

Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2023: East Midlands

Ellen Wood, Oriane Nermond and Emily Jones

August 2024

About Learning and Work Institute

Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

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.

Stay informed. Be involved. Keep engaged. Sign up to become a Learning and Work Institute supporter: learningandwork.org.uk/supporters.

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

www.learningandwork.org.uk @LearnWorkUK @LearnWorkCymru (Wales)

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without the written permission of the publishers, save in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

Contents

Summary	4
Introduction	6
Adult participation in learning in the East Midlands	9
Future intentions to learn.....	17
Motivations to learn	18
Learning delivery	19
Barriers to learning.....	23
Learning for career change	28

Summary

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.

Since 1996, Learning and Work Institute has been undertaking the Adult Participation in Learning Survey on an almost annual basis. 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.

Year-on-year the survey finds stark and persistent inequalities, with some groups more likely to learn as an adult than others. The 2023 survey also indicated that differences between geographical regions may be widening. With greater devolution of learning and skills policy and funding, it is important to better understand patterns of participation at a regional level.

Regional differences in adult participation in learning can be explained by demographical differences, in other words, who lives in the region. But other factors, such as policy interventions, can also result in these differences. This report provides insights on adult participation in learning in the East Midlands.

Key findings for the East Midlands

In the East Midlands, just over half of adults (52 per cent) said they have learned over the past three years, which is consistent with the UK and England averages.

The East Midlands has the joint second highest participation in learning rate in England. However, the proportion of current or recent learners is only significantly higher than the proportions of four other regions: North East (42 per cent), Yorkshire and the Humber (47 per cent) and East of England (44 per cent). Adults in the East Midlands are significantly less likely to participate in learning than adults in Greater London (64 per cent), where the proportion of adult learners is significantly higher than all of the other regions.

The regional differences in participation rates are often partly explained by demographic differences within the sample. In the East Midlands, the demographic composition is fairly similar to the composition of the UK as a whole. Therefore, it is not surprising to find a participation rate averaging fairly similar to the rest of the UK and England. However, in the survey sample for the East Midlands, there is a significantly lower proportion of people aged 25-34 and a significantly higher proportion of people aged 45-54. Older adults are less likely to participate in learning than younger adults. Furthermore, the survey sample includes a significantly lower proportion of adults in AB social grade and a higher proportion of adults in C2 social grade. Again, this should suggest slightly lower participation rates, but this was not the case.

Within the East Midlands, and as seen in the UK as a whole, there are significant inequalities between demographic groups:

- Adults in the highest social grade (AB¹) are significantly more likely to participate in learning than adults in other social grades.
- Younger adults are significantly more likely to take up learning than older adults.
- The longer individuals remain in full-time education, the more likely they are to learn as an adult.

These inequalities are fairly similar in the other regions: the demographic groups that are less likely to participate in learning in the East Midlands are also those that are less likely to learn in the other regions. However, there are some differences:

- **Older adults aged 50-74 in the East Midlands are significantly more likely to participate in learning than in the rest of the UK.**
- **People who left full-time education in the East Midlands aged 16 or younger were significantly more likely to participate in learning than in the rest of the UK.**

In the East Midlands, adults' motivations for learning and their method of learning are similar to the UK overall: they are more likely to be learning for work than for leisure; they are mainly learning independently or through work; and most are doing at least some of their learning online.

In the East Midlands, people were significantly less likely to say they have experienced a challenge while learning than in the rest of the UK. Just over three in five learners (62 per cent) in the East Midlands identified at least one challenge compared to seven in ten (70 per cent) in the rest of the UK. The most commonly cited challenge was work and other time pressures. The challenges experienced by learners in the East Midlands are similar to those identified by learners in other UK regions. Survey respondents who say they haven't engaged with learning in the past three years were most likely to cite cost as a barrier to learning.

The survey included questions about career change. More than two in five (45 per cent) would like or need to change their career/industry/occupation in the next one or two years. The main reason cited was to earn more money, followed by a desire to feel happier at work. **Respondents were significantly more likely to say lack the self-confidence to change job than the UK average.** Most commonly, respondents said they would find learning or training helpful (34 per cent) and they would search online to find information and advice (43 per cent).

¹ AB social grade corresponds to adults in higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional occupations.

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 in the UK 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.

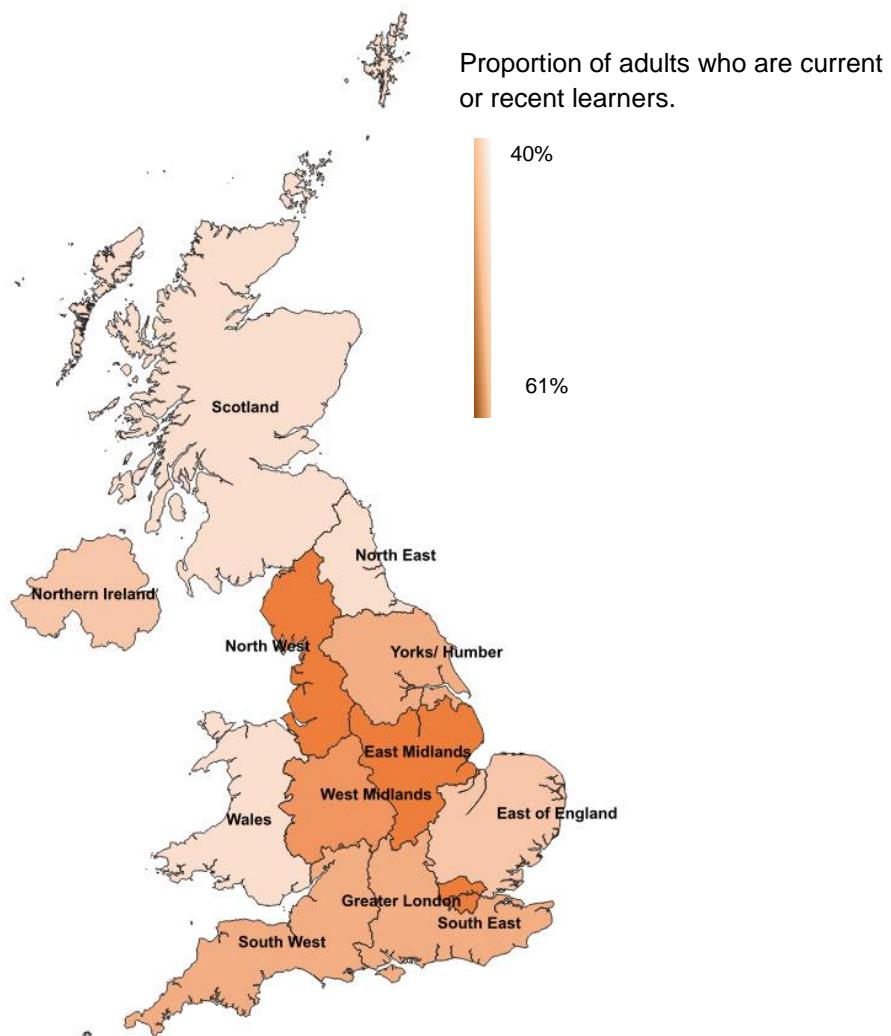
Growth in learning participation since 2019 shows an innate interest in learning among adults. However, fewer opportunities to learn at work or take part in formal learning or courses means people face limits in the types of learning they can pursue. Learning in all its forms has value and benefits.

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.

Analysing UK's nations and regions

While increased participation in learning is encouraging, there are stark regional differences and the survey indicates that these inequalities have been growing since 2017.² For example, while more than three in five adults in London have learned within the past three years, only two in five adults say are either a current or recent learners in the North East. Furthermore, participation rates are also lower for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales than for England.

Figure 1: Adult participation in learning by English regions and UK nations



Source: Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2023.

However, there are also important inequalities within regions and nations, with some groups less likely to take part in learning than others. With greater devolution of learning and skills policy and funding, it is important to better understand patterns of participation at a regional level. This can help inform where interventions and support

² Hall, S., Jones E., Evans, S. (2023) [Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2023](#), Learning and Work Institute.

are best targeted and may make the greatest impact. It should be noted that combined authorities, who manage devolved adult education budgets, cover sub regional areas rather than a region as a whole.

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.³ 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.

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.

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). A total of 709 adults in the East Midlands took part in the survey (651 weighted).

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.

To find out more about the survey series and explore trend data through our interactive charts, visit www.learningandwork.org.uk.

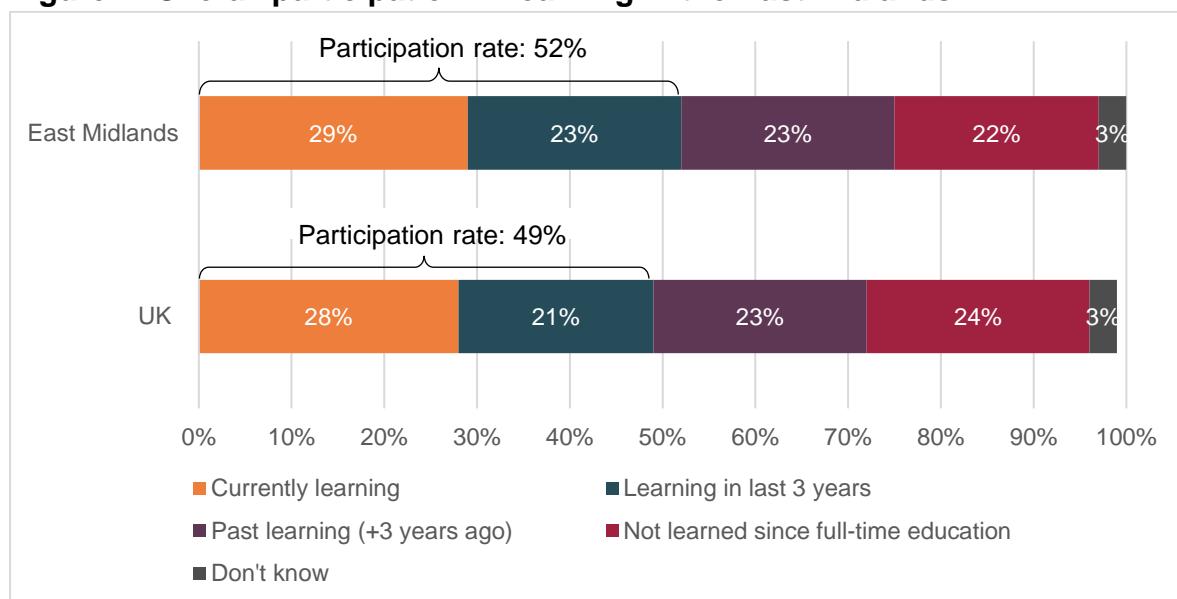
³ Surveys were undertaken annually from 1996 except in three years: 1997, 1998 and 2016.

Adult participation in learning in the East Midlands

Participation in learning is slightly higher in the East Midlands compared to the UK overall. Just over one half (52 per cent) of adults in the East Midlands stated they are currently learning or that they have taken up learning within the past three years, compared to 49 per cent in the UK. However, the difference is not statistically significant.

Almost three in ten adults in the East Midlands said they are currently learning (29 per cent), with nearly one in four (23 per cent) saying they have done some learning over the past three years (Figure 2). Just over one in five adults (22 per cent) said they have not done any learning since full-time education, and a similar proportion (23 per cent) said they have been in learning over three years ago.

