

# Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2023: Greater London

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## Learning and Work Institute

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## 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 Greater London.

### Key findings for London

In London, just under two in three adults (64 per cent) said they learned over the past three years, which is significantly higher than the UK and England averages. **London has the highest participation in learning rate of the nine England region.** The participation rate in London in 2023 was at its highest of the 27-year history of the survey.

The higher participation rate in London can be partly explained by demographic differences. For example, London population includes a higher proportion of younger people and people with higher-level qualifications. The survey finds that both of these characteristics are associated with higher participation in learning.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, S. (2023) [Time to learn 2023](#), Learning and Work Institute.

- Adults in the highest social grade (AB<sup>2</sup>) 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 London are also those that are less likely to learn in the other regions. However, there are some differences:

- **Adults aged 35-44 in London are significantly more likely to say they have participated in learning than in the rest of the UK.**
- **People in London who left full time education aged 21 and over are also more likely to say they have taken part in learning in than in the rest of the UK.**
- **Londoners across all social grades are also significantly more likely to participate in learning than their peers in other regions.**

In London, 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. However, **Londoners are significantly more likely to report that they have learned for work related reasons than in the rest of the UK.**

Despite a higher rate of participation in learning, **Londoners are more likely to identify at least one challenge or barrier to learning, compared to the rest of the UK.** Nearly one in three Londoners (32 per cent) said **work and time pressure** prevented them from engaging with learning, compared to only one in five (19 per cent) in the rest of the UK. **Financial pressures** were also more commonly cited by Londoners as a challenge while learning than in the rest of the UK. This could relate to a higher proportion of Londoners reporting that their learning had a fee attached and that they had done their learning through a higher education institution.

**Adults in London are significantly more likely to believe that people like them can change career** (75 per cent), compared to the UK average (71 per cent). Furthermore, they are more likely to say they want or need to change career than in the rest of the UK. Londoners' motivations for career change are fairly similar to the other UK regions and nations, however, adults in London are significantly more likely to say they:

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<sup>2</sup> AB social grade corresponds to adults in higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional occupations.

- Feared or were at risk of redundancy (16 per cent compared to 12 per cent across the UK)
- Want to get a job that is more suited to their skills (30 per cent compared to 27 per cent in the UK). Wider evidence shows that many people in London are overqualified for the job they are doing in part due to a very competitive job market, with fewer graduate jobs than graduates<sup>3</sup>
- Are motivated to change job or career by change in personal circumstances (23 per cent compared to 20 per cent in the UK).

Barriers to changing careers are fairly similar to the UK overall. However, adults in London are significantly more likely to say they:

- Have always done the same type of job (25 per cent compared to 20 per cent in the UK)
- Don't want to start a new career from the beginning (20 per cent compared to 16 per cent in the UK)
- Don't know where to go for information/advice (20 per cent compared to 17 per cent in the UK average).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://centreforlondon.org/reader/city-skills/chapter-1-challenges/#1-resource-and-participation>

## 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.

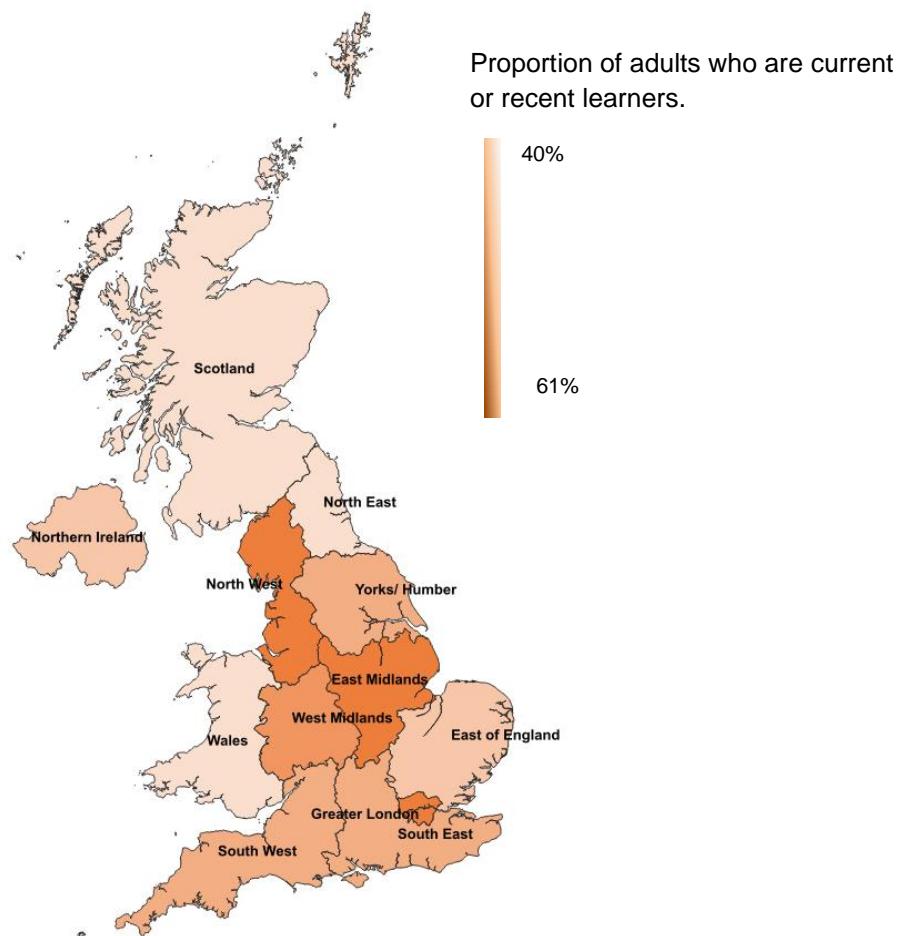
To engage more adults in learning, policymakers, commissioners and those working in learning providers need to look at people's motivations for learning. The biggest reasons adults give for not taking part in learning are cost, feeling too old, time pressures and also not wanting to / not seeing the 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> Hall, S., Jones E., Evans, S. (2023) [Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2023](#), Learning and Work Institute.

