



POLISH LITERARY TRANSLATORS AND THEIR WELL-BEING

A survey

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“A good translator *always wants to know more*,
always wants to have experienced more,
never feels quite satisfied
with the job s/he has just completed”

Douglas Robinson, *Becoming a Translator*, 2020 (4th ed.)

Well-being:

- Positive attitude towards one's work, happiness at work;
- Factors: individual, organisational, personal;
- Components of happiness (Veenhoven 2015):
 - life chances
 - life outcomes
 - outer individual qualities
 - inner individual qualities

Similar surveys:



Dam, Zethsen 2011

(the status of business translators on the Danish market)



Ruokonen, Lassus, Virtanen 2020

(Finnish translators' job satisfaction)



Bednárová-Gibová 2020

(work-related happiness of Slovak literary translators; 21 respondents)

Our survey



Tłumacze literatury w Polsce - poczucie zadowolenia z wykonywanego zawodu

Liczba odpowiedzi: 160



160 RESPONDENTS

Out of 1146 literary translators in Poland
(gathered in the Facebook Literary Translators' Forum
[Forum Tłumaczy Literatury] in July 2024)

Out of 534 STL members (July 2024)

78% respondents were women

41 QUESTIONS

28 closed; 3 open; 10 possibilities to specify the given answer



from 7 May to 7 July 2024, via Microsoft Forms

Our main issues:



INWARD-ORIENTED || OUTWARD-ORIENTED FACTORS
OF WELL-BEING

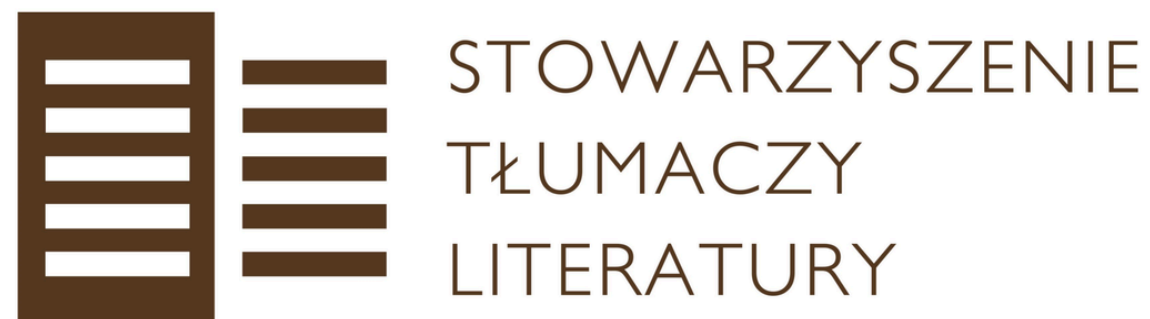


BURNOUT



ROLE OF TRANSLATORS' COMMUNITY

Polish Literary Translators Association (STL)



Established 2010

535 members [September 2024]

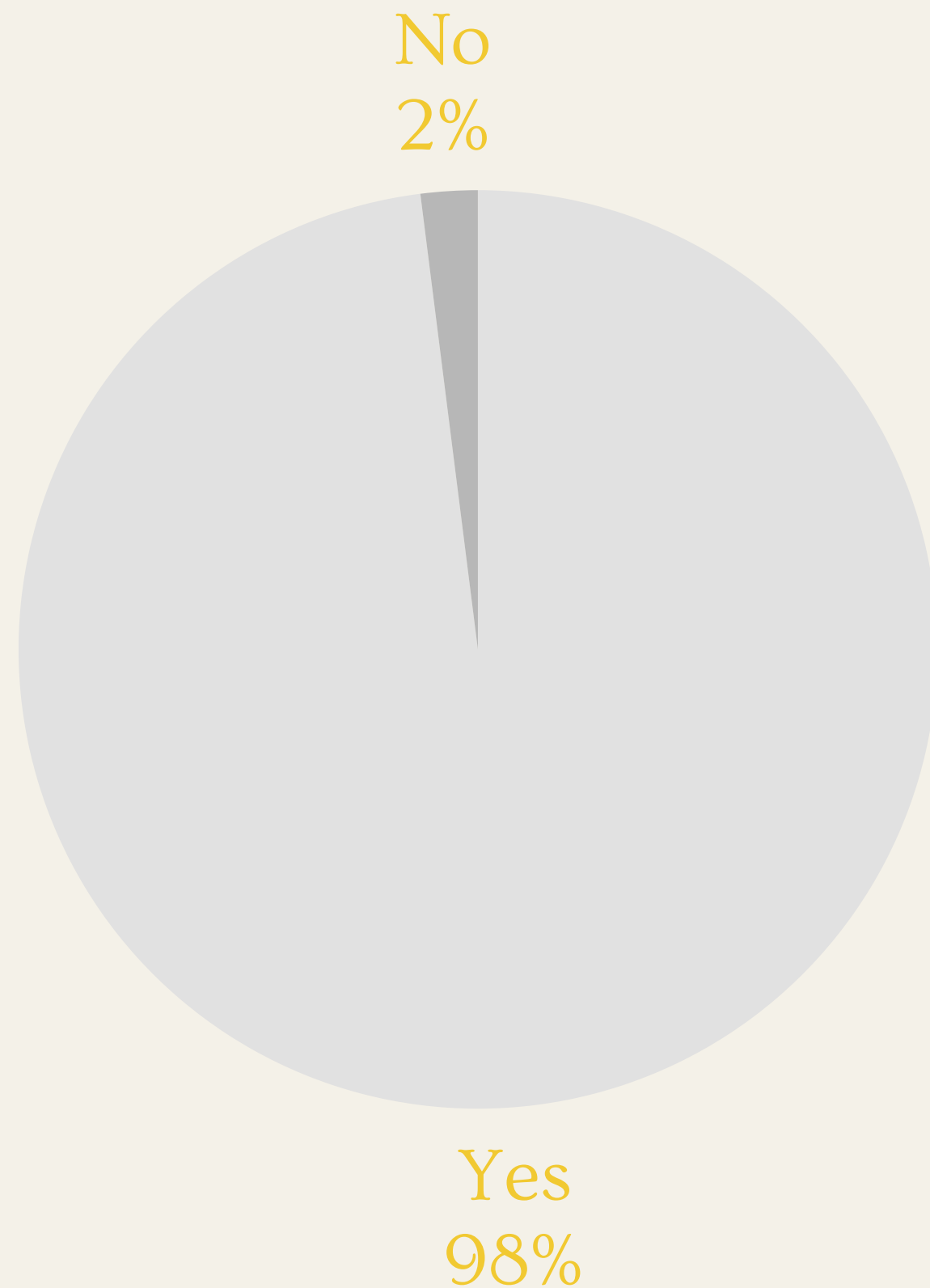
Mission: integrating the community of literary translators in Poland, protecting their interests and supporting their development