Figure 2: Overall participation in learning in the East Midlands

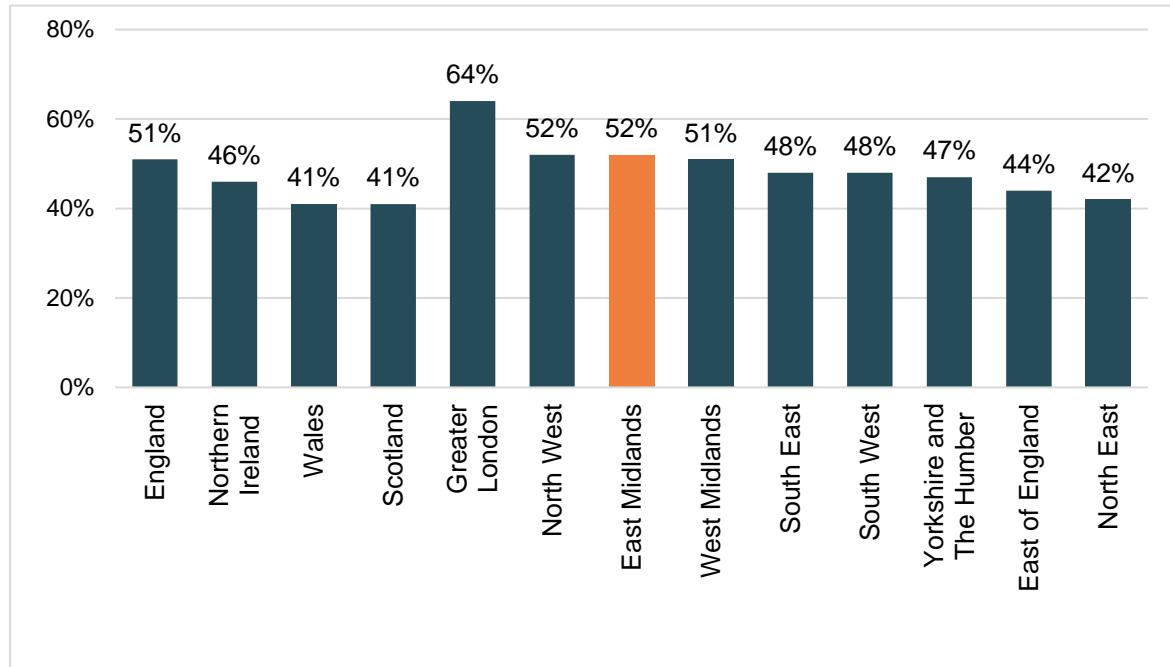


Base: East Midlands respondents. Weighted base: = 651, unweighted base = 709. UK: all respondents. Weighted base = 8906, unweighted base = 9506.

When comparing levels of participation in learning across the UK in 2023, the survey shows that the participation rate in the East Midlands is similar to the average in England (51 per cent) (Figure 3). This compares to 46 per cent in Northern Ireland, and 41 per cent in both Scotland and Wales.

The East Midlands has the joint second highest participation in learning rate in England. However, the proportion of current or recent learners is only significantly higher than the proportions of four other regions: North East (42 per cent), Yorkshire and the Humber (47 per cent) and East of England (44 per cent). Adults in the East Midlands are significantly less likely to participate in learning than adults in Greater London (64 per cent), where the proportion of adult learners is significantly higher than all of the other regions.

Figure 3: Participation in learning by region and nation

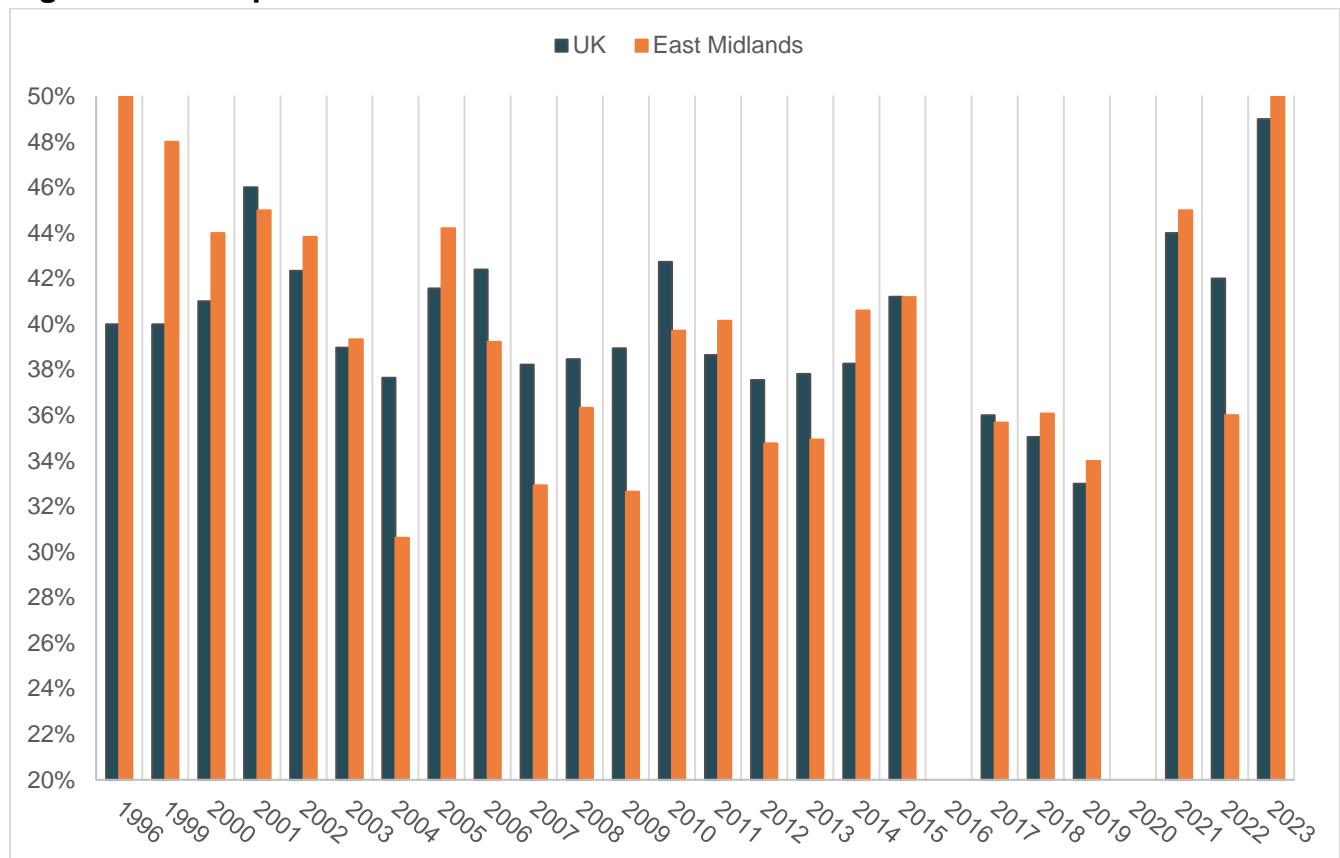


Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 8,906, North East = 359, North West = 975, Yorkshire and The Humber = 730, East Midlands = 651, West Midlands = 782, East of England = 832, Greater London = 1,173, South East = 1,216, South West = 772, England = 7,491, Northern Ireland = 249, Scotland = 744, 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.

In the 27-year history of the survey, the participation rate in the East Midlands, as in other regions has fluctuated over time (Figure 4).⁴ However, the year-on-year changes need to be interpreted with caution as the volatility of the estimates are partly due to the smaller sample size at a regional level.

⁴ Note that data is available for 23 out of 27 years. The survey did not run in 1996, 1997 or 2016. The survey in 2020 was carried out using a different methodology and is therefore not comparable.

Figure 4: Participation rates over time in the East Midlands and in the UK



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

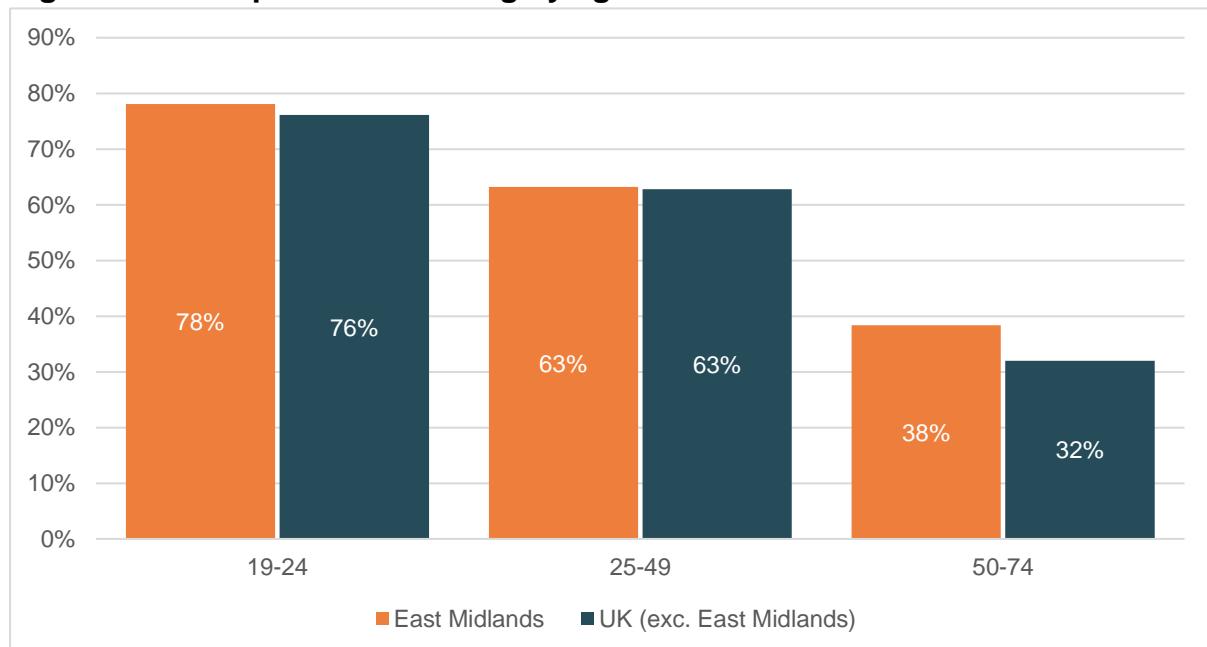
Demographic breakdown

Age

The UK survey consistently shows that participation in learning decreases with age. In the East Midlands, younger adults aged 19-24 are significantly more likely to say they are current or recent learners than older adults aged 50-74 (Figure 5). Nearly four out of five adults aged 19-24 (78 per cent) said they are current or recent learners, compared to 63 per cent of adults aged 25-49 and 37 per cent of adults aged 50-74.

The participation rates by age in the East Midlands are similar to the UK overall for adults aged 19-24 and 25-49. However, **participation among older adults (aged 50-74) is significantly higher in the East Midlands (37 per cent) than in the rest of the UK (32 per cent)**.

