LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2023

November 2023

Sophie Hall, Emily Jones and Stephen Evans

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We research what works, develop new ways of thinking and implement new approaches. Working with partners, we transform people's experiences of learning and employment. What we do benefits individuals, families, communities and the wider economy.

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Published by National Learning and Work Institute

3rd Floor Arnhem House, 31 Waterloo Way, Leicester LE1 6LP

Company registration no. 2603322 | Charity registration no. 1002775

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Almost 1 in 2 adults

are currently learning or have done in the last three years –
the highest participation rate recorded since the survey began in 1996.

This increase in participation is driven by a post-pandemic **rise in self-directed learning,** including online.

Around **2 in 5 people** said their learning was for leisure or personal interest.

The uptick in participation rates is **not evenly distributed.**

People in the **DE social grade** and those **furthest from the labour market** show smaller increases in participation.

The **gap between UK regions and nations** with the highest and lowest learning participation is 23 percentage points and **may be increasing.**

The **differences in participation between age groups have narrowed over time**, but younger people remain more than twice as likely to take part in learning than older people.

Stark inequalities persist and need to be more effectively tackled for everyone to have a fair opportunity and for the Government's 'levelling up' agenda to succeed. **The Government and employers need to invest more in learning** to tap into adults' interest in learning and make sure their opportunities aren't limited.

L&W LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

Introduction

Learning is crucial for life, work and society. It can help people find work, progress in or change careers, support health and wellbeing, promote social integration, and many more benefits besides. Lifelong learning will only grow in importance as the UK's population ages, people have longer working lives, and our economy and society changes.

The Adult Participation in Learning Survey provides a unique insight into how many adults are taking part in learning each year, the benefits people see from learning, and the reasons why some adults say they have not taken part in learning. It does so based on a broad definition of learning, including but not limited to formal learning, courses and qualifications.

The 2023 survey shows almost one in two adults took part in learning in the last three years, the highest rate since the survey started in 1996. This continues the step change in learning participation seen since the pandemic, which followed a decade of declines as the Government cut adult education budgets in England and austerity hit services.

The increase in participation since the pandemic has been driven by a rise in self-directed learning, including online. This is often for personal or leisure reasons or general interest. This is clearly positive, but other opportunities to learn have become more limited over time: employer and Government investment in England are down in the last decade.

There is more positive news in the narrowing over time of some inequalities in learning participation between groups. This includes by age, important given our aging population. Nonetheless, these inequalities remain stark and persistent and, in the case of regional differences, may in fact have widened in recent years.

Growth in learning participation since 2019 shows an innate interest in learning among adults. However, fewer opportunities to learn at work or take part in formal learning or courses means people face limits in the types of learning they can pursue. Learning in all its forms has value and benefits.

To engage more adults in learning, policymakers, commissioners and those working in learning providers need to look at people's motivations for learning. The biggest reasons adults give for not taking part in learning are cost, feeling too old, time pressures and also not wanting to / not seeing the benefits. That points to the need to build a culture of learning and offer people a range of flexible learning options.

Learning and Work Institute has called for an expanded Lifelong Learning Entitlement to provide more help with the course and living costs of learning at all levels and through life. Along with better incentives for employers to invest more in training, such as a new Skills Tax Credit, this can help us make that step change.

About the Adult Participation in Learning Survey

Since 1996, Learning and Work Institute has been undertaking the Adult Participation in Learning Survey on an almost annual basis[1]. The survey provides a unique overview of the level of participation in learning by adults, with a detailed breakdown of who participates and who does not, over a span of 28 years.

The survey deliberately adopts a broad definition of learning, including a wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning, far beyond the limits of publicly offered educational opportunities for adults. Each year, a representative sample of approximately 5,000 adults aged 17 and over across the UK are provided with the following definition of learning and asked when they last took part, as well as how likely they are to take part in learning during the next three years:

'Learning can mean practising, studying, or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. Learning can also be called education or training. You can do it regularly (each day or month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full-time or part-time, done at home, at work, or in another place like college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. We are interested in any learning you have done, whether or not it was finished.'

Like most of our surveys in recent years, the 2023 survey explores who participates in learning; motivations and barriers; how learning is undertaken; and benefits experienced as a result of learning. It also includes questions on learning for career change; using technology to support learning; and awareness of and interest in different post-16 training and qualification options.

Unlike previous years, the 2023 survey sample includes regional boosts to achieve a minimum sample size in each UK region (600 for all regions apart from Northern Ireland, where the sample was boosted to 400 respondents). The boosted sample consists of 9,506 adults aged 17 and over (8,906 weighted). The sample was not boosted for the questions on using technology to support learning and post-16 education options. The sample for these questions consists of 5,089 adults.

Fieldwork was conducted between August and September 2023 by a market research company via their UK online omnibus survey. The sample has been weighted to provide a nationally representative dataset.

Further information about the methodology and the definitions used in this report can be found in the Annex. To find out more about the survey series and explore trend data through our interactive charts, visit www.learningandwork.org.uk.

[1] Surveys were undertaken annually from 1996 except in three years: 1997, 1998 and 2016.

Participation in learning

Key chapter findings:

- The 2023 survey shows that almost one in every two adults in the UK (49 per cent) say they are either currently learning or have done so in the last three years. This is a statistically significant increase of eight percentage points on the participation rate in 2022 and the highest recorded since the survey began.

- In line with previous surveys, age, social grade, labour market status, and the age at which respondents completed full-time education are all significant predictors of participation in learning. However, in a departure from last year's survey, more men than women say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years (51 per cent versus 47 per cent).

- Compared to 2022, there has been a notable increase in participation for adults aged 35-44 (+16 percentage points) and 55-64 (+10 percentage points).

- The uptick in learning participation rates is not evenly distributed across the adult population. Compared to 2022, people in the DE social grade and people furthest from the labour market show smaller increases in participation.

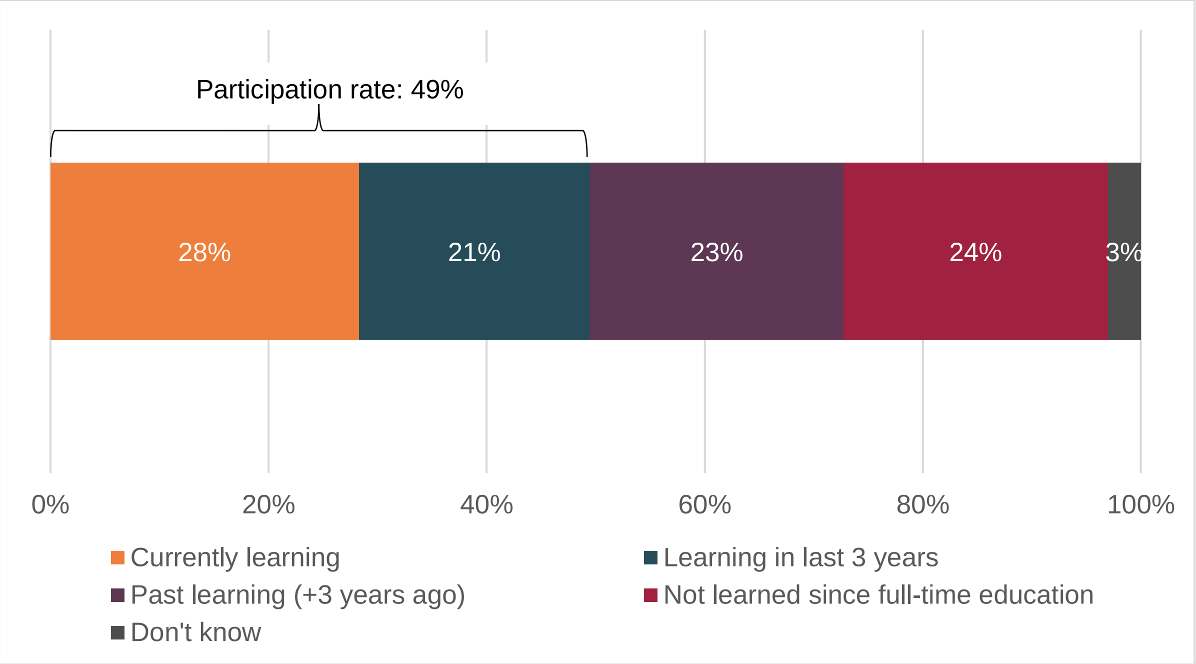
- While stark inequalities remain, analysis of the difference in participation across years indicates that the gaps between people most and least likely to learn may be narrowing by social grade and age.

- A higher proportion of adults in England (51 per cent) say they are current or recent learners in 2023, an increase of nine percentage points on last year's survey. Only England has shown a substantial increase in participation rates since 2022, leading to a gap in participation among UK nations which was not evident in last year's survey. Among English regions, London continues to have the highest participation rate. The gap between London and the lowest performing region (the North East) is consistent with 2022, at 22 percentage points.

- Analysis of the difference in participation across years indicates that the gap between the highest and lowest performing regions may be increasing.

The 2023 survey shows that nearly three in ten adults (28 per cent) say they are currently learning, with a further one in five (21 per cent) saying they have done some learning within the last three years (Figure 1). Almost one in four adults (24 per cent) say they have not taken part in learning since leaving full-time education, while a similar proportion (23 per cent) say that they have been involved in learning over three years ago.

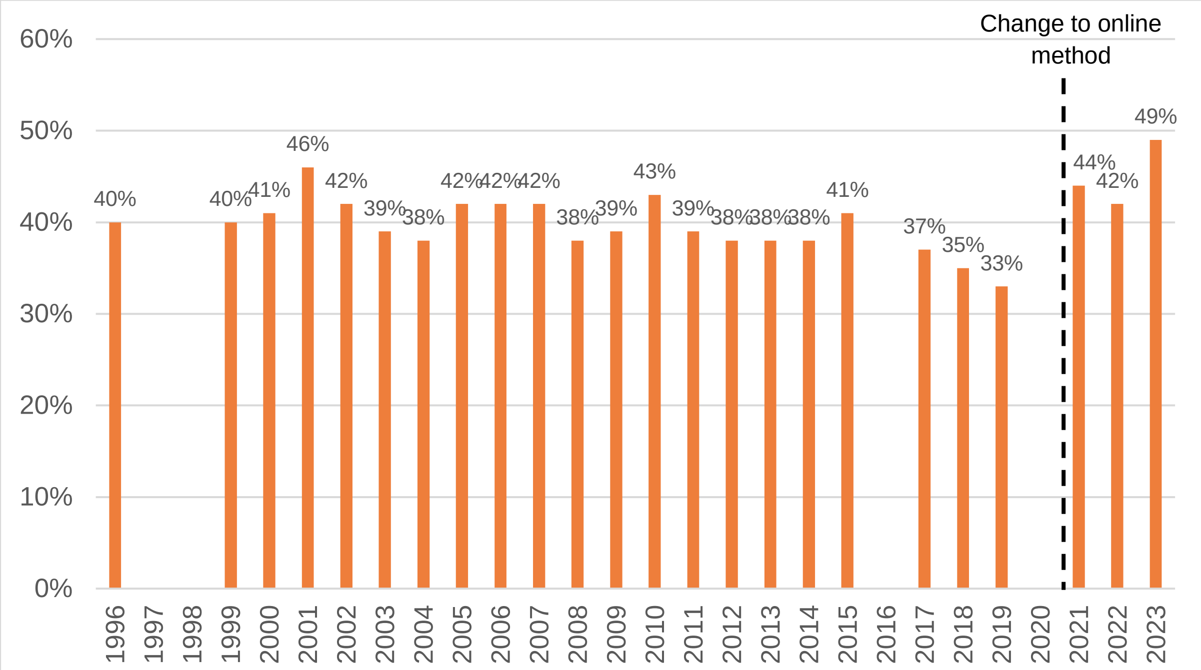
Figure 1: Overall participation in learning



Base: all respondents. Weighted base = 8,906, unweighted base = 9,506.

The 2023 survey reveals a statistically significant increase of eight percentage points in the participation rate (current or recent learning) on the previous year's survey, to 49 per cent. This is the highest participation rate recorded since the survey began (Figure 2). The change in survey method from face-to-face to online means that comparisons to surveys pre-2021 should be treated with caution. However, survey results over the last three years appear to indicate a sustained interest in learning post-pandemic.

Figure 2: Participation in learning, 1996-2023[2]



Base: all respondents to each survey. Weighted base for 2023 = 8,906, unweighted base for 2023 = 9,506

Demographic breakdowns

Gender

In a departure from recent years, men (51 per cent) are significantly more likely than women (47 per cent) to say they are current or recent learners.

Social grade

In line with previous surveys, social grade[3] is a key predictor of participation in learning (Figure 3). Those in the AB social grade are significantly more likely to say they are current or recent learners compared to all other social grades. Three in five adults (60 per cent) in the AB social grade are current or recent learners, compared to 46 per cent in the C1, 55 per cent in the C2 and 38 per cent in the DE grades. More than twice as many adults in the DE grade say they have not participated in learning since leaving full-time education when compared to those in the AB grade (35 per cent compared to 14 per cent).

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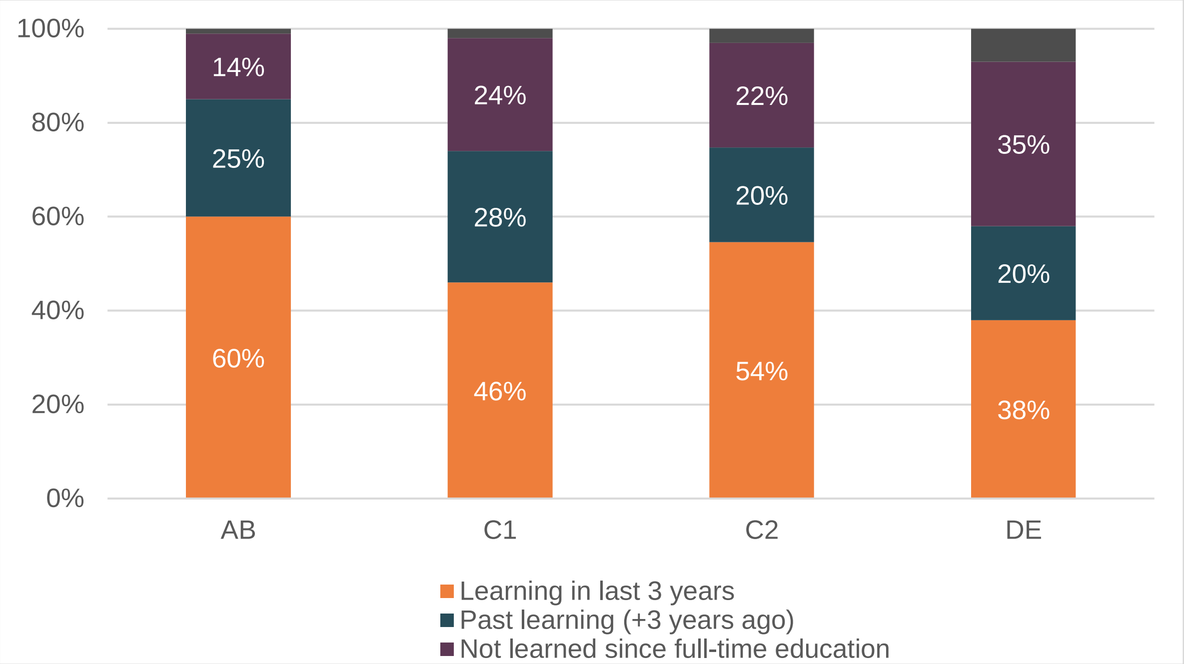
[2] Figures for 2020 have been excluded. This is because the unique context of the Coronavirus lockdown restrictions, coupled with the use of a telephone survey approach, means that findings are not directly comparable to those from other years.

[3] Social Grade: AB: Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional occupations. C1: Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative, and professional occupations. C2: Skilled manual occupations. DE: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations; unemployed and lowest grade occupations plus economically inactive and retired. https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/aboutcensus/censusproducts/approximatedsocialgradedata#:~:text=AB%3A%20Higher%20and%20intermediate%20managerial,unemployed%20and%20lowest%20grade%20occupations

The proportion of people in all social grades reporting they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years has increased significantly compared to 2022, though Figure 4 suggests 2022 may have been an outlier. This is most pronounced in social grades AB (+11 percentage points), C1 (+8 percentage points) and C2 (+10 percentage points). The proportion of adults in social grade DE reporting they have current or recent experience of learning has only risen by three percentage points, although this still represents a statistically significant increase when compared to 2022.

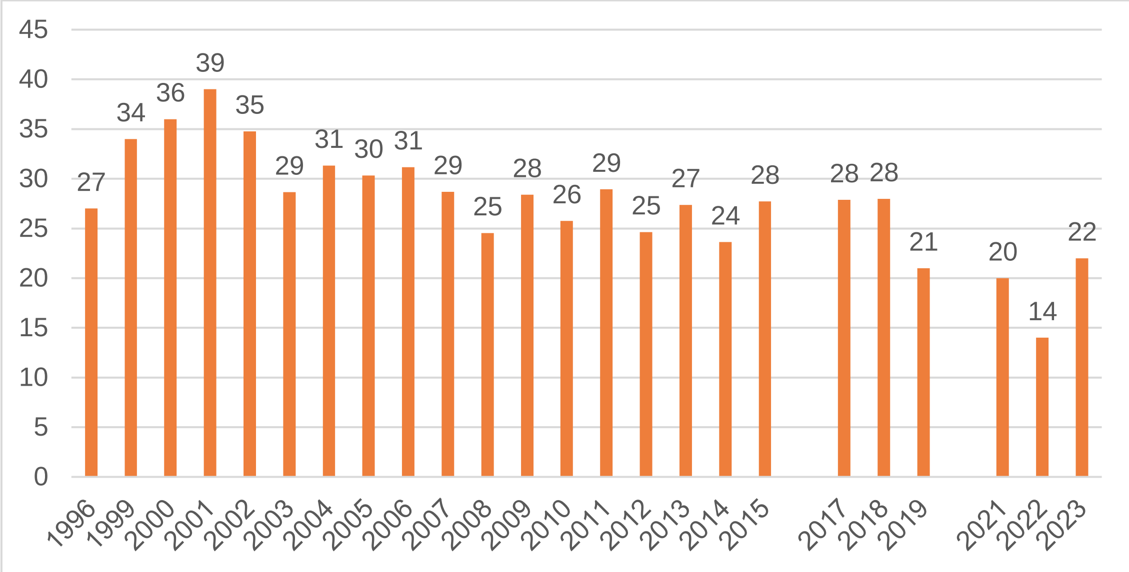
Figure 3: Participation in learning by social grade



Base: all respondents Total weighted base = 8,906, AB = 2,738, C1 = 2,023, C2 = 1,506, DE = 2,639. Total unweighted base: Total = 9,506, AB = 2,903, C1 = 2,180, C2 = 1623, DE = 2,800.

Figure 4 shows the percentage point difference in participation between the social grade with the highest participation rate (usually AB, although in some years this has been C1) and the social grade with the lowest participation rate (always DE) over the history of the survey. The gap in participation between social grades remained relatively consistent between 2003 and 2018, ranging from a difference of 24 to 31 percentage points. The gap narrowed from 2019 onwards, although it has increased again from 14 percentage points in 2022 to 22 percentage points in 2023.

Figure 4: Percentage point difference in participation rates by social grade



Base: all respondents to each survey. Weighted base for 2023 = 8,906, unweighted base for 2023 = 9,506

Working status

Another key predictor of adult participation in learning is working status. Closer proximity to the labour market is associated with higher participation rates (Figure 5). The pattern of participation for those active in the labour market is consistent with findings reported in previous years. Full-time and part-time workers[4] are most likely to participate in learning (64 per cent and 57 per cent respectively) followed by the self-employed (56 per cent).

The rate of participation declines for people furthest from the labour market, dropping to 45 per cent those who are unemployed and seeking work, 31 per cent of people who are unable to work/disabled, 23 per cent for those who are not working and not seeking work, and 22 per cent for those who are retired. Respondents who are not seeking work are most likely to have not taken part in learning since leaving full-time education (45 per cent). With increases in economic inactivity since the Covid-19 pandemic causing challenges in the labour market, it is important that employment support is available to people out of work and not on benefits, and this includes learning provision[5].

