interpreters
- 43% reduce
- 40% no impact
- 17% increase

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

LSPs: Anticipated Adoption of AI Tools

46% of LSPs plan to increase their usage of AI tools in the next 2 years. 41% are considering it.

Do you plan to increase your usage of AI tools in the next 2 years?

13% No
46% Yes
41% Maybe
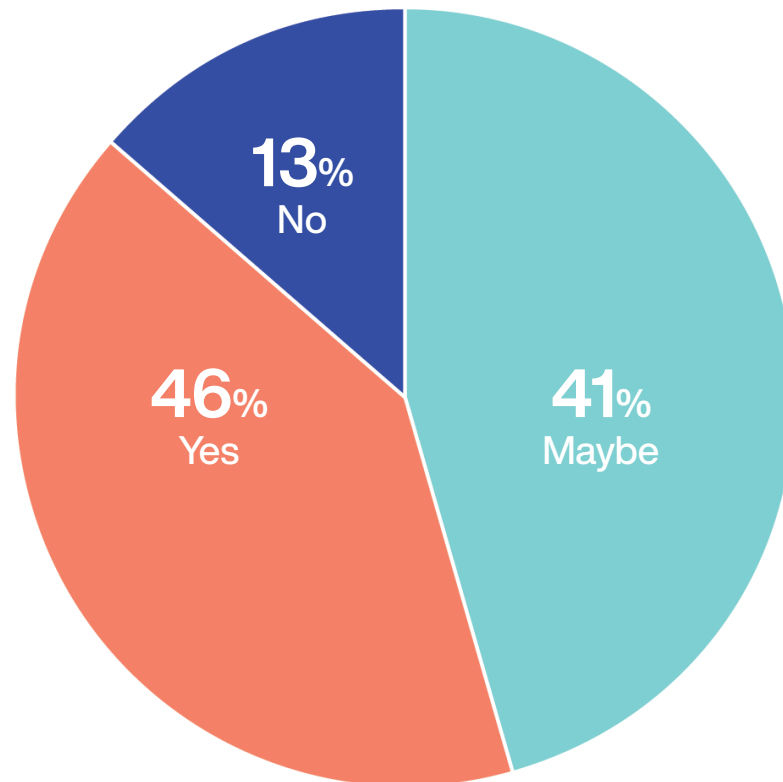
Anticipated adoption of AI Tools among LSPs

Language Service Providers (LSPs) are actively considering the incorporation of AI tools.

AI's potential is especially observed in the realms of translation, including machine translation and captioning. However, its role in interpreting remains a subject of contention. Specific AI tools, such as ChatGPT and other machine translation services, have been highlighted, with some providers also contemplating the use of AI-powered interpretation platforms. The potential for AI to handle rare languages or assist in areas like subtitles and captions, contingent on improved reliability, is also evident.
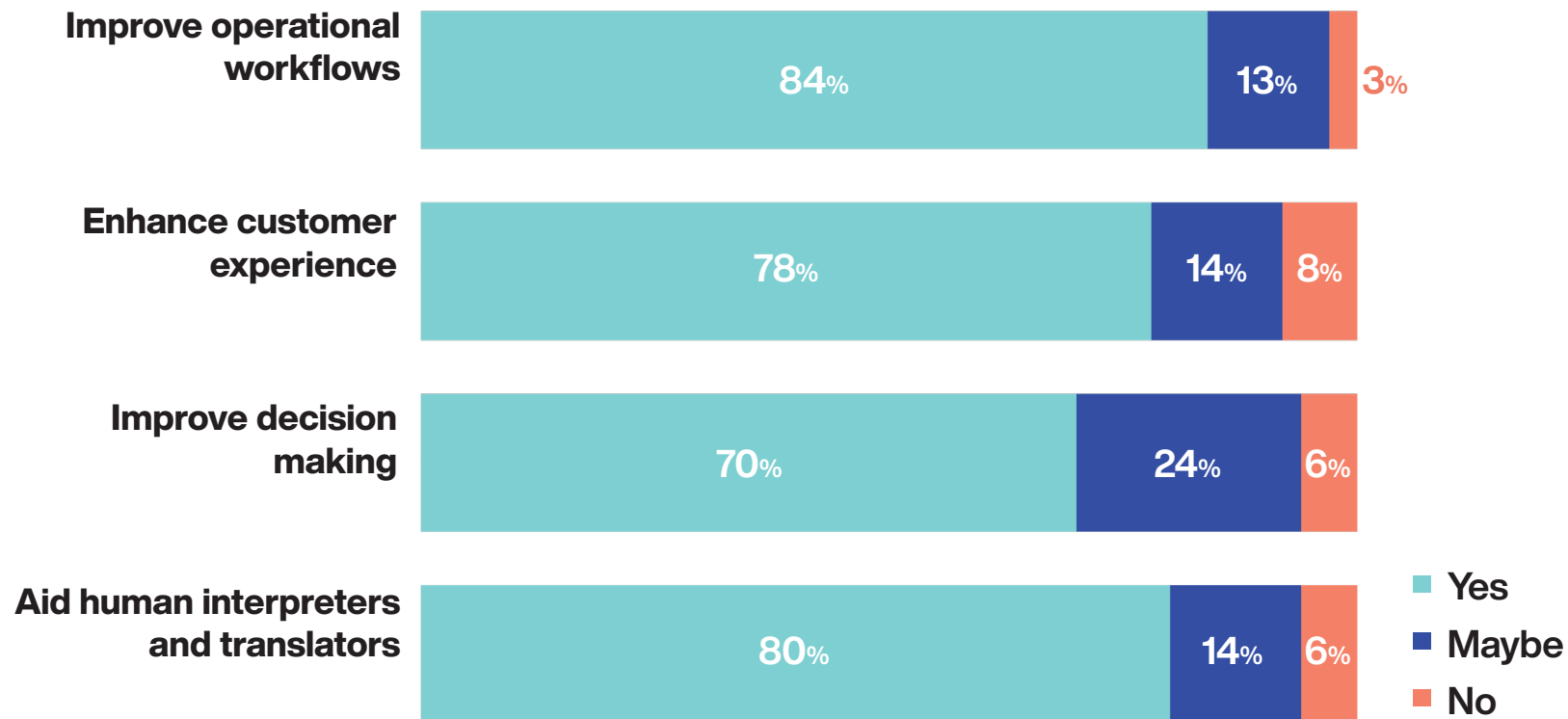
On the operational front, many LSPs anticipate AI to streamline and automate their processes, spanning from HR functions to transcription and content creation. Yet, there's a palpable sense of caution. Numerous respondents express uncertainty about which specific AI tools to integrate or emphasize the need for further maturity in the technology, especially in interpreting. While some LSPs are actively gauging the market, awaiting technological advancements and clarity, others have opted for discretion, keeping their AI-related plans confidential. This dynamic landscape underscores the industry's careful navigation amidst the promises and challenges posed by AI.