HOME PAGE:

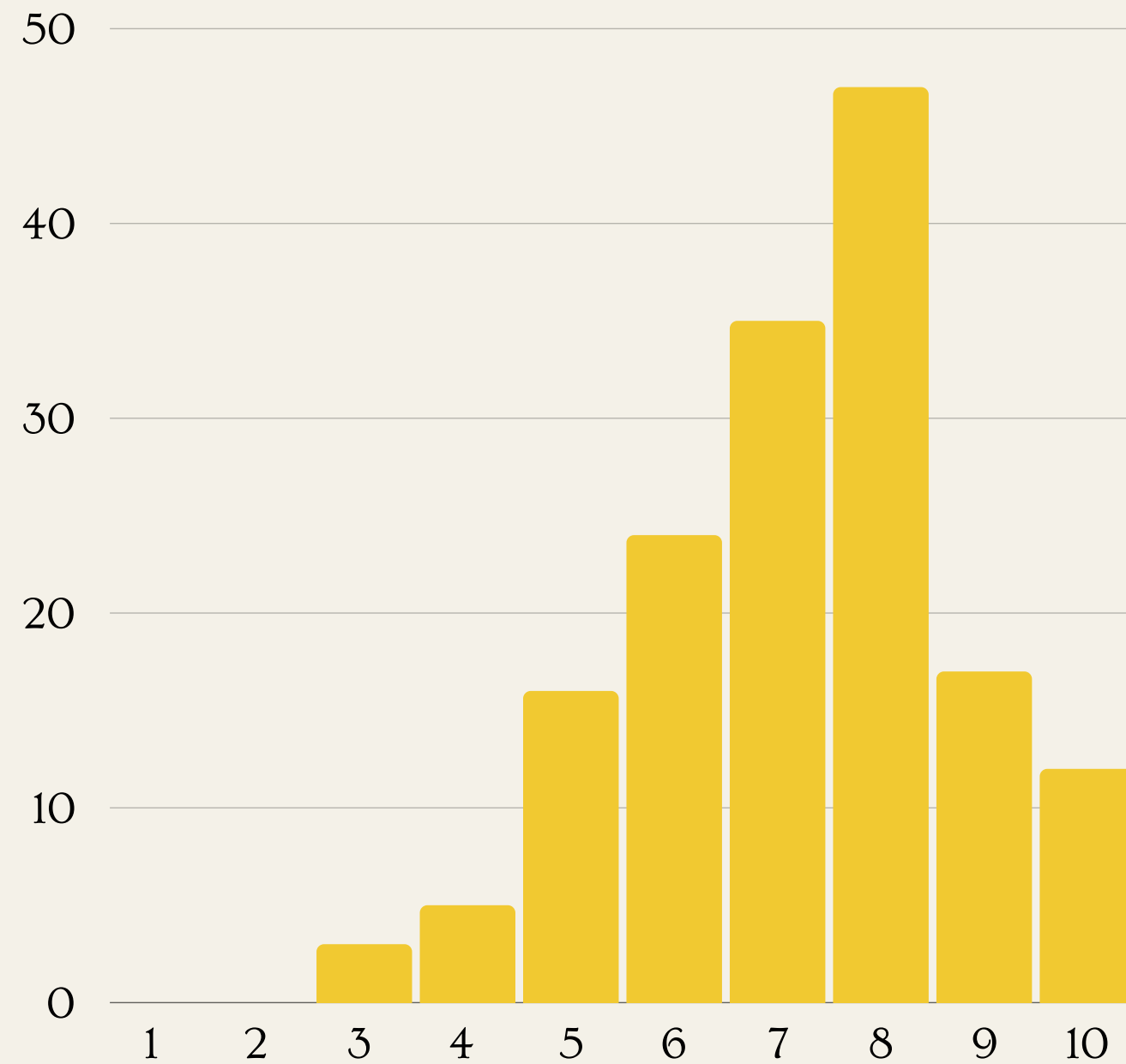
<https://stl.org.pl/english/>

Polish literary translators - shiny happy people?



Does your translation work provide
you with satisfaction?