Figure 5: Participation in learning by age in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: East Midlands respondents. Total weighted base = 628, 19-24 = 73, 25-49 = 239, 50-74 = 266. Total unweighted base = 685, 19-24 = 76, 25-49 = 275, 50-74 = 289. UK respondents. Total weighted base = 7463, 19-24 = 826, 25-49 = 3317, 50-74 = 3320. Total unweighted base = 8066, 19-24 = 844, 25-49 = 3763, 50-74 = 3459.

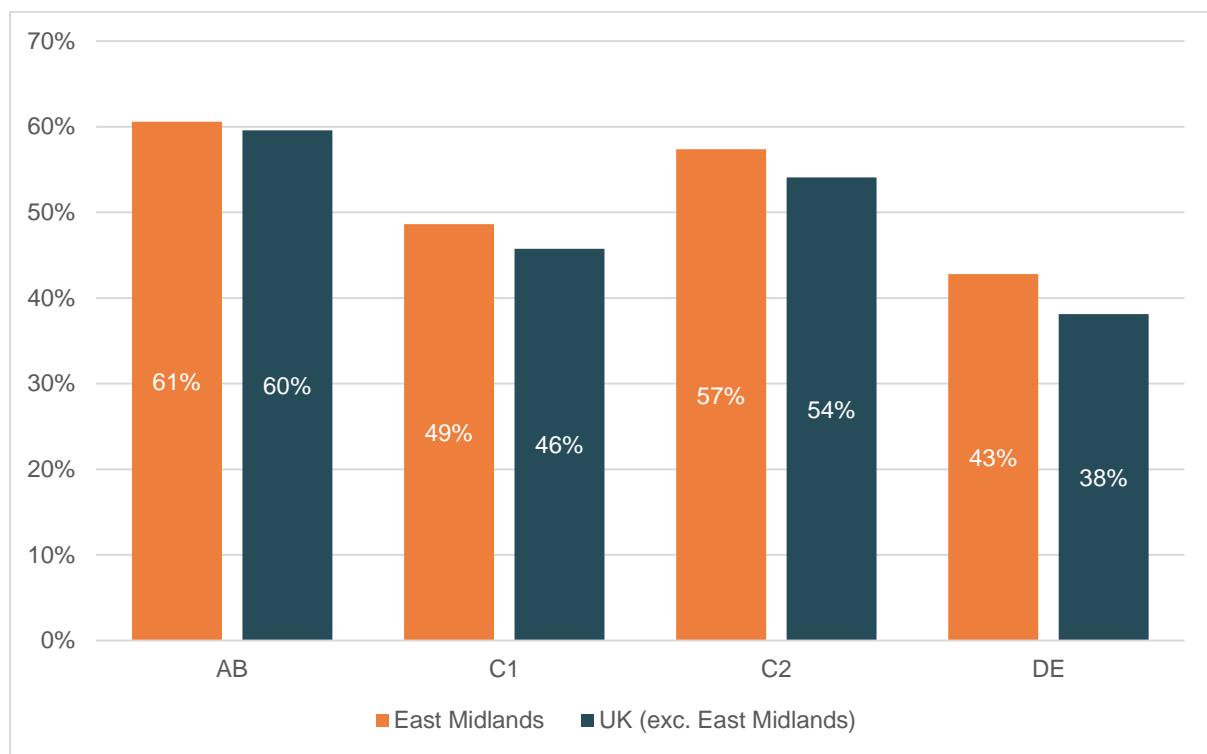
Social grade

The Adult Participation in Learning Survey consistently shows that social grade⁵ is a key predictor of participation in learning. In the East Midlands, people in the DE and C1 social grades were significantly less likely to say they are current or recent learners compared to people in AB and C2 social grades (Figure 6).

Three out of five adults (61 per cent) in the AB social grade said they are current or recent learners, compared to 49 per cent in C1, 57 per cent in C2 and 43 per cent in DE grades. The participation rates by social grade in the East Midlands are similar to the UK.

⁵ 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.

Figure 6: Participant in learning by social grade in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: East Midlands respondents. Total weighted base = 651, AB = 175, C1 = 146, C2 = 136, DE = 194. Total unweighted base = 709, AB = 189, C1 = 161, C2 = 148, DE = 211. Base: UK (excluding the North East) respondents. Total weighted base = 8255, AB = 2563, C1 = 1877, C2 = 1370, DE = 2445. Total unweighted base = 8797, AB = 2714, C1 = 2019, C2 = 1475, DE = 2589.

Age completed full-time education

The survey uses the age someone left full-time education as a proxy for highest level of qualification. The UK survey shows that the longer individuals remain in full-time education, the more likely they are to learn as an adult. In the East Midlands, adults who left education aged 19 or 21 and older are significantly more likely to be current or recent learners than those who left full-time education aged 16 or less (Figure 7).

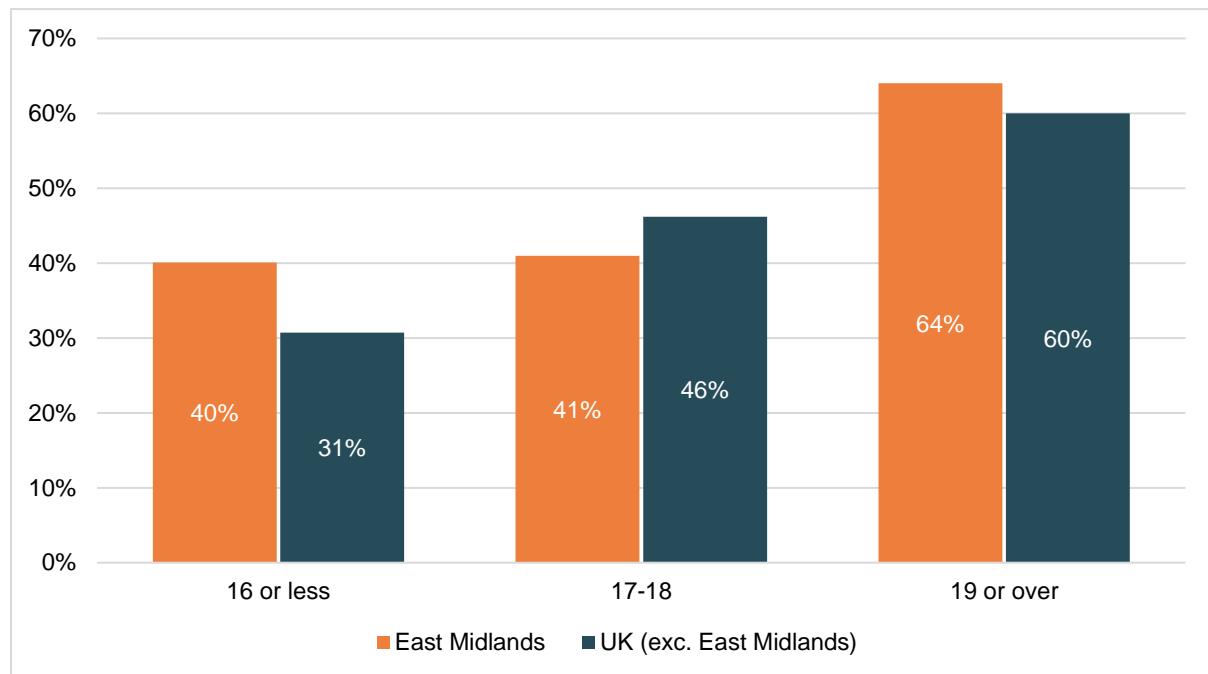
Two in five adults who left education aged 16 or under (40 per cent) or aged 17-18 (41 per cent) said they are current or recent learners. This increases to 64 per cent for those who left education aged 19 or over.

In the East Midlands, the participation rates are fairly similar to the rates for the UK overall for people who left full-time education aged 17-18 or 19 or over. **However, the rates are significantly higher for those who left education aged 16 or under.**

The participation gap between adults who left full-time education aged 16 or under and those who left aged 19 or over is lower in the East Midlands than in the UK. The gap in participation in learning between adults who left full-time education aged 16 and those who left full-time education aged 19 or over is 29

percentage points in the UK overall. In the East Midlands the gap is equal to 24 percentage points.

Figure 7: Participation in learning by age of completing full-time education in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: East Midlands respondents. Total weighted base = 614, 16 or less = 212, 17-18 = 144, 19 or over = 258. Total unweighted base = 669, 16 or less = 227, 17-18 = 157, 19 or over = 285. Base: UK respondents. Total weighted base = 8040, 16 or less = 2483, 17-18 = 1919, 19 or over = 3541. Total unweighted base = 8449, 16 or less = 2527, 17-18 = 2014, 19 or over = 3908.

Gender

In the East Midlands, men (50 per cent) and women (49 per cent) are almost equally as likely to say they are current or recent learners. The rates are similar to the UK overall, as men (51 per cent) are slightly more likely than women (47 per cent) in the UK to say they are current or recent learners.

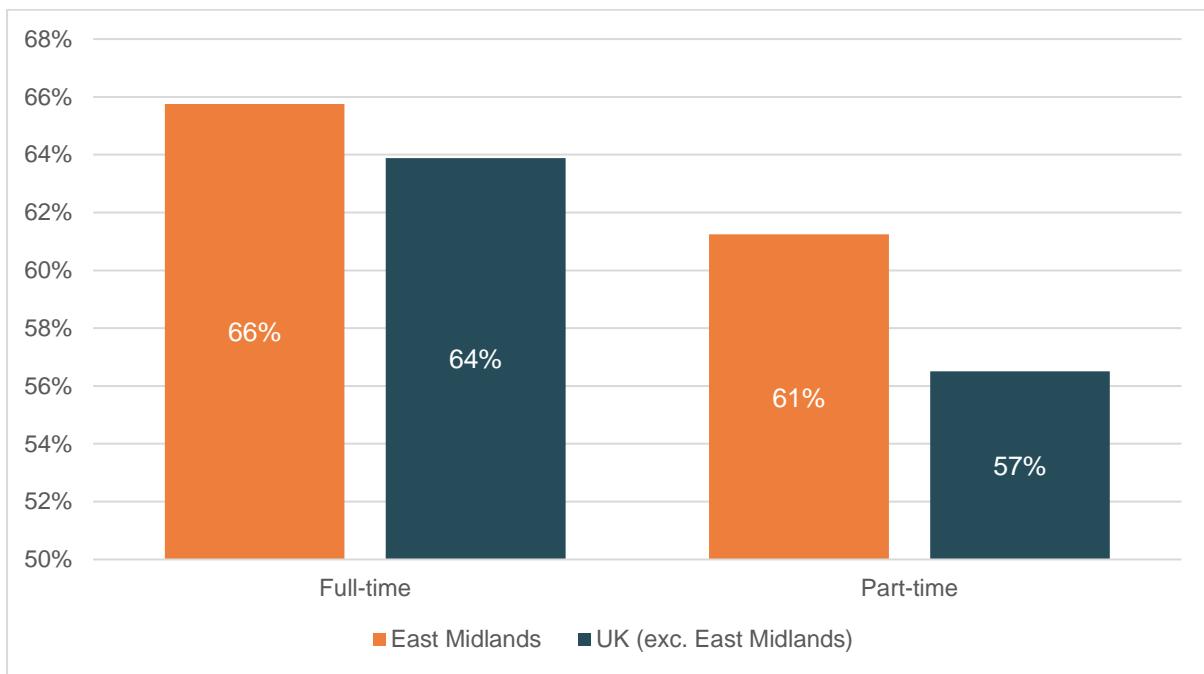
Working status

The survey shows that working status is a key predictor of participation in learning, with closer proximity to the labour market associated with higher participation rates. Due to small sample sizes, the East Midlands analysis includes only two working statuses: working full-time and working part-time (Figure 8).