at a regional level. This can help inform where interventions and support are best targeted and may make the greatest impact.

## 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 1328 adults in London took part in the survey (1173 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 dataset representative of the UK.

To find out more about the survey series and explore trend data through our interactive charts, visit [www.learningandwork.org.uk](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk).

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<sup>5</sup> Surveys were undertaken annually from 1996 except in three years: 1997, 1998 and 2016.

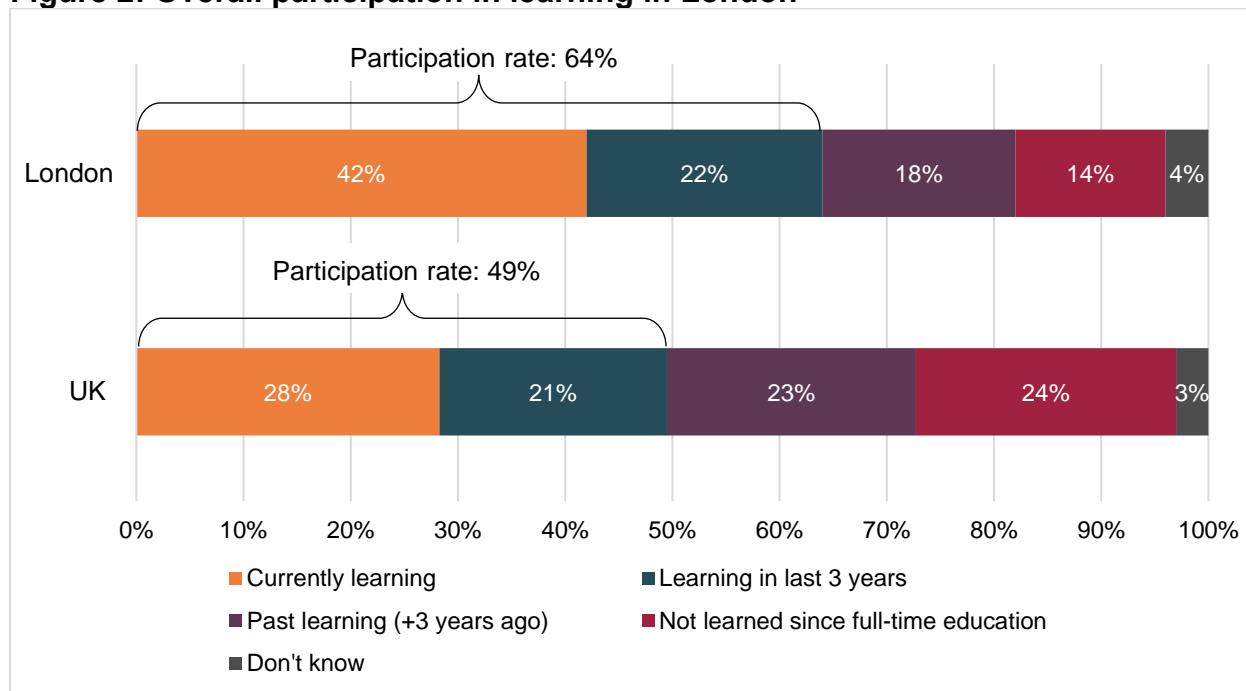
## Adult participation in learning in London

**Participation in learning is significantly higher in London than the UK overall.** Just over two in three (64 per cent) of adults in London 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.