Polish literary translators - shiny happy people?

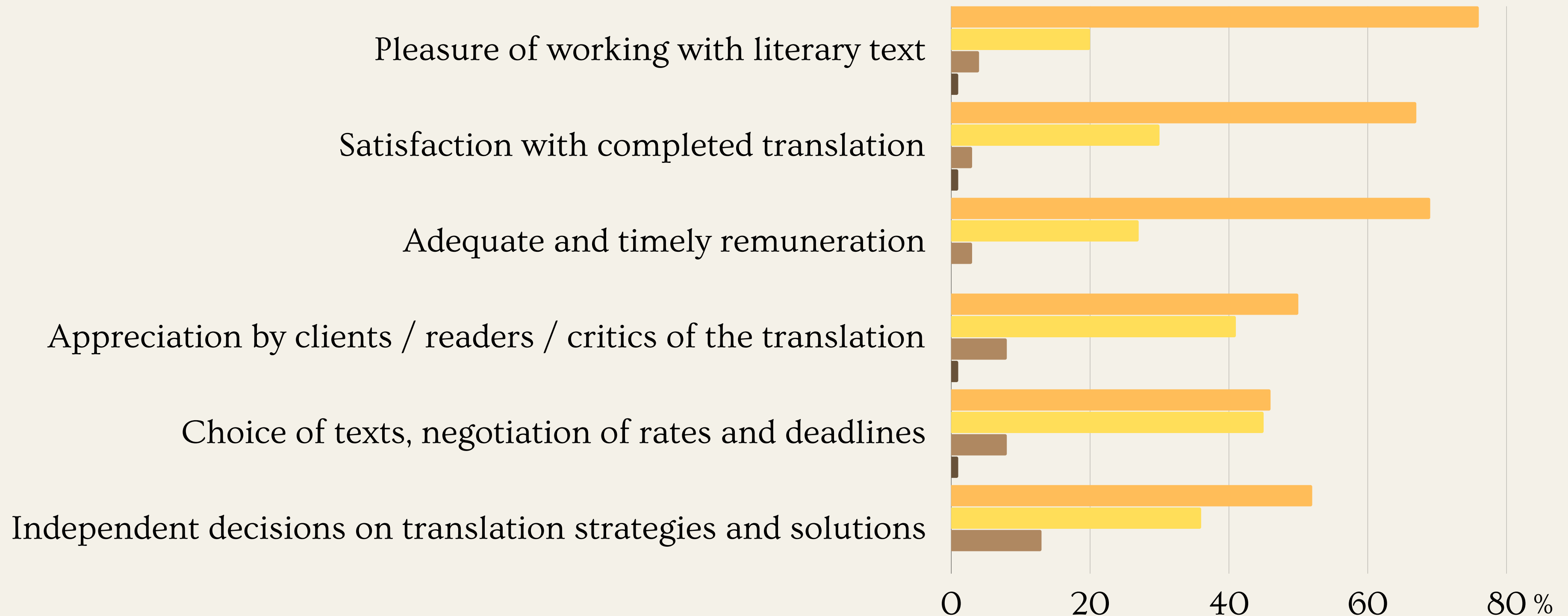


(1) feeling of a task well done - (10) complete euphoria

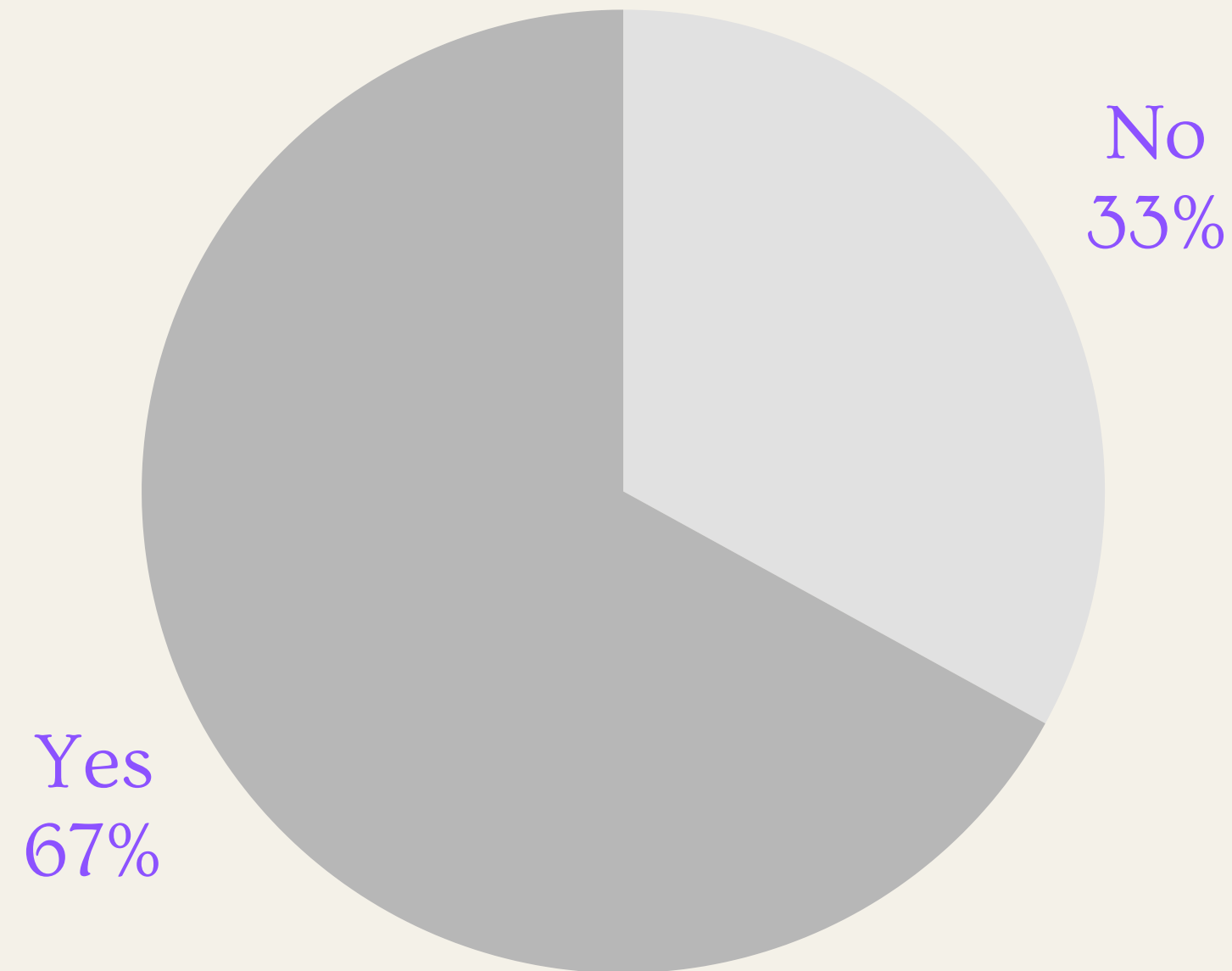
If it does, please indicate the intensity of your feelings. Mark on a scale from 1 to 10.