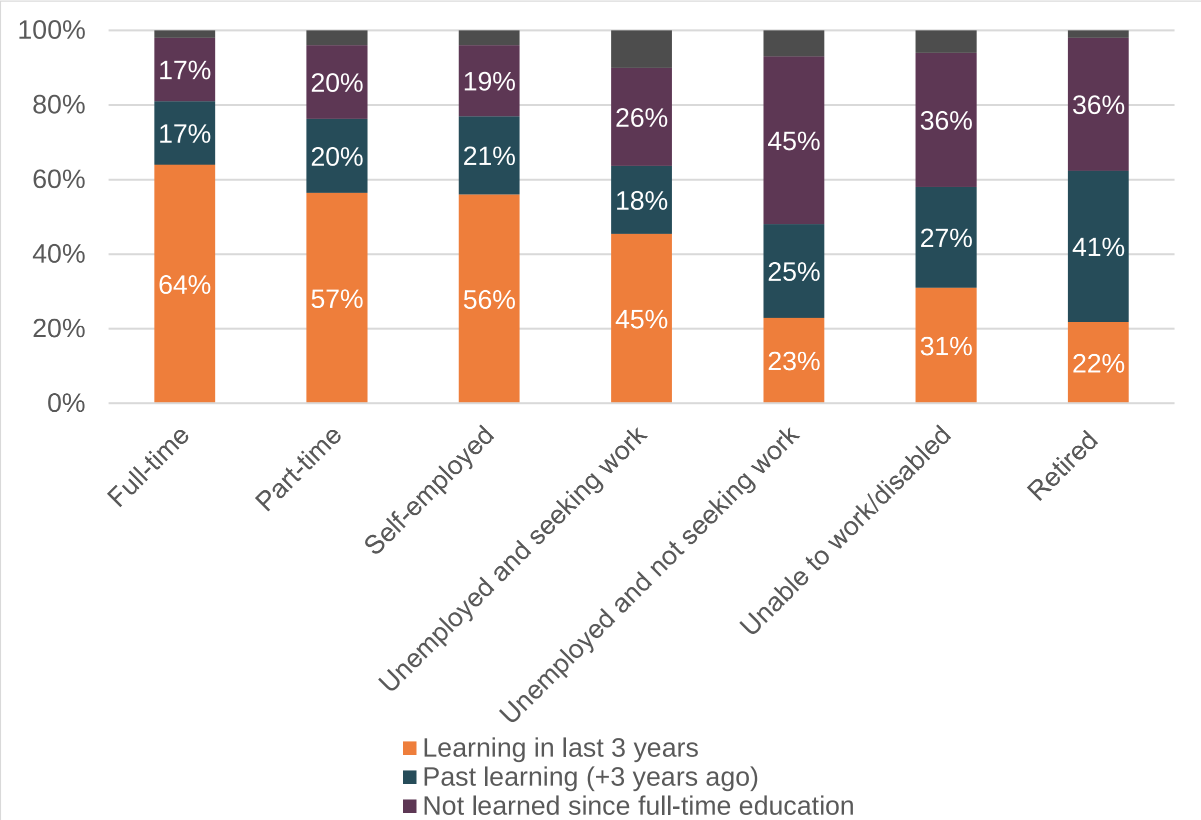
There has been a significant increase in participation rates for full-time workers (+12 percentage points), part-time workers (+8 percentage points) and the self-employed (+11 percentage points) compared to the 2022 survey. However, this uptick in participation is not evenly distributed across the adult population, with a much lower increase for those furthest from the labour market, including those who unable to work or disabled (+3 percentage points), retired adults (+3 percentage points) and

[4] Full-time part-time employment is defined, respectively, as 30 or more and fewer than 30 hours per week.

[5] Evans, S., Clayton, N. and Vaid, L (2023) Missing workers

people who are not working or seeking work (+1 percentage point). The participation rate for unemployed people is lower than 2022 by one percentage point.

Figure 5: Participation in learning by working status



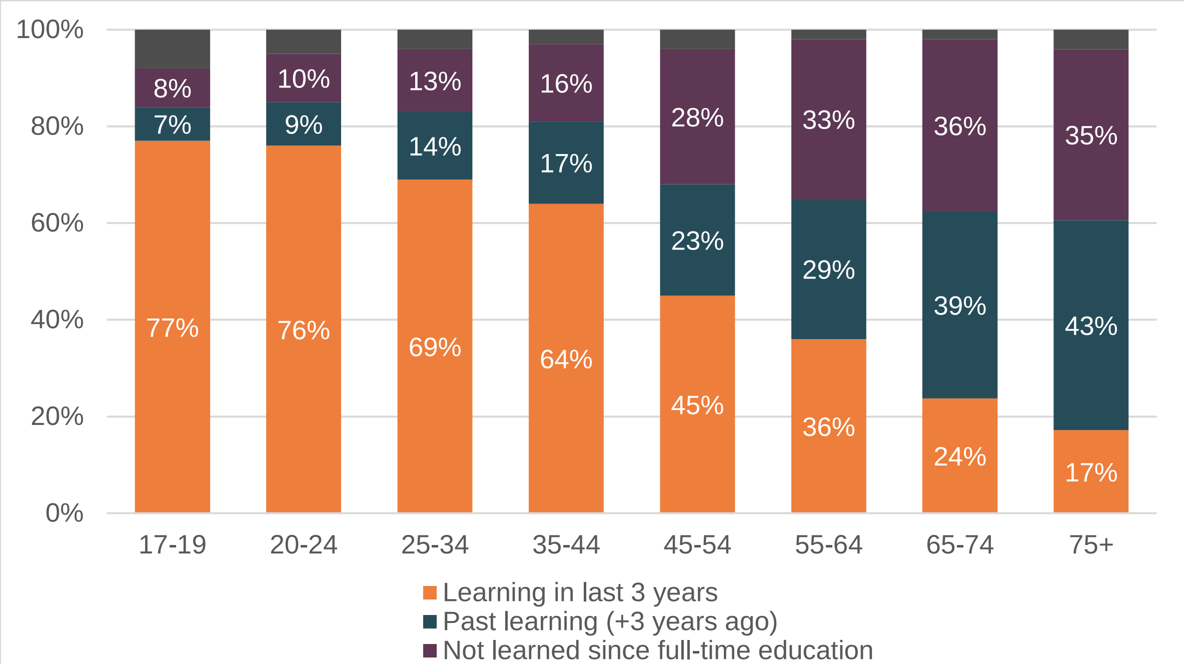
Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 8906, full-time = 3,483, part-time 1,255, self-employed = 482, unemployed and seeking work = 377, not working and not seeking work = 496, unable to work/disabled = 320, retired = 2,014. Total unweighted base = 9,506, full-time = 3,888, part-time 1391, self-employed = 514, unemployed and seeking work = 413, not working and not seeking work) = 569, unable to work/disabled = 367, retired = 1,862.
Note: Respondents still in full-time education are not shown in the chart.

Age

As in previous surveys, participation in learning decreases with age (Figure 6). Just over three in four younger adults aged 17-19 (77 per cent) and 20-24 (76 per cent) say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years. Roughly two in three adults aged 25-34 (69 per cent) and 35-44 (64 per cent) are current or recent learners. Participation falls to under one half (45 per cent) of adults aged 45-54 and around one third aged 55-64 (36 per cent).

Compared with the previous year's survey, respondents in most age groups are more likely to report they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years. Participation rates have increased significantly for those aged 25-64 (35-44 (+16 percentage points), 55-64 (+10 percentage points), 25-34 (+7 percentage points), 45-54 (+7 percentage points) and 65-74 (+6 percentage points). Only 17–19-year-olds have shown a slight decline in participation (-2 percentage points).

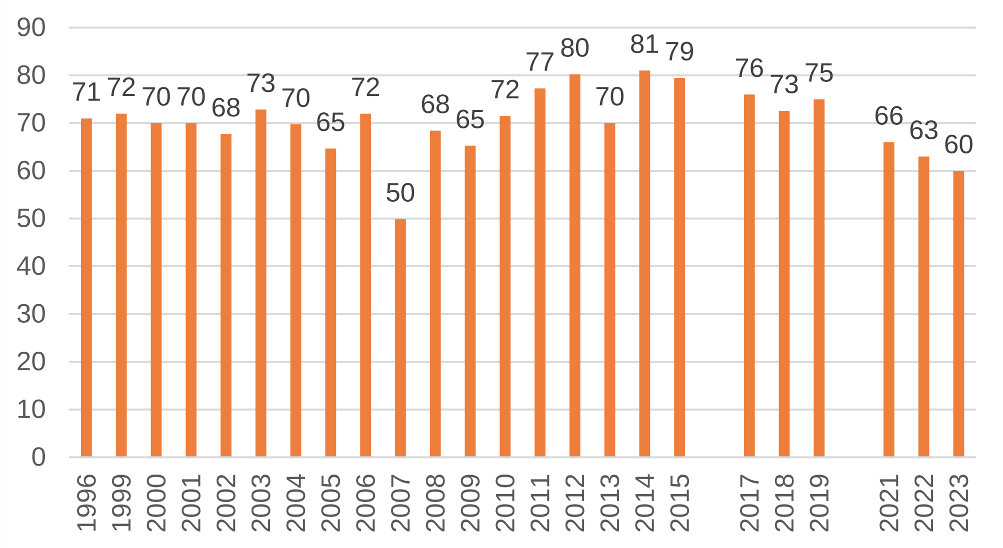
Figure 6: Participation in learning by age



Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 8,906, 17-19 = 387, 20-24 = 776, 25-34 = 1,488, 35-44 = 1,384, 45-54 = 1,485, 55-64 = 1,347, 65-74 = 1,439, 75+ = 599. Total unweighted base = 9,506, 17-19= 392, 20-24 = 794, 25-34 = 1,665, 35-44 = 1,617, 45-54 = 1,640, 55-64 = 1,597, 65-74 = 1,267, 75+ = 534.

Figure 7 shows the percentage point difference in participation rate between the age group with the highest participation rate and the lowest participation rate over the history of the survey. The gap in participation was at its highest between 2012 and 2015, peaking in 2014 with a difference of 81 percentage points. Since then, it has started to decline, with a steeper decline between 2019 and 2021, dropping from a difference of 75 percentage points to 66 percentage points. The gap in participation is now at one of its lowest points in the history of the survey, perhaps reflecting a renewed interest in lifelong learning post-pandemic.

Figure 7: Percentage point difference in participation rates by age



Base: all respondents to each survey. Weighted base for 2023 = 8,906, unweighted base for 2023 = 9,506

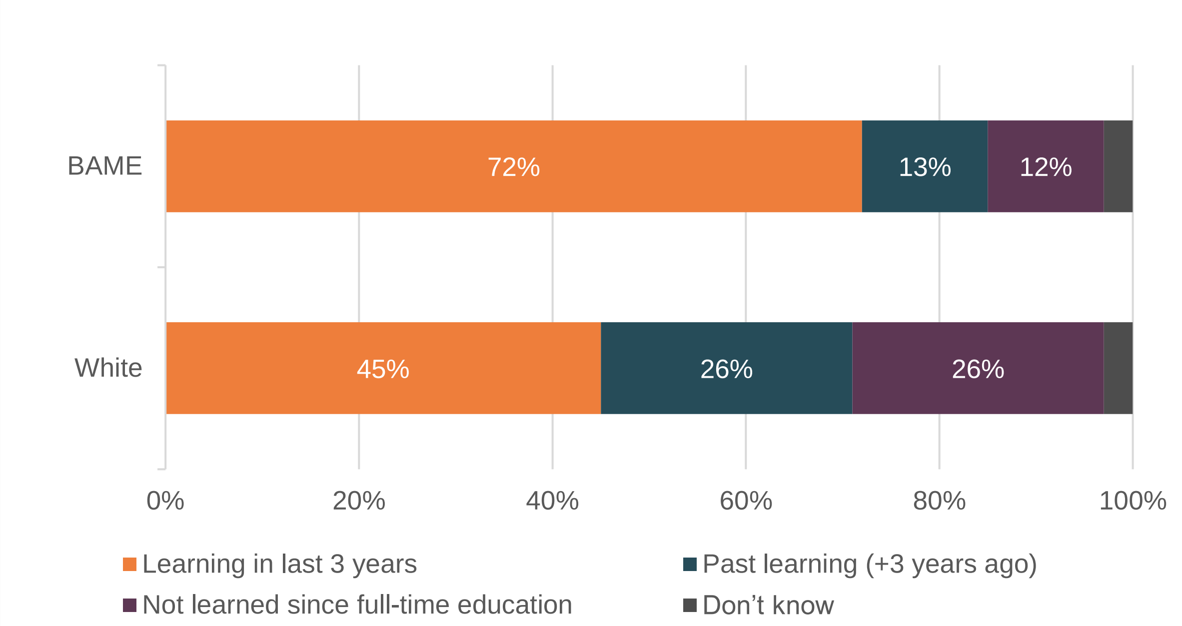
Ethnicity

In line with previous survey findings, respondents from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are more likely to say they are current or recent learners than their counterparts from white backgrounds (72 per cent compared to 45 per cent) (Figure 8)[6]. Respondents from black (76 per cent), Asian (70 per cent) and mixed (69 per cent) ethnic backgrounds are all more likely than their counterparts from white backgrounds to say they are current or recent learners. This may be driven partly by demographic factors in the sample: adults from all BAME groups are more likely than the sample average to be under the age of 35 and to live in England, both of which correlate with higher participation rates. Those from Asian and black ethnic groups are also more likely to have finished full-time education aged 21 or above and to have completed a university degree or postgraduate course.

The increased likelihood of participation is driven by a much more substantial proportion of respondents from BAME backgrounds reporting they are *currently* learning (49 per cent, compared to 24 per cent of respondents from white backgrounds). When compared to last year's survey, participation has increased for both groups of respondents, by around the same amount: seven percentage points for those from white backgrounds against six percentage points for those from BAME backgrounds.

[6] Grouping respondents into these two broad categories masks differences within and between individual ethnic groups. However, small sample sizes for do not permit more detailed analysis by ethnicity. Measures for previous learning in the last three years are not statistically significant.

Figure 8: Participation in learning by ethnicity



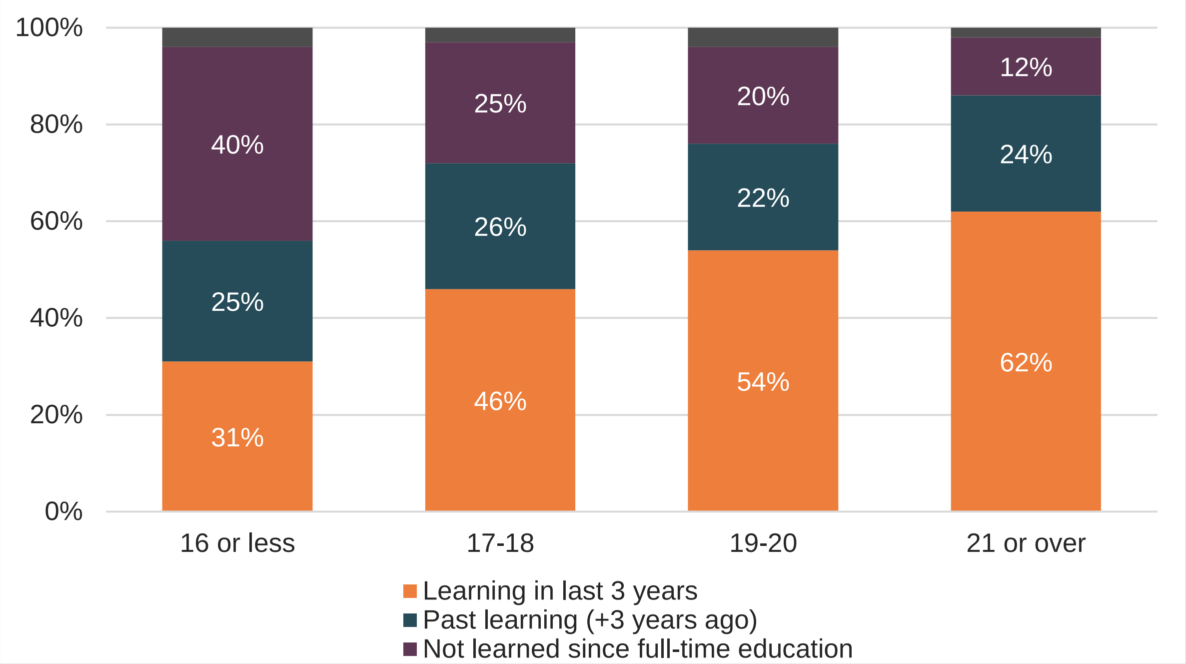
Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 5,860, white = 4,885, BAME = 975. Total unweighted base = 6,120, white = 5,078, BAME = 1,042.

Age completed full-time education

The age at which respondents say they completed full-time education is also strongly associated with participation in learning; the longer individuals remain in full-time education, the more likely they are to learn as an adult (Figure 9). This is consistent with previous years. Just over one in three (31 per cent) adults who say they left education aged 16 or under say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years. This figure increases for those who stayed in education until age 17-18 (46 per cent), and further still for those who stayed in education until age 19-20 (54 per cent). Respondents who completed full-time education until at least 21 are twice as likely to say they are current or recent learners than those who completed aged 16 or under, with a participation rate of 62 per cent.

Compared to the 2022 survey, the participation rate has increased across all these age groups at a similar rate: eight percentage points for those aged 21 or over when they completed full-time education, six percentage points for those who completed between ages 17-18 or 19-20, and seven percentage points for those who completed aged 16 or under. As such, the gap in participation in learning between these groups has not narrowed.

Figure 9: Participation in learning by age of completing full-time education



Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 8,443, 16 or under = 2,625, 17-18 = 2,019, 19-20 = 995, 21 or over = 2,804. Total unweighted base = 9,025, 16 or under = 2,744, 17-18 = 2,156, 19-20 = 1,077, 21 or over = 3,048.

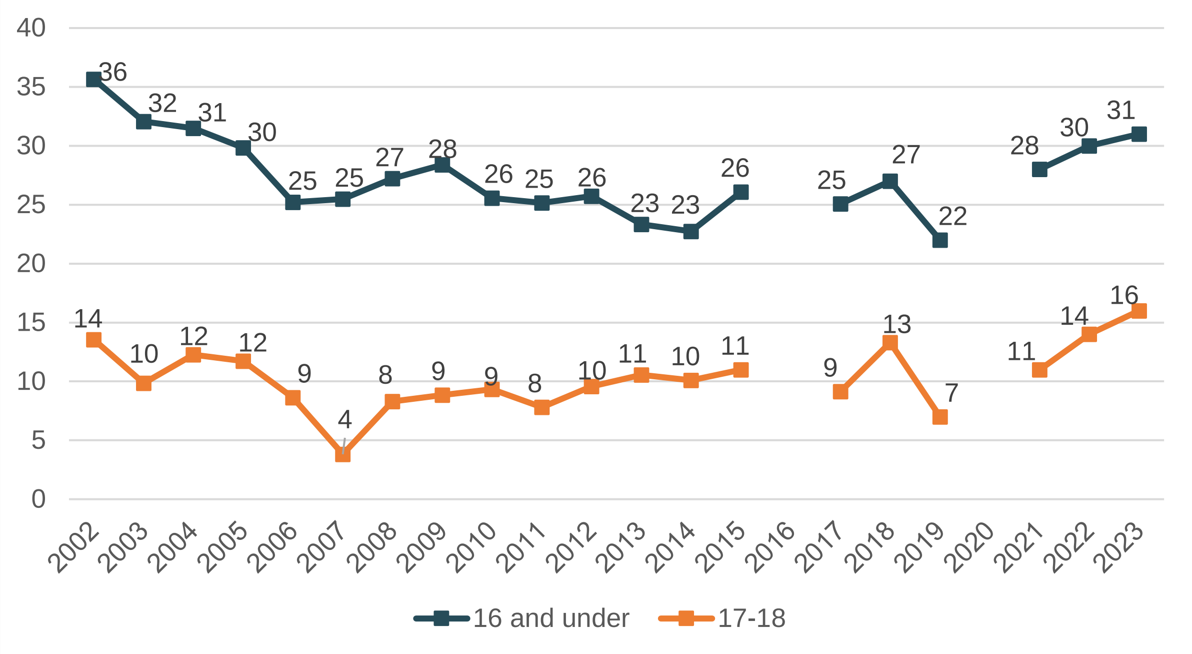
Figure 10 shows the percentage point difference in participation rate over time by age left full-time education; this characteristic has been recorded in the survey since 2002. The orange bar shows the difference between those who say they left full-time education aged 21 plus and those who say they left aged 16 or below. The blue bar shows the difference between those who say they left full-time education aged 21 plus and those who say they left aged 17-18.

For those who say they left aged 16 or under, the gap in participation declined between 2002 and 2006 (from a difference of 36 to 25 percentage points), and remained relatively stable until 2018. The gap decreased in 2019, before starting to increase again from 2021.

The pattern for those who say they left aged 17-18 is broadly similar. The gap declined from 14 percentage points in 2002 to just four percentage points in 2007. It increased again in 2008, then remained relatively stable until 2017. The gap declined in 2019, before starting to climb again from 2021.

Overall, the trends indicate that the age someone left full-time education remains a key indicator of participation in learning, and the gap may be widening again, after plateauing from the mid 2000s until the pandemic. Note in addition that age left full-time education is correlated with age – older people are more likely to have left full-time education at an earlier age. As such, it is likely that this gap is partly picking up age differences. Analysis of participation in learning by age left full-time education and by age cohort would be needed to examine the extent to which this pattern holds within age groups.

Figure 10: Percentage point difference in participation rates by age left FTE compared to those who left FTE aged 21+



Base: all respondents to each survey. Weighted base for 2023 = 8,906, unweighted base for 2023 = 9,506

Geography

When comparing levels of participation in learning across the UK, the survey shows that just over one half (51 per cent) of adults in England say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years (Figure 11). This compares to 46 per cent in Northern Ireland, and 41 per cent in both Scotland and Wales. Only England has seen a substantial increase in participation since 2022 (+9 percentage points). There was a much lower rate of increase in Northern Ireland (+3 percentage points) and Scotland (+2 percentage points). The participation rate in Wales is consistent with the 2022 survey (42 per cent). It is worth noting that variations UK nations were not so evident in the 2022 survey, where the difference between the highest and lowest performing nations was just four percentage points.