**This is mainly driven by the proportion of adults saying they are currently learning**, with 42 per cent of adults in London saying this, compared to 28 per cent in the rest of the UK (Figure 2). In London, people are significantly less likely to say they haven't learned since full time education (14 per cent) than in the rest of the UK (24 per cent).

In London, just over one in five (22 per cent) said they have done some learning over the past three years. Just under one in five adults (18 per cent) said they have not done any learning since full-time education, while just over one in ten (14 per cent) said they have been in learning over three years ago.

**Figure 2: Overall participation in learning in London**

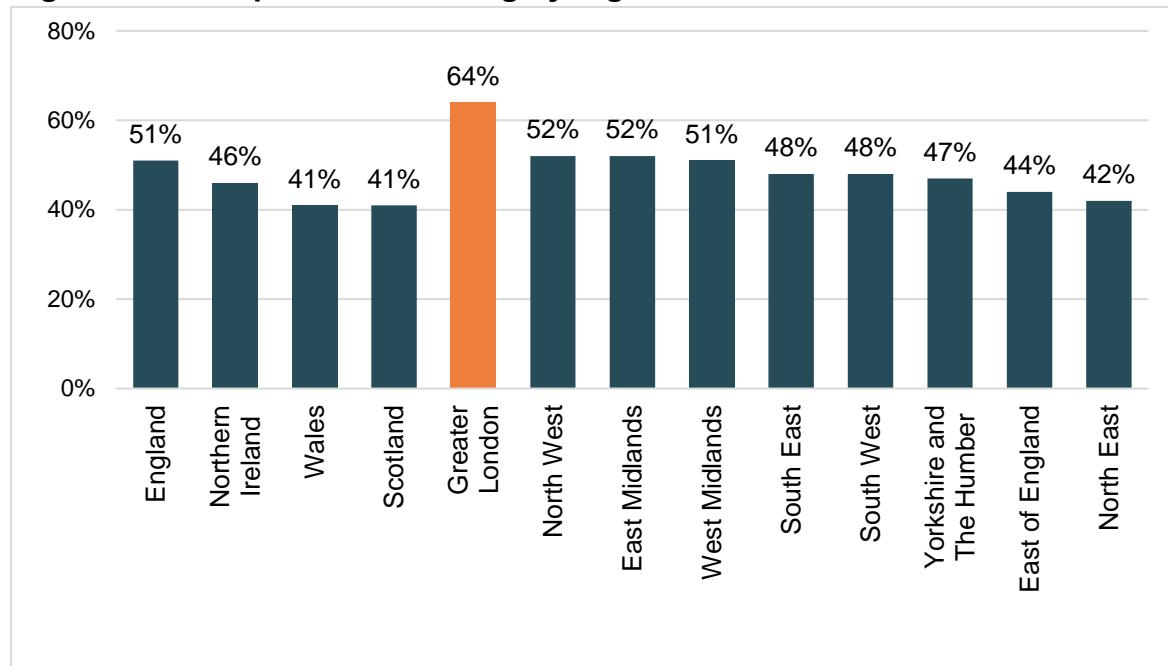


Base: London respondents. Weighted base: = 1173, unweighted base = 1328. UK: all respondents. Weighted base = 8906, unweighted base = 9506.

When comparing levels of adult participation in learning across the UK in 2023, the survey shows that the participation rate in London is significantly higher than in other UK nations and regions (Figure 3). 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.

These regional differences can be partly explained by compositional factors – who lives in this region – as some demographic groups are more likely to participate in learning than others. In London, the higher participation rate can be partly explained by a higher proportion of younger people and people with higher-level qualifications, both of which are associated with participation in learning.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 3: Participation in learning by region and nation**