Average indication: 7.21

Which of the following criteria are important factors influencing your sense of satisfaction with your profession?

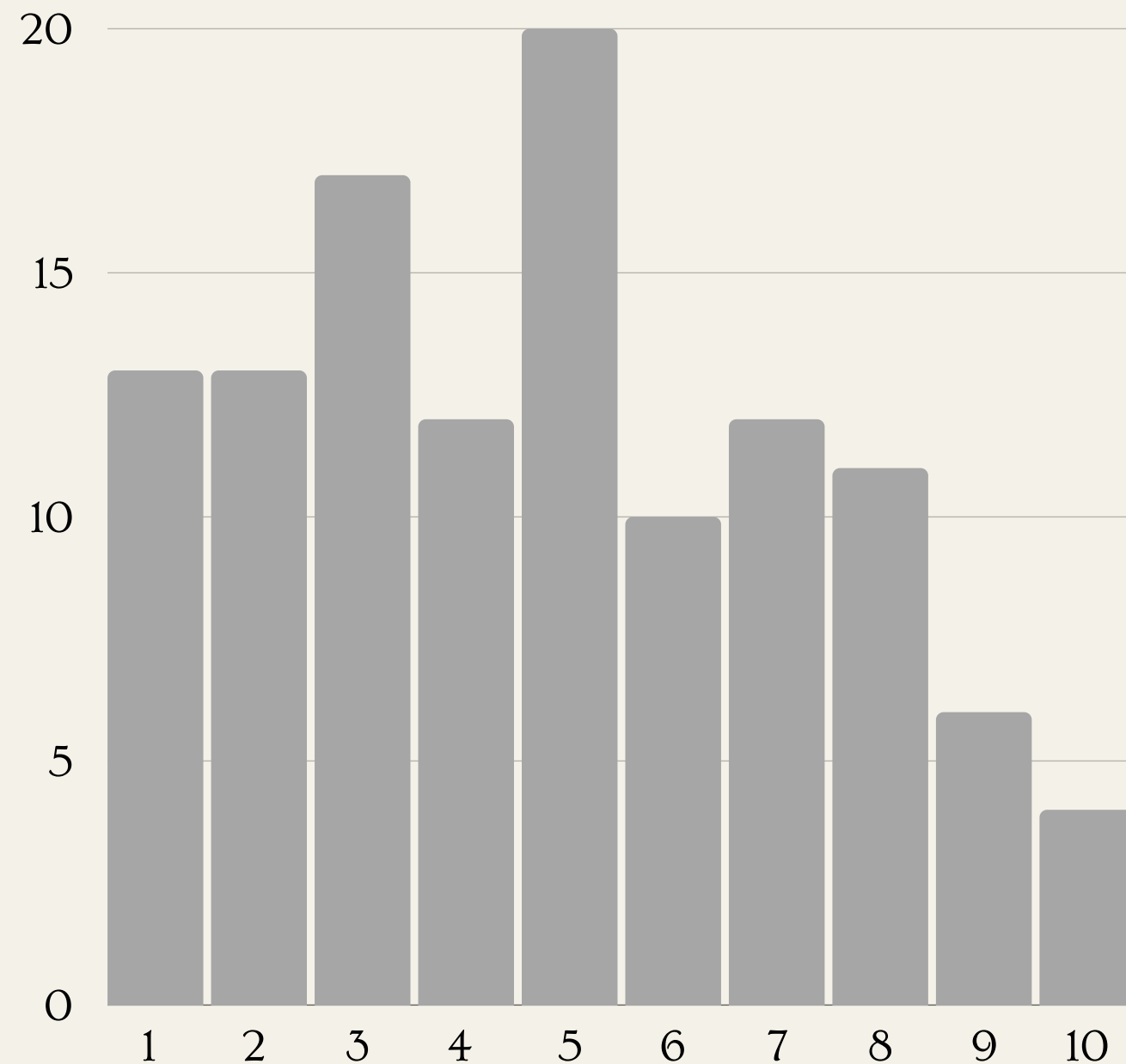


Polish literary translators - shiny happy people?