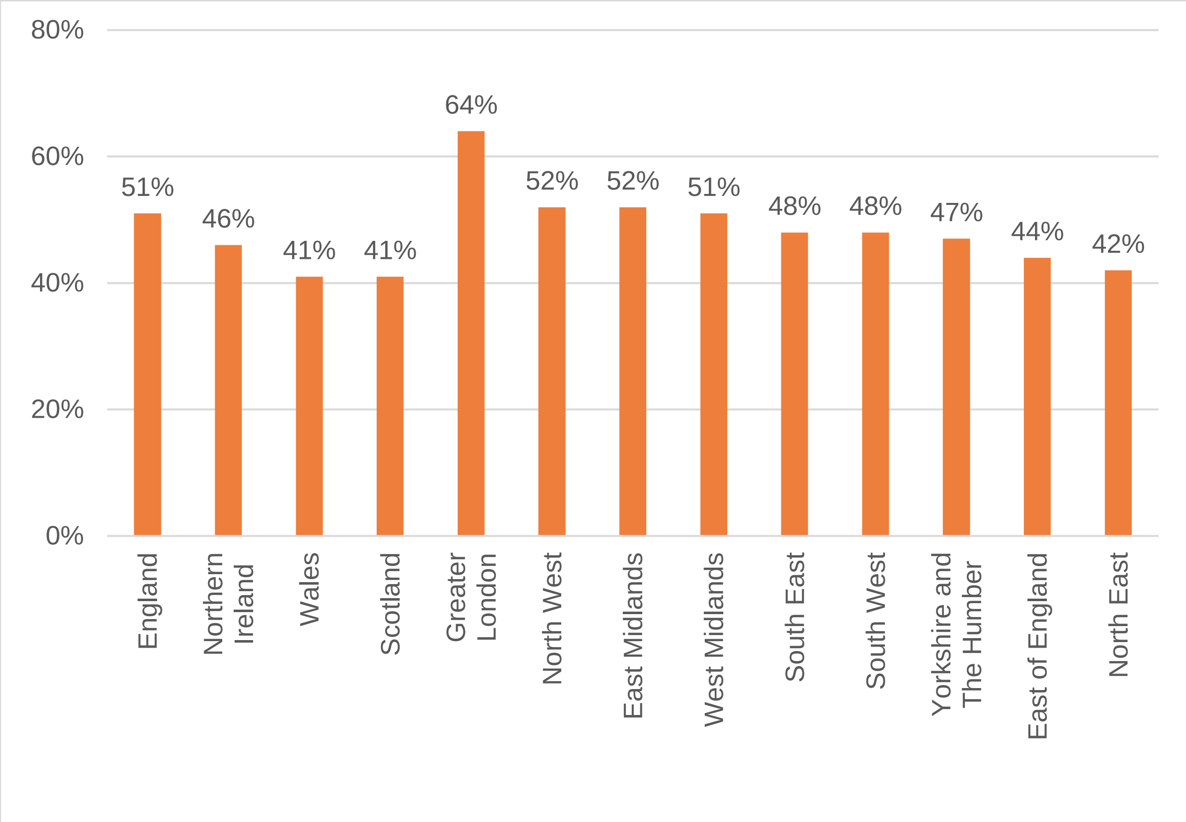
All English regions show an increased participation rate in 2023 compared to 2022. As in 2022, Greater London has by far the highest participation rate (64 per cent), representing an increase of eight percentage points on last year.

The lowest participation rates were recorded in the East of England (44 per cent) and the North East (42 per cent), although these regions also show an increase of six and five percentage points in participation rates, respectively, compared to last year's survey[7]. The performance gap between best and worst performing regions persists. The difference in percentage points grew from 17 in 2019 to 21 in 2022.

[7] Differences in participation in learning rates for England, compared to other UK nations, and for Greater London, compared to all other English regions, are statistically significant.

The 2023 survey shows a 22 percentage point difference between Greater London and the North East. The gap in participation between London and all other regions has increased significantly when compared to 2019.

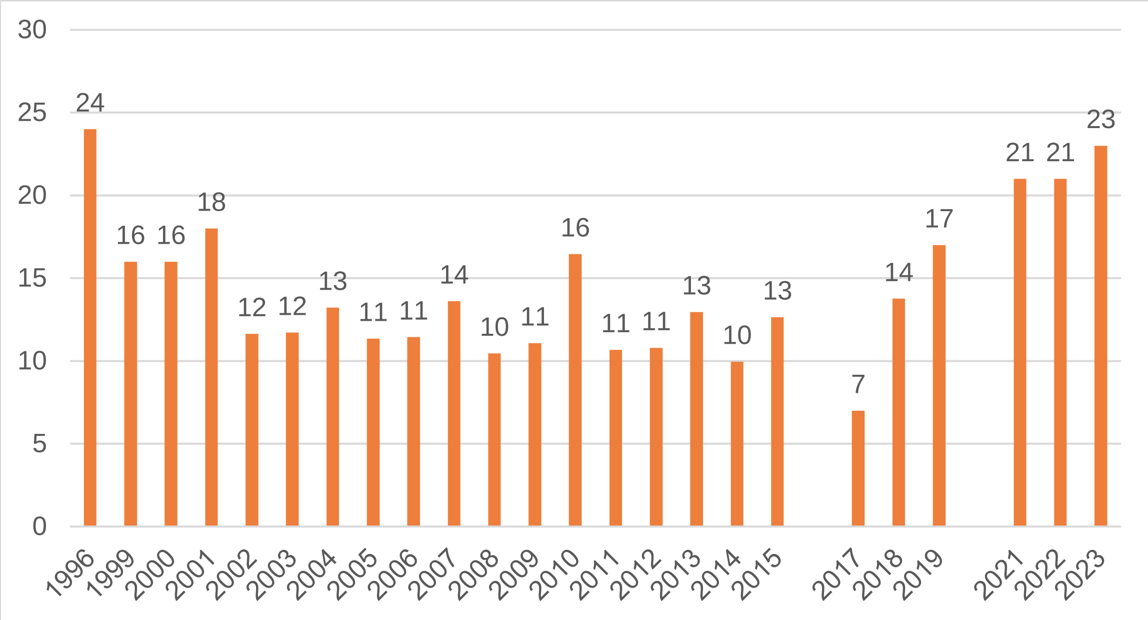
Figure 11: Participation in learning by region and nation



Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 8,906, North East = 359, North West = 975, Yorkshire and The Humber = 730, East Midlands = 651, West Midlands = 782, East of England = 832, Greater London = 1,173, South East = 1,216, South West = 772, England = 7,491, Northern Ireland = 249, Scotland = 744, Wales = 422. Total unweighted base = 9,506, North East = 598, North West = 1,045, Yorkshire and The Humber = 786, East Midlands = 709, West Midlands = 834, East of England = 814, Greater London = 1,328, South East = 1,083, South West = 711, England = 7,908, Northern Ireland = 401, Scotland = 600, Wales = 597.

Figure 12 shows the percentage point difference in participation over time by UK region (excluding England as a whole). The gap in participation between regions was relatively stable between 2002 and 2019, besides being slightly higher in 2010 and much lower in 2017. The gap has been steadily rising since and is now almost back up to 1996 levels.

Figure 12: Percentage point difference in participation rates by UK region and nation (excluding England as a whole)



Base: all respondents to each survey. Weighted base for 2023 = 8,906, unweighted base for 2023 = 9,506

Regression analysis of participation in learning

A regression analysis was carried out to measure how the probability of current or recent (within the last three years) learning is affected by a range of demographic characteristics[8]. The advantage of this analysis is that it allows the effect of each characteristic on the probability of learning to be measured, while taking all other characteristics in account.

The results of the regression analysis show that age, social grade, highest education level[9], ethnicity and labour market status are all significant predictors of participation in learning when included in the same model. Gender is not a significant predictor of participation in learning once these other variables are taken into account.

Younger age groups are significantly more likely to be engaged in learning. For each increase in age group the likelihood of participating in learning decreases by an average of 25 per cent.

Social grade is also a significant predictor of learning. When grade AB is used as a reference point, the likelihood of participating drops by around 38 per cent for those in grade DE, 31 per cent for C1, and 17 per cent for C2.

[8] The analysis excludes adults still in full-time education.

[9] Both age at leaving full-time education and highest level of education were included in initial models. However, highest level of education was a better predictor of likelihood to learn than age at leaving full-time education. Age at leaving full-time education was therefore dropped from the model due to high collinearity with highest level of education.

Ethnicity is again a significant predictor, with those identifying as minority ethnic being around two-thirds (63 per cent) more likely to participate in learning.

Employment status has a significant effect on the probability of learning. When compared to those in full-time employment, likelihood to participate in learning declines by almost three-quarters (73 per cent) for those not seeking work; more than half for retirees (58 per cent) or those not working due to a disability or heath condition (51 per cent); and almost half (46 per cent) for those unemployed but seeking work.

Finally, highest level of education affects probability of engaging in learning. When compared to those with university degrees, likelihood of participating in learning declines by around two-thirds (68 per cent) for those without GCSEs; around three-fifths (59 per cent) for those with only GCSEs; half (50 per cent) for those with A levels, and around two in five (39 per cent) for those with other college qualifications.

Future intentions to learn

Key chapter findings

- Almost half (48 per cent) of adults say that they are either very likely (24 per cent) or fairly likely (24 per cent) to take up learning in the next three years. These results are significantly higher than in the 2022 survey where 40 per cent of adults said that they would be likely to take up learning in the next three years.
- In line with previous studies, current or recent participation in learning is a key indicator of future intentions to learn. Eighty-four per cent of current learners say that they are likely to take up learning in the next three years, compared with only 11 per cent of people who had not learnt since full-time education.
- A regression analysis shows that gender, age, ethnicity, social grade, employment status, and previous level of education are all significant predictors of future likelihood to learn.

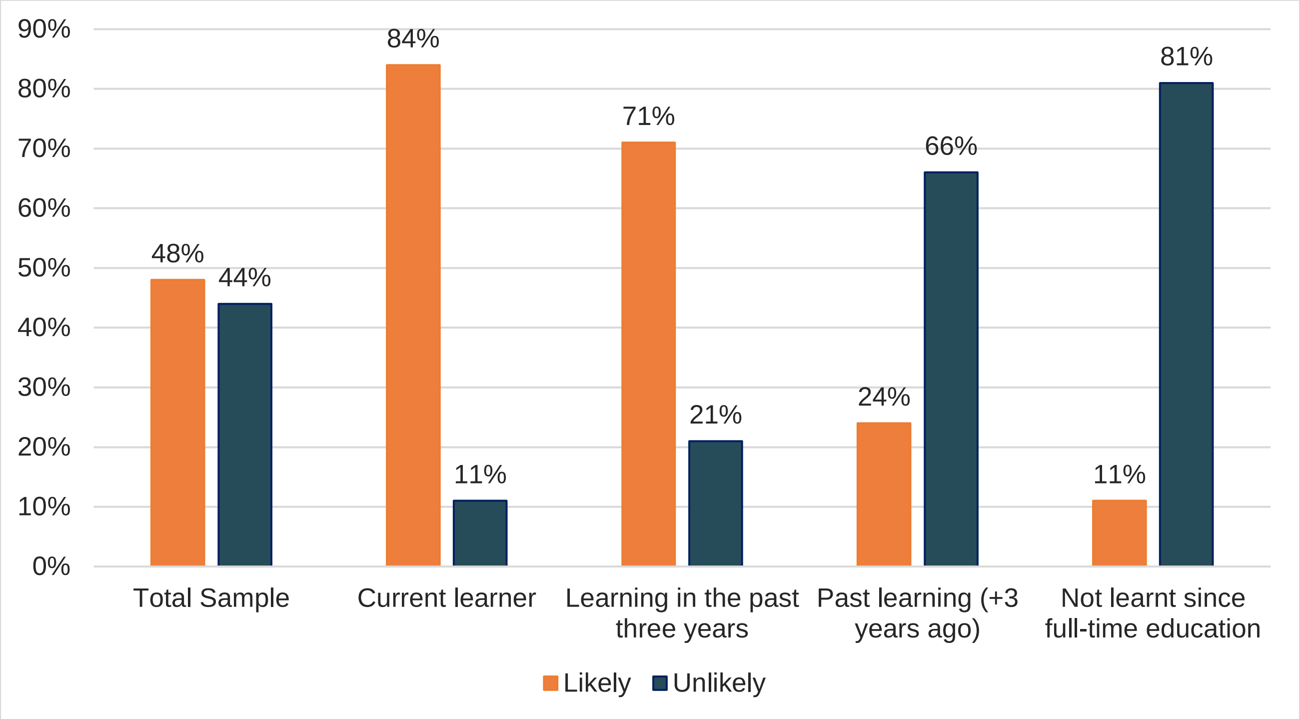
As well as patterns and experiences of current/recent learning, the survey captures future intentions to learn and how these vary by demographics. All respondents were asked about their likelihood of taking up learning in the next three years.

Almost one half (48 per cent) of adults say that they are either very likely (24 per cent) or fairly likely (24 per cent) to take up learning in the next three years. These figures reflect a significant increase compared to 2022, where around two in five adults indicated they are likely to take up learning in the future (similar figures to 2022 were reported in the five years previous). Forty-four per cent of adults say that they are either fairly unlikely (15 per cent) or very unlikely (28 per cent) to take up learning in the next three years, while nine per cent say they do not know.

Reflecting previous survey findings, current or recent participation in learning is a key indicator of future intentions to learn (Figure 13). The more recently adults have participated in learning, the more likely they are to say they would consider doing so in the future. More than four in five current learners (84 per cent) say that they are likely to take up learning in the next three years, compared with only 11 per cent of people who say they have not done any learning since full-time education and 24 per cent who say they took part in learning more than three years ago. This emphasises the importance of encouraging adults to try learning and providing support for them to continue doing so throughout their lives.

When compared to 2022, we can see that the increased likelihood to participate in learning in the future is likely to be driven by both a higher proportion of current learners in the sample, and the fact that adults who say they haven't learned in the last three years are more likely to indicate that they intend to learn in the future.

Figure 13: Future likelihood of learning by current learning status



Base: all respondents. 'Don't know' responses are not shown. Total weighted base = 8,906, Current learners = 2,519, learned in last 3 years = 1,877, studied/learned over 3 years ago = 2,078, have not studied/learned since leaving full-time education = 2,121. Total unweighted base = 9,506, Current learners = 2,725, learned in last 3 years = 2,053, studied/learned over 3 years ago = 2,168, have not studied/learned since leaving full-time education = 2,230.

Regression analysis

A regression analysis was carried out to find out how the probability of intending to learn in the future (i.e., participants who stated they were "very likely" or "fairly likely" to take up learning in the next three years) is affected by a range of demographic characteristics[10].

The results of the regression analysis show that gender, age, social grade, highest education level[11], ethnicity and employment status are all significant predictors of intentions for future learning when included in the same model.

There is a small but significant effect of gender on the probability of future learning. Although overall likelihood of learning was slightly lower in women, once all other factors (age, employment, education) are taken into account, women actually have a

[10] The analysis did not include participants in full-time education.

[11] As with the model on participation, both age at leaving full-time education and highest level of education were included in initial models. However, highest level of education was a better predictor of likelihood of future learning than age at leaving full-time education. Age at leaving full-time education was therefore dropped from the model due to high collinearity with highest level of education.

higher probability of planning to learn in the future (17 per cent increase in likelihood compared to men).

Age also has a significant effect on learning intentions. For every increase in age likelihood to learn in the future declines by around one fifth (21 per cent).

The impact of social grade is again significant. When compared to those in the AB social grade, likelihood to learn in the future declines by around one quarter (27 per cent) for those in the C2 grade, and around two in five (43 per cent) for those in both the C1 and DE grades.

Similarly to the model on participation, ethnicity is a significant predictor of likelihood to learn in the future. Those identifying as white are around three-quarters (76 per cent) less likely than those from minority ethnic backgrounds to indicate that they are likely to learn in the future.

Employment status also has a significant effect on intentions for future learning. When compared to those in full-time employment, likelihood to learn in the future decreases by a factor of around one in five (18 per cent) for part-time employees; more than a third for those who are self-employed or unemployed and seeking work (35 per cent and 37 per cent respectively); two in five (42 per cent) for those unable to work due to disability; three in five (62 per cent) for those unemployed, but not seeking work; and 71 per cent for retired adults.

The likelihood of future learning also increases with education level. When compared to those with degree level qualifications, likelihood declines by almost half for those with A levels (48 per cent) or other college qualifications (47 per cent); and around two-thirds for those with GCSEs (68 per cent) or without GCSEs (64 per cent).

Motivations to learn

Key chapter findings

- Most learners (57 per cent) said that they had taken up their main learning for work or career reasons, while around two in five (41 per cent) said it was for leisure or personal interest. These results are identical to those from the 2022 survey, and reflect a sustained increase in adults learning for leisure or personal interest post-pandemic.
- Younger people are less likely to take up learning for leisure or personal interest than older age groups, as are those in full-time education or employment.
- Among those motivated to learn for their career, by far the most common reason cited (almost half of respondents) is to develop or improve in their current job. Around one in five respondents said it was to retrain into a different type of job.
- Among respondents' broader motivations for learning, the most commonly cited reasons relate to personal interest (38 per cent) and personal development (38 per cent).
- When motivations are grouped, 59 per cent indicate that they are motivated by factors related to learning and knowledge. However, almost as many respondents cite work-related (57 per cent) or personal and social reasons (57 per cent), highlighting the importance of ensuring a broad range of learning opportunities are available to adults.

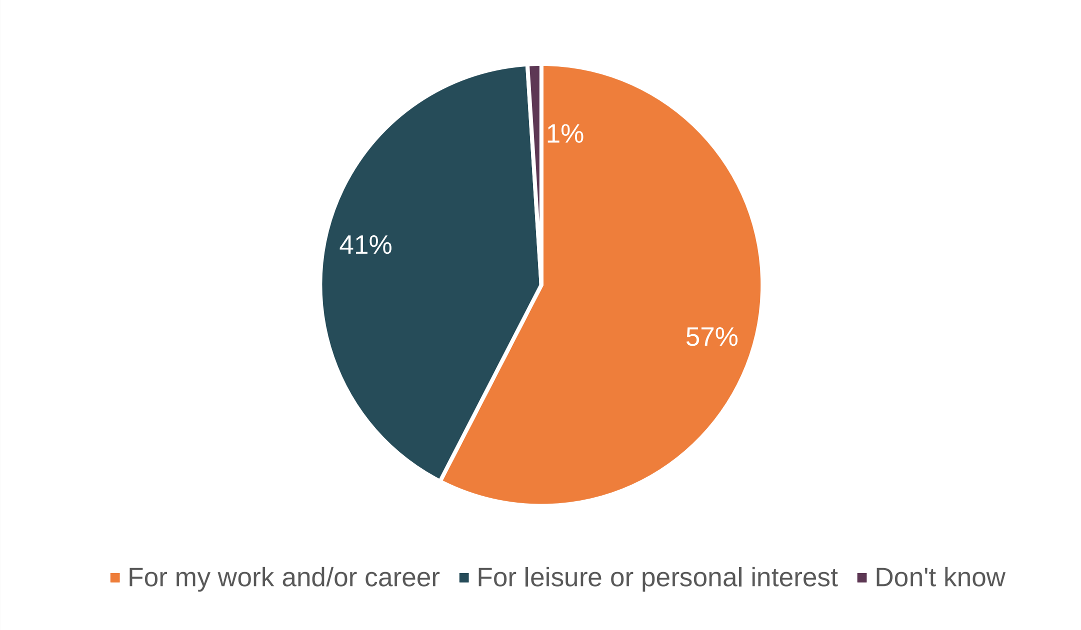
Work-related motivations

Each year, respondents who have engaged with learning within the previous three years are asked to state whether they started their *main* learning for work or career related reasons or whether they have taken up learning for leisure or personal interest (Figure 14).

Most learners (57 per cent) have taken up their main learning for work or career reasons, while around two in five people (41 per cent) said it was for leisure or personal interest. These results are identical to those from the 2022 survey, and reflect a sustained increase in adults learning for leisure or personal interest post-pandemic[12].

[12] 20 per cent of adults said they were learning for leisure or personal interest in 2019, 23 per cent in 2018, and 24 per cent in 2017.

Figure 14: Motivation for taking up main learning



Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base = 4,396. Unweighted base = 4,778.

