

Certification Pass Rates 2004–2014

The Certification Committee is happy to report here on certification pass rates for 2004–2014.¹ Pass rates have remained relatively stable over time, and this is reflected in the 2004-2014 data as well.

To describe the results effectively and avoid distortion, the information has been divided into two groups: 1) languages with 40 or more exams in the reporting period; and 2) languages with extremely low volume (ELV), defined as language pairs with fewer than 40 exams in the reporting period.

The overall pass rate for ATA’s Certification Program for 2004-2014 was 15.45%. A total of 5,463 candidates (previous period: 6,339) took the exam in 29 language pairs (previous period: 29), and 844 exams were rated “pass” (previous period: 1,032). Of these language pairs, 16 had 40 or more exams over this period (previous period: 16). The Polish>English and Dutch>English exams have entered ELV status due to low demand for these language pairs, while Finnish>English is no longer represented. However, Swedish>English has started as a new language pair.

The individual language pairs are listed in Table 1 in alphabetical order with the number of examinations and pass rate for both sets of data.

Thirteen of the 29 language pairs each had fewer than 40 exams. (See Table 2 on page 38.) The results for these language pairs have been combined in the figures shown in Table 2. This was done because these language pairs cannot be averaged reliably due to their low volume. Another reason is that some languages were not offered for the entire period. The Italian>English language pair was suspended in 2007 and only reinstated in 2015, so it will remain in the ELV category for some time. In addition, Hungarian>English, which had a low volume to begin with, has been suspended since 2008, although work is ongoing to reinstate it.

Figure 1 presents the data on the high-volume languages in 2004–2014 in graphical form, in a format slightly

Table 1: Language Pairs with 40 or More Certification Exams (16 language pairs): 2004–2014

Language Pair	Number of Exams	Pass Rate per Language Pair
Arabic>English	211	9.00%
French>English	269	18.22%
German>English	239	26.78%
Japanese>English	113	13.27%
Portuguese>English	131	22.14%
Russian>English	124	28.23%
Spanish>English	1,038	12.04%
Total and overall pass rate, foreign into English:	2,125	15.81%
English>Chinese	246	13.41%
English>French	165	9.09%
English>German	106	27.36%
English>Italian	91	28.57%
English>Japanese	95	16.84%
English>Polish	83	19.28%
English>Portuguese	145	28.97%
English>Russian	197	15.23%
English>Spanish	2,040	11.76%
Total and overall pass rate, English into foreign:	3,168	14.11%
Grand total and overall program pass rate:	5,293	14.79%

Figure 1: American Translators Association Translator Certification Examination Pass Rates by Language Pair and Number of Examinations (n=5,463), 2004–2014, Sorted by Pass Rate

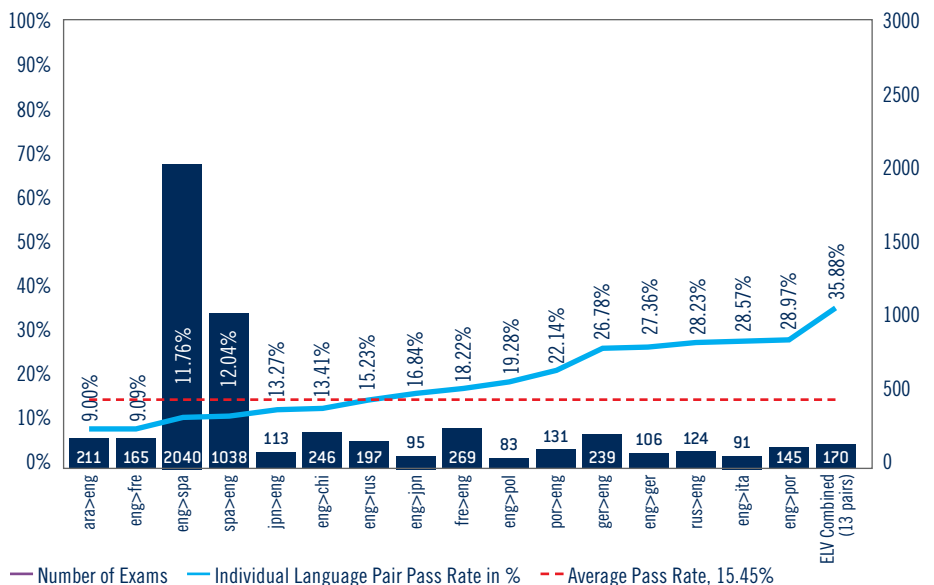


Table 2 : Extremely Low Volume (ELV) Language Pairs with Fewer than 40 Certification Exams: 2004–2014 (n=13)