Do you happen to struggle with a sense
of professional burnout?

Polish literary translators - shiny happy people?

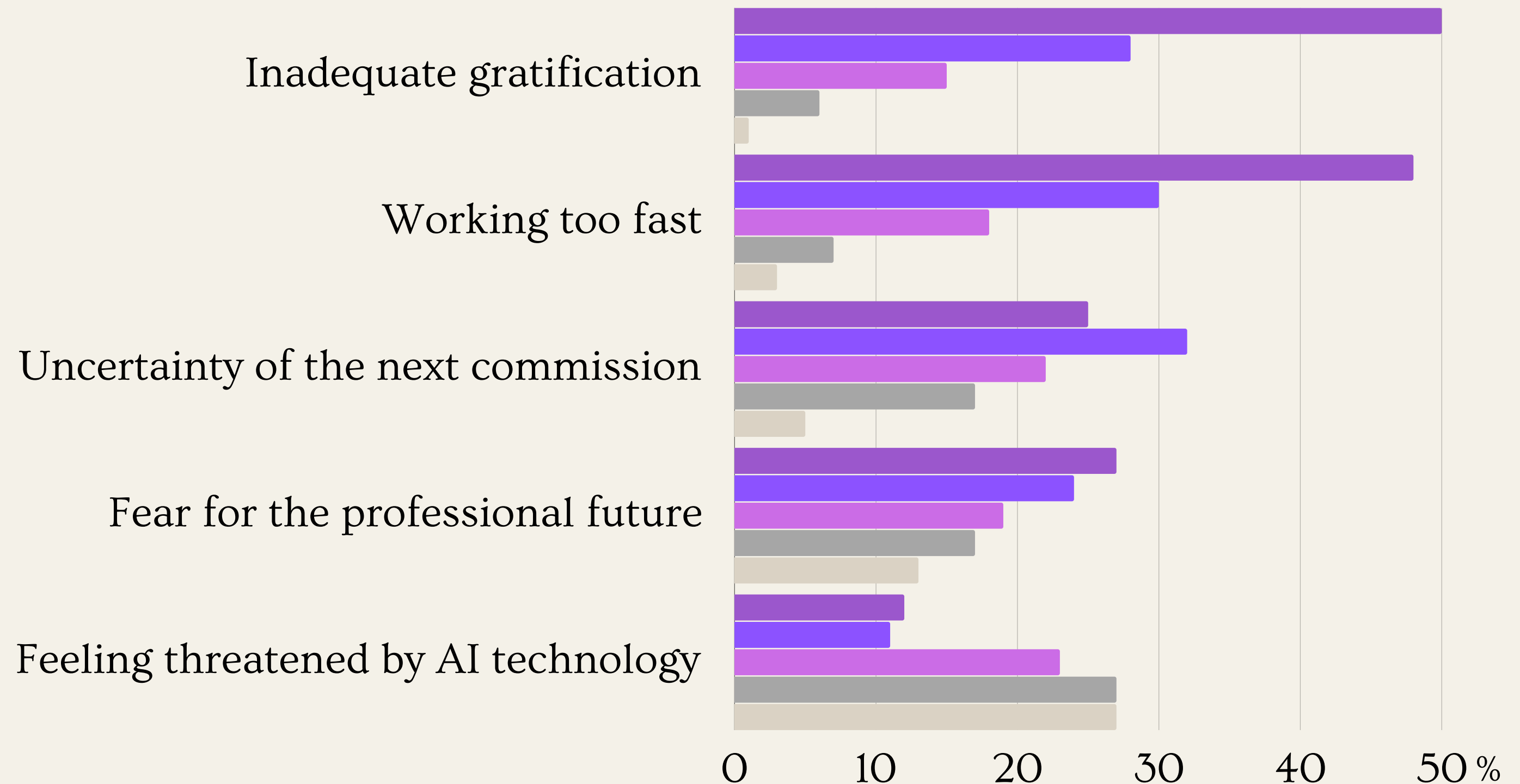


(1) lowered mood and sense of fatigue - (10) complete exhaustion, feeling of meaninglessness; I quit this job