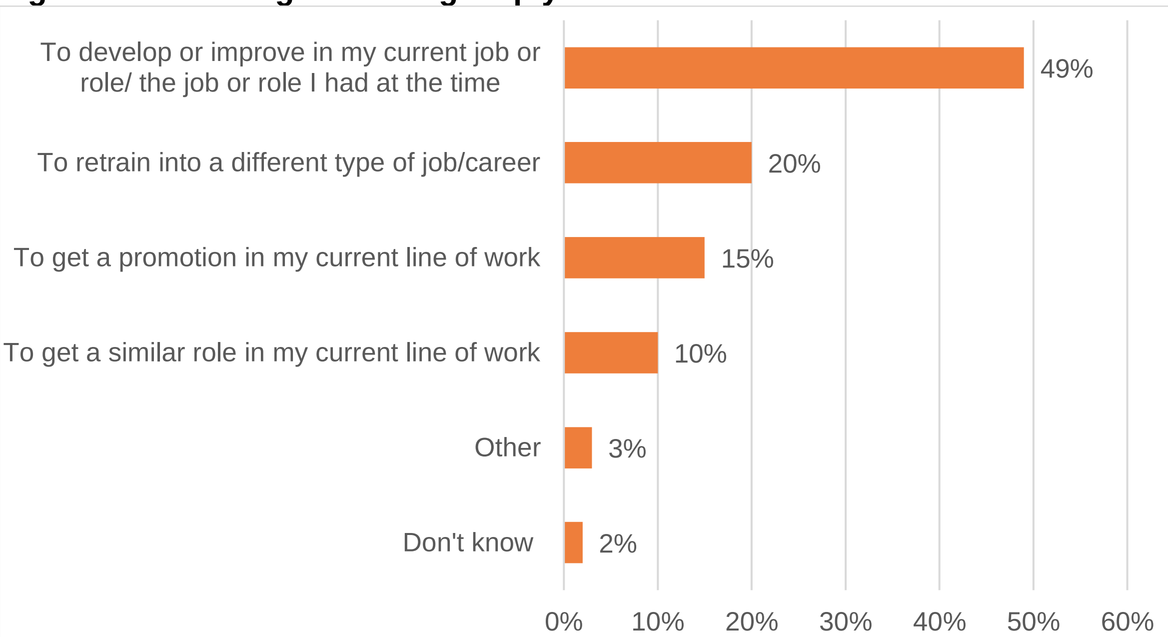
Adults' motivations differ by demographic characteristics, including:

- **Adults employed full or part-time** are more likely to say they are learning for work and/or career related reasons (64 per cent and 61 per cent respectively). By contrast, those who are retired (86 per cent), not working or seeking work (62 per cent), or unable to work/disabled (72 per cent) are more likely to learn for leisure or personal interest.
- **Correspondingly, adults under the age of 55** are more likely to say they are learning for work and/or career related reasons (61-66 per cent). By contrast, adults over the age of 65 are more likely to learn for leisure or personal interest (80-82 per cent). These findings are consistent with last year's survey, and are likely to be related at least in part to employment status, with younger adults more likely to be in full-time or part-time employment.
- **Parents** are more likely to say they are learning for work and/or career related reasons, compared to people without parenting responsibilities (62 per cent compared to 54 per cent). This is consistent with last year's survey, and may be influenced partly by the findings on age and working status (parents are more likely to be aged 25-54 and employed when compared to the sample average).
- **People from BAME backgrounds** are more likely to learn for their work or career compared to those from white backgrounds (64 per cent compared to 55 per cent). Again, this finding may be related at least in part to age and working status, with adults from BAME backgrounds in the sample more likely to be younger and employed.

- **Women** are more likely to learn for their work or career (59 per cent compared to 56 per cent), while **men** are more likely to say their learning is learning for leisure or personal interest than women (43 per cent compared to 40 per cent).
- **Respondents who finished full-time education at 16** are more likely to say they are learning for leisure or personal interest (49 per cent) than those that finished full-time education later (41-43 per cent).
- **People qualified to GCSE-equivalent level or below** are more likely to say they are learning for leisure or personal interest (45-47 per cent), compared to 39-41 per cent for those with A level-equivalent or above.

Adults whose main motivation for learning was for work or career related reasons were asked how they thought this learning might help their work or career prospects (Figure 15). By far the most common answer (almost half of respondents, 49 per cent) is that it will help them to develop or improve in their current job role. One in five respondents (20 per cent) said it will help them to retrain into a different type of job/career. Fifteen per cent believe that their learning will help them gain a promotion in their current line of work, while 10 per cent hope their learning will support them to get a similar role the same line of work. These results are broadly in line with previous surveys.

Figure 15: How might learning help your career?



Base: All who learnt for their work and/or career. Weighted base 2,519. Unweighted base = 2,777.

Broader motivations

All adults with current or recent experience of learning were asked to identify their broader motivations for starting their *main* learning (Table 1). Respondents were most likely to identify motivations related to their personal interests or development – 38 per cent said that they are motivated to learn because they are interested in the subject, and the same proportion state that they want to develop themselves as a person. Just over one in five learners (22 per cent) also want to improve their self-confidence, while 17 per cent are motivated to improve their health and wellbeing.

Many respondents also cite reasons related to their careers, including to help them to do their current job or improve their job skills (28 per cent), to get a new or different job (15 per cent), to get a promotion or better pay (15 per cent), to make work more satisfying (15 per cent) or to change the type of work they do/change career (14 per cent).

Other common motivations include gaining a qualification (21 per cent) and getting onto a future course of learning (14 per cent).

Table 1: Motivations to learn

Motivation	Percentage
To develop myself as a person	38%
I am interested in the subject	38%
To help me do my current job better/improve job skills	28%
To improve my self-confidence	22%
To get a recognised qualification	21%
To improve my health and wellbeing	17%
To get a new or different job	15%
To get a promotion or better pay	15%
To make my work more satisfying	15%
To change the type of work I do/change career	14%
To help me get onto a future course of learning	14%
To meet people	12%
Not really my choice - Employer/professional/benefit requirement	10%
To support my children's schooling	6%
Other	1%
Don't Know	1%

Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base = 4,396. Unweighted base = 4,778

To enable comparisons with previous surveys, motivations were grouped into four categories[13]:

- **Work-related**, including: To get a new or different job; To change the type of work I do/change career; To help me do my current job better/improve job skills; To get a promotion or better pay; To make my work more satisfying

[13] The list of answer options for this question was reduced for the 2021 survey, and the same answer options were then used in 2022 and 2023. As such, while motivations can be categorised in a similar way, there are some slight differences to these groupings when compared to 2018 and 2019. A key difference is that in 2018 and 2019, there were two separate groups for 'health and wellbeing' and 'social and community' motivations. These have now been combined into one 'personal and social' category. The figures for 2018 and 2019 are the figures for 'health and wellbeing' and 'social and community' combined.

- **Learning and knowledge**, including: To get a recognised qualification; To help me get onto a future course of learning; I am interested in the subject; To support my children's schooling

- **Personal and social**, including: To develop myself as a person; To improve my self-confidence; To improve my health and wellbeing; To meet people

- **Requirements**, including: Not really my choice - Employer/professional/benefit requirement.

Most respondents (59 per cent) indicated that they are motivated by factors related to learning and knowledge (Table 2). However, almost as many respondents cited work-related (57 per cent) or personal and social reasons (57 per cent). This is in contrast to the previous two years where learning and knowledge was 6-8 percentage points higher than work related or social reasons. Similar to 2021 and 2022, only a small proportion of respondents said that learning was a requirement (10 per cent). The proportion of respondents citing all four reasons is higher than in 2022. This increase is statistically significantly for work-related, personal and social reasons, and learning being a requirement, but not for learning and knowledge-related reasons.

These results highlight the diverse reasons that adults take up learning. It is therefore important to ensure that a broad range of learning opportunities are available; both work and non-work-related opportunities are vital to encourage adults to engage with learning.

Table 2: Grouped motivations for learning

Group	Percentage 2018	Percentage 2019	Percentage 2021	Percentage 2022	Percentage 2023
Learning and knowledge	53%	78%	60%	57%	59%
Work-related	52%	81%	52%	51%	57%
Personal and social	45%	61%	53%	51%	57%
Requirement	16%	20%	9%	8%	10%

Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base 2018 = 1,747; unweighted base 2018 = 1,702. Weighted base 2019 = 1,659; unweighted base 2019 = 1,515. Weighted base = 2021 = 2,228; unweighted base 2021 = 2,322. Weighted base 2022 = 2,136; unweighted base 2022 = 2,170; Weighted base 2023 = 4,396; unweighted base 2023 = 4,778.

Learning delivery

Key chapter findings:

- The most commonly reported method of learning for adults is learning independently on their own (34 per cent), while 10 per cent said they learned independently with others. Learning through work or a formal educational establishment also remains common, with adults being least likely to learn through voluntary and community venues.
- Almost two thirds of learners (64 per cent) said that at least some of their main learning has been online, a finding broadly consistent with previous surveys and substantially above levels reported pre-pandemic. One in two learners report their learning has been fully online (50 per cent).
- Around two thirds of learners (67 per cent) said there is a fee attached to their learning. Although a four percentage point increase on 2022, this is still substantially lower than in 2018 and 2019. Younger adults, those in the AB social grade, in full-time employment, who have completed a university degree or postgraduate course, or who have taken up learning for their work/career are more likely to have participated in learning with a fee attached.

Method of learning

Adults who reported that they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years were asked how they did or are doing their *main* learning. (Table 3). Just over one third (34 per cent) said they learned independently on their own – a statistically significant increase of four percentage points compared to 2022. One in ten respondents (10 per cent) said they learned independently with others.

Work related learning was commonly reported, including learning on a training course at work (19 per cent), learning on the job (17 per cent), an external training course arranged by their employer (12 per cent), or an apprenticeship (6 per cent).

Adults also report learning through formal educational institutions, including university/higher education institution/Open University (17 per cent), further education college/tertiary/6th form college (9 per cent), and local adult education centre or class (8 per cent).

Smaller proportions of adults report they are learning in less formal settings, including voluntary organisations (8 per cent), local community facilities (7 per cent), local schools (6 per cent) and leisure or health clubs (5 per cent).

The patterns of where and how adults learn remain broadly similar to previous years. Respondents remain more likely to say that they learned independently on their own (or alongside others) compared to surveys before 2021. The 2023 figure is more than double that of 2019 (16 per cent), and substantially higher than the figures of around one in five reported in 2018 and 2017. This may indicate a step change in learning behaviours resulting from the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Table 3: Method of learning

Location	Percentage
Independently on my own	34%
On a training course at work	19%
On the job	17%
Through a university/higher education institution/Open University	17%
On an external training course arranged by my employer	12%
Independently with others	10%
Through a further education college/tertiary/6th form college	9%
Through a local adult education centre or class	8%
Through a voluntary organisation	8%
Through local community facilities *	7%
On an apprenticeship	6%
Through a local school	6%
Through a leisure or health club	5%
Other	1%
Don’t know	1%

Base: All current and recent learners. Weighted base = 4,396; unweighted base = 4,778.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer. * such as a library, museum, place of worship, bookshop etc.

To compare with the results from previous surveys[14], responses about the location of learning were grouped into four categories:

- **Work-related**, including: On the job; On a training course at work; On an external training course arranged by my employer; On an apprenticeship
- **Independently**[15], including: Independently on my own; Independently with others
- **Formal educational establishment**, including: Through a university/higher education institution/Open University; Through a further education college/tertiary/6th form college; Through a local adult education centre or class; Through a local school
- **Community or voluntary organisation**, including: Through a voluntary organisation; Through local community facilities e.g. library, museum, place of worship, bookshop etc; Through a leisure or health club.

[14] There were some changes in the answer options included in 2018 and 2019, but these were minor.
[15] In the 2018 and 2019 survey, this group included the answer option *“Online including through an app e.g. websites, forums, YouTube.”* This was removed from 2021 onwards, and instead respondents were asked about online learning in a separate question.

Overall, the proportion of adults learning through work (41 per cent) has increased significantly by seven percentage points compared to 2022 and is closer to the level reported in 2018 (Table 4). Compared to 2022, there have also been statistically significant increases in the proportion of adults learning through community or voluntary organisations (+7 percentage points) or learning independently (+6 percentage points). This may reflect the sustained increase in learning for leisure or personal interest when compared to pre-2021 surveys; the data shows that one quarter (25 per cent) of those learning for leisure or personal interest have done so through a community or voluntary setting. The proportion learning through a formal educational establishment (35 per cent) is similar to the previous two surveys, although is eight percentage points lower compared to 2019.

Table 4: Grouped locations of learning

Group	Percentage 2018	Percentage 2019	Percentage 2021	Percentage 2022	Percentage 2023
Work-related	43%	45%	34%	34%	41%
Independently	36%	36%	40%	35%	41%
Formal educational establishment	29%	43%	33%	34%	35%
Community or voluntary	8%	5%	15%	11%	18%

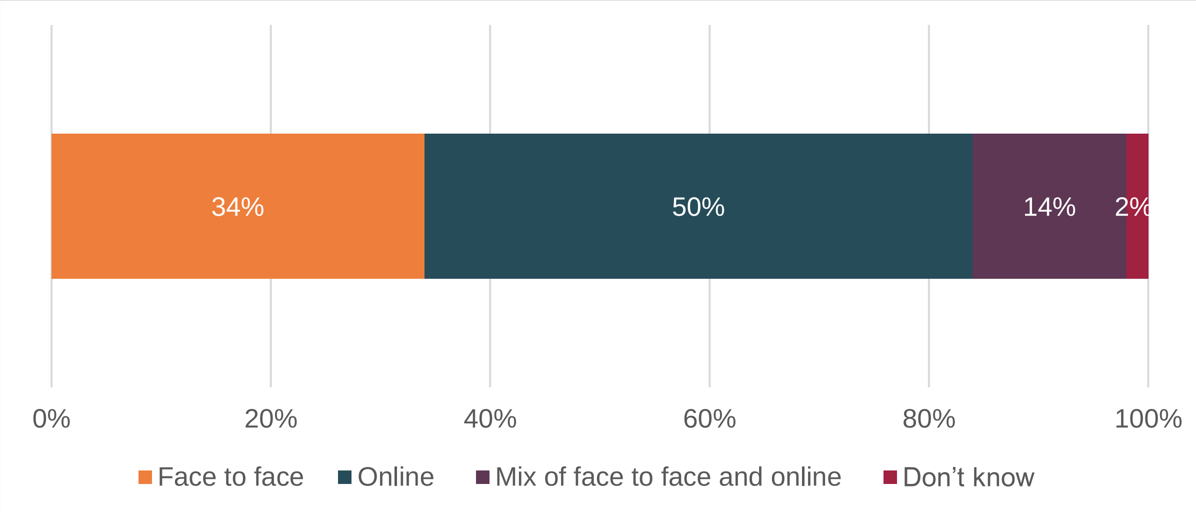
Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base 2018 = 1,747; unweighted base 2018 = 1,702. Weighted base 2019 = 1,659; unweighted base 2019 = 1,515. Weighted base 2021 = 2,228; unweighted base 2021 = 2,322. Weighted base 2022 = 2,136; unweighted base 2022 = 2,170. Weighted base 2023 = 4,396; unweighted base 2023 = 4,778.

Online learning

Adults who reported that they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years were asked whether their main learning took place online or face-to-face (Figure 16). Almost two thirds (64 per cent) said that at least some of their main learning has been online. The proportion of learners reporting at least some online learning is four percentage points lower than in 2022 and five percentage points lower than 2021. However, the proportion remains substantially above the figure reported in 2019 (47 per cent), indicating a sustained shift towards online learning as a result of the pandemic.

One half (50 per cent) of current and recent learners said their learning has been fully online, while one in three (34 per cent) said their learning has been entirely face-to-face and 14 per cent said their learning has involved a mix of online and face-to-face learning.

Figure 16: Participation in learning by method



Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base = 4,396; unweighted base = 4778.

The data indicates that some groups of adults are more likely to learn online than others. These include:

- **Women**, of whom just over two thirds (68 per cent) have learned at least partly online and more than one half (54 per cent) wholly online – both substantially higher than reported by men (61 per cent and 47 per cent). These measures are fairly consistent with findings from previous surveys.
- **Adults aged 35-64**, with 70-78 per cent saying their learning was at least partly online. Conversely, adults aged under 35 are more likely to have completed at least some of their learning face to face, with between 51 and 72 per cent saying this.
- **Respondents in higher social grades**, with around seven in ten respondents in AB (67 per cent) and C1 (72 per cent) social grades saying they learned at least partly online, compared to 61 per cent in C2 and 55 per cent in DE. While these measures are broadly consistent with previous years, the proportion of adults in the DE social grade learning online has declined by five percentage points since 2022, widening the gap between those in C2 and DE when it comes to online learning. These findings raise questions about the accessibility of online learning for adults in lower social grades, whether due to digital poverty or other factors (for example, a preference for face-to-face support). However, the gap between the AB and DE grades is smaller than pre-pandemic (21 percentage points in 2019), indicating some progress in this area.
- **Adults who left full-time education later/have higher level qualifications**, with seven in ten (70 per cent) of those who left full-time education aged 21 or above and 69 per cent of respondents who have completed a university degree/postgraduate course saying their learning was at least partly online. These findings are consistent with previous years.

- **Adults whose learning is for personal or leisure interest**, of whom 69 per cent are learning at least partly online, compared to 61 per cent learning for work or career purposes. These findings are consistent with previous survey findings.
- **People from white ethnic backgrounds**, with 65 per cent learning at least partly online (compared to 59 per cent from BAME backgrounds) and 52 per cent learned fully online (compared to 43 per cent from BAME backgrounds).

Fees

Since 2011, there have been a range of changes to the funding of adult education provision. While entitlements to fully-funded or co-funded provision remain for some learners, dependent on age, course subject and prior attainment, others are required to pay a course fee. The introduction of advanced learner loans in England in 2013 gave individuals studying at Level 3 or above an option to borrow for the cost of the course, where for many this had been free before, and to pay back only once their income had exceeded an earnings threshold. The Government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, introduced in 2021, enables eligible adults[16] aged 19 and over in England to access free, fully-funded Level 3 qualifications from a list approved by the Government.

In the context of changes such as these, a question has been included in the survey to investigate adults' investment in their learning. This question was also asked in the 2018, 2019 and 2022 surveys.

Two thirds of current and recent learners (67 per cent) said a fee was attached to their main learning (Table 5). This figure is a statistically significant increase of four percentage points compared to 2022 (63 per cent), but is still significantly lower than 2018 levels. This could be as a result of changes to government funding, but could also reflect an increase in learning for leisure or personal interest. Just over one half (54 per cent) of respondents who learned for leisure or personal interest in 2023 reported that a fee was attached to their learning, compared to around three quarters (76 per cent) of those learning for work or career purposes.

Most commonly, learners said their fee was paid by their employer (28 per cent) or that they paid themselves (26 per cent). One in ten (10 per cent) paid their fee by taking out a loan. A somewhat lower proportion of respondents said they had accessed government funding, received help from their institution, or received support from friends or family members (all at seven per cent). Support from charities or non-government organisations was reported by just two per cent of learners.

[16] Eligible adults include adults without two full A-Levels or equivalent qualifications and adults who earn below the National Living Wage annually or are unemployed, regardless of their prior qualifications.

While the 28 per cent of learners who say their fee was paid by their employer is higher than 2022, the proportion remains significantly lower than in 2018. Compared to previous years, a higher proportion of learners say that they self-funded their learning. Again, this could reflect increased learning for leisure or indicate that employers are investing less in workforce learning or training and the impact of Government cuts to funding for adult education in England. It should be noted that there were changes to these answer categories for the 2022 and 2023 survey, with some categories being combined (see table footnotes).

Table 5: How learning is paid for

Payment method	Percent 2018	Percent 2019	Percent 2022	Percent 2023
My employer paid/is paying[17]	34%	32%	24%	28%
I paid the fee directly	24%	23%	23%	26%
I paid the fee by taking out a loan[18]	13%	13%	7%	10%
Other government funding	8%	9%	6%	7%
Help from my institution e.g. access funds, grants, bursaries etc.	2%	3%	5%	7%
The fee was/is paid by a friend or family member as a gift	2%	2%	3%	7%
Charity or other non-government organisation	1%	1%	1%	2%
Don't know	1%	2%	2%	2%
Net: Any fee	**80%**	**76%**	**63%**	**67%**
There was no fee	**19%**	**23%**	**35%**	**32%**

Base: Current or recent learners. Weighted base 2018 = 1,746; unweighted base 2018 = 1,702. Weighted base 2019 = 1,659; unweighted base 2019 = 1,515. Weighted base 2022 = 2,136; unweighted base = 2,170. Weighted base 2023 = 4,396; unweighted base = 4,778.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer.

The following respondent groups were more likely to say there was a fee for their learning, or they received help or support with fees, compared to the sample average:

- **Adults aged 20-44** are more likely to say their learning attracted a fee (74-79 per cent). These proportions have increased since the 2022 survey (68-71 per cent). Adults aged 17-34 are more likely than the sample average to have taken out a loan to cover their fees (14-18 per cent), while those aged 17-24 are more likely

[17] In the 2018 and 2019 survey, there were two separate answer options: *"It was internal training provided by employer"* and *"My employer paid".* These figures have been combined in the table to align with the 2022 and 2023 survey answer categories.
[18] In the 2018 and 2019 survey, there were two separate answer options: *"I paid the fee by taking out a formal learning loan e.g. Student Loan, Advanced Learner Loan, Career Development Loan"* and *"I paid the fee by taking out a non-learning specific loan e.g. loan from a bank or building society, loan from a friend or family member".* These figures have been combined in the table to align with the 2022 and 2023 survey answer categories.

to have received other government funding (12-13 per cent). Additionally, those aged 20-34 are more likely to say their fee was paid by a friend or family member as a gift (10-11 per cent), and those aged 25-44 are more likely to have received help from their institution (8-11 per cent). These findings reflect the higher likelihood that a substantial proportion of respondents aged 20-24 are in full-time further or higher education.