Adults working part-time are less likely to say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years (61 per cent), compared to those working full-time (66 per cent). However, the difference is not statistically significant.

Despite some small differences between participation in learning by working status in the East Midlands and in the rest of the UK, the differences are not statistically significant.

Figure 8: Participation in learning by working status in the East Midlands and in the UK



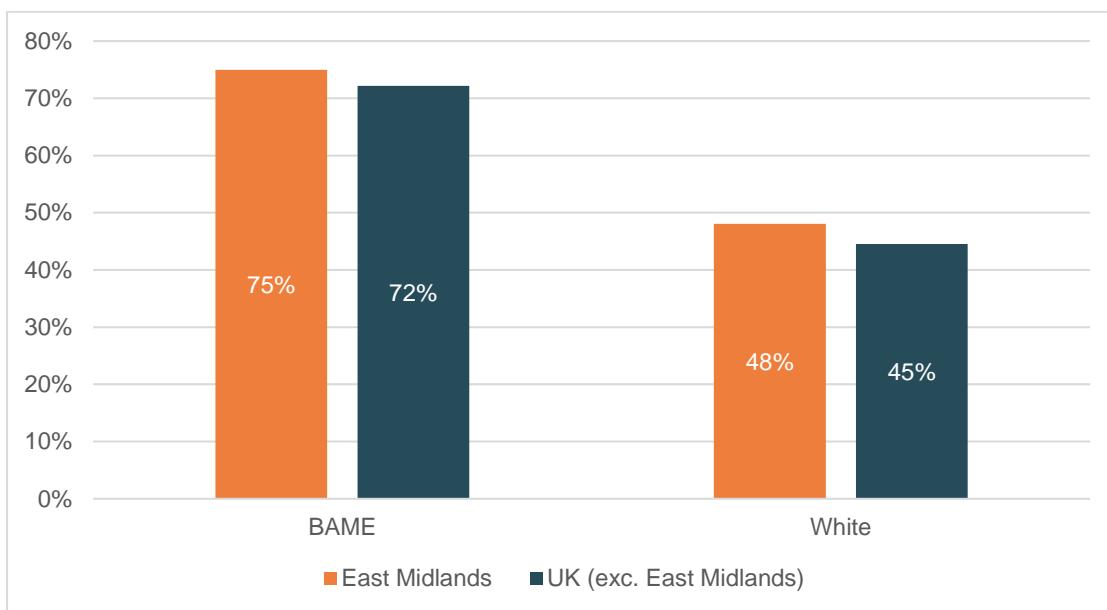
Base: East Midlands respondents. Total weighted base = 648, Full-time = 257, Part-time = 80. Total unweighted base = 705, Full-time = 290, Part-time = 92. Base: UK (excluding the East Midlands) respondents. Total weighted base = 8258, Full-time = 3226, Part-time = 1175. Total unweighted base = 8801, Full-time = 3598, Part-time = 1299.

Note: Respondents in other working status are not shown in this chart due to small sample sizes in the East Midlands.

Ethnicity

In the East Midlands, respondents from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are significantly more likely to say they are current or recent learners than White respondents (Figure 9). Three in four adults (75 per cent) from BAME backgrounds are current or recent learners, compared to 48 per cent of White respondents. The participation rates for BAME backgrounds are similar to the rest of the UK.

Figure 9: Participation in learning by ethnicity in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: East Midlands respondents. Total weighted base = 442, BAME = 80, White = 362. Total unweighted base = 482, BAME = 89, White = 393. Base: UK respondents. Total weighted base = 5666, BAME = 960, White = 4706. Total unweighted base = 5628, BAME = 812, White = 4826.

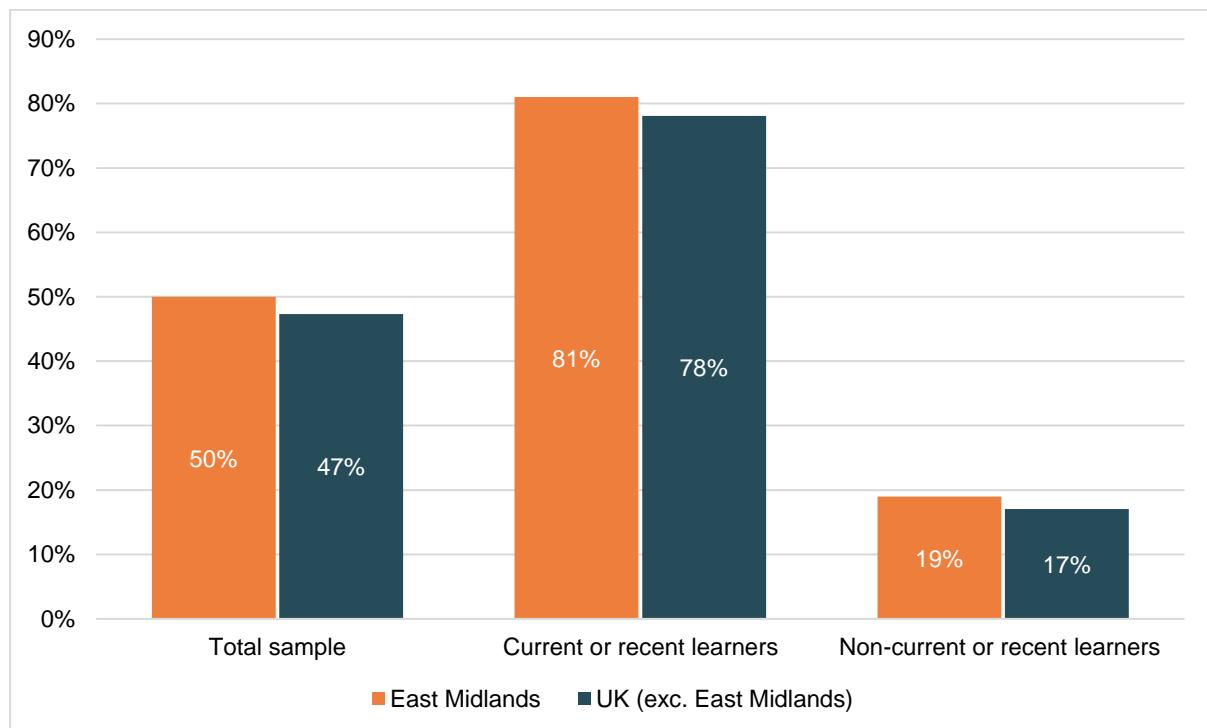
Future intentions to learn

As well as patterns and experiences of current/recent learning, the survey captures future intentions to learn. Respondents were asked about their likelihood of taking up learning in the next three years.

In the East Midlands, one half of adults (50 per cent) said that they are either very likely or likely to take up learning in the next three years (Figure 10). However, adults' intention to learn is highly influenced by their current learning status. Recent and current learners are significantly more likely to say they are likely to learn in the future than adults who haven't engaged with learning in the past three years. Four in five (81 per cent) current or recent learners said they are likely or very likely to learn in the future, compared with one in five (19 per cent) of adults who haven't engaged with learning in the past three years.

These proportions are fairly similar to the UK overall: 78 per cent of the current or recent learners said they are likely to learn in the future compared with only 17 per cent of adults who have not taken up learning over the last three years.

Figure 10: Future likelihood of learning by current learning status in the East Midlands and in the UK



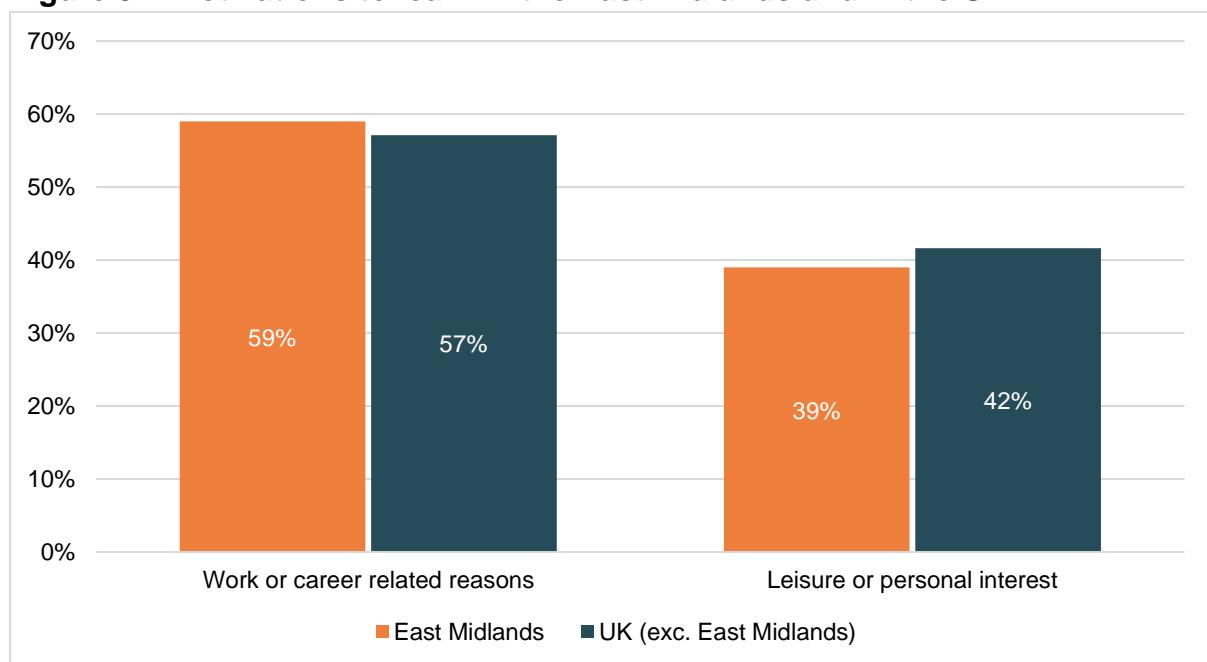
Base: East Midlands respondents. 'Don't know' responses have been taken out. Weighted base = 600, Current or recent learner = 1317, Not current or recent learner = 283. Unweighted base = 709, Current or recent learner = 373, Not current or recent learner = 336. Base: UK (excluding East Midlands) respondents. Weighted base = 8306, Current or recent learner = 4079, Not current or recent learner = 3916. Unweighted base = 8797, Current or recent learner = 4405, Not current or recent learner = 4392.

Motivations to learn

Respondents who have engaged with learning within the previous three years were asked to state whether they started their main learning for work or career related reasons. In the East Midlands, nearly three in five adults (59 per cent) said they took up learning for work or career related reasons, while two in five (39 per cent) said they took up learning for leisure or personal interests (Figure 11).

These proportions are similar to the rest of the UK: 57 per cent of respondents in the rest of the UK said they took up learning for work or career related reasons compared 42 per cent who say they did it for leisure or personal interest.