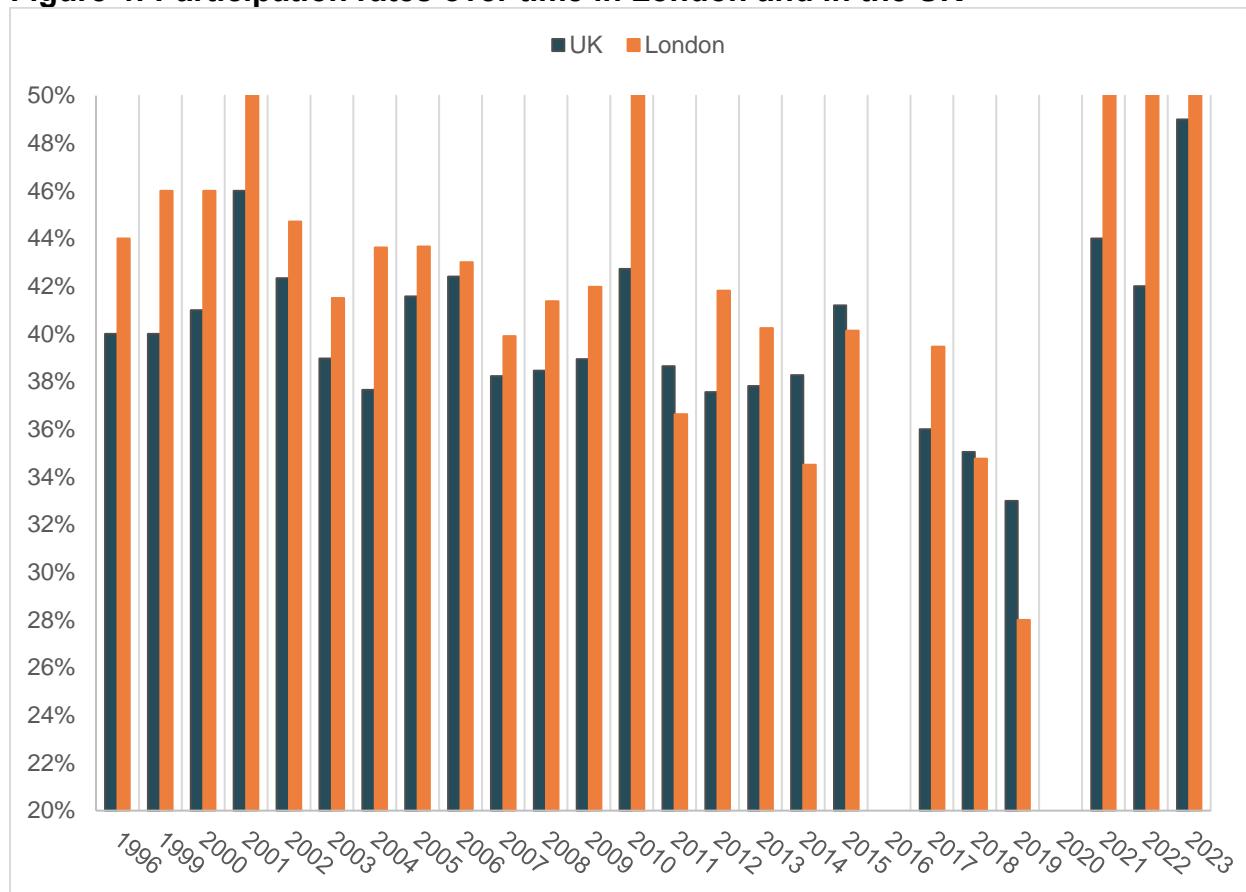


Base: all respondents. Total weighted base = 8,906, North East = 359, North West = 975, Yorkshire and The Humber = 730, East Midlands = 651, West Midlands = 782, East of England = 832, Greater London = 1,173, South East = 1,216, South West = 772, England = 7,491, Northern Ireland = 249, Scotland = 744, 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 2023, the participation rate in London was the highest of the 27-year history of the survey.** Across the years, the participation rate in London has been higher than the UK average in 19 years (Figure 4).<sup>7</sup> While the participation rate was historically low in 2019, with only 28 per cent of adults stating they had taken part in learning in the last three years, the participation rate increased sharply in 2021 to reach 59 per cent and has remained high.

<sup>7</sup> 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 London and in the UK**