- **Men** are more likely than women to say their learning attracted a fee (70 per cent compared to 64 per cent) and that their employer paid (31 per cent compared to 24 per cent), that they paid the fee directly (29 per cent compared to 24 per cent), that they got help from their institution (9 per cent compared to 5 per cent) and that a family member or friend paid the fee (also 9 per cent compared to 5 per cent).
- **Adults in the AB social grade** are more likely than the sample average to say their learning attracted a fee (71 per cent). They are also more likely to say that their employer paid their fee (32 per cent), that they paid their fee directly (30 per cent) or they took out a loan (11 per cent).
- **Employees, especially those working full-time**, are more likely than the sample average to say that their learning attracts a fee (73 per cent and 76 per cent respectively). Employed people and full-time workers are also more likely to say that their employer paid (35 per cent and 41 per cent respectively), that they paid directly (both 29 per cent) and that they took out a loan (both 10 per cent).
- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** are more likely than the sample average to say their learning attracted a fee (73 per cent) – particularly those from black backgrounds (75 per cent) and mixed backgrounds (78 per cent). Respondents from BAME backgrounds are also more likely to say that they paid the fee directly (33 per cent) and/or that a family member or friend paid the fee (10 per cent).
- **Adults currently in full-time higher education** are more likely to say their learning attracted a fee (75 per cent), that they took out a loan to pay the fee (30 per cent), received government funding (26 per cent) and they received help from their institution (13 per cent).
- **Adults who completed full-time education aged 21 or over** are more likely than the sample average to say that their learning attracted a fee (69 per cent) and that they paid the fee directly (33 per cent). Adults who completed full-time education aged 16 or under are less likely to say that their learning attracted a fee (60 per cent).
- **Correspondingly, adults who have completed an undergraduate degree or postgraduate course** are more likely to say their learning attracted a fee (71 per cent), and that they paid the fee directly (32 per cent), that their employer paid

(29 per cent), that they took out a loan or that they got help from their institution (8 per cent).

- **Adults who took up learning for their work or career** are more likely to say their learning attracted a fee compared to those who learned for leisure or personal interest (76 per cent compared to 54 per cent). They are also more likely to say that their employer paid their fees (38 per cent compared to 14 per cent) and they paid the fee by taking out a loan (10 per cent compared to 8 per cent). Those learning for leisure of personal interest, meanwhile, are more likely to have paid the fee directly (31 per cent compared to 24 per cent).

Benefits of learning

Key chapter findings:

- The most common benefit of learning identified by respondents is enjoying learning more (30 per cent). One in four adults believe that they have improved the skills needed to do their job and that their self-confidence has improved (both 25 per cent).
- Grouping the benefits of learning reveals those most often experienced by learners are work-related (63 per cent), an increase of six percentage points compared to 2022. Almost one in two learners (46 per cent) say they experienced benefits related to learning and knowledge, while two in five (40 per cent) report benefits related to their health and wellbeing. Almost one in five learners (19 per cent) have experienced social or community-related benefits. These findings further emphasise the wide-ranging benefits of learning for individuals and communities.

Learning as an adult can have significant benefits for individuals, including those related to health, employment, and social life and community. Each year, survey respondents with current or recent experience of learning are asked to identify the benefits or changes that they have experienced as a result.

In the 2023 survey, enjoying learning more (30 per cent) is the most common benefit identified by respondents (Table 6). One in four adults believe that they have improved the skills needed to do their job and that their self-confidence has improved (both 25 per cent). These reflect the findings from the two previous surveys, with a very similar proportion of respondents identifying each of these benefits.

Other work-related benefits commonly cited by respondents include increased confidence at work (19 per cent), higher productivity at work/improved work quality (17 per cent), work has become or is expected to become more satisfying (13 per cent), and or they have changed or expect to change the type of work they do (10 per cent).

Other personal and social benefits commonly identified by respondents include improved health and wellbeing (15 per cent), improved understanding of other people and cultures (15 per cent), having more control over their life (14 per cent) and meeting new people, making new friends, or finding a new partner (13 per cent).

Just seven per cent of respondents say they have not yet experienced any benefits or changes as a result of learning.

These findings demonstrate the wide-ranging benefits experienced by learners in both their personal and working lives.

Table 6: Changes or benefits experienced as a result of learning

Benefits	Percentage
I enjoy learning more	30%
I have improved the skills needed to do my job	25%
My self-confidence has improved	25%
I am more confident at work	19%
I am more productive at work/work is of a higher quality	17%
I have got/expect to get a recognised qualification	16%
My health and wellbeing have improved	15%
I am more understanding of other people and cultures	15%
I have more control of my life	14%
My work has become/I expect my work to become more satisfying	13%
I have met new people/made new friends/found a new partner	13%
I have changed/expect to change the type of work I do/my career	10%
I have got/expect to get a new or different job	9%
My working relationships with colleagues/employer have improved	9%
I have got/expect to get a promotion or a rise in earnings	8%
I have moved/expect to move onto a further course of learning	8%
I am more involved in my local community (	8%
I have a greater understanding of my child's/children's schooling	7%
Don't know	2%
I have not yet experienced any benefits or changes	7%

Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base = 4,396; unweighted base = 4,778.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer

To enable comparisons with previous surveys, benefits were grouped into four categories[19]:

- **Work-related**, including: I have got/expect to get a new or different job; I have changed/expect to change the type of work I do; I have got/expect to get a recognised qualification; I have got/expect to get a promotion or a rise in earnings; my work has become/I expect my work to become more satisfying; I am more confident at work; my working relationships with colleagues/my employer have improved; I have improved the skills needed to do my job; I am more productive at work/work is of a higher quality

- **Health and wellbeing**, including: My self-confidence has improved; My health and wellbeing have improved; I have more control of my life

- **Learning and knowledge**, including: I have moved/expect to move onto a further course of learning; I enjoy learning more; I have a greater understanding of my child's/children's schooling; I am more understanding of other people and cultures

[19] The list of answer options for this question was reduced for the 2021 survey, and the same answer options were then used in 2022 and 2023. As such, while motivations can be categorised in a similar way, there are some slight differences to these groupings when compared to 2018 and 2019.

- **Social and community**, including: I have met new people/made new friends/found a new partner; I am more involved in my local community (e.g. through attending events, volunteering).

In line with previous years, the most common benefits experienced by learners are work-related (63 per cent), and the proportion is six percentage points higher than in 2022 (Table 7). Almost one half of learners (46 per cent) say they experienced benefits related to learning and knowledge, a slightly higher proportion than in the previous two years, but lower than levels reported pre-pandemic. Two in five learners (40 per cent) have experienced benefits related to their health and wellbeing, a five percentage point increase compared to 2022 and much higher than levels reported pre-pandemic. Almost one in five learners (19 per cent) have experienced social or community-related benefits, a figure that is slightly higher than the previous two years and in line with those reported pre-pandemic. These findings further emphasise the wide-ranging benefits of learning for individuals and communities.

Adults who took up their main learning for their work or career are more likely to identify work-related benefits than those who took up learning for leisure or personal interest (77 per cent compared to 44 per cent). However, substantial proportions of these learners still identify wider benefits: two in five (42 per cent) who took up learning for their career identify benefits related to learning and knowledge, and more than a third (37 per cent) identify benefits related to health and wellbeing.

Table 7: Grouped changes or benefits experienced as a result of learning

Group	Percentage 2018	Percentage 2019	Percentage 2021	Percentage 2022	Percentage 2023
Work-related	57%	59%	58%	57%	63%
Learning and knowledge	53%	54%	43%	42%	46%
Health and wellbeing	31%	34%	37%	35%	40%
Social and community	18%	18%	17%	16%	19%

Base: all current or recent learners. 2018 weighted base = 1,747; unweighted base = 1,702. 2019 weighted based = 1,659; unweighted base = 1,515. 2021 weighted base = 2,228, unweighted base = 2,322. 2022 weighted base = 2,136; unweighted base = 2,170. 2023 weighted base = 4,396; unweighted base = 4,778.

Barriers to learning

Key chapter findings:

- Just over two in three current and recent learners (68 per cent) report encountering at least one challenge while learning, a slight increase on previous surveys. Learners are most likely to identify work and time pressures (24 per cent), the cost of learning (16 per cent), lacking confidence to learn (13 per cent), being put off by tests and exams (12 per cent) or feeling too old (12 per cent). While percentages may have increased, the pattern of reported challenges has seen little variation compared to previous surveys.
- Seven in ten respondents (70 per cent) who have not engaged in learning in the last three years identified a barrier that has prevented them from doing so. Almost three in ten report cost/affordability and feeling too old as reasons for not learning (both 28 per cent). Other commonly reported barriers include work/other time pressures (20 per cent), being put off by tests and exams (12 per cent) and lack of confidence to learn (11 per cent). Almost three in ten adults (29 per cent) who have not recently taken part in learning also said that nothing is preventing them from doing so and they don't want to.
- Current and recent learners are more likely to experience situational barriers to learning (arising from an adult's personal and family situation), while those who have not learned recently are more likely to cite dispositional barriers (relating to the attitudes, perceptions and expectations). This finding is consistent with previous surveys and wider research, indicating that those who are furthest away from learning may benefit from support to understand the value of learning and to increase their confidence to learn.

Each year, respondents are asked to identify the barriers to learning that they have experienced. Current or recent learners are asked to state any challenges that they have encountered while learning, and adults who have not participated in learning for at least three years are asked to identify the factors that prevent them from doing so. Together, these provide insights on the types of obstacles that policy and practice can seek to remove to ensure that more and different adults are able to engage in learning throughout their lives.

Current and recent learners

Just over two thirds of current or recent learners (68 per cent) reported at least one challenge while learning (Table 8). This is a statistically significant increase compared to 2022 (65 per cent).

Learners are most likely to identify work and time pressures (24 per cent) as a challenge, followed by the cost of learning (16 per cent). Lack of confidence to learn (13 per cent), being put off by tests and exams (12 per cent) and feeling too old (12 per cent) were next most often mentioned. These main challenges are consistent with previous surveys.

One in ten learners report childcare or caring responsibilities, transport or travel issues, an illness or disability or difficulties or issues with the course/learning or tutor (all 10 per cent) as challenges.

Table 8: Challenges experienced while learning

Barrier	Percentage
Work/other time pressures	24%
Cost/money/can't afford it	16%
I don't feel confident enough	13%
I feel I am too old	12%
I am put off by tests and exams	12%
Childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities	10%
Transport/too far to travel	10%
An illness or disability	10%
Difficulties or issues with the course/learning or tutor	10%
Lack of digital skills/confidence for online learning	9%
Lack of digital equipment/broadband for online learning	8%
I have difficulties with reading, writing or numbers	7%
Don’t know	2%
Nothing/ none of these	30%
Net: Any challenge	**68%**

Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base = 4,396; unweighted base = 4,778.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer

Challenges encountered by learners can be grouped into those that are:

- **Situational**, arising from an adult’s personal and family situation, including: Cost/money/can't afford it; Childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities; Transport/too far to travel; Work/other time pressures; lack of digital equipment/broadband for online learning

- **Dispositional**, relating to the attitudes, perceptions and expectations of adults, including: I feel I am too old; An illness or disability; I am put off by tests and exams; I have difficulties with reading, writing or numbers; I don't feel confident enough; lack of digital skills/confidence for online learning

- **Institutional**, arising from the unresponsiveness of educational institutions, including: Difficulties or issues with the course/learning or tutor.

As in previous years, learners are more likely to have experienced situational challenges (48 per cent) than dispositional challenges (42 per cent) while learning (Table 9). The percentages of adults reporting these both of these challenges has increased significantly when compared to 2022 (43 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively), although the increase is smaller for dispositional challenges. One in ten learners (10 per cent) cited institutional challenges, again an increase on the percentage reported in last year's survey.

Table 9: Grouped challenges experienced while learning

Group	Percentage 2021	Percentage 2022	Percentage 2023
Situational	45%	43%	48%
Dispositional	43%	39%	42%
Institutional	9%	8%	10%
No challenges encountered	32%	32%	30%

Base: all current or recent learners. Weighted base 2021 = 2,228, unweighted base 2021 = 2,322. Weighted base 2022 = 2,136; unweighted base 2022 = 2,170.2023 weighted base = 4,396; unweighted base = 4,778.

Adults who have not participated in learning within the last three years

Seven in ten respondents (70 per cent) who have not engaged in learning in the last three years identified at least one barrier that has prevented them from doing so (Table 10). This is consistent with previous surveys.

Almost three in ten adults (29 per cent) who have not recently taken part in learning said that nothing is preventing them from doing so or they don't want to. This is consistent with findings from previous years and points to the importance of not only removing barriers to learning, but actively promoting the benefits of learning and engaging adults to encourage participation.

Almost three in ten non-learners report cost/affordability and feeling too old as reasons for not learning (both at 28 per cent). These figures are consistent with 2022 (both at 29 per cent), but the proportion reporting cost/affordability remains much higher than reported in 2021 (19 per cent), potentially due to cost of living pressures. Other commonly reported barriers to learning include work/other time pressures (20 per cent), which has increased significantly by four percentage points since 2022, being put off by tests and exams (12 per cent) and not feeling confident enough (11 per cent).

Table 10: Barriers to learning

Barrier	Percentage
Cost/money/can't afford it	28%
I feel I am too old	28%
Work/other time pressures	20%
I am put off by tests and exams	12%
I don't feel confident enough	11%
An illness or disability	10%
I haven't got round to doing it	9%
Childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities	7%
I don't know what is available or how to find out what is	6%
Transport/too far to travel	6%
Lack of digital skills/confidence for online learning	4%
My home environment is not suitable for online learning	3%
Negative experience of learning in the past	3%
I have difficulties with reading, writing or numbers	2%
Lack of digital equipment/broadband for online learning	2%
Don’t know	1%
Nothing is preventing me / I don’t want to learn	29%
Net: Any barrier	**70%**

Base: respondents all who have not participated in learning in the previous three years. Weighted base = 4,199; unweighted base = 4,398.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer

Barriers can be grouped into those that are:

- **Situational**, including: Cost/money/can't afford it; Childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities; Work/other time pressures; Lack of digital equipment/broadband for online learning; My home environment is not suitable for online learning[20]; Transport/too far to travel[21]

- **Dispositional**, including: I don't know what is available or how to find out what is; I feel I am too old; An illness or disability; I haven't got round to doing it; I am put off by tests and exams; I have difficulties with reading, writing or numbers; I don't feel confident enough; Lack of digital skills/confidence for online learning; Negative experiences of learning in the past[22].

Around one half (51 per cent) of respondents who have not participated in learning recently cited dispositional barriers that have prevented them from doing so, compared to 46 per cent who cite situational barriers (Table 11).

The prevalence of dispositional barriers is consistent with the two previous surveys but remains significantly lower than reported in 2019. The proportion of people without recent experience of learning reporting situational barriers has increased

[20] This variable was added for the 2022 and 2023 survey
[21] This variable was added for the 2022 and 2023 survey
[22] This variable was added for the 2022 and 2023 survey

significantly by six percentage points compared to 2022, and is significantly higher than pre-pandemic figures. This may reflect the rising cost of living and other practical and financial pressures following the pandemic.

When compared to the findings for adults who have taken part in learning in the last three years**,** we can see that those without recent experience of learning are more likely to raise dispositional barriers. This finding is consistent with previous surveys and wider research[23], indicating that those who are furthest away from learning may benefit from action to effectively communicate the value of learning and to increase their confidence to learn.

Table 11: Grouped barriers to learning

Group	Percentage 2018	Percentage 2019	Percentage 2021	Percentage 2022	Percentage 2023
Dispositional	42%	59%	52%	49%	51%
Situational	31%	35%	40%	40%	46%
Nothing preventing	33%	28%	29%	29%	29%

Base: respondents who had not participated in learning in the previous three years or since full-time education. Weighted base 2018 = 3,162; unweighted base 2018 = 3,528. Weighted base 2019 = 3286; unweighted base 2019= 3,660. Weighted base 2021 = 2,657; unweighted base 2021 = 2,566. Weighted base 2023 = 4,199; unweighted base 2023 = 4,398.

Dispositional barriers are more likely to be cited by:

- Respondents **aged 45-54** (58 per cent) when compared to the sample average.
- Respondents in the **DE** (57 per cent)**, C2** (54 per cent) and **C1** (49 per cent) **social grades**, compared to those in AB social grade (43 per cent).
- **Women** (53 per cent), compared to men (49 per cent).
- Adults who are **unable to work/disabled** (81 per cent), who are **unemployed and seeking work** (63 per cent) and who are **not working and not seeking work** (58 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- Respondents in **Northern Ireland** (58 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- Respondents who **left full-time education aged 16 or under** (55 per cent), and to a slightly lesser extent those **leaving aged 17-18 and 19-20** (both at 52 per cent), compared to those who left aged 21 and over (44 per cent).
- Correspondingly, adults with **lower levels of qualifications**, including those who left school at 16 with no GCSEs (60 per cent), who left school at 16 with GCSEs

[23] Learning and Work Institute (February 2021) Decision making of adult learners below Level 2

(54 per cent) and those with college qualifications excluding A Levels (56 per cent), compared to the sample average.

Situational barriers are more likely to be cited by:

- Adults aged **20-54** (60-70 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- Respondents from **BAME backgrounds** (64 per cent), especially those from Asian backgrounds (71 per cent), compared to their counterparts from white backgrounds (45 per cent).
- Respondents in **social grades C2** (53 per cent) and **DE** (48 per cent), compared to those in social grades C1 (45 per cent) and AB (41 per cent).
- Respondents who are **employed full-time** (61 per cent), **employed part-time** (58 per cent), who are **unemployed and seeking work** (63 per cent) and **unable to work/disabled** (57 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- **Parents** (71 per cent) compared to people without parenting responsibilities (40 per cent).
- Respondents in **Greater London** (55 per cent) compared to the sample average.
- Those who **completed full-time education aged 21 or over** (54 per cent) **and aged 19-20** (53 per cent), compared to those who left full-time education aged 17-18 (46 per cent) and aged 16 or under (40 per cent).
- Correspondingly, those who have **completed a university degree** (53 per cent) or **A levels** (50 per cent) or **other college level qualifications** (47 per cent), compared to those who hold GCSE level qualifications (41 per cent) and those who left school aged 16 with no GCSEs (37 per cent).

Learning for career change

Key chapter findings:

- Around seven in ten adults (71 per cent) believe that people like them can change career or the industry/occupation they work in. People working full-time, who stayed in full-time education for longer, with higher level qualifications, in higher social grades and who are aged 25-44 are all more likely to believe people like them can change career.
- Nearly one third of adults (32 per cent) say they want to change career in the next one to two years and a further 13 per cent said they need to change career. People who stayed in full-time education longer, have higher level qualifications, are full-time workers and say they are currently learning are more likely to *want* to change career. People in lower social grades and people without qualifications are more likely to say they *need* to change career. People who are unemployed and seeking work and those in the DE social grade are more likely to say they don't know if they want or need to change career, indicating they might particularly benefit from careers advice.
- The most common motivations to change career are to earn more money (47 per cent), be happier/more fulfilled at work (38 per cent) or to have a new challenge (35 per cent).
- The main barrier people face in changing career is self-confidence (25 per cent). This is followed by fear of applying for jobs/job interviews (22 per cent), not knowing what job or career they could do (22 per cent), not being able to afford to retrain (22 per cent) and not being able to afford a pay cut (22 per cent).
- Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of people who want to change career say they need to develop their skills to do this.
- To change career, adults are most likely to say they would like learning or training (32 per cent), while 26 per cent say they would like financial support towards the cost of learning/training and advice on their transferable skills.
- When seeking information and advice about career change, adults are most likely to search online (37 per cent) or to ask friends, family and colleagues (23 per cent). These findings highlight the need for credible and trustworthy information being available and easy to find online, as well as the importance of social networks in providing information. Just over one in ten adults (12 per cent) don't know where they would go for information or advice about changing job or career. This demonstrates a need to raise awareness of sources of careers information, advice and guidance for adults.

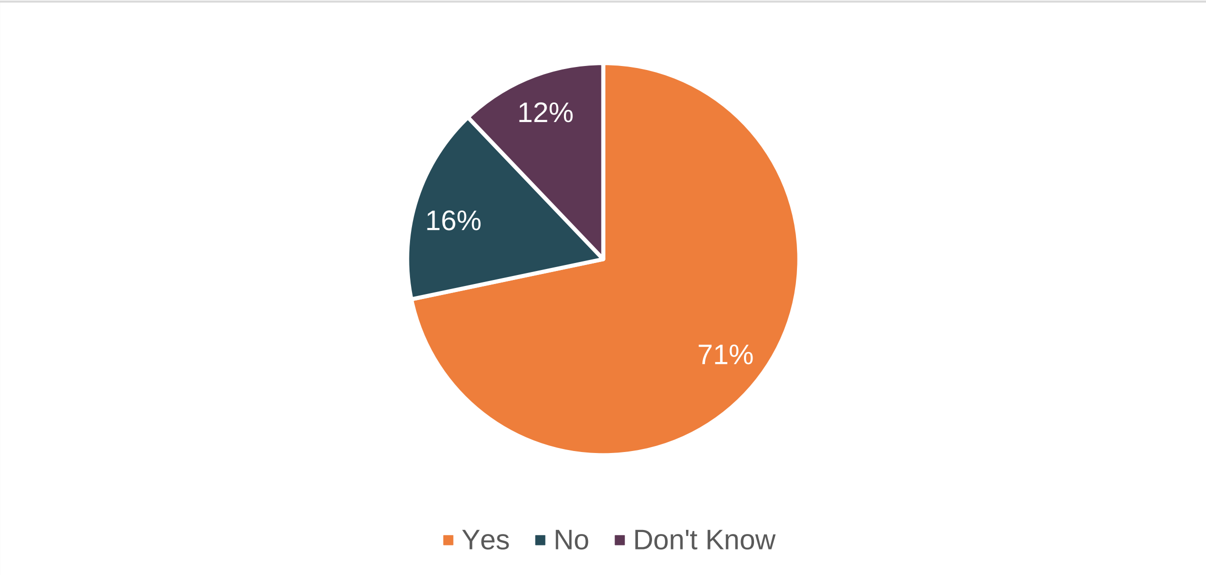
Advances in technology, including Artificial Intelligence, alongside longer working lives will see more people needing to change jobs and careers. The Coronavirus pandemic also had a profound effect on the labour market, with an increase in the number of people who are economically inactive and job vacancies at record levels. Many workers will therefore need to reskill into different careers to ensure they can make the most of the opportunities ahead.

