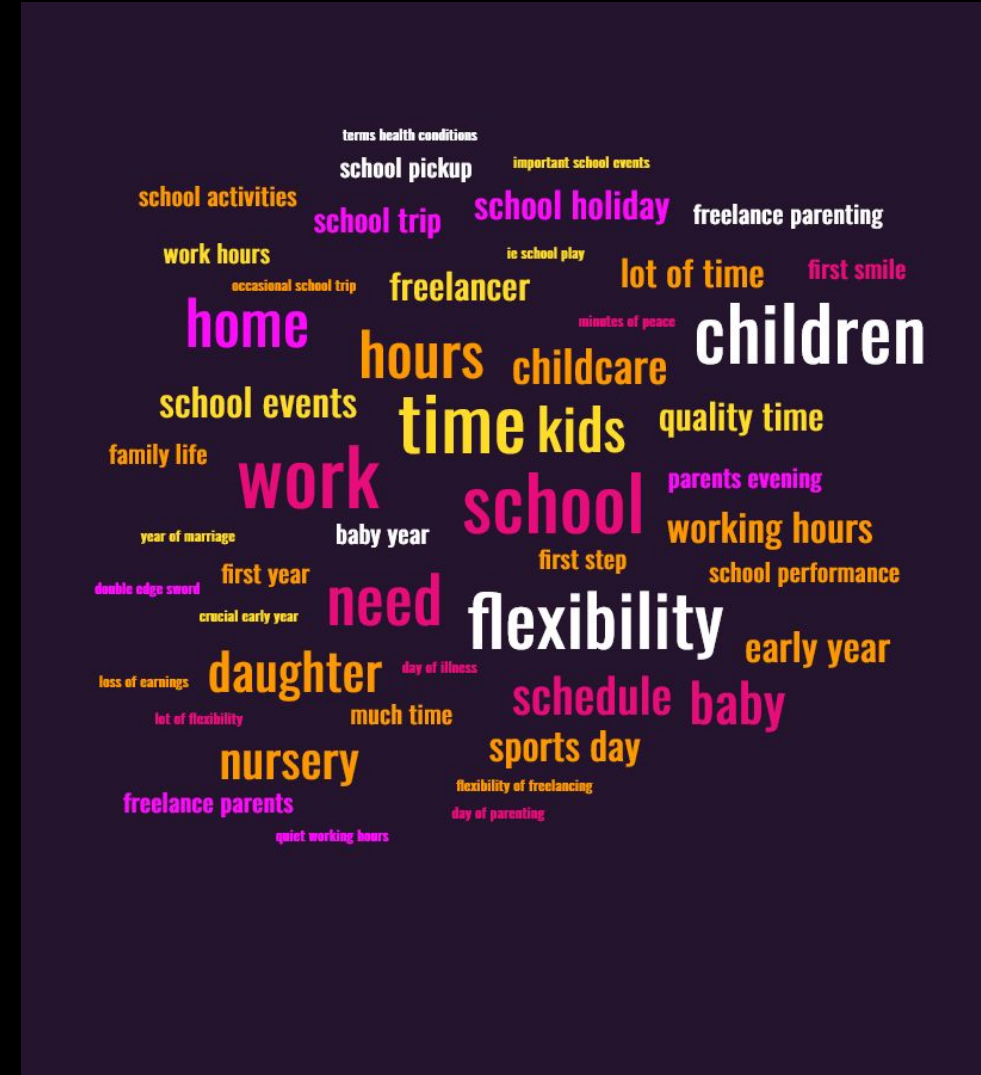


Freelance translator and interpreter parent survey

March 2022 - Results

Hayley Wood
hayley@hwoodtranslations.com



Who responded to the survey?