Figure 91: Motivations to learn in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: all current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, unweighted base = 373. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 4058, unweighted base = 4405.

Learning delivery

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. In the East Midlands, three out of ten (30 per cent) current and recent learners said they learned independently on their own (Figure 12).

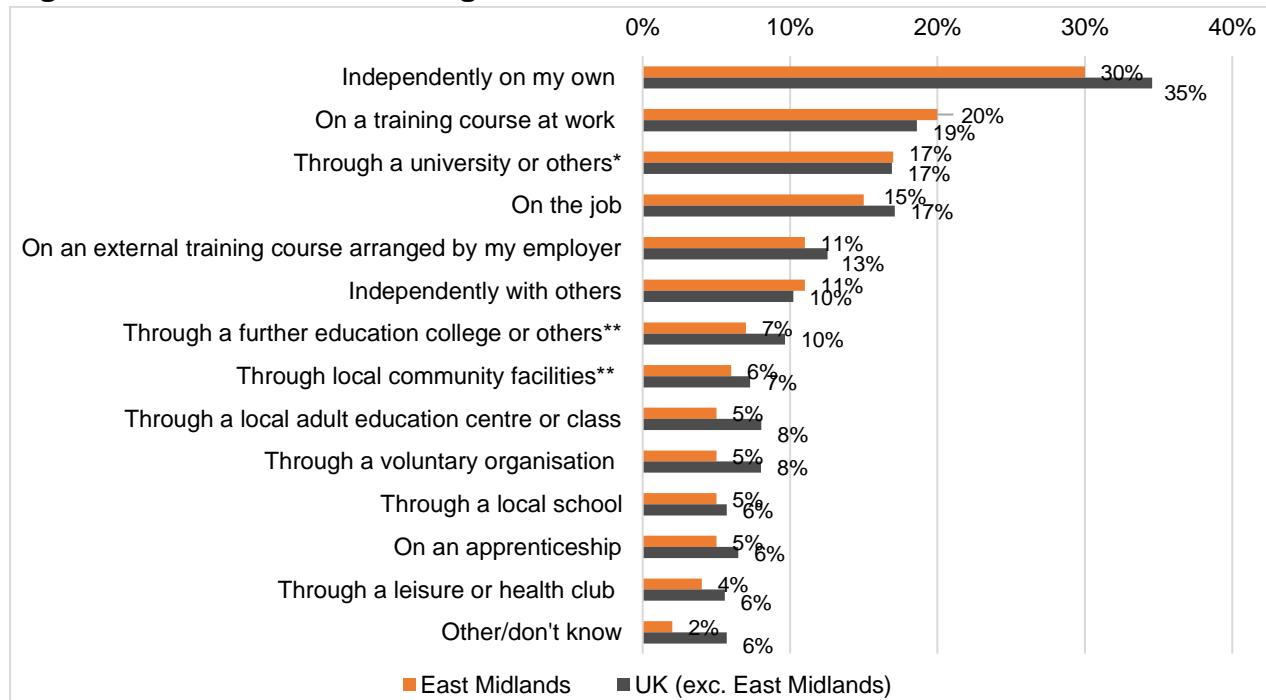
Work related learning was also commonly reported, with one in five adults learning through a training course at work (20 per cent), 15 per cent of adults learning on the job, and 11 per cent on an external training course arranged by their employers.

Nearly one in five (17 per cent) of adults reported learning through a university, 11 per cent independently with others or 7 per cent through further education.

Other provision reported by learners included through local community facilities (6 per cent), a local adult education centre (5 per cent), a voluntary organisation (5 per cent), a local school (5 per cent), on an apprentice (5 per cent) or through a leisure or health club (4 per cent).

These proportions are similar to the UK overall.

Figure 12: Location of learning in the East Midlands and in the UK



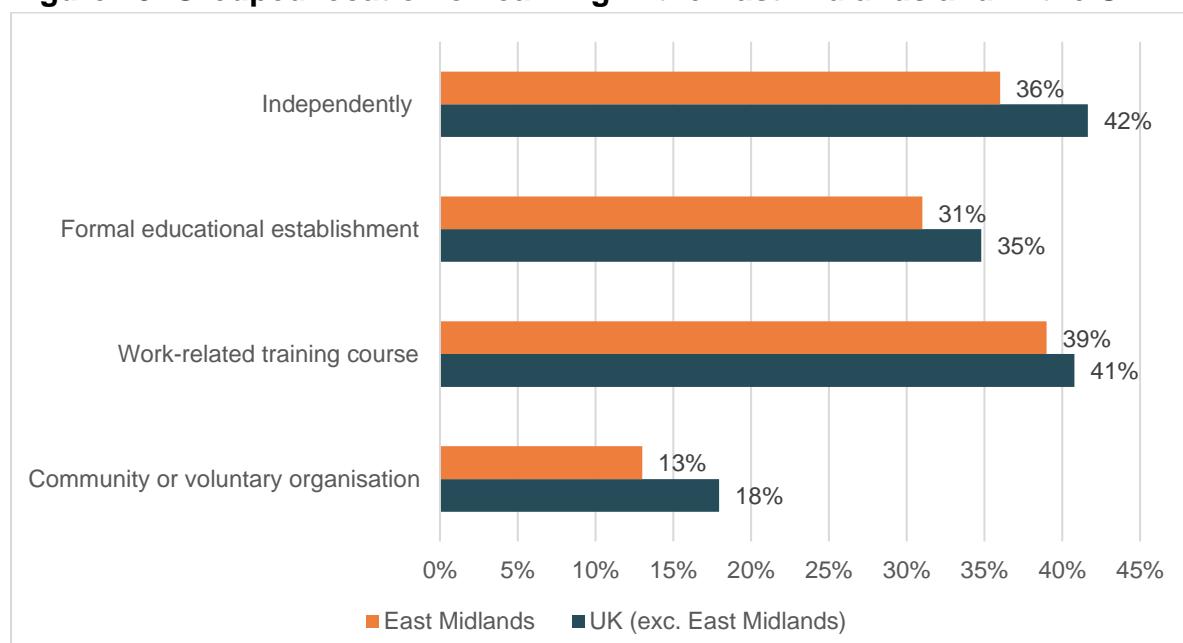
Base: All current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, unweighted base = 373. To note: the sample sizes are small for some of these categories, so they need to be interpreted with caution. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 4058, unweighted base = 4405. *higher education institution/Open University **tertiary/6th Form college *** such as a library, museum, place of worship, bookshop etc.

To help with comparison, these delivery methods could be grouped in four categories: independently; formal education establishment; work-related training course and community or voluntary organisation.⁶

In the East Midlands, 36 per cent said they have done their learning independently and 39 per cent said they have done their learning on a work-related training course. One in three (31 per cent) said they have done their training through a formal establishment and just over one in ten (13 per cent) said they have done their training through a community or voluntary organisation (Figure 13).

The delivery methods are fairly similar to the rest of the UK: 42 per cent of current or recent learners in the other regions said they have learned independently, 41 per cent through a work related course, 35 per cent through a formal educational establishment and 18 per cent through a community or voluntary organisation.

Figure 13: Grouped location of learning in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: all current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, Unweighted base = 373. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 4058, unweighted base = 4405.

⁶ The response options were categorised as follows:

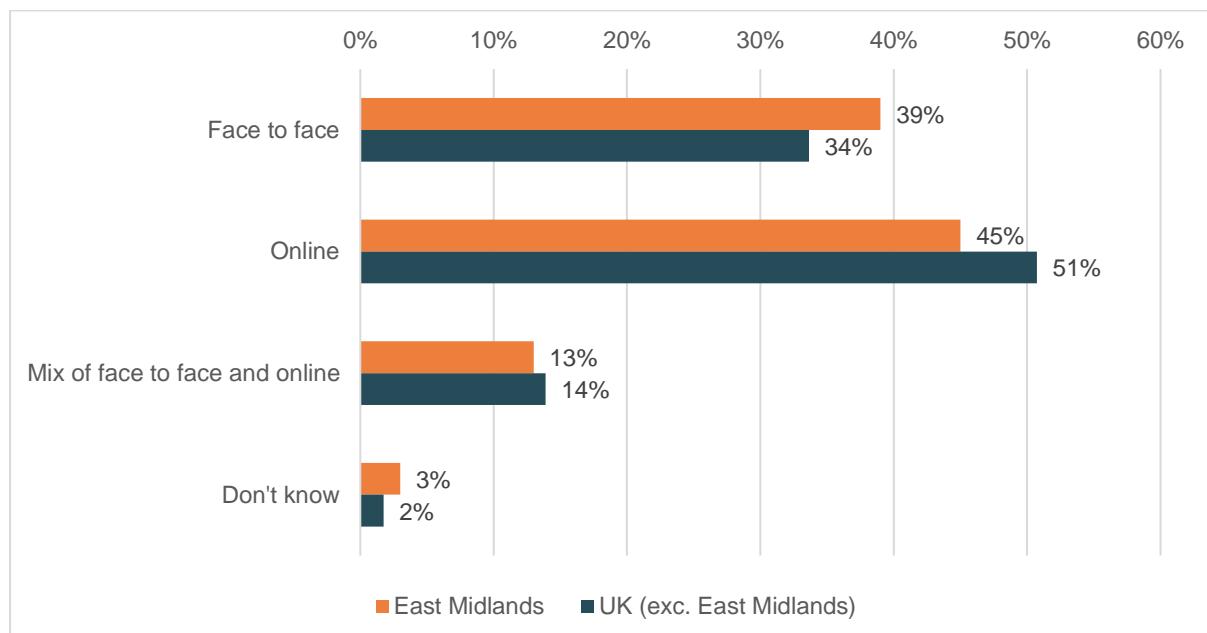
- Work-related, including: On the job; On a training course at work; On an external training course arranged by my employer; On an apprenticeship
- Independently, including: Independently on my own; Independently with others
- Formal educational establishment, including: Through a university/higher education 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.

Online and face to face

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. In the East Midlands, 45 per cent of current or recent learners said they completed at least one of their learning online (Figure 14). Two in five (39 per cent) said they have taken up their learning face to face and 13 per cent said their learning has involved a mix of online and face to face learning.

Adults in the East Midlands are significantly more likely to learn face to face (39 per cent) than the UK average (34 per cent). The proportions are similar for the other modes of delivery.

Figure 1410: Participation in learning by mode of delivery in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: all current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, unweighted base = 373. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 4058, unweighted base = 4405.