Within this context, this year's survey asked adults whether they are planning to change job or career in the near future. The survey also explored motivations to change career, barriers to changing career and what support people would find helpful.

Changing job or career

All respondents who are working or are unemployed and seeking work were asked whether they thought that people like them could change careers or change the occupation/industry they were in (Figure 17). Around seven in ten respondents (71 per cent) believe that people like them are able to change careers. A further 16 per cent said that they did not think that people like them could change careers and 12 per cent did not know.

Figure 17: Respondents that believe people like them are able to change career



Base: All respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education. Weighted base = 5,966; unweighted base = 6,589

Respondents who are significantly more likely to say they believe people like them can change career include:

- **Respondents who say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years** (80 per cent and 75 per cent), compared to those who say they haven't done any learning in the last three years (70 per cent) or since full-time education (54 per cent). In addition, **people who say they are likely to learn in the next three years** (81 per cent) are more likely to agree people like them can change career, compared to people who say they are unlikely to take up learning (59 per cent).

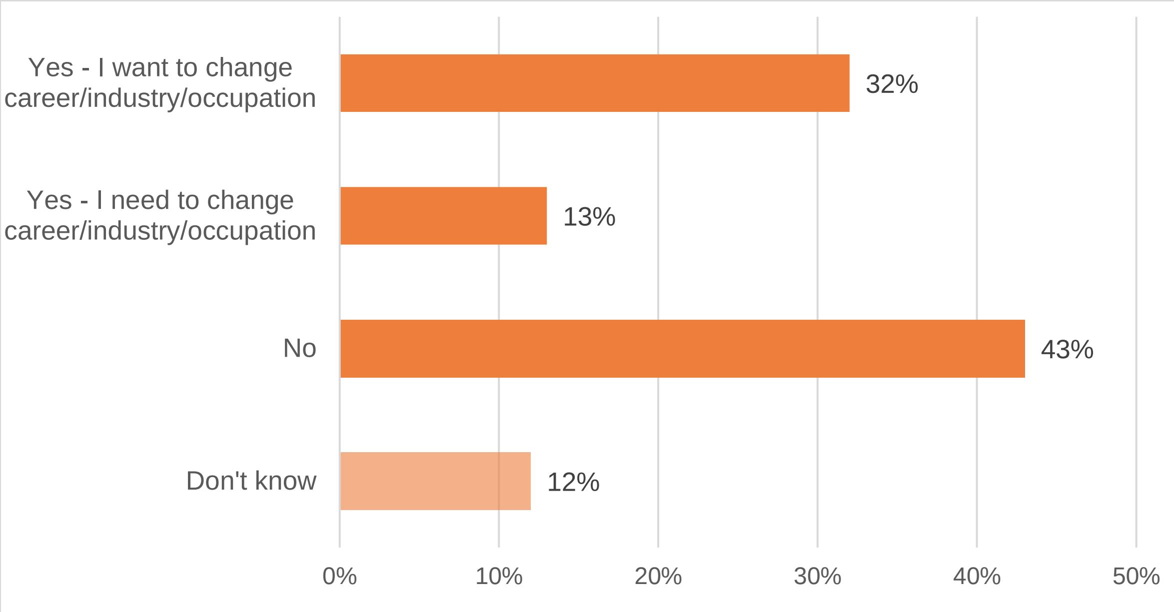
- **People who left full-time education aged 21 or above** (78 per cent), compared to the sample average. People who left full-time education aged 17-20 (70 per cent) are also more likely than people who left aged 16 or younger (65 per cent) to believe people like them can change careers.
- **People who hold degree or postgraduate qualifications** (77 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- **People aged 25-44** (76-77 per cent), compared to the sample average. People aged 55 and above are significantly more likely to say they don't believe people like them can change careers (23-32 per cent).
- **Those in the AB social grade** (77 per cent), compared to the sample average. In addition, people in the C1 and C2 social grades (both 71 per cent) are more likely than people in the DE social grade (65 per cent) to agree that people like them can change career.
- **Full-time workers** (74 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- **Parents** (78 per cent), compared to people without parenting responsibilities (67 per cent).
- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** (76 per cent), compared to their white counterparts (71 per cent).
- **People living in Northern Ireland and Greater London** (78 per cent and 76 per cent) compared to the sample average.

More than two in five adults (45 per cent) indicated that they want (32 per cent) or need (13 per cent) to change their career or the industry/occupation in the next one to two years (Figure 18). Wider research indicates that around six per cent of adults change occupation or sector each year[24].

Just over two in five respondents (43 per cent) said that they do not need to change career. Just over one in ten adults (12 per cent) said they don't know, indicating some uncertainty among workers about their career plans.

[24] Evans, S. and Vaid, L. (2023) All change: Understanding and supporting retraining and career change

Figure 18: Whether adults want or need to change careers in the next 1-2 years



Base: All respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education. Weighted base = 5,966; unweighted base = 6,589.

Some groups are significantly more likely to say they want or need to change career or occupation/industry, including:

- **Men** (48 per cent) compared to women (42 per cent).
- **People aged 20-44** (52-62 per cent) compared to the sample average.
- **Parents** (58 per cent), compared to people without parenting responsibilities (37 per cent).
- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** (61 per cent), compared to their white counterparts (40 per cent).
- **Respondents in Greater London and the North West** (56 per cent and 49 per cent respectively), compared to the sample average.
- **Those who engaged in learning for leisure or personal interest** when compared to those learning for their work or career (60 per cent compared to 51 per cent). This may suggest that learning motivated by personal interest may help to inspire people to change career.
- **People in social grades C2 and DE** (both 48 per cent), with respondents in these groups being significantly more likely to say they *need* to change career or occupation/industry than people in C1 or AB (14-15 per cent compared to 11 per cent of those in grades AB and C1). People in the DE social grade (16 per cent) are also more likely to say they don’t know whether they want or need to change career.

- **Full-time workers** are significantly more likely to say they *want* to change career (35 per cent) compared to the sample average. Self-employed people (52 per cent) are significantly more likely than the sample average to say they don't want or need to change career. People who are unemployed and seeking work (25 per cent) are significantly more likely to say they don't know whether they want or need to change career, indicating that they might benefit from careers advice and guidance.

- **People who left full-time education aged 19 or above** are more likely to say they *want* to change career (36 per cent), compared to the sample average.

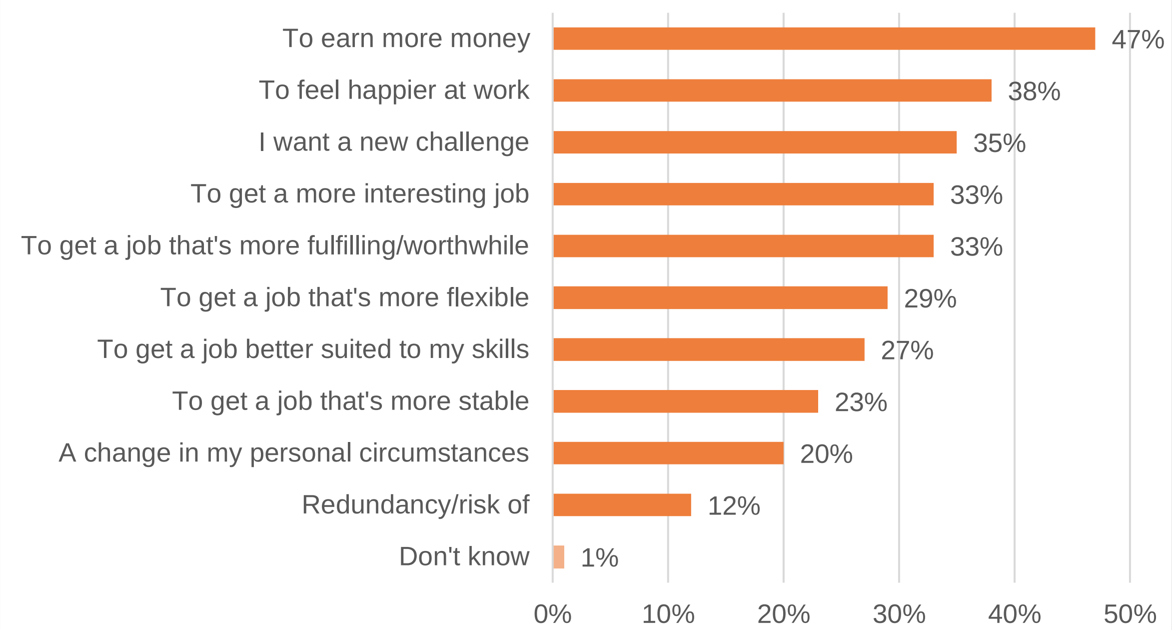
- **People who hold degree or postgraduate qualifications** are more likely to say they *want* to change career (37 per cent) than the sample average. **People who left school at 16 with no GCSEs** (18 per cent) are significantly more likely to say they *need* to change career.

- **Respondents who say they are currently learning** are more likely than the sample average to say they *want* to change career (46 per cent)**. People who say they have learned in the last three years** are more likely to say they *need* change career (16 per cent). Adults who have not learned in the last three years are more likely to say that they do not want or need to change career (55 per cent) or that they don't know (14 per cent). This suggests a strong relationship between learning and motivations for career change.

Motivations for career change

Respondents who indicated that they either want to or need to change career in the next one to two years were asked the reason for this change (Figure 19). Almost half of respondents (47 per cent) cited the desire to earn more money. Other common reasons for desiring a career change are to feel happier at work (38 per cent), for a new challenge (35 per cent) or for a job that's more interesting (33 per cent) or more fulfilling/worthwhile (33 per cent). Nearly three in ten respondents (29 per cent) cited a desire for more flexibility. This may be linked to the normalisation of hybrid working since the Coronavirus pandemic, which some employers may be unable/unwilling to cater to. Additionally, just over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) wanted a job that is better suited to their skills. Some respondents are also motivated by a lack of work in their industry; 12 per cent either feared redundancy or had already been made redundant and 23 per cent wanted to move to a more stable line of work.

Figure 19: Reason for wanting/needing career change

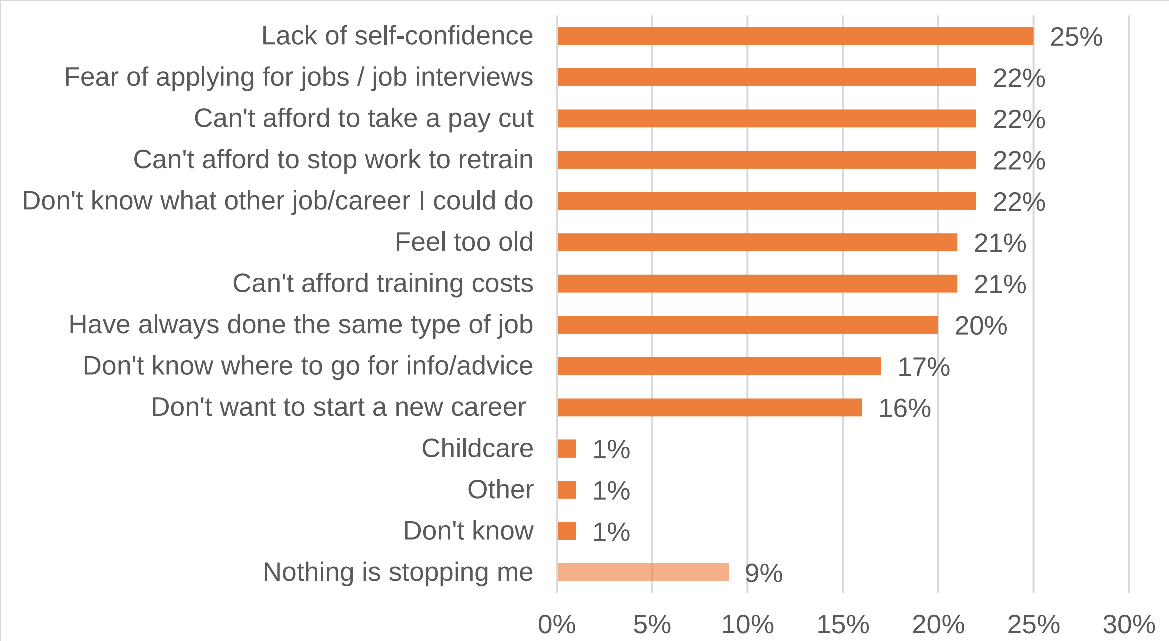


Base: All who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years. Weighted base = 2,686, unweighted base = 2,981.

Barriers to career change

Respondents who indicated that they want or need to change career were then asked what was stopping them from doing this (Figure 20). The most cited barrier was self-confidence (25 per cent). Other dispositional barriers include fear of applying for jobs/job interviews (22 per cent), feeling too old (21 per cent), having always done the same job (20 per cent) and not wanting to start a new career from the bottom (16 per cent). Some barriers relate to a lack of awareness of opportunities or guidance, with 22 per cent saying they don’t know what other job or career they could do and 17 per cent indicating they don’t know where to go for information and advice. Other barriers relate to finance, including not being able to afford to retrain (22 per cent), not being able to afford a pay cut (22 per cent) and/or not being able to afford training costs (21 per cent). Nearly one in ten respondents who say they want or need to change career say that nothing is stopping them from doing this.

Figure 20: Reason for not changing career

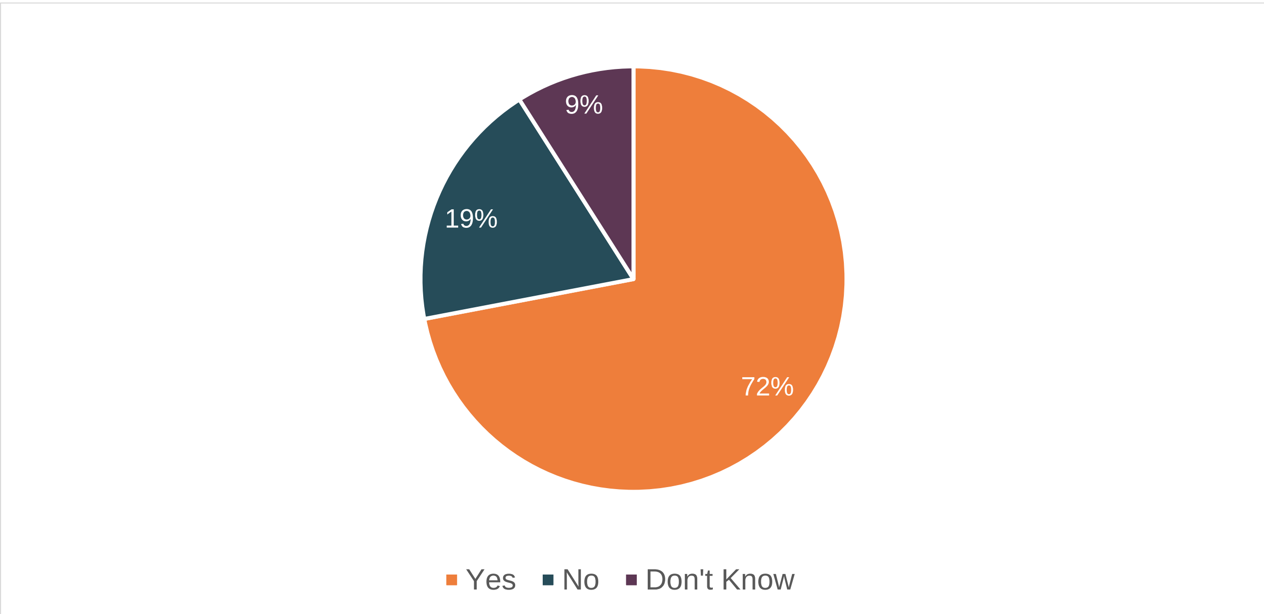


Base: All who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years. Weighted base = 2,686, unweighted base = 2,981.

Developing skills for career change

Respondents who indicated that they want or need to change career were asked if they need to develop their skills in order to change career or the industry/occupation they are in (Figure 21). Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of respondents said they need to develop their skills, while 19 per cent said they don't and 9 per cent said they don't know.

Figure 21: Do you need to develop your skills to change career or change the industry/occupation you work in?



Base: All who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years. Weighted base = 2,686, unweighted base = 2,981.

Some groups of adults were significantly more likely than others to say that they would need to develop their skills, including:

- **Men** (74 per cent), compared to women (69 per cent).
- **People aged 25-44** (79 per cent aged 25-34 and 75 per cent aged 35-44), compared to the sample average.
- **People from the AB social grade** (75 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- **Full-time workers** (75 per cent), compared to the sample average.
- **People who left full-time education aged 21 or above** (77 per cent) and **who hold degree or postgraduate qualifications** (78 per cent) compared to the sample average.
- **Respondents who say they are currently learning** (82 per cent) compared to the sample average**.** This reinforces the finding above that those with more recent experience of learning are most likely to learn in the future.
- **Those who engaged in learning for work and/or career** (78 per cent) compared to those who took up learning for leisure or personal interest (74 per cent).
- **Parents** (79 per cent), compared to people without parenting responsibilities (66 per cent).
- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** (77 per cent), compared to their white counterparts (71 per cent).

Some groups of adults were significantly more likely to say they don’t know if they need to develop their skills to change career. This indicates that they may need careers information, advice and guidance to help them understand this:

- **Women** (11 per cent) compared to men (7 per cent).
- **People aged 45-64** (15-19 per cent).
- **People who are unemployed and seeking work and part-time workers** (17 per cent and 11 per cent).
- **People who left full-time education aged 16 or less** (12 per cent).
- **People who say they haven’t done any learning in the last three years or since full-time education** (13 per cent and 19 per cent).

Support for career change

Respondents were asked to select, from a list of options, what support they would find helpful if they wanted/needed to change career (Figure 22). Respondents most commonly indicated that they would find learning or training helpful (32 per cent). This was followed by financial support, with 26 per cent selecting financial support towards the cost of learning/training and 25 per cent indicating they would find financial support towards living costs helpful. Respondents also stated that they would find advice useful – on their transferable skills (26 per cent), to choose the right job/career for them (24 per cent), to choose the learning or training they need (21 per cent) or coaching to help them get a job (19 per cent). One in five respondents (20 per cent) said that they would like coaching and support when they first start a job.

Figure 22: What would be most helful for changing career

Base: All respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education. Total weighted base = 5,966. Total unweighted base = 6,589.

Respondents were asked where they would go for information and advice if they wished to change career (Table 12). Nearly two in five respondents (37 per cent) said they would use a general online search to find information and advice. This was followed by friends, family and colleagues (23 per cent). These findings highlight the need for credible and trustworthy information being available and easy to find online, as well as the importance of social networks in providing information.

Other sources of information and advice include education providers, social media, recruitment agency/consultant (all 16 per cent), as well as a professional, sector or trade organisation or Jobcentre Plus (both 15 per cent). Only 12 per cent of respondents said they would go to the National Careers Service or a prospective employer, and 11 per cent said they would go to their current employer. Just over one in ten adults (12 per cent) do not know where they would go for information or advice about changing job or career. This demonstrates a need to raise awareness of sources of careers information, advice and guidance for adults.

Table 12: Where respondents go for advice on career change

Source of information/advice	Percentage
General online search	37%
Friends, family or colleagues	23%
Education provider such as a college or university	16%
Social media	16%
Recruitment consultant/agency	16%
Professional, sector or trade organisation	15%
Jobcentre Plus	15%
National Careers Service	12%
Prospective employers	12%
Your current employer (e.g. HR, line manager)	11%
Citizens' Advice	8%
Local community, voluntary or religious centre	5%
Local or national charity	5%
Unionlearn representative or Workplace Learning Advocate	5%
Don't know	12%

Base: All employed, f-t education or unemployed seeking work. Weighted base = 5,966. Unweighted base = 6,589.

Using technology to support learning

Key chapter findings:

- Almost all adults (95 per cent) who have learned in the last three years have used technology during their learning. The most common uses of technology are watching online videos (46 per cent), completing online assessments (40 per cent) and sending and receiving emails (38 per cent). Much smaller proportions of learners are using AI (14 per cent) or VR (9 per cent).
- Likelihood of using technology to learn declines with age. Respondents from BAME backgrounds are more likely to have used technology to support their learning. While women are more likely than men to have used technology for a number of tasks, men are more likely to have engaged with AI and VR.
- Adults who have used technology to learn cite benefits in terms of *enabling learning* – for example, by allowing them to learn from home (48 per cent), at a convenient time (43 per cent) and at their own level and pace (40 per cent). They also recognise how technology can *aid or enhance their learning experience* – for example, by making learning more interesting and engaging (29 per cent), improving their digital skills (25 per cent), and motivating them to learn (24 per cent). Those who have not learned recently or not used technology to learn tend to be less likely to cite benefits related to aiding or enhancing the learning experience, emphasising a need to promote these benefits to encourage uptake of technology for learning.
- The findings indicate that adults are far more confident in using everyday technologies such as email, smartphones, laptops or desktop computers, and online search engines in their daily lives than they are using these as tools for work or learning. This demonstrates a need to provide structured guidance and support when using familiar technologies in a learning or work context.
- Adults are less confident overall in using technologies more specific to work and learning settings, such as word processing, video meetings, spreadsheets, presentations, learning platforms, and databases. This highlights a clear need to ensure that adults are confident using common workplace and learning technologies, particularly as online and hybrid learning and work become more commonplace.