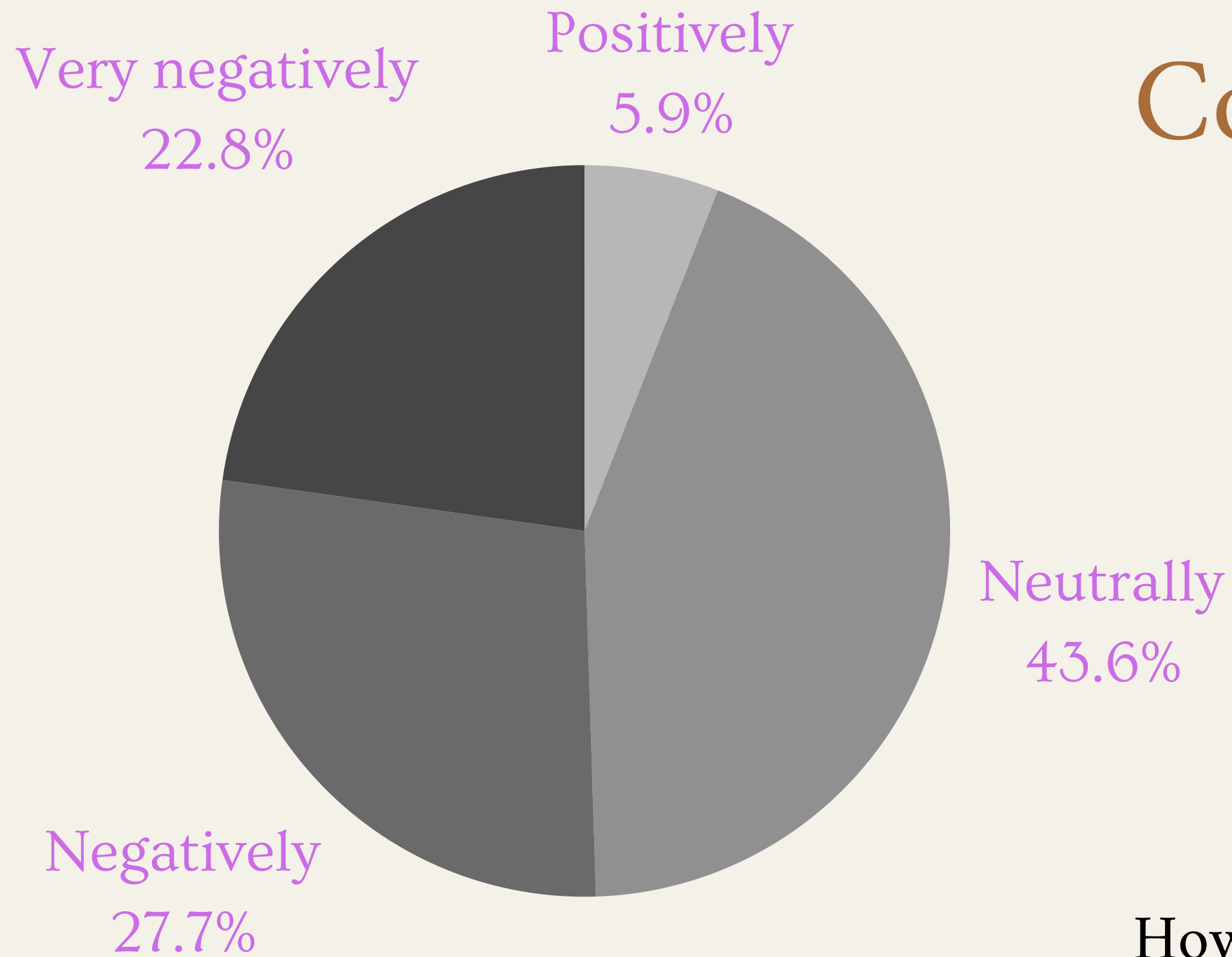
If you do, please indicate the intensity of your feelings. Mark on a scale from 1 to 10.

Average indication: 4.78

Which of the following criteria are important factors influencing your sense of burnout?



Competition with AI?



How do you see AI being used
to translate literature?

Polish Literary Translators Association (STL)