Fees

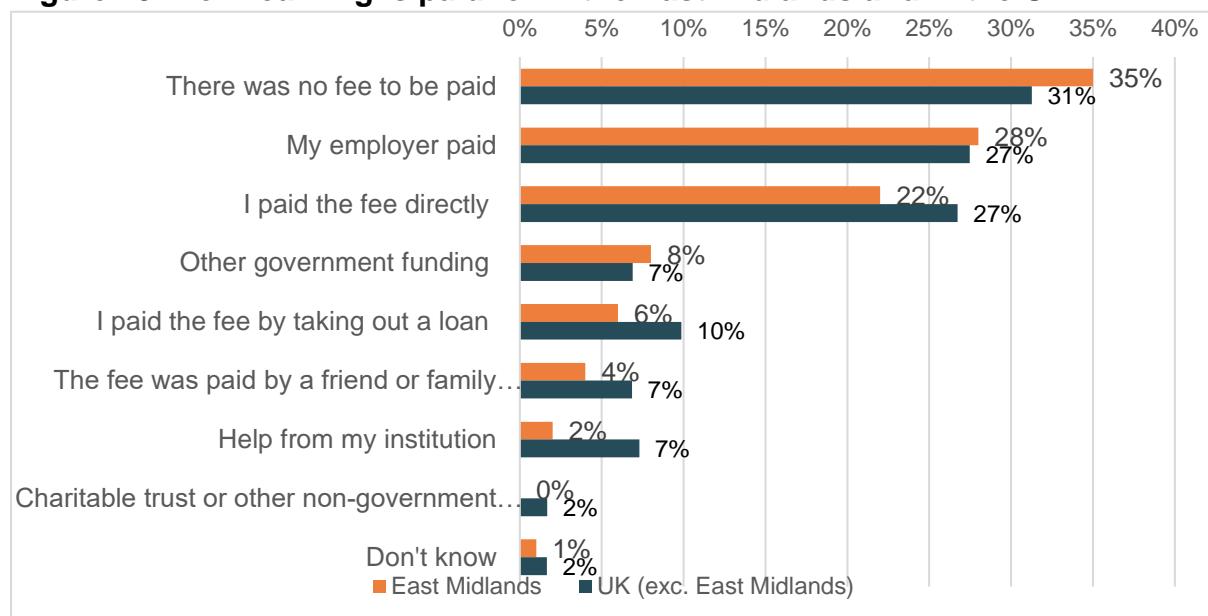
In the East Midlands, around two in three (65 per cent) of current or recent learners said a fee was attached to their main learning (Figure 15).

Most commonly, learners reported their fee was paid by their employer (28 per cent). One in five (22 per cent) of learners said they paid their fee directly. Just under one in ten learners said they paid their fee by other government funding (8 per cent). A minority of learners said they paid their fee by taking out a loan (6 per cent), with support from their friend or family member (4 per cent) or with help from institution (2 per cent).

The proportions of people who reported paying for their learning in the East Midlands is similar to the rest of the UK (69 per cent). While there are some differences in how

learners paid for their learning in the East Midlands compared to the rest of the UK, none of the differences are statistically significant.

Figure 15: How learning is paid for in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: all current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, unweighted base = 373. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 4058, unweighted base = 4405.

Barriers to learning

Each year, 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 barriers that prevent them from doing so. 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.

Challenges current or recent learners have experienced

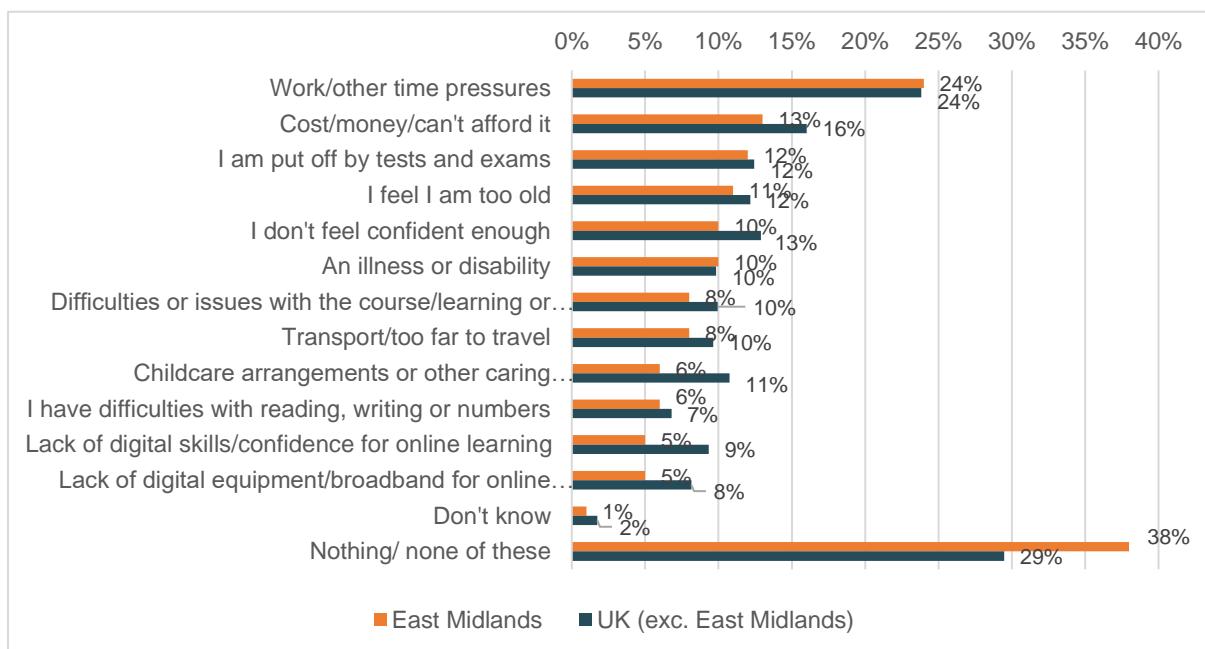
In the East Midlands, people were significantly less likely to identify a challenge while learning. Just over six in ten (62 per cent) current or recent learners identified at least one challenge, compared with seven in ten (70 per cent) in the rest of the UK.

Most commonly, current or recent learners in the East Midlands identified work and other time pressures as a challenge (24 per cent) (Figure 16). Other common challenges relate to people's attitudes or perceptions of learning, such as a lack of being put off by tests/exams (12 per cent), feeling too old (11 per cent) or not feeling confident enough (10 per cent).

Respondents identified challenges related to their situation, including the cost of learning (13 per cent), an illness or disability (10 per cent), difficulties or issues with the course (8 per cent), transport (8 per cent), childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities (6 per cent), or they have difficulties with reading, writing or numbers (6 per cent). Participants also said they experienced digital barriers while learning due to a lack of digital skills or confidence for online working (5 per cent) or lack of digital equipment (5 per cent).

These findings are similar to the rest of the UK.

Figure 16: Challenges experienced when learning in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: all current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, unweighted base = 373. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 4058, unweighted base = 4405.

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.

In the East Midlands, two in five adult learners (41 per cent) said they have experienced situational challenges (Table 1). Just over a third (35 per cent) said they are facing dispositional challenges and a further 8 per cent said they are facing institutional challenges. These proportions are fairly similar to the UK overall (see Table 1).

Table 1: Grouped challenges experienced by current or recent learners in the East Midlands and in the UK

Group	East Midlands	The UK (excluding the East Midlands)
Situational	41%	49%
Dispositional	35%	42%
Institutional	8%	10%
No challenges encountered	38%	29%

Base: all current or recent learners in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 338, unweighted base = 373. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK. Weighted base = 4396, unweighted base = 4778.

Barriers faced by people who haven't engaged with learning within the past three years

In the East Midlands, almost seven in ten (69 per cent) adults who say they have not engaged in learning within the past three years identified at least one barrier. This is similar to the rest of the UK (71 per cent).

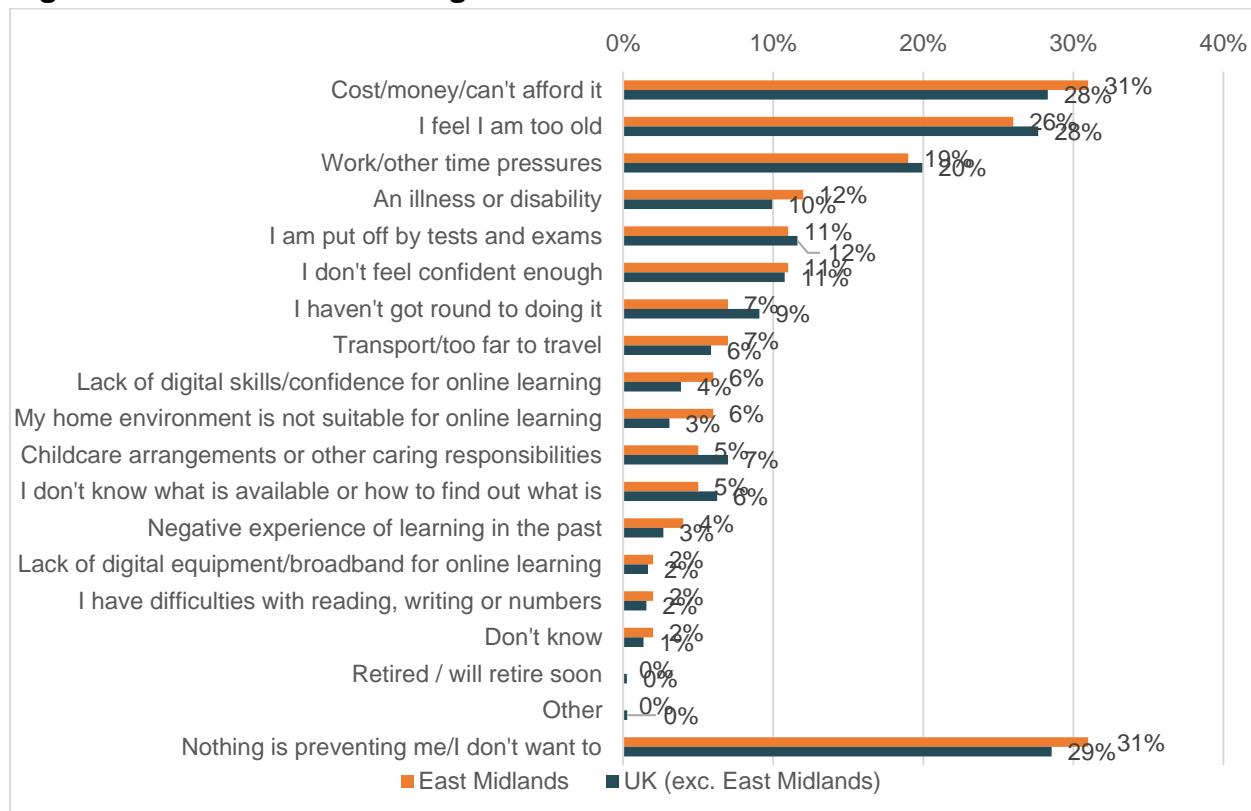
The top barrier identified by the adults who haven't taken up learning within three years is the cost of learning (31 per cent) (Figure 17). This was followed by feeling too old to take up learning (26 per cent) and work or other time pressures (19 per cent).

Other barriers that were reported by around one in ten adults in the East Midlands included an illness or disability (12 per cent), being put off by tests and exams (11 per cent), not feeling confident enough (11 per cent),.

Less than one in ten adults reported the following barriers to learning: not getting round to doing it (7 per cent), transport (7 per cent), lacking digital skills or confidence for online learning (6 per cent), their home environment is not suitable for online learning (6 per cent) or childcare or other caring responsibilities (5 per cent).

The barriers people faced in the East Midlands are similar to the barriers experienced in the other regions and nations.

Figure 17: Barriers to learning in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 292, unweighted base = 312. Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in the UK (excluding the East Midlands) Weighted base = 3907, unweighted base = 4086.

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; Transport/too far to travel
- **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.

Just under half of adults (47 per cent) who said they have not taken part in learning in the last three years identified dispositional and/or situational barriers to doing so. Three in ten (31 per cent) said they did not want to engage with learning or that nothing was preventing them from doing so. These findings are fairly similar to the UK overall (see Table 2).