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

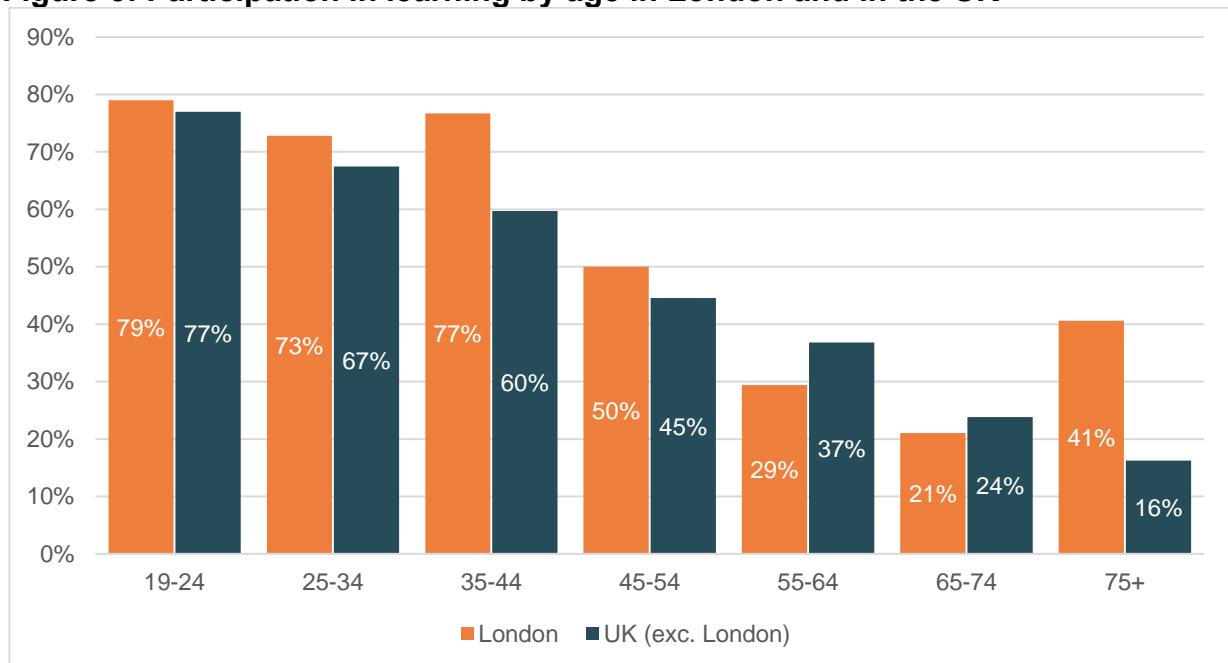
## Demographic breakdown

### Age

The UK survey consistently shows that participation in learning decreases with age. In London, younger adults aged 19-24 are significantly more likely to say they are current or recent learners than all the other age group (Figure 5). Just under eight in ten (79 per cent) younger adults said they are current or recent learners, compared with three in four aged 25-34 (73 per cent) and 35-44 (77 per cent). However, none of these proportions are statistically significantly different. Participation falls to one half (50 per cent) of adults aged 45-54 and 29 per cent of adults aged 55-64. One in five (21 per cent) adults aged 65-74 and two in five (41 per cent) aged 75 and older said they are current or recent learners.

The participation rates by age in London are similar to the UK overall for adults aged 25-34 and 45 and older. However, **participation among adults aged 35-44 is significantly higher in London than the rest of the UK.**

**Figure 5: Participation in learning by age in London and in the UK**



Base: London respondents. Total weighted base = 1172, 19-24 = 212, 25-34 = 283, 35-44 = 331, 45-54 = 136, 55-64 = 102, 65-74 = 76, 75 and older = 32. Total unweighted base = 1328, 19-24 = 225, 25-34 = 326, 35-44 = 393, 45-54 = 157, 55-64 = 126, 65-74 = 71, 75 and older = 30. UK respondents. Total weighted base = 8125, 19-24 = 723, 25-34 = 1359, 35-44 = 1265, 45-54 = 1351, 55-64 = 1239, 65-74 = 1345, 75 and older = 543. Total unweighted base = 8909, 19-24 = 1127, 25-34 = 1521, 35-44 = 1498, 45-54 = 1523, 55-64 = 1484, 65-74 = 1174, 75 and older = 483.