Language Pair	Number of Exams	Percentage of Total Exams (n=5,463)	Number of Years Offered
Croatian>English	7	0.13%	10
Danish>English	12	0.22%	17+
Dutch>English	25	0.46%	17+
Hungarian>English*	4	0.07%	17+
Italian>English*	16	0.29%	17+
Polish>English	26	0.48%	17+
Swedish>English	7	0.13%	2
English>Croatian	14	0.26%	16
English>Dutch	10	0.18%	17+
English>Finnish	8	0.15%	16
English>Hungarian	20	0.37%	17+
English>Swedish	7	0.13%	4
English>Ukrainian	14	0.26%	10
Totals:	170	3.11%†	

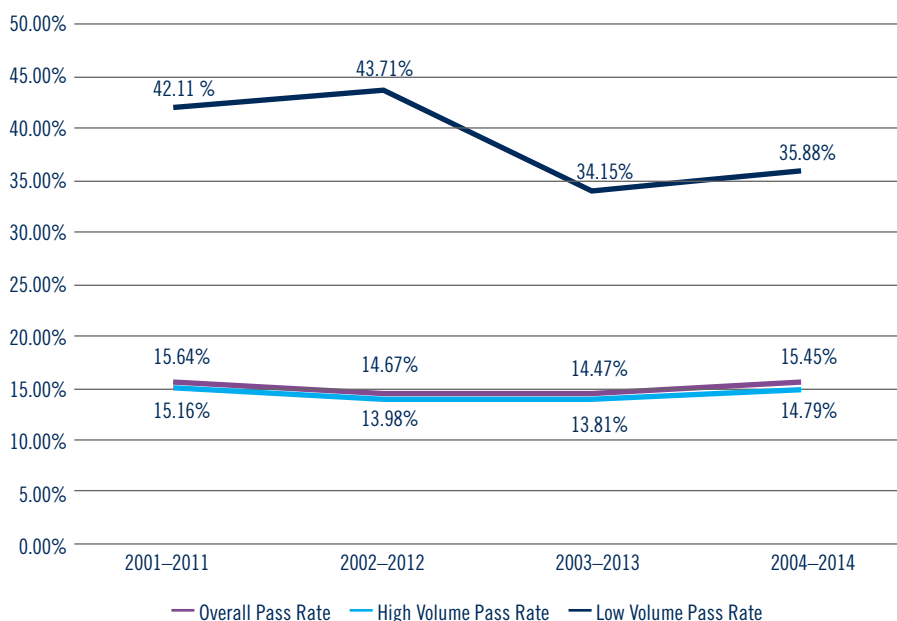
* suspended

† calculated total percentage differs from sum of individual percentages due to rounding

different from previous pass-rate reports. The dashed horizontal red line shows the mean pass rate. No standard deviation is provided for the pass rate percentages because the language pairs have widely divergent numbers of exams. Overall, this

figure shows that the pass rates differ for each language pair. The pass rates for the high-volume language pairs range from a low of 9.00% for Arabic>English to a high of 28.97% for English>Portuguese. The average of 35.88% for the aggregated ELV

Figure 2: ATA Certification Exam Pass Rate Trend, Overall and by Volume



languages (3.11% of all exams) represents 13 language pairs averaging two or fewer exams per year. A slightly higher or lower number of ELV exams passing in any data set can greatly skew the individual average.

Figure 2 compares pass rates over time using four sets of data (2001–2011 through 2004–2014). The overall pass rate has remained largely stable, with a high of 15.64% and a low of 14.67%. The pass rate for high-volume languages closely mirrors the overall pass rate, just slightly below it, ranging from 15.16% to 13.81%. Not surprisingly, the ELV pass rate is both quite a bit higher and more variable. The shift between the low-40% range in the first two data sets and the mid-30% range in the second two sets is attributable to a few language pairs with moderate pass rates moving from high-volume into the ELV category, pulling the average down. This did not have a noticeable effect on the high-volume pass rate, however, which shows how small the number of ELV exams is in the overall system.

We hope that this information on pass rates is interesting and useful to our members and potential candidates for ATA's certification exam. ATA's Certification Committee will continue to report the figures on a regular basis. ●

NOTE

¹ A longer article on pass rates, including an analysis of data over the past four data sets, is available in the Bonus Features section of the *Chronicle-Online* website (www.atanet.org/chronicle-online/magazine/bonus-features).



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