Table 2: Grouped barriers faced by adults who haven't engaged with learning within the past three years in the East Midlands and in the UK

Group	East Midlands	The UK (excluding the East Midlands)
Situational	47%	46%
Dispositional	47%	51%
No challenges encountered	31%	29%

Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 292, unweighted base = 312. Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in the UK (excluding the East Midlands) Weighted base = 3907, unweighted base = 4086.

Learning for career change

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.

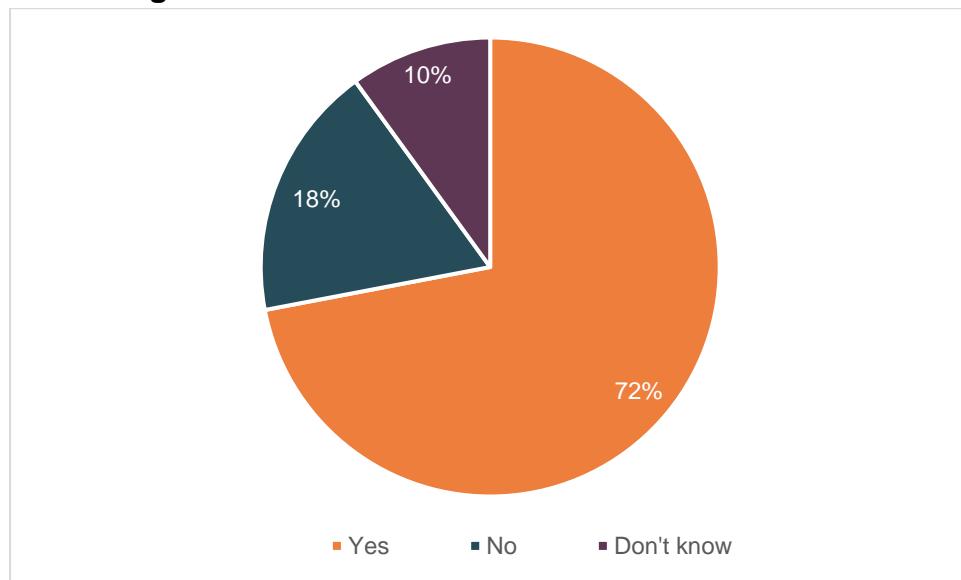
Many workers will therefore need to reskill into different careers to ensure they can make the most of the opportunities ahead. Within this context, this year's survey asked adults whether they are planning to change job or career in the near future. The survey also explored motivations to change career, barriers to changing career and what support people would find helpful.

Changing job or career

All respondents who are working or unemployed and seeking work were asked whether they thought people like them could change careers or change the occupation/industry they were in. In the East Midlands, seven in ten respondents (72 per cent) believe that people like them can change career (Figure 18). Nearly one in five (18 per cent) said they did not think that people like them could change careers and one in ten (10 per cent) said they don't know.

This is fairly similar to the UK overall with 71 per cent of respondents who believe that people like them are able to change careers, 16 per cent who did not think so and 12 per cent did not know.

Figure 1811: Respondents in the East Midlands who believe people like them can change career



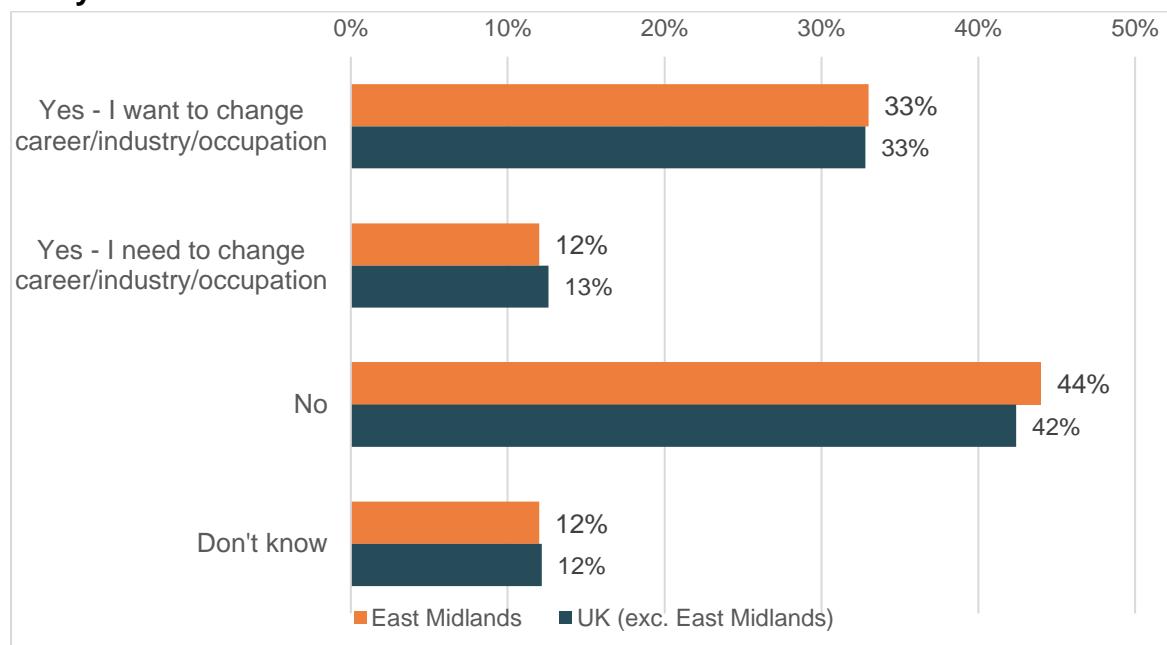
Base: respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 436, unweighted base = 490.

In the East Midlands, one third of respondents said they want (33 per cent) to change their career/industry/occupation in the next one or two years (Figure 19).

Just over one in ten (12 per cent) said they need to change their career, industry or occupation in the next one or two years. Just over two in five respondents (44 per cent) said they do not need or want to change career and 12 per cent don't know.

The proportion of adults in the East Midlands who said they want or need to change their career is similar to the rest of the UK, with 33 per cent of adults saying they want to and 13 per cent saying they need to. Wider research indicates that around six per cent of adults change occupation or sector each year.⁷

Figure 19: Whether adults want or needs to change career in the next one or two years



Base: respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 336, unweighted base = 490. Base respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 5630, unweighted base = 6099.

⁷ Evans, S. and Vaid, L. (2023) [All change: Understanding and supporting retraining and career change](#)

Motivations for career change

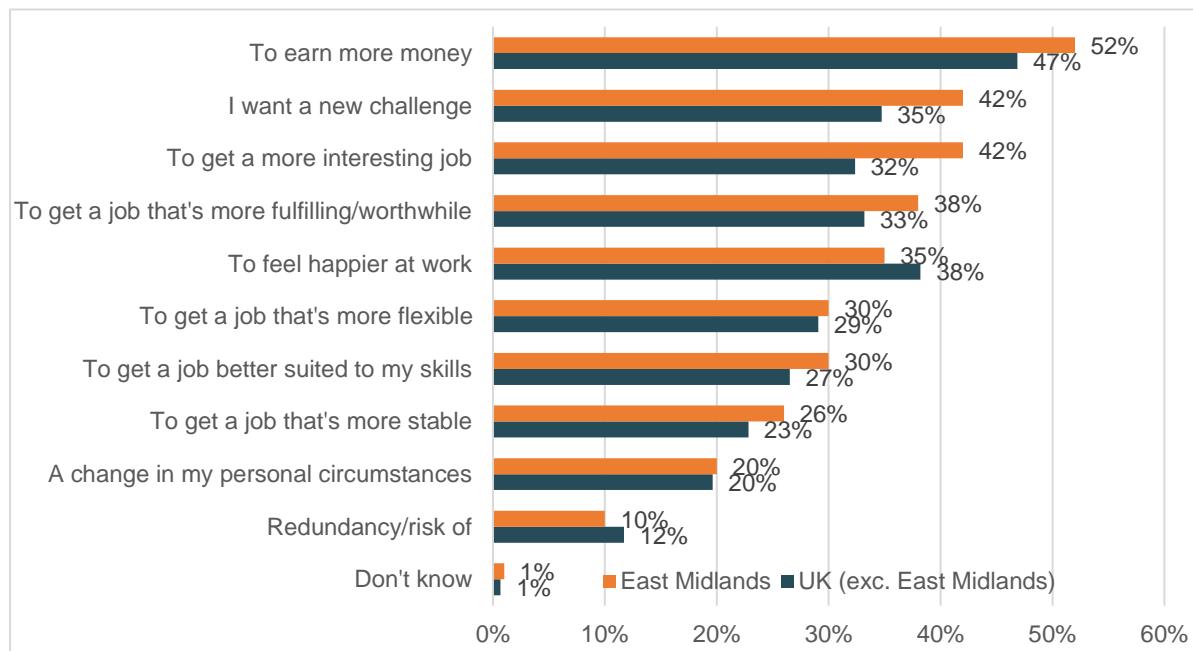
Respondents who indicated that they either want to or need to change career in the next one to two years were asked the reason for this change (Figure 20). In the East Midlands, the main reason cited was to earn more money (52 per cent). This was followed by wanting a new challenge (42 per cent) and to get a more interesting job (42 per cent).

Respondents also reported wanting to get a job that would be more fulfilling or worthwhile (38 per cent), to feel happier at work (35 per cent), a job that was more flexible (30 per cent), better suited to their skills (30 per cent) or more stable (26 per cent).

One in five respondents (20 per cent) reported that a change in personal circumstances was the reason for wanting a career change. A further one in ten (10 per cent) said they feared or were at risk of redundancy.

The motivations for career change in the East Midlands are fairly similar to the rest of the UK (Figure 20). **Adults in the East Midlands are significantly more likely to say they want or need a career change to get a more interesting job (42 per cent) or because they want a new challenge (42 per cent) than the UK average (33 per cent and 35 per cent).**

Figure 20: Reasons for wanting or needing career change in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the East Midlands.

Weighted base = 176, unweighted base = 198. Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 2510, unweighted base = 2783.