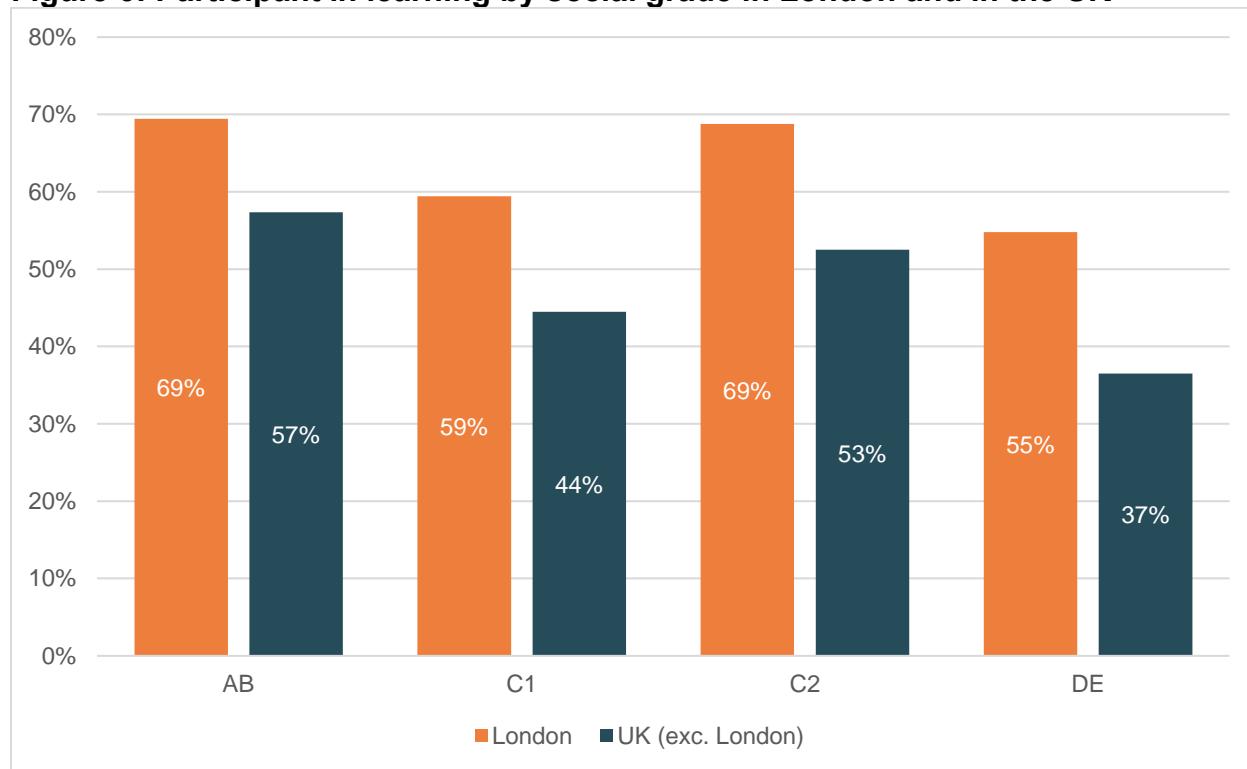
### Social grade

The Adult Participation in Learning Survey consistently shows that social grade<sup>8</sup> is a key predictor of participation in learning. In London, seven in ten adults (69 per cent) in the AB social grade said they are current or recent learners, compared to 59 per cent in the C1, 69 per cent in the C2 grades and 55 per cent in DE (Figure 6). Respondents in the AB social grade are significantly more likely to say they are current or recent learners compared to C1 and DE (Figure 6).

**In London, people across all social grades are significantly more likely to take part in learning than in the rest of the UK.**

<sup>8</sup> 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 London and in the UK**



Base: London respondents. Total weighted base = 1173, AB = 517, C1 = 202, C2 = 173, DE = 281. Total unweighted base = 1328, AB = 592, C1 = 228, C2 = 195, DE = 313. Base: UK (excluding London) respondents. Total weighted base = 7733, AB = 2221, C1 = 1821, C2 = 1333, DE = 2358. Total unweighted base = 8178, AB = 2311, C1 = 1952, C2 = 1428, DE = 2487.