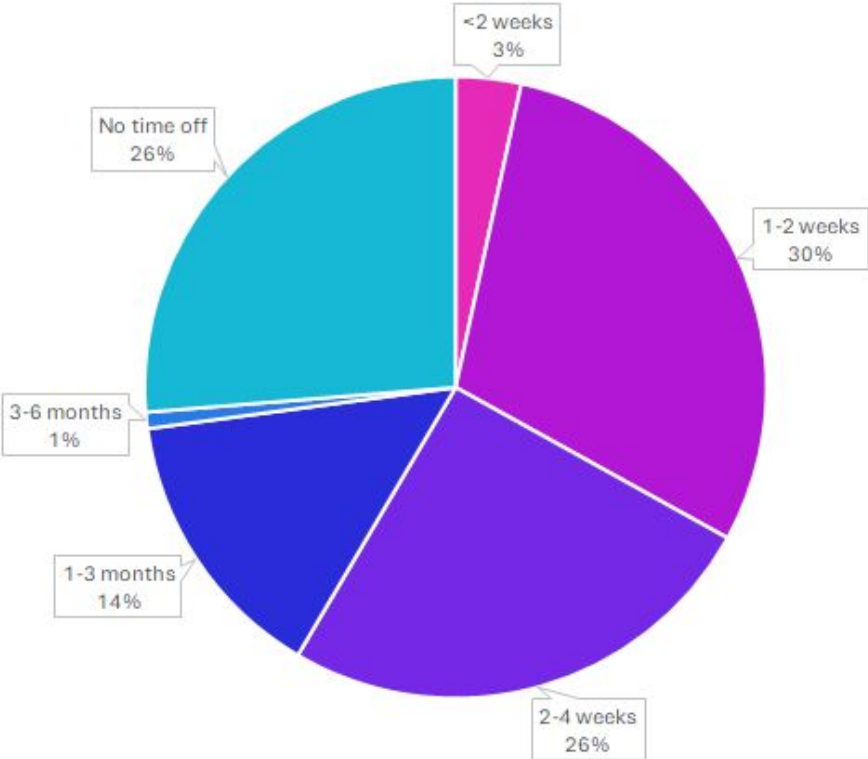
- 118 respondents
- 86% freelance translators (others freelance interpreters or in-house)
- 68% based in the UK
- 90% were their baby's primary caregiver during the first 12 months (nb the survey did not provide an option to state that this role was equally shared with a partner - would add that in a future survey)

The survey asked quantitative and qualitative questions focusing on the first 12 months after the arrival of the respondent's most recent child (if they had more than one).

Time off before the baby arrived

*‘How long did you take off work
immediately before your baby was
born/came into your care?’*

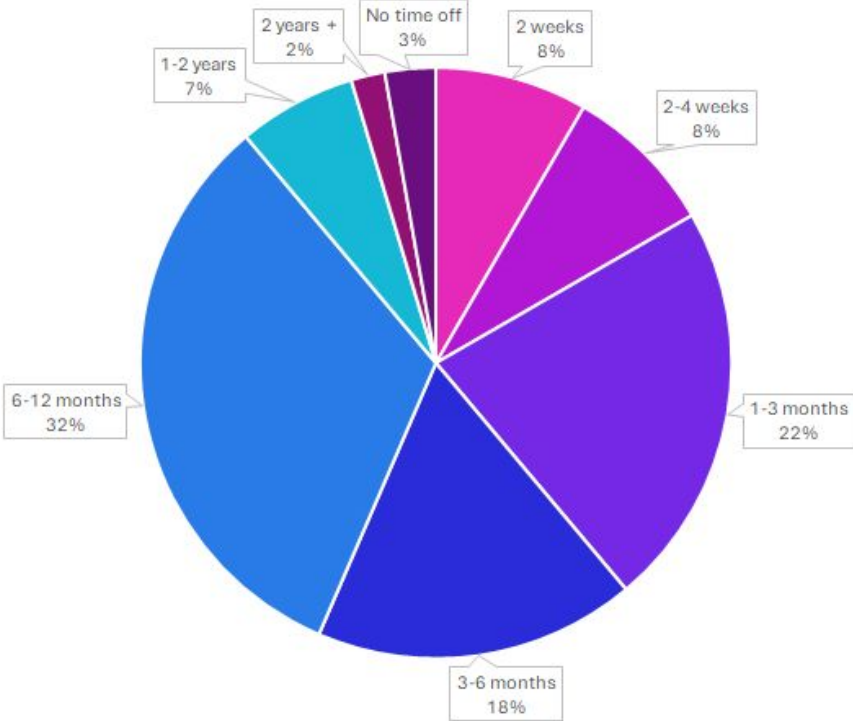
A fairly big range - the majority took at least some time off, but just over a quarter didn't take any time off at all. A few respondents noted this decision was somewhat taken out of their hands by health problems in pregnancy, premature babies, etc.