Barriers to career change

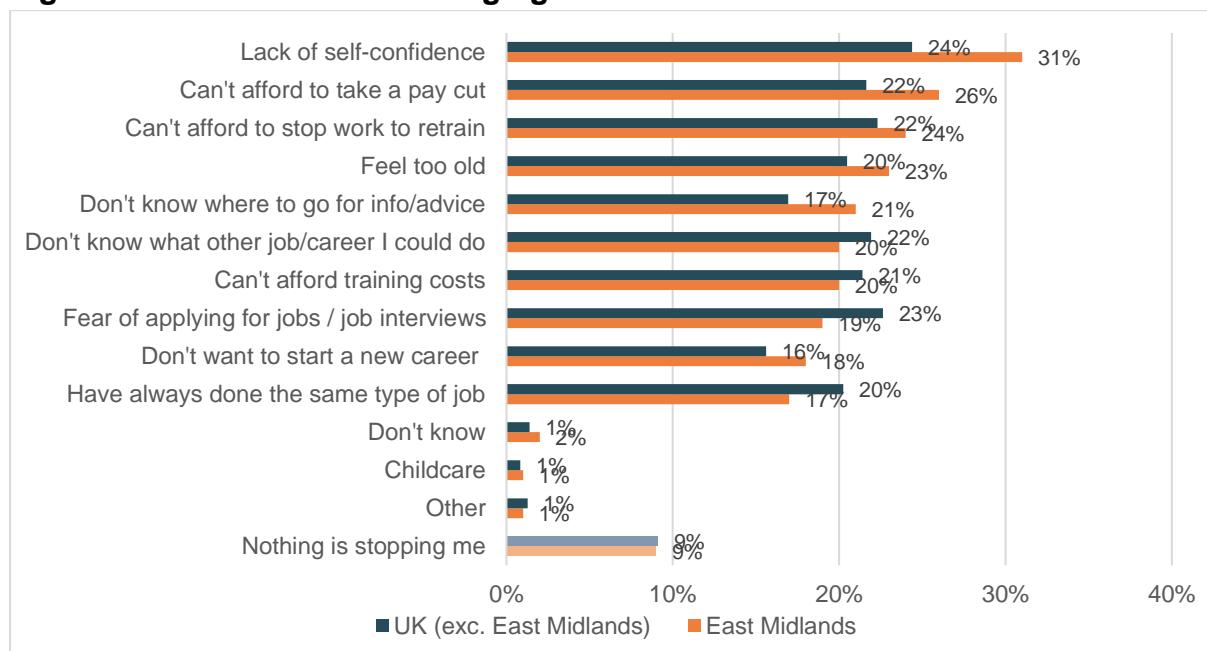
Respondents who indicated that they want or need to change career were then asked what was stopping them from doing this (Figure 21). In the East Midlands, the most cited barrier was a lack of self-confidence (31 per cent). This was followed by barriers related to finance, including not being able to afford to take a pay cut (26 per cent), to stop work to retrain (24 per cent) or training costs (20 per cent).

Adults in the East Midlands commonly cited dispositional barriers⁸, including feeling too old (23 per cent) or a fear of applying for jobs or job interviews (19 per cent). One in five adults said they did not know where to go for information or advice (21 per cent) or they did not know what other job or career they could do (20 per cent). Other barriers included not wanting to start a new career from the beginning (18 per cent) or having always done the same type of job (17 per cent).

Only 9 per cent of respondents who said they want or need to change career say that nothing is stopping them from doing this.

The barriers to career change identified by respondents in the East Midlands are fairly similar to the rest of the UK. **Adults in the East Midlands are significantly more likely to say they lack the self-confidence to learn (31 per cent) than the UK average (25 per cent).**

Figure 21: Reason for not changing career in the East Midlands and in the UK



Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the East Midlands.

Weighted base = 176, unweighted base = 198. Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 2510, unweighted base = 2783.

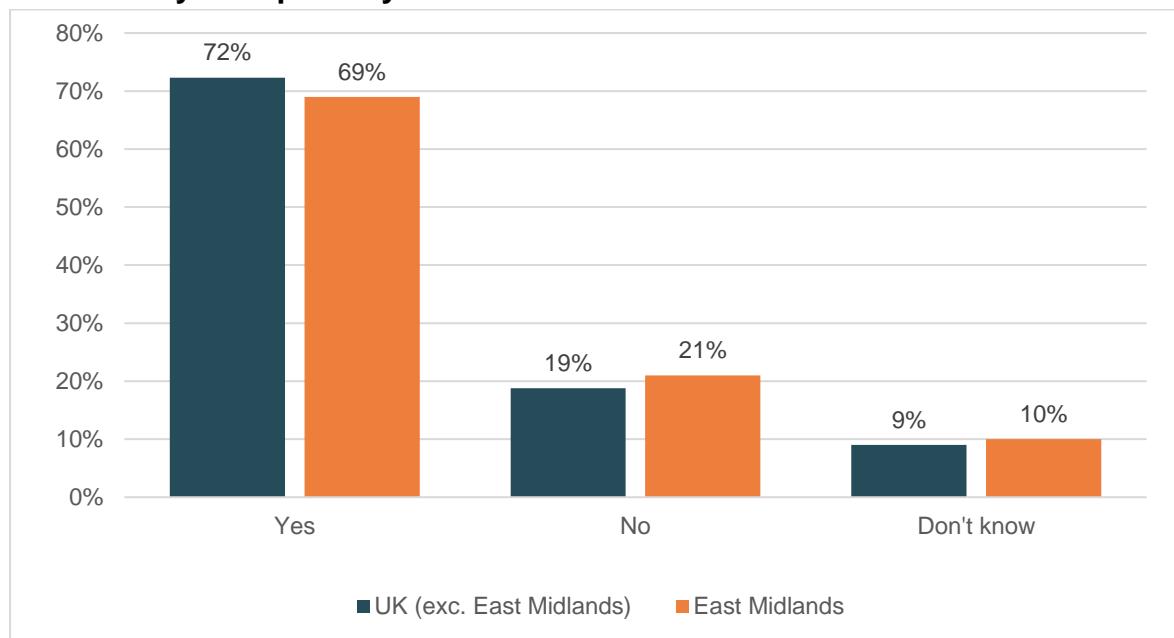
⁸ Dispositional barriers relate to the attitudes, perceptions and expectations of adult. They include barriers such as feeling too old to learn, being put off by tests and exams, not feeling confident enough to learn.

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 22).

In the East Midlands, seven in ten adults (69 per cent) said they need to develop their skills, while 21 per cent said they don't, and 10 per cent said they don't know. These figures are fairly similar to the UK.

Figure 2212: Do you need to develop your skills to change career or change the industry/occupation you work in?



Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the East Midlands.

Weighted base = 176, unweighted base = 198. Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 2510, unweighted base = 2783.

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 23). In the East Midlands, respondents most commonly indicated that they would need learning or training (34 per cent).

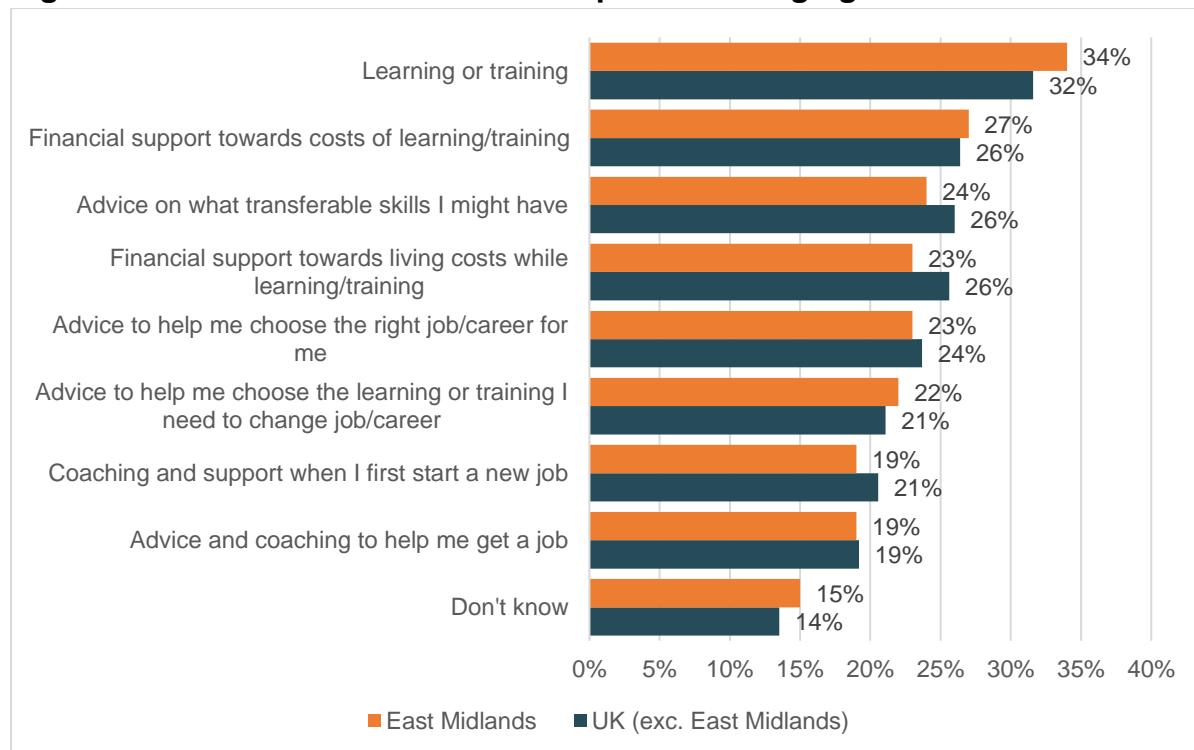
This was followed by respondents stating that they would find financial support, including towards costs of learning/training (27 per cent) or living costs (23 per cent) helpful.

Advice or information was also commonly identified as a helpful support for career change including: advice on what transferable skills they might have (24 per cent) or advice to choose the right job/career for them (23 per cent), advice to help them choose the learning or training needed to change job/career (22 per cent), coaching and support when they first start a new job (19 per cent) or advice and coaching to

help them get a job (19 per cent). A further 15 per cent said they don't know what they would find most helpful.

Respondents in the East Midlands identified similar support to the rest of the UK (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: What would be the most helpful for changing career



Base: respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 436, unweighted base = 490. Base respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 5530, unweighted base = 6099.

Respondents were asked where they would go for information and advice if they wished to change career (Table 3). In the East Midlands, just over two in five respondents (43 per cent) said they would use a general online search to find information and advice. This was followed by friends, family and colleagues (22 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 a professional, sector or trade organisation (19 per cent), social media (17 per cent), an education provider such as a college or university (16 per cent), a recruitment consultant/agency (15 per cent), Jobcentre Plus (15 per cent) or the National Careers Service (13 per cent).

Respondents said they would also go to their prospective employer (13 per cent) or their current employer (9 per cent) for advice on career change.

A small minority of respondents said they would go to Citizens' Advice (7 per cent) a Unionlearn representative (4 per cent), a local community, voluntary or religious centre for advice (4 per cent) or a local or national charity (4 per cent).

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.

These figures are similar to the rest of the UK (see Table 3). However, **adults in the East Midlands are significantly more likely to say that they would go to a professional, sector or trade organisation (19 per cent) than the UK average (15 per cent)**. In addition, adults in the East Midlands are significantly more likely to use a general online search (43 per cent) than the rest of the UK (37 per cent).

Table 3: Where respondents go for advice on career change

Source of information/advice	East Midlands	UK (excluding the East Midlands)
General online search	43%	37%
Friends, family or colleagues	22%	23%
Education provider such as a college or university	16%	16%
Social media	17%	15%
Recruitment consultant/agency	15%	16%
Professional, sector or trade organisation	19%	15%
Jobcentre Plus	15%	15%
National Careers Service	13%	12%
Prospective employers	13%	12%
Your current employer (e.g. HR, line manager)	9%	12%
Citizens' Advice	7%	8%
Local community, voluntary or religious centre	4%	5%
Local or national charity	4%	5%
Unionlearn representative or Workplace Learning Advocate	4%	5%
Don't know	12%	12%

Base: respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the East Midlands. Weighted base = 436, unweighted base = 490. Base respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the UK (excluding the East Midlands). Weighted base = 5530, unweighted base = 6099.