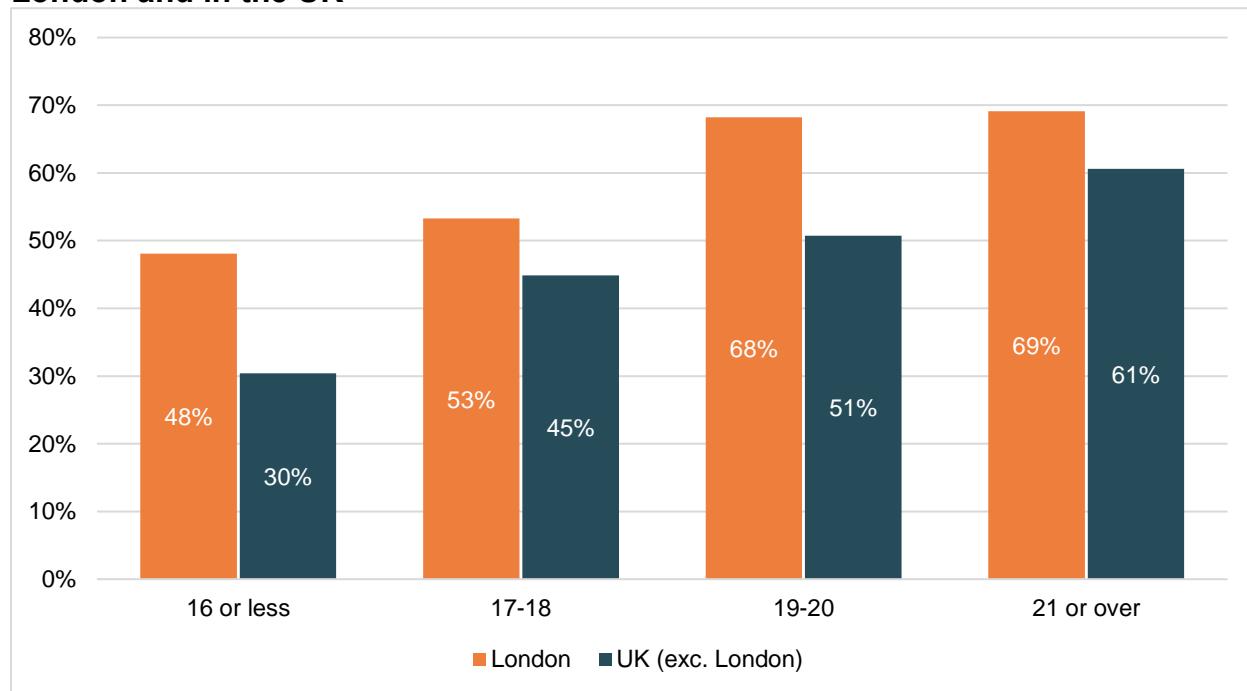
### Age completed full-time education

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 London, adults who stayed in education until at least 19 years old are significantly more likely to learn as an adult than those who left education aged 18 or under (Figure 7). Just under half of adults (48 per cent) who left education aged 16 or under are current or recent learners, compared with just over half of adults (53 per cent) for those who left aged 17 or 18, nearly seven in ten adults (68 per cent) for those who left education aged 19 or 20, and similarly seven in ten adults (69 per cent) for those who left education aged 21 or over.

In London, adults who left full time education aged 17 or over are significantly more likely to say they have learned in the past three years than the rest of the UK. While people in London who left full time education aged 16 or less are more likely to have recent experience of learning than the rest of the UK, the difference is not statistically significant.

The participation gap between adults who left full-time education aged 16 or under and those who left aged 21 or over, is 21 percentage points in both the UK (excluding London) and in London.

**Figure 7: Participation in learning by age off completing full-time education in London and in the UK**



Base: London respondents. Total weighted base = 1089, 16 or less = 156, 17-18 = 229, 19-20 = 173, 21 or over = 531. Total unweighted base = 1236, 16 or less = 173, 17-18 = 255, 19-20 = 197, 21 or over = 611. Base: UK respondents. Total weighted base = 7354, 16 or less = 2469, 17-18 = 1790, 19-20 = 822, 21 or over = 2273. Total unweighted base = 7789, 16 or less = 2571, 17-18 = 1901, 19-20 = 880, 21 or over = 2437.

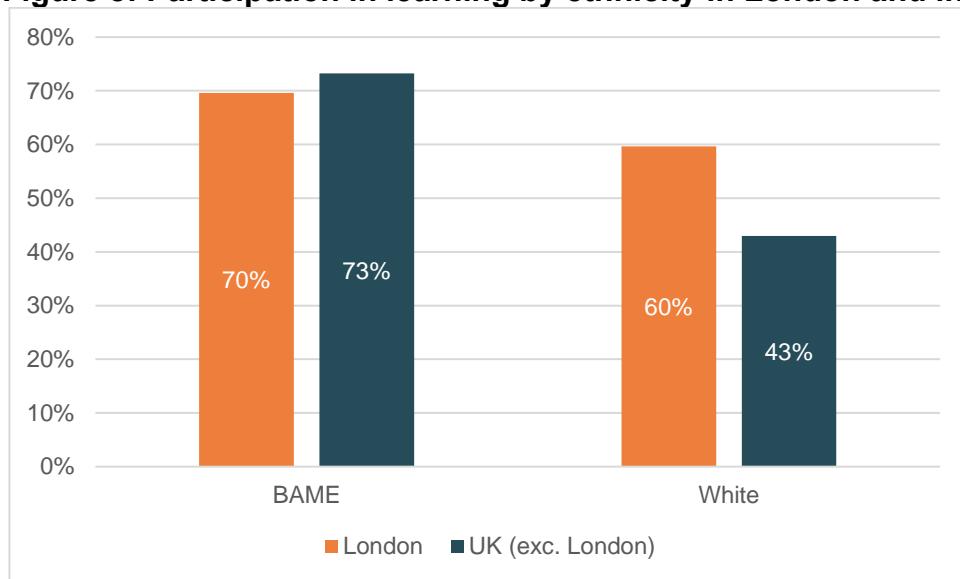
### Gender

In London, men (63 per cent) are more likely than women (37 per cent) to say they are current or recent learners. The difference between the two proportions is statistically different. The rates are different to the UK overall, with 51 per cent of men and 47 per cent of women saying they are current or recent learners.

