

LOST IN TRANSLATION- A GLOBAL CHALLENGE FOR BOTH DOCTORS AND PATIENTS

Dr Anxhela Gradeci ¹, Miss Alina Unipan ¹

1Queen’s Hospital, Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

OBJECTIVES

Language barriers are known to contribute to health inequalities resulting in adverse health outcomes. It is essential that healthcare professionals are equipped with the necessary support and resources to assist women in accessing translating services.

METHODS

To gather our doctors' insights regarding their experiences with translation services, we developed a survey comprising 10 questions: 7 with yes/no responses and 3 designed for open-ended feedback. Conducted confidentially, the survey took under 2 minutes to complete. It was distributed to 40 medical professionals, with 72.5% of participants providing feedback.

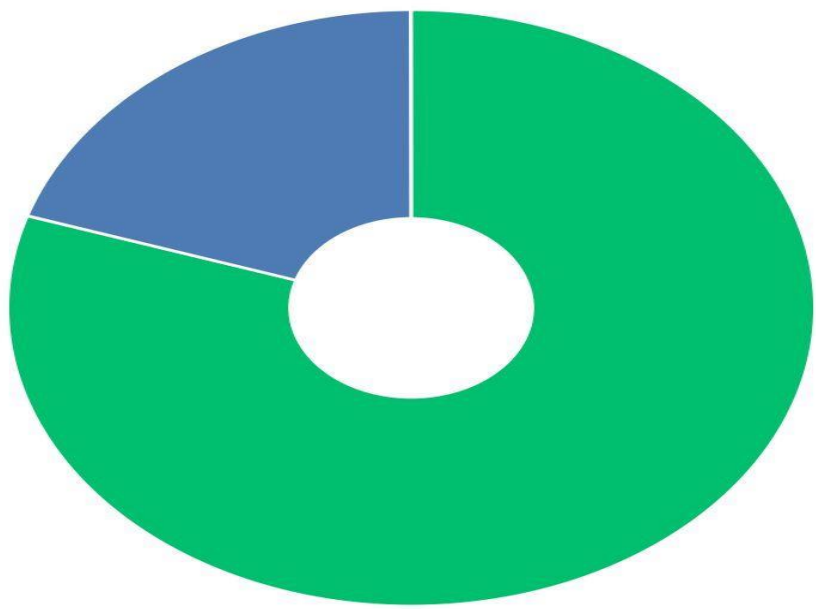
RESULTS

All respondents indicated they utilize translation services in their practice, with frequency ranging from a few times per week to a few times a day. Among the respondents, 79% reported speaking more than one language. Of the 29 respondents, 55% were aware that only approved translators are permitted to serve in a translating capacity routinely, while 45% were not aware of this requirement. Notably, only 1% of respondents were unaware of the local translation services available. Additionally, 83% found these translation services difficult to access, while 17% expressed satisfaction.

Furthermore, 72% of the respondents indicated that they have been asked by colleagues to act as translators, and a significant 90% have relied on colleagues for translation assistance due to time constraints. Only 45% of respondents were familiar with NHS and GMC recommendations concerning the use of translation services.

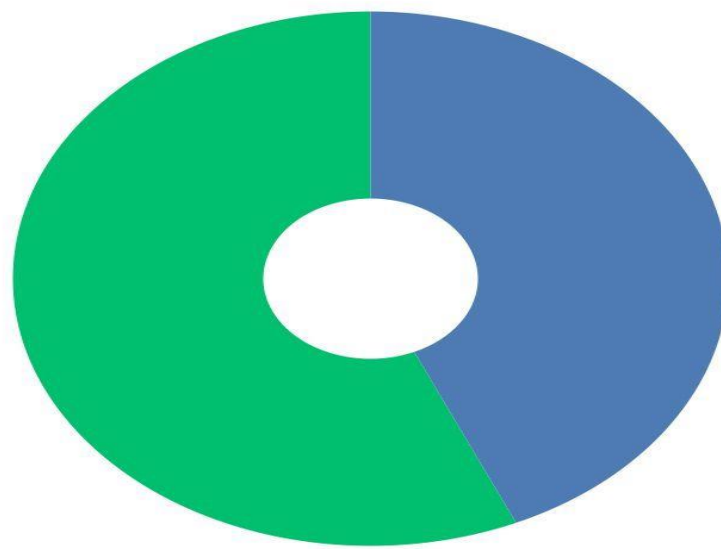
39.3% of respondents reported receiving feedback from patients' families concerning inaccuracies in the translations provided.