With technology becoming integral to how we learn, Learning and Work Institute is partnering with Ufi VocTech Trust to identify key trends in the development, deployment and use of technology in adult learning. As part of our multi-year partnership, questions were included in this year's survey to explore how adults use technology for learning, how this can support them to learn, and the kinds of technology they are comfortable using in their learning and wider life.

It should be noted that these questions were only asked to the original survey sample, prior to the regional boosts (5,089 adults).

Use of technology to learn

All adults who said they had recently done or are currently doing some learning were asked about technology they had used as part of their learning (Table 13).

Almost all learners (95 per cent) had used technology as part of their learning. Nearly one half (46 per cent) had watched online videos and around two in five had completed online assessments (40 per cent) or sent and received emails (38 per cent). At least one in three respondents had conducted online research or used a search engine (35 per cent); joined online video calls, lessons, or webinars (35 per cent); or used an online learning platform (33 per cent).

Around one in four learners had produced written assignments using word-processing software (27 per cent); learned through a smartphone app (25 per cent); joined or followed a social media page or group (24 per cent); or created a presentation using PowerPoint, Google Slides or similar (24 per cent).

Learners were less likely to have produced or analysed spreadsheets (16 per cent) or used artificial intelligence (AI) (14 per cent) or virtual reality (VR) technology (9 per cent). While a minority of learners are using newer technologies (AI and VR), these numbers are not insubstantial. It will be interesting to explore how these figures change over the next few years as these technologies become more established.

Table 13: Use of technology to learn

Technology used	Percentage
Watched online videos (e.g. YouTube, Tik Tok)	46%
Completed online assessments	40%
Sent/received emails	38%
Conducted online research/used a search engine (e.g. Google, Bing)	35%
Joined video calls/online lessons/webinars (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom)	35%
Used an online learning platform (e.g. Google classroom, Moodle, Canvas)	33%
Produced written assignments using Microsoft Word, Google docs, or similar	27%
Learned through a smartphone app	25%
Joined/followed a social media page or group (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp)	24%
Created a presentation using PowerPoint, Google Slides, or similar	24%
Produced or analysed spreadsheets e.g. Microsoft Excel or Google sheets	16%
Used Artificial intelligence (AI) technology e.g. Chat GPT	14%
Learnt through Virtual reality (VR) technology	9%
None of these	5%
One or more technologies	**95%**

All who have recently done or are currently doing some learning. Weighted base = 2,495; unweighted base = 2,571.

Note: Respondents could give more than one answer.

There are some interesting variations in these findings by demographic factors:

- **Younger respondents** are more likely to have used technology to support their learning. Ninety-seven per cent of those aged 17-34 have used technology while learning. This declines to 95 per cent of those aged 35-54, 91 per cent aged 55-64, and 87 per cent aged 65-74. Respondents aged 17-44 are more likely than the sample average to have used AI (17-21 per cent), while those aged 25-44 are most likely to have used VR (13-14 per cent).

- **Women** are more likely than men to have used technology for a range of tasks, including watching online videos (48 per cent compared to 43 per cent); completing online assessments (45 per cent compared to 35 per cent); sending emails (41 per cent compared to 34 per cent); conducting online research (39 per cent compared to 32 per cent); joining video calls, online lessons or webinars (39 per cent compared to 31 per cent); using an online learning platform (36 per cent compared to 31 per cent); and producing written assignments (30 per cent compared to 23 per cent). However, men are more likely than women to have used both AI (17 per cent compared to 11 per cent) and VR (10 per cent compared to 8 per cent).

- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** are more likely than white respondents to have used technology to support their learning (97 per cent compared to 94 per cent). Those from BAME backgrounds are also more likely than those from white backgrounds to have engaged with both AI (21 per cent compared to 12 per cent) and VR (12 per cent compared to 8 per cent).
- **Those educated up to degree level** are more likely than the sample average to have engaged with both AI (17 per cent) and VR (12 per cent).
- **Those who finished full-time education aged 16 or below** are less likely than the sample average to have used technology to support their learning (92 per cent).

How technology supports learning

Learners who had used technology to learn were asked how this technology helped to support their learning (Table 14). Almost all learners (97 per cent) identified at least one benefit of using technology to support their learning.

For many learners, technology is an *enabler*. Nearly one half of learners said that technology had allowed them to learn at home (48 per cent). Around two in five reported that technology had allowed them to learn at a convenient time (43 per cent) or at their own level and pace (40 per cent). More than one in three said technology had allowed them to learn at a convenient location (36 per cent), while one in four said technology had helped them to balance learning around their work commitments (25 per cent) and made learning more affordable (24 per cent). Almost one in five learners said that technology had helped them to balance learning around family or childcare commitments (18 per cent).

Respondents also identified additional ways that technology had a*ided or enhanced* their learning experience. Almost one in three learners said that technology had made learning more interesting or engaging (29 per cent). For around one in four learners, technology had helped improve their digital skills (27 per cent), made them more confident to learn (25 per cent), made them more motivated to learn (24 per cent), and helped them to find learning opportunities or courses (23 per cent).

Respondents who hadn't learned in the last three years, or who had not used technology to support their learning, were asked how they thought technology could support their learning if they decided to take up learning in the future. Just over three-quarters of these respondents (77 per cent) identified at least one way in which technology could support their learning. Most commonly, they identified benefits related to convenience, including being able to learn at home (48 per cent), at their own level and pace (44 per cent), and at a convenient time (41 per cent) or location (34 per cent). When compared to those who had already used technology to support their leaning, this group is less likely to recognise benefits related to enhancing the learning experience, such as making learning more interesting or engaging (21 per cent) and increasing confidence (18 per cent) or motivation (16 per cent). This may indicate a need to promote the benefits of technology to support learning to those who are currently not engaging with learning or using technology as part of their learning.

Table 14: How technology supports/can support learning

How technology supports /can support learning	Used technology to support learning in last 3 years? Yes	No	All respondents
Allowed / could allow learning at home	48%	48%	48%
Allowed / could allow learning at a convenient time	43%	41%	42%
Allowed / could allow learning at own level and pace	40%	44%	42%
Allowed / could allow learning at a convenient location	36%	34%	35%
Made / could make learning more interesting or engaging	29%	21%	25%
Helped / could help to improve digital skills	27%	25%	26%
Allowed / could allow to be more confident to learn	25%	18%	22%
Helped / could help balance learning around work commitments	25%	17%	21%
Made / could make learning more affordable	24%	23%	23%
Made / could make more motivated to learn	24%	16%	20%
Helped / could help finding learning opportunities or courses	23%	24%	24%
Helped / could help balance learning around family or childcare commitments	18%	15%	16%
None of the above	3%	23%	13%
Net: Any	**97%**	**77%**	**87%**

All who have used technology to help support their learning in last 3 years: Weighted base = 2,360; unweighted base = 2,437. All who haven't recently done learning or haven't used technology in their learning: Weighted base = 2,557; unweighted base = 2477.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer for both questions.

Insights into the perceived benefits of using technology for different groups can help to engage adults in learning. For the purpose of subgroup analysis, answer options were grouped into those that *enable* learning and those that *aid or enhance* learning[25]. Responses for those who both had and had not used technology to support their learning are considered together.

In total, 78 per cent of adults cited at least one benefit related to *enabling learning*, and 58 per cent identified at least one benefit related to *aiding or enhancing learning*. There are variations in these findings by respondent demographics:

- **Younger respondents** (aged 20-44) are more likely to cite benefits related to enabling learning (83 per cent). Those aged 65-74 (70 per cent) and 75 plus (63 per cent) are less likely to identify these benefits. Younger adults are also more likely to cite benefits related to aiding or enhancing learning: 67 per cent aged 17-19, 64 per cent aged 20-24, 71 per cent aged 25-34, and 67 per cent aged 35-44. Those aged 55-64 (51 per cent), 65-74 (45 per cent) and 75+ (42 per cent) are less likely to cite these benefits.
- **Respondents in social grade AB** are also more likely to identify these benefits: 83 per cent cite benefits related to enabling learning, compared to just 71 per cent in grade DE. Three in five respondents (61 per cent) in the AB grade cite benefits related to aiding or enhancing learning, compared to 55 per cent in grade DE.
- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** are more likely to cite benefits related to enabling learning when compared to white respondents (85 per cent compared to 77 per cent), and also aiding or enhancing learning (73 per cent compared to 56 per cent).
- **Women** are more likely than men to recognise the benefits of technology for enabling learning (81 per cent compared to 74 per cent).
- **Respondents who left full time education aged 21 or above** are more likely to identify benefits related to enabling learning (84 per cent) and aiding or enhancing learning (64 per cent), while those who left full-time education aged 16 or below are less likely (71 per cent enabling, 51 per cent aiding or enhancing).
- **Employed adults** are overall more likely to recognise benefits related to enabling learning when compared to those not working (82 per cent compared to 72 per cent), and are also more likely to cite benefits related to aiding or enhancing learning (62 per cent compared to 53 per cent). However, there are some specific

[25] Benefits related to *enabling learning* included: It made learning more affordable; It allowed me to learn at my own level and pace; It allowed me to learn at a convenient time; It allowed me to learn at home; It allowed me to learn at a convenient location; It helped me to balance learning around my work commitments; It helped me to balance learning around my family or childcare commitments. Benefits related to *aiding and enhancing* learning included: It allowed me to be more confident in learning; It made learning more interesting/engaging: It made me more motivated to learn; It helped me to find learning opportunities/courses; It helped to improve my digital skills

answer options that those unemployed and seeking work are more likely to cite when compared to the sample average:

- Helping to improve their digital skills (36 per cent compared to 26 per cent)
- Allowing them to be more confident in learning (32 per cent compared to 22 per cent)
- Helping them to find learning courses or opportunities (31 per cent compared to 24 per cent)
- Making them more motivated to learn (29 per cent compared to 20 per cent)
- Helping to balance learning around family or childcare commitments (24 per cent compared to 16 per cent)

These findings demonstrate the range of ways in which technology can be used to make learning more accessible for those furthest away from the labour market.

Confidence in using technologies

All respondents were asked whether they would feel confident using various types of technology in three different scenarios: in at home/in their everyday life, at work and for learning (Table 15). The purpose of this question was to explore whether there are technologies that adults are already confident using in their everyday lives that can be tapped into in a learning setting to increase engagement.

The findings show that respondents are generally more confident using technology in their daily lives than for learning or at work: 96 per cent are confident using at least one kind of technology in their daily lives, compared to 92 per cent for learning and 85 per cent at work. These differences are particularly notable for commonly used technologies, for example:

- Seven in ten respondents (69 per cent) are confident using email in everyday life, compared to 58 per cent at work and 56 per cent for learning.
- A similar proportion (68 per cent) are confident using smartphones in their everyday lives, compared to 52 per cent for work and 55 per cent for learning.
- Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) are confident using a laptop or desktop computer in their daily life, compared to 55 per cent at work and 59 per cent for learning.
- Around three in five (62 per cent) are confident using online search engines in their daily lives, compared to 50 per cent at work and 54 per cent for learning.
- Confidence in using social media for work and learning is even lower, at 39 per cent and 40 per cent respectively, despite 57 per cent of adults being confident using this in their daily lives.

These findings highlight the importance of providing structured guidance and support when technology is used in a learning or work context, even if this technology seems familiar.

Respondents are less confident overall in using technologies more specific to work and learning settings, such as word processing, video meetings, spreadsheets, presentations, learning platforms, and databases. Fewer than half of respondents are confident using any of these technologies in any settings. Just two in five are confident using video meetings for learning or work, despite the prominence of these in many workplaces post-pandemic. Just three in ten (31 per cent) are confident using online learning platforms for learning. These findings highlight a clear need to ensure that adults are confident using common workplace and learning technologies, particularly as online and hybrid learning and work becomes commonplace.

As might be expected, adults are least confident with using emerging technologies such as AI and VR in any settings (13-14 per cent and 10-11 per cent respectively). As these technologies become more mainstream, it will be important to ensure that adults are equipped and confident to use them in their learning and professional lives.

Table 15: Confidence using technology in everyday life, learning and work

Type of technology	Everyday life	Work	Learning
Email	69%	58%	56%
Smartphone (Internet access)	68%	52%	55%
Laptop or desk top computer	64%	55%	59%
Online search engines	62%	50%	54%
Social media	57%	39%	40%
Online videos	53%	39%	48%
Tablet/iPad	52%	42%	46%
Word processing	46%	44%	43%
Video meetings	38%	40%	39%
Spreadsheets	35%	37%	34%
Presentations	31%	34%	35%
Learning Platform	25%	24%	31%
Databases	25%	30%	25%
Artificial intelligence (AI) technology	14%	13%	14%
Virtual reality (VR) technology	11%	10%	11%
None of these	4%	15%	8%
Confident using one or more	**96%**	**85%**	**92%**

Base: All respondents. Weighted base = 5089; unweighted base = 5089.
Note: Respondents could give more than one answer.

There are variations in confidence in using technology by demographic factors, which are more notable when it comes to using technology for work or learning:

- Confidence **declines with age** for both work and learning, although not for everyday life. When it comes to using technology at work, confidence starts to decline for those aged over 45: from 94-95 per cent for those aged 20-44 to 89 per cent for those aged 45-54, 83 per cent aged 55-64, 68 per cent aged 65-74, and 59 per cent aged 75+. A similar pattern can be observed for learning, although this is less pronounced: confidence sits between 95-96 per cent for those aged 20-44, before dropping to 93 per cent aged 45-54, 91 per cent aged 55-64, 86 per cent aged 65-74, and 83 per cent aged 75+.

- **Respondents from BAME backgrounds** are significantly more likely than those from white backgrounds to feel confident using technology at work (95 per cent compared to 83 per cent) and for learning (97 per cent compared to 91 per cent). The difference for using technology in everyday life is also statistically significant, although smaller (98 per cent compared to 96 per cent).

- Those who **left full-time education aged 21 or above** and who are **educated up to degree level** are more likely than the sample average to be confident using technology in their everyday lives (both 98 per cent), for work (both 91 per cent) and for learning (both 96 per cent). Those who left secondary school with no GCSEs, meanwhile, are less likely to be confident using technology in their personal lives (92 per cent). Those whose highest level of education is GCSE or below are also less likely than the sample average to be confident in using technology for work (73 per cent no GCSEs, 80 per cent with GCSEs) or for learning (83 per cent no GCSEs, 88 per cent with GCSEs).

- **Adults in the DE social grade** are significantly less likely than those is all other social grades to be confident using technology in their everyday lives (93 per cent), at work (77 per cent) and for learning (87 per cent).

- **Employed adults** tend to be more confident using technology in their everyday lives (97 per cent), at work (95 per cent), and for learning (also 95 per cent). By contrast, just 85 per cent of those unemployed and seeking work are confident using technology at work. These findings demonstrate a need to support those furthest away from the labour market to confidently use technology.

- **Those who have not learned since leaving full-time education** are less likely than the sample average to be confident using technology in their personal lives (92 per cent) and for learning (80 per cent). Confidence in using technology at work varies more substantially according to learning status: this declines from 94 per cent for adults who are current or recent learners, to 83 per cent who took part in learning more than three years ago and 71 per cent who have not taken part in learning since full-time education.

- Adults based in **Greater London** are more likely than the sample average to be confident using technology for work (94 per cent) and learning (96 per cent). Confidence using technology for work is lowest in Wales (80 per cent) and the

East of England (81 per cent), and for learning in Scotland and the East of England (both 88 per cent). These findings illustrate an inequality in confidence with technology across the UK regions, which it will be important to address to ensure equitable access to good learning and work opportunities.

Post-16 education options

Key chapter findings:

- Adults' awareness of post-16 education options varies, from four in five adults (83 per cent) saying they have heard of apprenticeships to only one half (51 per cent) indicating they are aware of higher technical qualifications (HTQs).
- Respondents who indicated they know something about post-16 education options tended to say they knew a little rather than a lot about each of them. Adults were most likely to say they know at least a little about apprenticeships (86 per cent), followed by bachelor's degrees (80 per cent) and Level 4 and 5 qualifications (80 per cent).
- Respondents who indicated they had heard of each of the education options were most likely to say they would consider undertaking an HTQ (34 per cent), followed by a Level 4 and 5 qualification (33 per cent) and degree apprenticeship (32 per cent). Despite adults being most aware of apprenticeships, this was the option they are least likely to consider (25 per cent).
- Awareness, knowledge and likelihood to consider post-16 education options varies by demographic characteristics, and the patterns reflect some of those found in the wider survey. Adults who stayed in full-time education longer, with higher level qualifications and with closer proximity to the labour market are more likely to say they know about and are likely to consider taking up the education options. This suggests that interventions to engage adults in education should be targeted where awareness and knowledge may be lower.

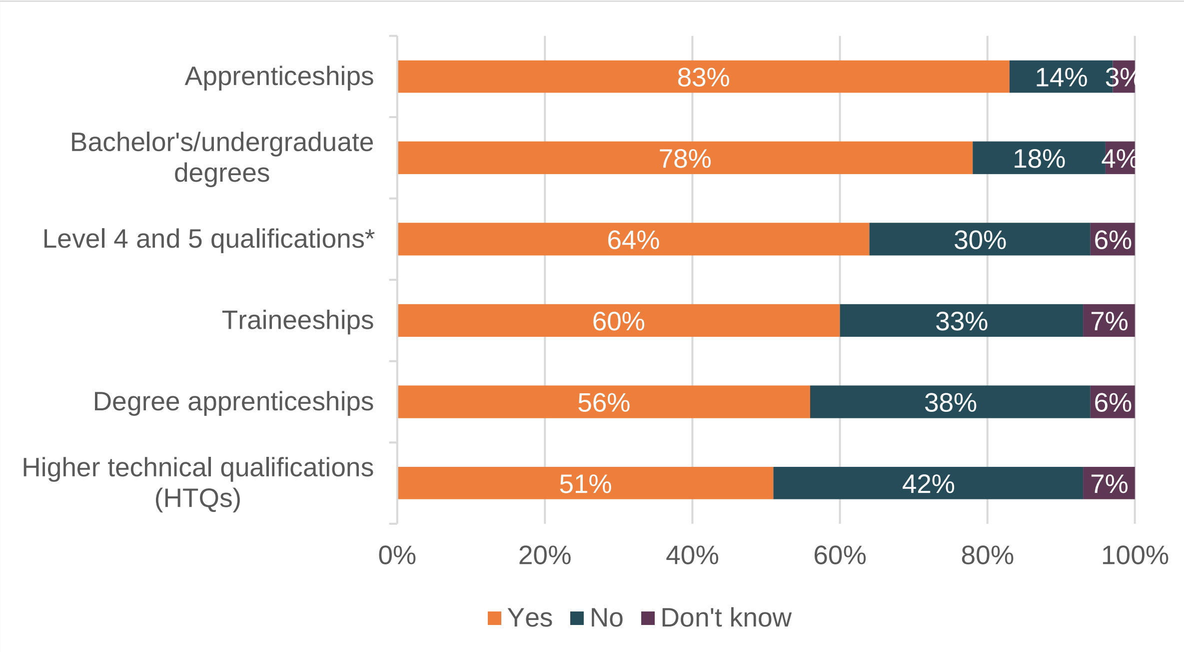
In recent years, the government has implemented a number of reforms to post-16 education in England. These include reforms to apprenticeships, such as the introduction of apprenticeship standards and the apprenticeship levy, as well as the creation of higher technical qualifications (HTQs), which are new or existing Level 4 and 5 qualifications that sit between A levels/T levels and degrees. In the academic year 2022/23, HTQ courses were available in digital occupations and from September 2023, HTQs were also available in construction and health and science. By 2025, they will be taught in a wide range of sectors. In this context, the Department for Education funded questions in this year's survey to gauge adults' awareness, knowledge and likelihood to consider different post-16 education options to inform future policy and implementation.

It should be noted that these questions were only asked to the original survey sample, prior to the regional boosts (5,089 adults).

Awareness of post-16 education options

All survey respondents in England were asked to indicate whether or not they had heard of different post-16 education and training options (Figure 23). Respondents were most likely to say they had heard of apprenticeships, with 83 per cent indicating this. However, awareness of degree apprenticeships is lower, with 56 per cent saying they had heard of these. Nearly four in five adults (78 per cent) indicated they had heard of bachelor's/undergraduate degrees. Nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of respondents had heard of Level 4 and 5 qualifications, however only half (51 per cent) had heard of higher technical qualifications (HTQs). Three in five (60 per cent) of respondents had heard of traineeships.

Figure 23: Whether adults have heard of learning options



Base: all respondents in England, weighted base = 4,280; unweighted base = 4,405.
Note: * such as HNDs or a foundation degree.

Awareness of these options varies by different respondent characteristics. This provides insights on where efforts to raise awareness of formal education opportunities may best be targeted.

- **Women** were more likely than men to say they had heard of apprenticeships (85 per cent compared to 80 per cent). **Men** were more likely than women to say they had heard of traineeships (62 per cent compared to 59 per cent), degree apprenticeships (57 per cent compared to 54 per cent) and HTQs (54 per cent compared to 48 per cent).