Faithful,
beautiful,
invisible



Translator also an author

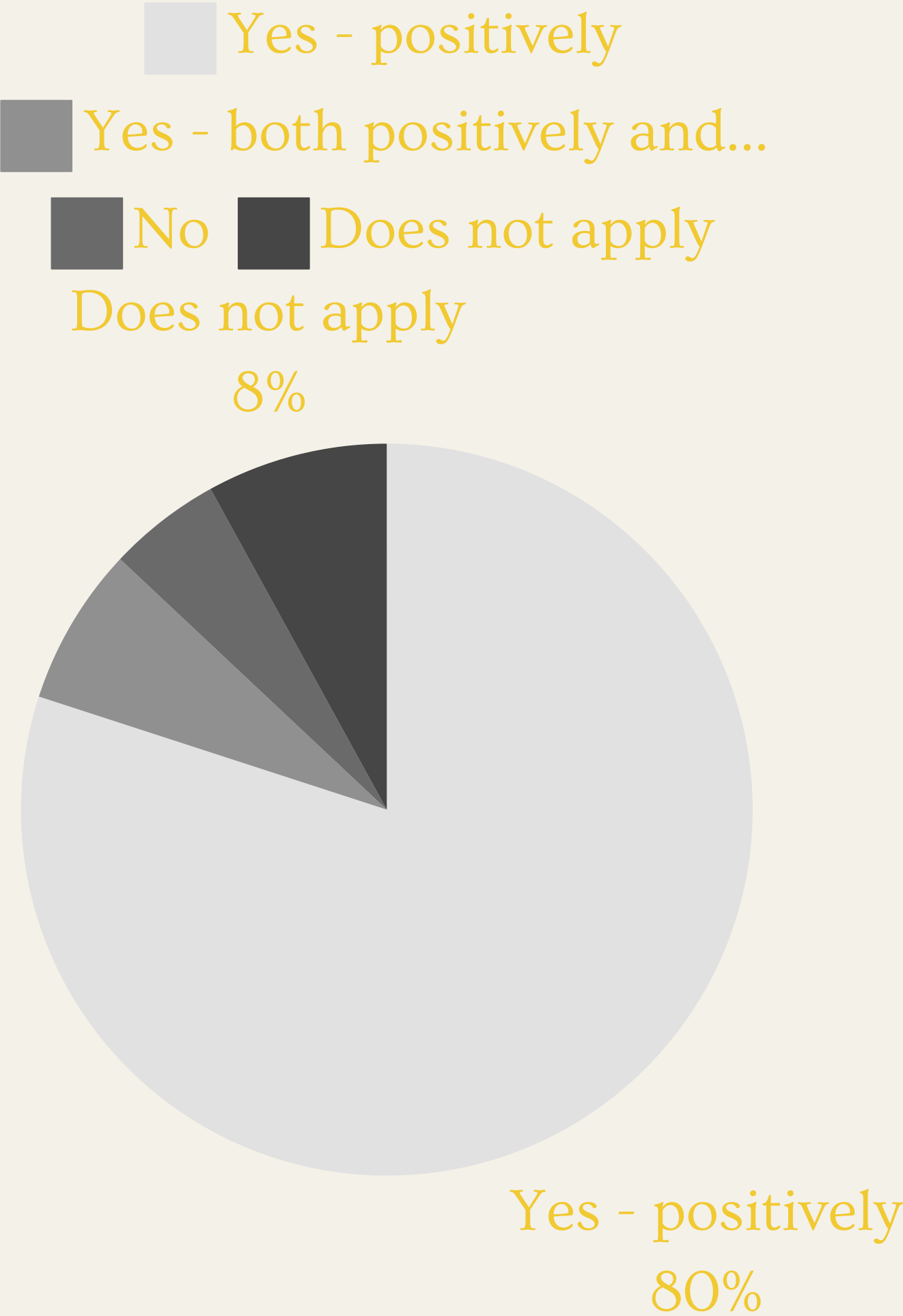


Shakespeare
did not write
in Polish



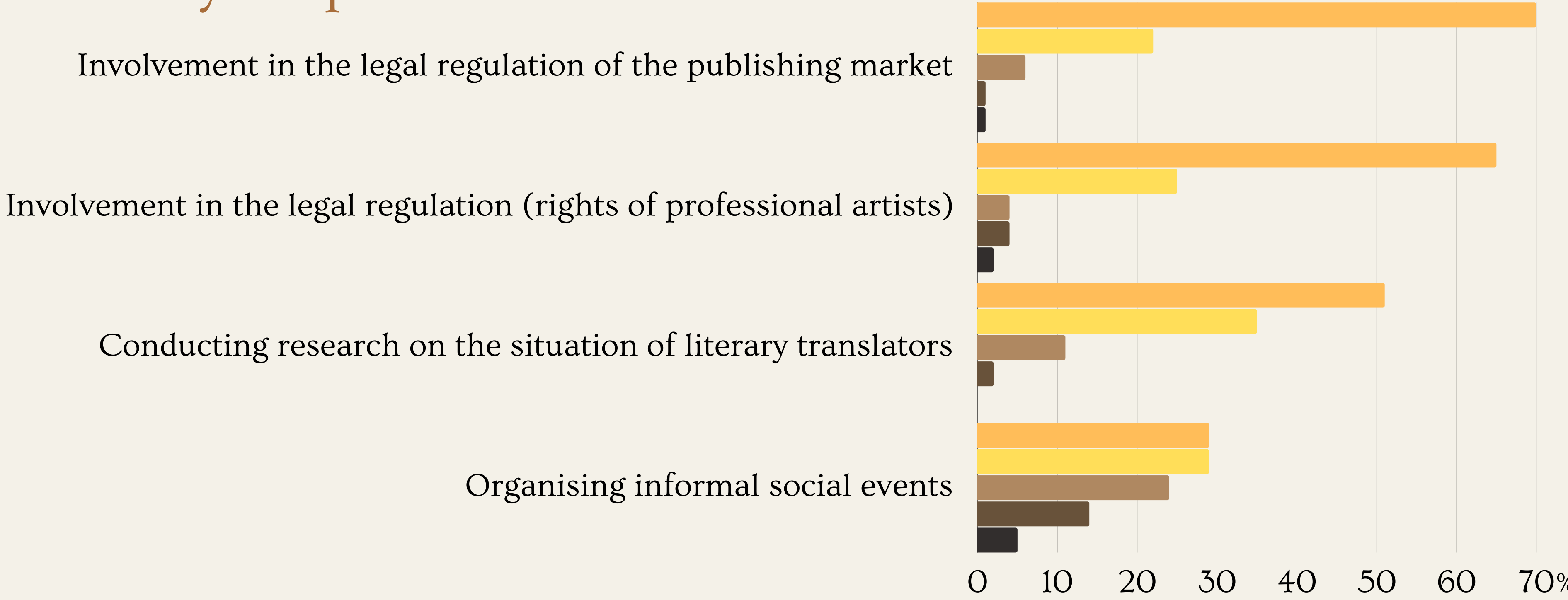
We beam with translation

Belonging and well-being



Does STL membership affect your overall sense of satisfaction with the profession?

How would you rate the impact of the following STL activities on increasing your overall sense of satisfaction with your profession?



Which STL activities have the greatest impact on the overall sense of your satisfaction with the profession?

“A huge credit to STL is the creation of a professional environment. In my first 20 years in the profession, I didn’t know a single [literary] translator.”

“It is pleasant to hang out from time to time with people from one’s own ‘flock’ who, on the one hand, may deal with and know something completely different, but, on the other hand, understand what being a [literary] translator is all about.”

— Anonymous Respondents





What potential STL activities could contribute to your overall sense of satisfaction with the profession?

“I think our organisation needs to define itself, whether it wants to be an event organiser or deal more with the livelihood situation.”

“I would very much like the STL to rather play the role of a trade union representing and defending our interests as translators because, in a clash with publishers, we are in an overwhelmingly lost position.”