28% of remote interpreters plan to increase their usage of AI tools in the next 2 years. 52% are considering it.

Do you plan to increase your usage of AI tools in the next 2 years?

- 20% No
- 52% Maybe
- 28% Yes
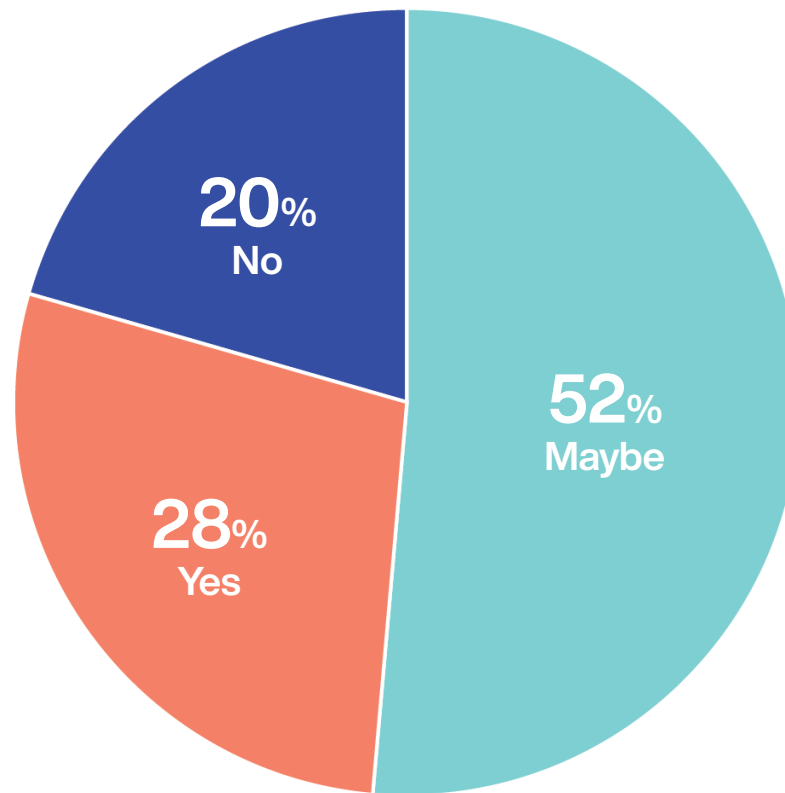
Anticipated adoption of AI tools among remote interpreters