- **Older respondents** were more likely than the sample average to have heard of apprenticeships and degrees. People aged 55 and above were more likely to say they had heard of apprenticeships (89-93 per cent) while those aged 55-74 were more likely to have heard of bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (81-84 per cent).

However, younger **respondents aged 17-34** were more likely to say they had heard of degree apprenticeships (60-70 per cent). **Respondents aged 25-44** were more likely than the sample average to say they had heard of HTQs (55-56 per cent).

- Those in **higher social grades** were more likely than the sample average to have heard of a range of learning options. People in the AB and C1 social grades were more likely to say they had heard of bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (85 per cent and 82 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (74 per cent and 69 per cent) and traineeships (65 per cent and 63 per cent). Respondents in the AB social grade were also more likely to have heard of degree apprenticeships (63 per cent) and HTQs (58 per cent), while those in grade C1 were more likely to have heard of apprenticeships (87 per cent).

- **People working full-time** were more likely to have heard of Level 4 and 5 qualifications (69 per cent) degree apprenticeships (61 per cent) and HTQs (57 per cent).

- Those who **completed their full-time education aged 21 or over**, or who have **completed a university degree or postgraduate course**, were more likely to have heard of all of the learning options except for apprenticeships. These figures are, respectively: bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (88 per cent; 89 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (76 per cent; 76 per cent), traineeships (68 per cent; 66 per cent), degree apprenticeships (65 per cent; 66 per cent) and HTQs (59 per cent; 60 per cent).

- **Parents** were more likely to indicate that they had heard of degree apprenticeships (61 per cent compared to 54 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (68 per cent compared to 62 per cent) and HTQs (59 per cent compared to 48 per cent). However, **people without parental responsibilities** were more likely than parents to say they had heard of bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (79 per cent compared to 74 per cent) and apprenticeships (85 per cent compared to 76 per cent).

- **Respondents from white backgrounds** were more likely than those from BAME backgrounds to say they have heard of apprenticeships (84 per cent compared to 77 per cent). Conversely, **respondents from BAME backgrounds** were more likely than those from white backgrounds to have heard of degree apprenticeships (63 per cent compared to 54 per cent).

- **Respondents in the East of England** were most likely to have heard of apprenticeships (86 per cent) and those in **Greater London** to have heard of HTQs (59 per cent).

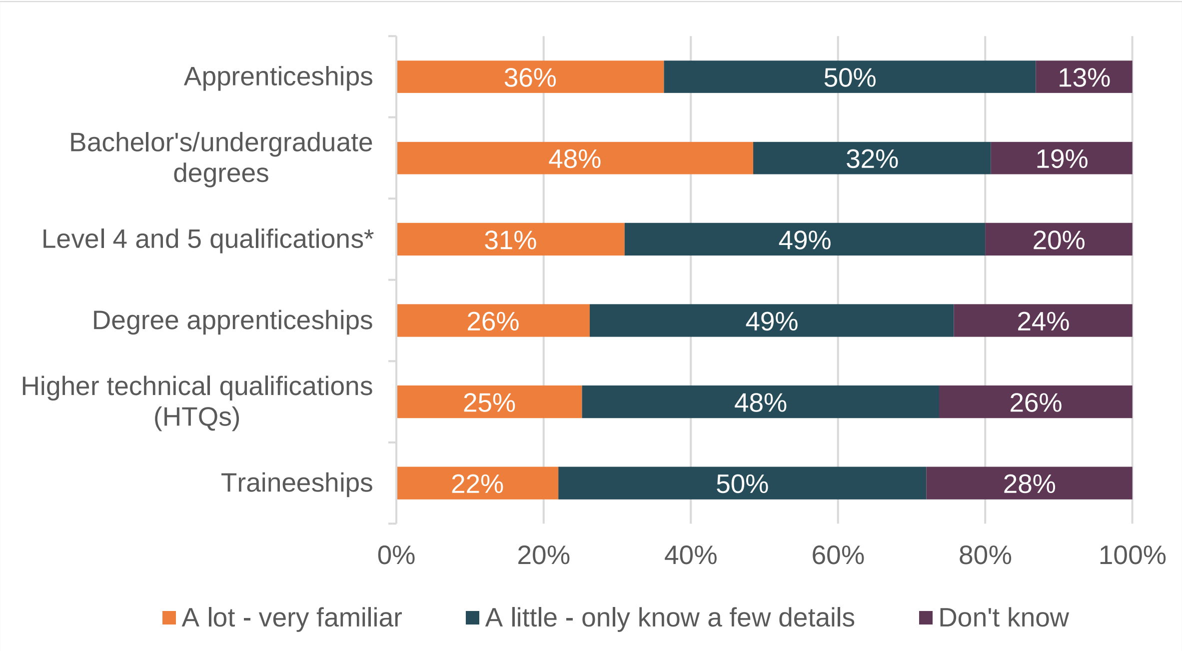
Knowledge about post-16 education options

Respondents who indicated that they had heard of each post-16 education and training option were asked to rate how much they know about them (Figure 24).

While most survey respondents who had heard of the different education and training options indicated they knew something about them, they were generally more likely to say they know a little (a few details) than they know a lot (very familiar with the activities involved). For example, respondents were most likely to indicate they had heard of apprenticeships (see Figure 23 above), but only 36 per cent said they know a lot about them and 50 per cent indicated they know a little about them. The only exception to this tendency is bachelor's/undergraduate degrees, with 48 per cent saying they know a lot and 32 per cent saying they know a little. Knowledge of the remaining learning options is as follows:

- Level 4 and 5 qualifications: 31 per cent know a lot, 49 per cent know a little
- Degree apprenticeships: 26 per cent know a lot, 49 per cent know a little
- HTQs: 25 per cent know a lot, 48 per cent know a little
- Traineeships: 22 per cent know a lot, 50 per cent know a little.

Figure 24: Knowledge of learning options



Notes: * such as HNDs or a foundation degree.
Base: All respondents in England who have heard of each respective learning option: weighted base ranging from 2,183 to 3,533 and unweighted base ranging from 2,255 to 3,610.

Combining those who said they know a little or a lot about each of the options, we see that levels of knowledge vary by respondent characteristics, including:

- **Men** were significantly more likely than women to say they know about all of the learning options: apprenticeships (89 per cent compared to 85 per cent); bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (84 per cent compared to 78 per cent); Level 4 and 5 qualifications (82 per cent compared to 77 per cent); degree apprenticeships (78 per cent compared to 73 per cent); HTQs (77 per cent compared to 70 per cent); and traineeships (75 per cent compared to 69 per cent).

- **Respondents aged 17-44** were significantly more likely than the sample average to say they know about apprenticeships (92-96 per cent), bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (87-92 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (87-90 per cent), degree apprenticeships (83-90 per cent), and traineeships (82-88 per cent). **Respondents aged 20-44** were more likely than the sample average to say they know about HTQs (80-87 per cent).

- **People in the AB social grade** were more likely than the sample average to say they know about bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (93 per cent). **Respondents in the AB and C2 social grades** were more likely to say they know about apprenticeships (92 per cent and 91 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (86 and 82 per cent) degree apprenticeships (both 82 per cent), HTQs (81 and 76 per cent) and traineeships (77 per cent and 79 per cent).

- **Adults working full-time or part-time** were more likely than the sample average to say they know about apprenticeships (both 90 per cent), bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (88 per cent and 84 per cent), Level 4-5 qualifications (87 per cent and 85 per cent), and traineeships (80 per cent and 79 per cent). **People employed full-time** were more likely to say they know about degree apprenticeships (84 per cent) and HTQs (82 per cent).

- **People who left full-time education aged 21 and above** were more likely than the sample average to say they know about bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (97 per cent) and degree apprenticeships (84 per cent). **People who left full-time education aged 19-20 or 21 and or above** were more likely to say they know about apprenticeships (89-92 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (83-88 per cent), HTQs (78-83 per cent) and traineeships (77-80 per cent).

- **Those who have completed a degree or postgraduate course** were more likely to say they know about bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (98 per cent), Level 4 and 5 qualifications (89 per cent), degree apprenticeships (85 per cent), HTQs (83 per cent) and traineeships (81 per cent). **People who have completed a degree/postgraduate qualification and people who have completed another college qualification** were more likely to say they know about apprenticeships (92 per cent and 91 per cent).

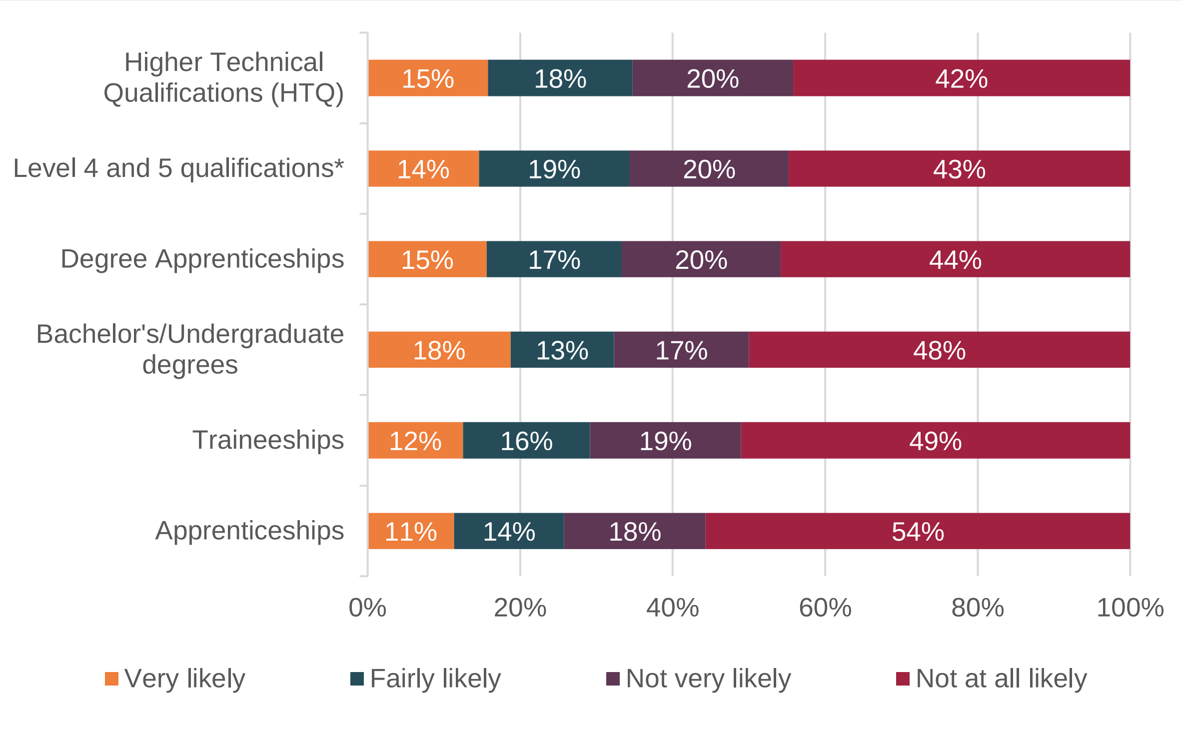
- **Parents** were more likely than people without parenting responsibilities to say they know about all of the education options: apprenticeships (93 per cent compared to 84 per cent); bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (90 per cent compared to 77 per cent); Level 4 and 5 qualifications (88 per cent compared to 76 per cent); degree apprenticeships (87 per cent compared to 70 per cent); HTQs (86 per cent compared to 67 per cent); and traineeships (86 per cent comparted to 65 per cent).

- **People from BAME backgrounds** were more likely than their counterparts from white backgrounds to say they know about all of the education options: apprenticeships (93 per cent compared to 86 per cent); bachelor's/undergraduate degrees (93 per cent compared to 78 per cent); degree apprenticeships (90 per cent compared to 72 per cent); Level 4 and 5 qualifications (89 per cent compared to 78 per cent); HTQs (86 per cent compared to 71 per cent); and traineeships (85 per cent compared to 69 per cent).

Likelihood to consider post-16 education options

Respondents who had heard of each learning option were also asked how likely they would be to consider undertaking that option (Figure 25). Respondents were most likely to say they would consider undertaking a HTQ (34 per cent), with 15 per cent saying they are very likely to consider this and 18 per cent that they are fairly likely to consider doing this. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents said they are likely to consider undertaking a Level 4 and 5 qualification (32 per cent), degree apprenticeship (32 per cent) or bachelor's/undergraduate degree (31 per cent). Respondents are least likely to consider undertaking traineeships (28 per cent) or apprenticeships (25 per cent).

Figure 25: Likelihood of considering learning options



Base: All respondents in England who have heard of each respective learning option. Weighted base ranging from 2,183 to 3,533, unweighted base ranging from 2,255 to 3,610.
Notes: * such as HNDs or a foundation degree. Data series “very likely” and “fairly likely” may not sum to the value “net likely %” due to rounding.

Respondents’ likelihood to consider each of the post-16 education options varies by demographic characteristics, which reflect their level of awareness and knowledge of each of the options.

- **Men** were more likely than women to say they would consider all of the post-16 education options: HTQ (41 per cent compared to 26 per cent); degree apprenticeship (38 per cent compared to 25 per cent); Level 4 and 5 qualification (38 per cent compared to 27 per cent); bachelor’s/undergraduate degree (36 per cent compared to 26 per cent); traineeship (33 per cent compared to 22 per cent); and apprenticeship (30 per cent compared to 20 per cent).

- **Respondents aged 17-44** were more likely than the sample average to say they would consider a degree apprenticeship (50-61 per cent), bachelor’s/ undergraduate degree (49-72 per cent), Level 4-5 qualification (47-60 per cent), apprenticeship (42-65 per cent) or traineeship (40-63 per cent). **Respondents aged 20-44** were more likely than the sample average to say they would consider doing a HTQ (51-64 per cent).

- **Respondents in the AB and C2 social grades** were more likely than the sample average to say they would consider doing a HTQ (38 per cent and 39 per cent) or bachelor’s/undergraduate degree (37 per cent and 35 per cent). Those in the C2 social grade were also more likely than the sample average to say they would consider a Level 4-5 qualification (43 per cent), degree apprenticeship (42 per cent), apprenticeship (37 per cent) or traineeship (37 per cent).

- **Adults working full-time** were more likely than the sample average to say they would consider a HTQ (50 per cent), Level 4-5 qualification (48 per cent) or degree apprenticeship (44 per cent). **Adults working full-time and part-time** were more likely to say they would consider a bachelor's/undergraduate degree (43 per cent and 36 per cent); traineeship (40 per cent and 34 per cent); or apprenticeship (34 per cent and 31 per cent).

- **People who left full-time education aged 19-20 or 21 and above** were more likely than the sample average to say they would consider doing a HTQ (41-42 per cent), Level 4-5 qualification (37-41 per cent), bachelor's/undergraduate degree (36-39 per cent), traineeship (33-35 per cent) or apprenticeship (28-30 per cent). **Those who left full-time education aged 21 and above** were also more likely to say they would consider doing a degree apprenticeship (36 per cent).

- **Those who have completed a degree or postgraduate course** were more likely to say they would consider doing all of the post-16 education options: a HTQ (43 per cent); bachelor's/ undergraduate degree (42 per cent); degree apprenticeship (38 per cent); traineeship (36 per cent); Level 4-5 qualification (36 per cent) or apprenticeship (29 per cent).

- **Parents** were more likely than people without parental responsibilities to say they would consider all of the post-16 education options: HTQ (61 per cent compared to 19 per cent); Level 4-5 qualification (57 per cent compared to 21 per cent); bachelor's/undergraduate degree (56 per cent compared to 21 per cent); degree apprenticeship (56 per cent compared to 20 per cent); traineeship (54 per cent compared to 16 per cent); apprenticeship (47 per cent compared to 17 per cent).

- **People from BAME backgrounds** were more likely than their counterparts from white backgrounds to say they would consider all of the post-16 education options: bachelor's/undergraduate degree (61 per cent compared to 24 per cent); degree apprenticeship (58 per cent compared to 25 per cent); HTQ (57 per cent compared to 28 per cent); apprenticeship (56 per cent compared to 19 per cent); traineeship (53 per cent compared to 22 per cent); Level 4-5 qualification (49 per cent compared to 28 per cent).

These results support some of the findings from the wider survey: adults with more experience of learning, with higher level qualifications and closer proximity to the labour market are more likely to say they would consider taking up further learning.

Annex: Methodology

The Adult Participation in Learning Survey deliberately adopts a broad definition of learning, including a wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning, far beyond the limits of publicly offered educational opportunities for adults. Each year, a representative sample of approximately 5,000 adults aged 17 and over across the UK are provided with the following definition of learning and asked when they last took part in any, as well as how likely they are to take part in learning during the next three years:

‘Learning can mean practising, studying, or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. Learning can also be called education or training. You can do it regularly (each day or month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full-time or part-time, done at home, at work, or in another place like college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. We are interested in any learning you have done, whether or not it was finished.’

Unlike previous years, the 2023 survey sample includes regional boosts to achieve a minimum sample size in each UK region (600 for all regions apart from Northern Ireland, where the sample was boosted to 400 respondents). The boosted sample consists of 9,506 adults aged 17 and over (8,906 weighted). The sample was not boosted for the questions on using technology to support learning and post-16 education options. The sample for these questions consists of 5,089 adults.

In addition to overall participation, the 2023 survey explores who participates in learning; motivations and barriers; how learning is undertaken; and benefits experienced as a result of learning. It also includes questions on knowledge of and interest in different learning and training options, use of technology to support learning, and learning for career change.

In 2023, the survey was part-funded by L&W’s New Futures programme (funded by the Covid-19 Support Fund), the Department for Education and Ufi VocTech Trust. Fieldwork was conducted by Kantar via their UK online omnibus survey, running from 10 August to 13 September 2023.

Fieldwork for the survey was first conducted online in 2021. Prior to this, fieldwork was conducted via a face-to-face omnibus, however, a shift in how people are communicating, with more households online than ever before, coupled with the Coronavirus pandemic creating challenges for face-to-face fieldwork, has led to market research agencies shifting to an online approach. This raises some potential issues regarding representation of older, disabled and digitally excluded adults, who we know from previous surveys are less likely to participate in learning. Weighting has been applied to mitigate this impact and to ensure a representative sample; however, year on year comparisons with surveys pre-2021 should be treated with some caution.

Analysis

Analysis of the survey results predominately involved a mixture of descriptive statistics and the significance testing of demographic and key variable breakdowns. It should be noted that due to space limitations not all results have been included in this report. It should also be noted that all figures, breakdowns and analyses throughout the report are based on weighted data. For further analysis and access to the dataset, please email: Emily.Jones@learningandwork.org.uk.

Measuring participation

The survey uses a deliberately broad definition of learning to capture as wide an array of learners as possible, which goes beyond participation in publicly funded provision. The interpretation of the definition is subjective and some individuals with similar experiences may classify themselves differently. An alternative approach was adopted by the National Adult Learner Survey (NALS),[26] which uses a different definition and a series of questions to classify respondents into formal learners, non-formal learners, informal learners and non-learners. Participation rates measured through NALS are higher than those captured by the Adult Participation in Learning Survey.

While respondents are given a definition of learning, the self-reported nature of the survey relies on individuals to make a judgement about how it relates to them. This can be influenced by their existing understanding of what learning is, which can relate to a range of factors such as the formality of the learning, duration and/or method of delivery. Respondents may therefore interpret questions differently, and they may provide incorrect information (either deliberately or through mis-remembering details). However, this risk is mitigated by the large sample size and by the general consistency of responses over the surveys' 26-year history. An alternative approach would be through use of nationally collected statistics on adult education such as in DfE and ESFA statistical releases[27]. However, such statistics are limited to publicly funded provision and are unable to identify qualitative issues such as barriers to learning or motivations.

Regression analysis

Binary logistic regression analyses were conducted to identify which demographic variables are significant predictors of certain binary outcomes (i.e., participation status and likelihood to participate in future learning). Predictor variables are variables found to influence an outcome once other variables have been controlled for. Therefore, a regression analysis helps to identify whether or not differences between demographic groups can be explained by differences in underlying variables. For the regression analyses described in this report, the variables tested

[26] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34798/12-p164-national-adult-learner-survey-2010.pdf
[27] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr

were age, gender, social class, working status, highest qualification level, and ethnicity.

A regression analysis produces a model of predictor variables for a particular outcome. The strength of the model is indicated by the proportion of the variance in answers that the model predicts. The level of model fits is given by the Nagelkerke R squared statistic, which shows that the chosen explanatory variables account for 17.9 per cent of the variation in participation status and 18.6 per cent of the variation in likelihood to learn.

Definitions

The following definitions are used throughout the report:

- **Current learners** – respondents who are currently learning.
- **Recent learners** – respondents who are not currently learning, but have done so within the three years prior to interview.
- **Participation in learning** – respondents who are currently learning or who have done so in the three years prior to interview (current and recent learners).
- **Participation rate** – the proportion of respondents who are current or recent learners.
- **Main learning** – the primary item of learning in which respondents are engaged, or have been within the previous three years, as self-defined by respondents.
- **Social grade** – based on Office for National Statistics' occupational classification, derived from a set of questions to identify features of respondents' occupation and workplace. Social Grade A includes the upper and upper-middle classes and is generally grouped with Grade B, the middle classes. Grade C1 includes the lower-middle class, often called white-collar workers. Grade C2 mainly consists of skilled manual workers. Grade D comprises the semi-skilled and unskilled working class, and is usually linked with Grade E, those in the lowest grade occupations or who are unemployed.