Time off after the baby arrived

*‘How long did you take off work
immediately after your baby was
born/came into your care?’*

An even bigger range: most took 6-12 months off, but several people didn't take any time off their business at all (some noted they were the sole earners or had no other support, so had no choice in the matter), while several respondents decided to take a total step back and focus on parenting, not returning to work until after a year or longer.



Shared parental leave (SPL)

(Available in the UK to *employed* parents - so only applies to UK-based people with a partner in employment).

35% of primary caregivers' partners took SPL (3 for over 6 months).

Given the relatively recent introduction of SPL in the UK, it would be interesting to see if this number increased when running the survey again in future.

Business continuity strategies

'What business continuity strategies did you put in place?'

A large number of respondents said they didn't do anything specific (some because it was in the pre-social media, always-online days), and others simply tried to carry on 'as normal', but others noted they had made use of the following:

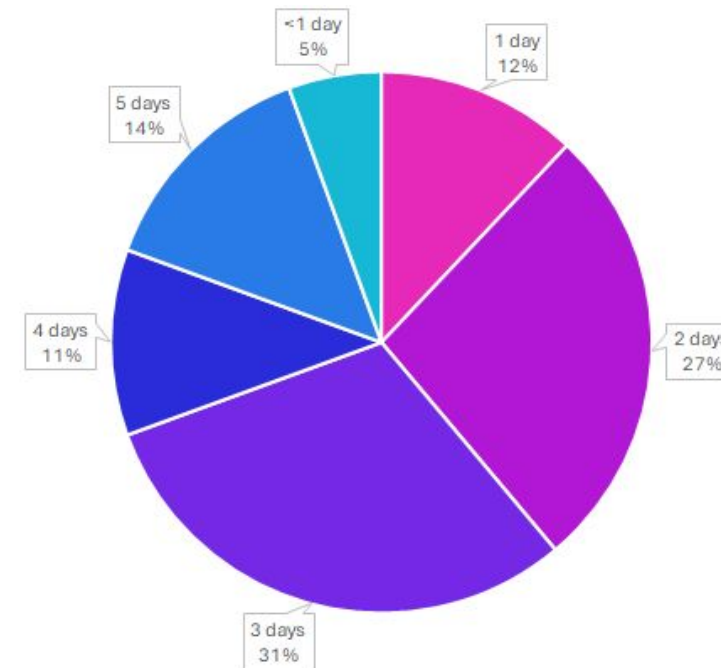
- Informing clients (key!)
- Having a network of trusted colleagues they could refer to (one even had a formal referral arrangement in place) or directed clients to database such as ITI/CIOL
- Scheduled social media in advance
- Took on a mentorship - or a mentee
- Continued with volunteer translation work
- Planned for KIT days (if in the UK or similar system)/CPD
- Used parental leave as a transition from employment to self-employment

Working pattern on return to work

'When you first went back to work, how many days were you working on average?'

Most people worked 2 or 3 days on their return to work.

However, in hindsight, there are so many variables to this that I should have got the survey to dig down into the detail: many respondents noted working evenings and weekends, or around unreliable naps and schedules, for example. A rough idea of how many hours worked per week would have provided a better picture.



Childcare during working hours

*‘How did your family cover working hours with childcare *when you first went back to work* (as this may change with family circumstances or as children become eligible for more funding etc)?’*

This was fairly evenly split between **‘no outside childcare (you and your partner (if applicable) juggled childcare with work’ (36%)** and **‘paid childcare only’ (40%)**, with the rest using a mix of paid/unpaid childcare. Initially I was surprised at the either/or response, but it makes sense if we consider that several respondents noted having little to no family support, perhaps due to international location etc: in that situation, these are the only two options.

Types of childcare

'What forms of paid childcare did you use (if applicable)?'