1. Do you speak more than one language fluently?



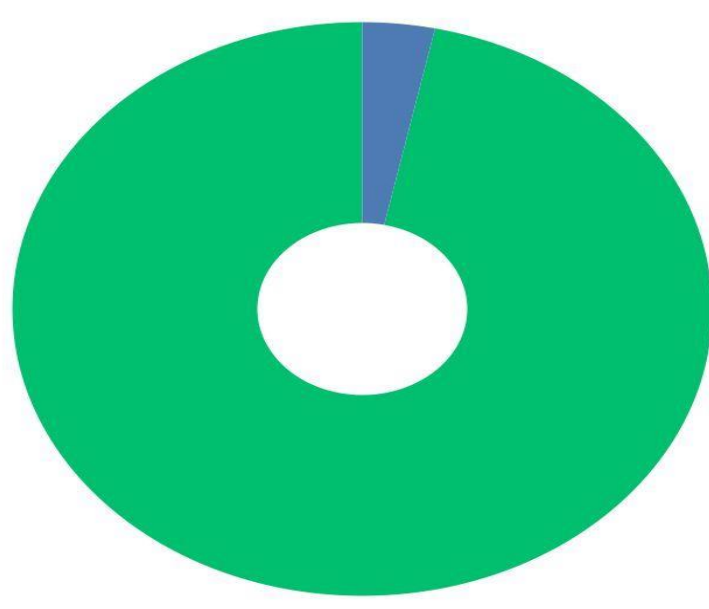
Yes	79% (23)
No	21% (6)

2. Did you know that unless you are an approved translator you should not routinely serve as a translator for your patients?



Yes	55% (16)
No	45% (13)

3. Are you aware that the hospital provide translation services for patients?



Yes	97% (28)
No	3% (1)

4. On an average how often you rely on translation services in your practice?

Responses

29 >

The use of translation services among clinicians varies and is influenced by their proficiency in other languages. Utilizing these services can be challenging and tends to depend on the specific clinical setting. In emergency situations, translation services may be needed several times per week by individual clinicians, and in some cases, multiple requests may occur daily.

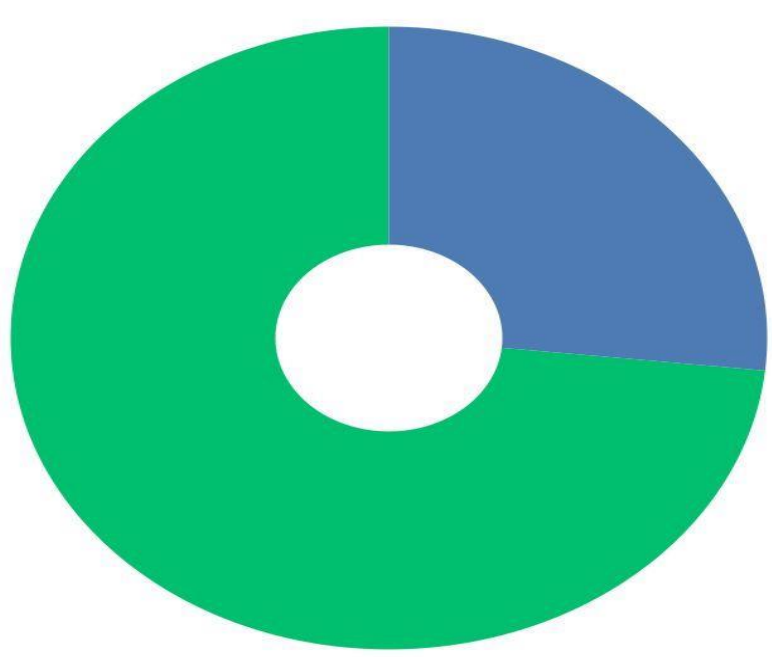
CONCLUSIONS

According to the data from the 2021 Census, 7.1% of the overall population reported English as their second language, 1.5% indicated they could not speak English well, and 0.3% reported being unable to speak English at all (1). It was previously reported that 3 in 5 of people who couldn’t speak English well were women (2). Providing care to a diverse and multicultural population includes the provision of high-quality interpreting services that are readily accessible (3). Furthermore, when language barriers are identified, a designated double appointment slot should be allocated for these patients, thereby minimizing reliance on bilingual staff to address time constraints.