— Anonymous Respondents



What potential STL activities could contribute to your overall sense of satisfaction with the profession?

“Increased efforts to influence legislative initiatives (The Artists Act, DSM Directive)”

“A realistic fight for a law on the literary translation profession. Introducing a salary range, as notaries have, for example.”

“Fighting for the provisions of the law on the status of professional artists that are truly favourable to us.”

— Anonymous Respondents

Conclusions



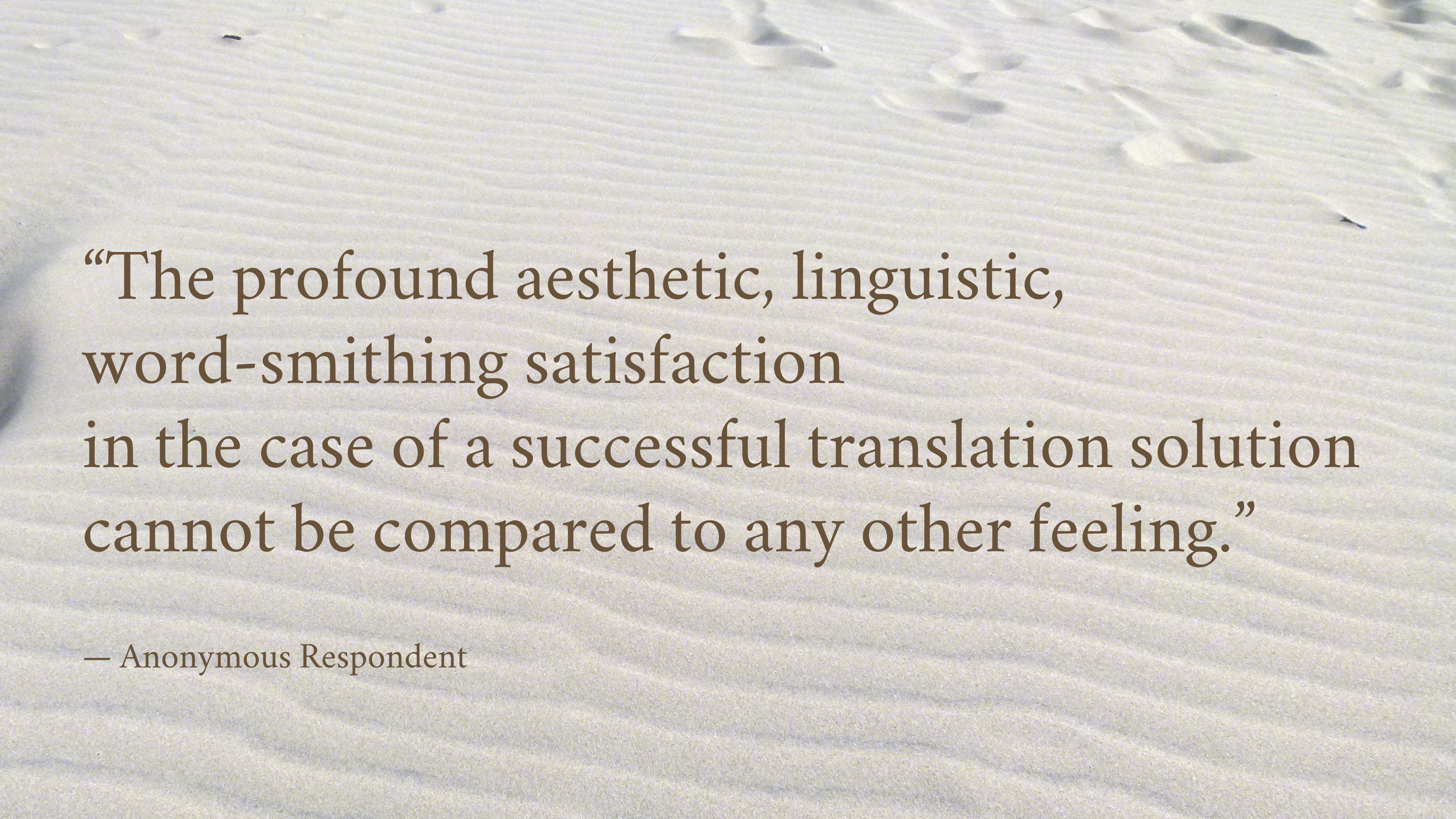
SENSE OF ARTISTRY



FRAGILE
BALANCE



ROLE OF
THE ASSOCIATION

A close-up, high-angle shot of a sandy beach. In the upper right, several footprints are visible, receding into the distance. The sand is light-colored and has a fine, rippled texture. The lighting is bright, creating soft shadows.

“The profound aesthetic, linguistic,
word-smithing satisfaction
in the case of a successful translation solution
cannot be compared to any other feeling.”

— Anonymous Respondent

Conclusions



SENSE OF ARTISTRY



FRAGILE
BALANCE



ROLE OF
THE ASSOCIATION

Conclusions



SENSE OF ARTISTRY



FRAGILE
BALANCE



ROLE OF
THE ASSOCIATION

WORKING TOGETHER

Polish Literary Translators Association (STL)



STL representatives
during talks
at the Polish Parliament



STL members during the Poznań book fair

Author - translator meeting organised by STL

HAVING FUN TOGETHER

Polish Literary Translators Association (STL)



Literary translators'
canoeing trip



Informal meeting
of STL members in Warsaw...



...and in Poznań

Selected bibliography

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Thank you!

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