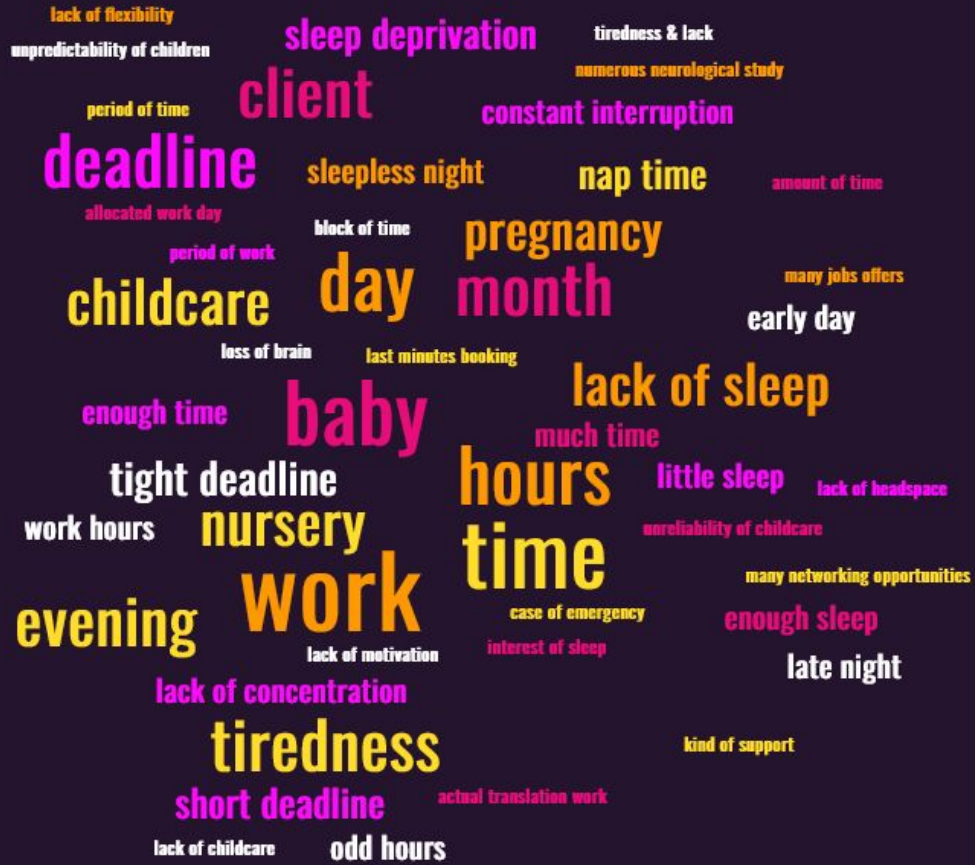
- Childminder: 22%
- Nursery: 36%
- Nanny/au pair: 3%

‘What aspects of juggling parenthood and freelance work did you find most challenging in the early days?’

The main one by far was **sleep: 47% of survey respondents found this a challenge**, whether due to sleep deprivation or trying to work around (often unreliable) nap times

Others included:

- Limited childcare/problems with childcare such as sickness
- Unpredictability of babies (teething, etc.)
- Unable to take on work with tight deadlines
- Working late at night or at weekends - feeling burned out
- Guilt (torn between work/family) and feeling emotionally/mentally overwhelmed
- Health problems/physical exhaustion
- Managing breastfeeding/pumping
- Lack of long blocks of uninterrupted time
- Feeling isolated (not knowing other freelancers with a baby)
- Difficult to get into ‘work mode’
- Having to turn down work/financial worries/worried about losing clients
- Lack of motivation to do ‘self-starting’ activities such as marketing



‘If you could give one piece of advice to a freelance translator/interpreter who is about to become a parent, what would it be?’

So much great advice, but some clear common themes:

- Enjoy your baby as much as you can - time flies, and you won't get this time back
- On the flipside, in the difficult times remember that this too shall pass
- So much of what you can do will depend on what your baby is like: whether they are an easy sleeper, are happy with their own company, etc. - and if you have more than one, the next one might be different
- Be kind to yourself and make time for yourself/to rest properly
- Get help from others where you can - for the household, for your health, for childcare
- Think of your child as your most important client (which they are!) and don't be afraid to say no
- Plan - but have a backup plan and be prepared to be flexible
- Save as much as you can pre-baby in order to give yourself options
- Do what's right for YOU and your family - there is no 'right' answer

‘What do you love about being a freelance parent?’

Lots of answers but again, some clear common themes (many respondents noted that the upsides of freelance parenting really come into their own **after** the baby years):

- Flexibility (by far the most mentioned benefit)
- Being able to be there for your kids (from sickness to school plays)
- Being your own boss - not having to justify your decisions to others
- Resetting your priorities - needing to justify time away from kids so focusing on more rewarding/better paid work
- Raising bilingual kids/international travel
- Setting an example by being self-employed

Get in touch

I am hugely grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey. If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, I'd love to hear from you. You can email me on:

hayley@hwoodtranslations.com