REFERENCES

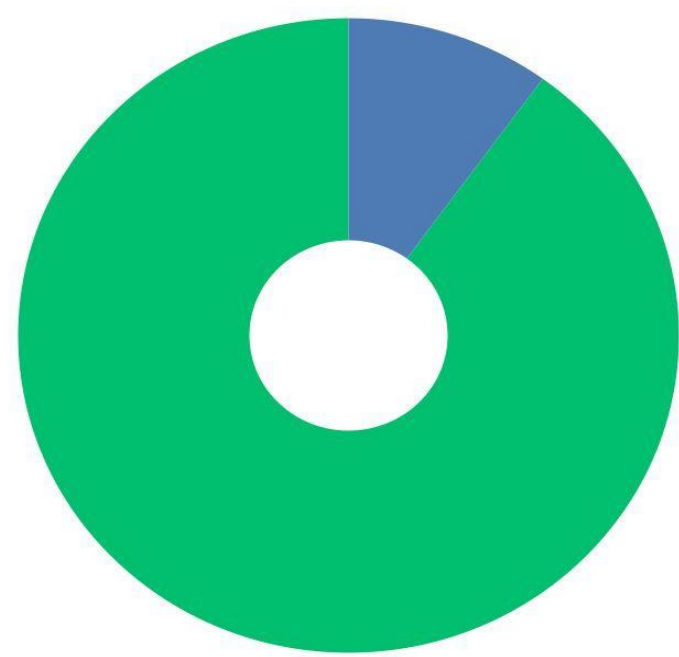
- Census – Office for National Statistics**
 - Office for National Statistics. Census [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2025 May 27]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>
- Ethnicity Facts and Figures: UK Population by Ethnicity – Demographics: English Language Skills (Latest)**
 - Government of the United Kingdom. UK population by ethnicity: demographics: English language skills (latest) [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2025 May 27]. Available from: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/english-language-skills/latest/>
- Language and Digital Barriers to Accessing Maternity Care and Advice**
 - National Health Service. Language and digital barriers to accessing maternity care and advice [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2025 May 27]. Available from: <https://resolution.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Language-and-digital-barriers-to-accessing-maternity-care-and-advice.pdf>

8. Have you ever been asked by your colleagues to provide translation services within clinical practice?



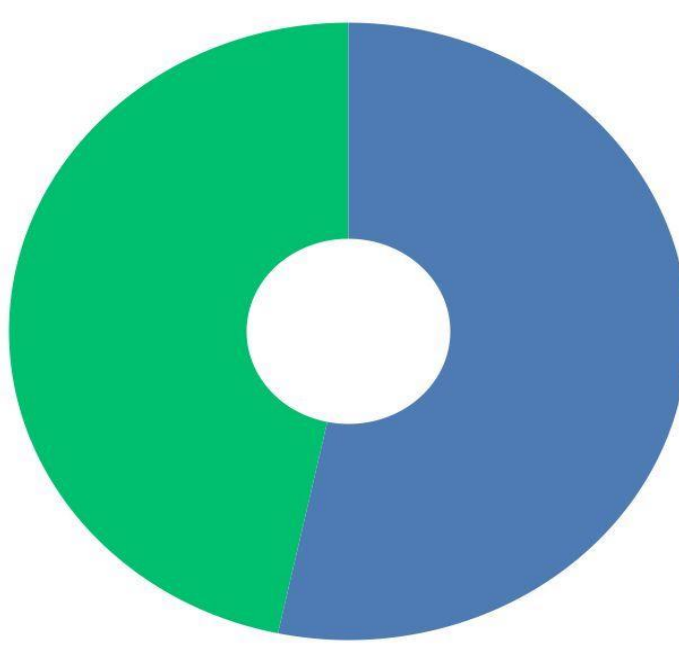
Yes	72% (21)
No	28% (8)

9. Have you ever asked colleagues to provide translation within clinical practice because time restrains?



Yes	90% (27)
No	10% (3)

10. Are you familiar with regulations around translation services_ NHS England and GMC recommendations?



Yes	45% (13)
No	55% (16)