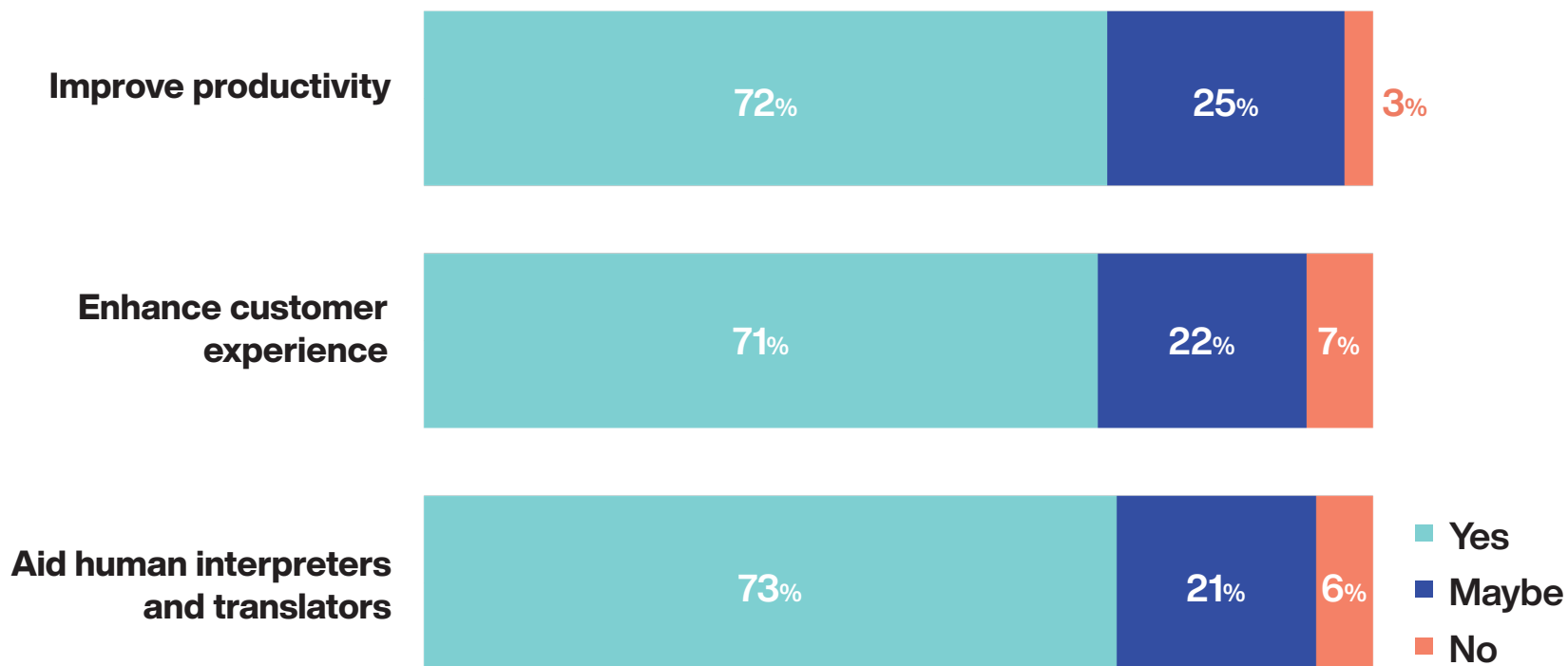Many on-demand remote interpreters expressed interest in using AI tools like DeepL and ChatGPT for quick term searches and translations during customer interactions. There's a significant interest in captioning and terminology tools to aid in language tasks. However, a substantial portion is still unfamiliar with specific AI tools, indicating a potential need for further education or training in this domain.

Remote interpreter interest in AI tools by area of impact

Area	Yes	Maybe	No
Improve productivity	72%	25%	3%
Enhance customer experience	71%	22%	7%
Aid human interpreters and translators	73%	21%	6%

Legend:
- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Conclusion

Challenges and Ethical Concerns

The advent of AI in the language industry, while promising, has been met with a series of challenges and ethical concerns that demand attention. At the forefront is the potential threat to human employment in the sector. As AI systems become more sophisticated and adaptable, the fear of them replacing human roles, especially in interpretation, remains prevalent. Beyond economic implications, there is a deeper concern about the accuracy and reliability of AI solutions. Language is inherently nuanced, culturally embedded, and ever-evolving. AI's current inability to grasp these subtleties could lead to misinterpretations, particularly in sensitive contexts like healthcare and law. Moreover, data privacy and the confidentiality of translations done through AI platforms are valid concerns. Using AI without clear disclaimers about its limitations might inadvertently create misconceptions about its reliability.

Opportunities for the Way Forward

Despite the challenges, the horizon is filled with opportunities for AI to harmoniously coexist and even elevate the language industry. Collaboration is key. The industry must come together, fostering dialogues between tech developers, LSPs, and language professionals to build AI tools that are both powerful and responsible. The blend of human expertise and AI capabilities can result in hybrid models where AI handles volume and speed, while humans ensure quality and cultural relevance. Furthermore, the administrative segment of the language industry can significantly benefit from AI's efficiency, from streamlined workflows to optimized customer interfaces. By positioning AI as a supportive tool rather than a replacement, the industry can harness its potential without sidelining human professionals. Continuous education, robust regulations, and transparency with customers about AI's capabilities will be paramount in shaping a future where AI and humans together push the boundaries of what's possible in the language services domain.

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