### Ethnicity

The national survey indicates that people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are more likely to say they have taken part in learning than White respondents. This is also the case in London, with seven in ten adults (70 per cent) from BAME backgrounds saying they are current or recent learners, compared with 60 per cent of White respondents (Figure 8). This difference is statistically significant. In London, people from white backgrounds are significantly more likely to say they have taken part learning compared to the rest of the UK.

**Figure 8: Participation in learning by ethnicity in London and in the UK**



Base: London respondents. Total weighted base = 755, BAME = 227, White = 528. Total unweighted base = 854, BAME = 255, White = 599. Base: UK respondents (excluding London). Total weighted base = 5105, BAME = 748, White = 4357. Total unweighted base = 5266, BAME = 787, White = 4479.

### 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, London analysis includes only two working statuses: working full-time and working part-time (Figure 9).

Adults working part-time are significantly less likely to say they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years (67 per cent), compared to those working full-time (72 per cent). Participation rates in London for people working full-time and part-time are significantly higher compared to the rest of the UK.

**Figure 9: Participation in learning by working status in London and in the UK**



Base: London respondents. Total weighted base = 1146, Full-time = 657, Part-time = 157, Retired = 103.

Total unweighted base = 1297, Full-time = 756, Part-time 178 88. Base: UK (excluding London) respondents. Total weighted base = 7760, Full-time = 2862, Part-time = 1098. Total unweighted base = 8090, Full-time = 3132, Part-time = 1213.

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

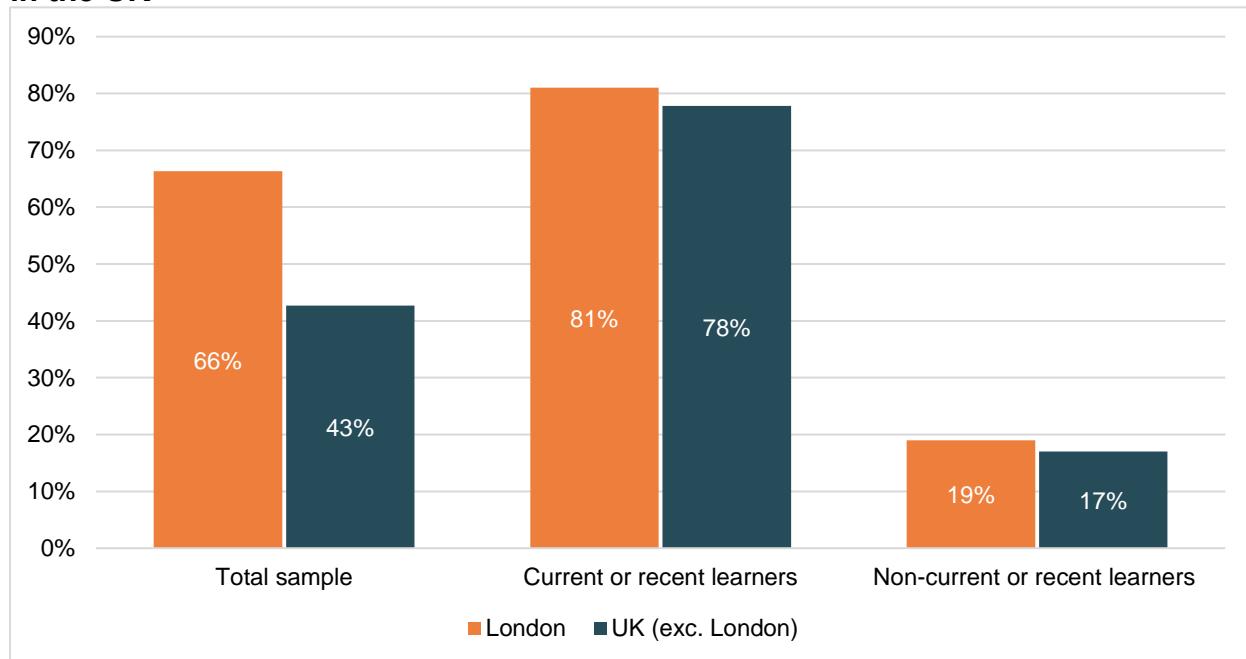
## Future intentions to learn

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 London, 66 per cent of adults said that they are either very likely or likely to take up learning in the next three years (Figure 10). This is significantly higher than the rest of the UK (43 per cent). 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 London and in the UK**



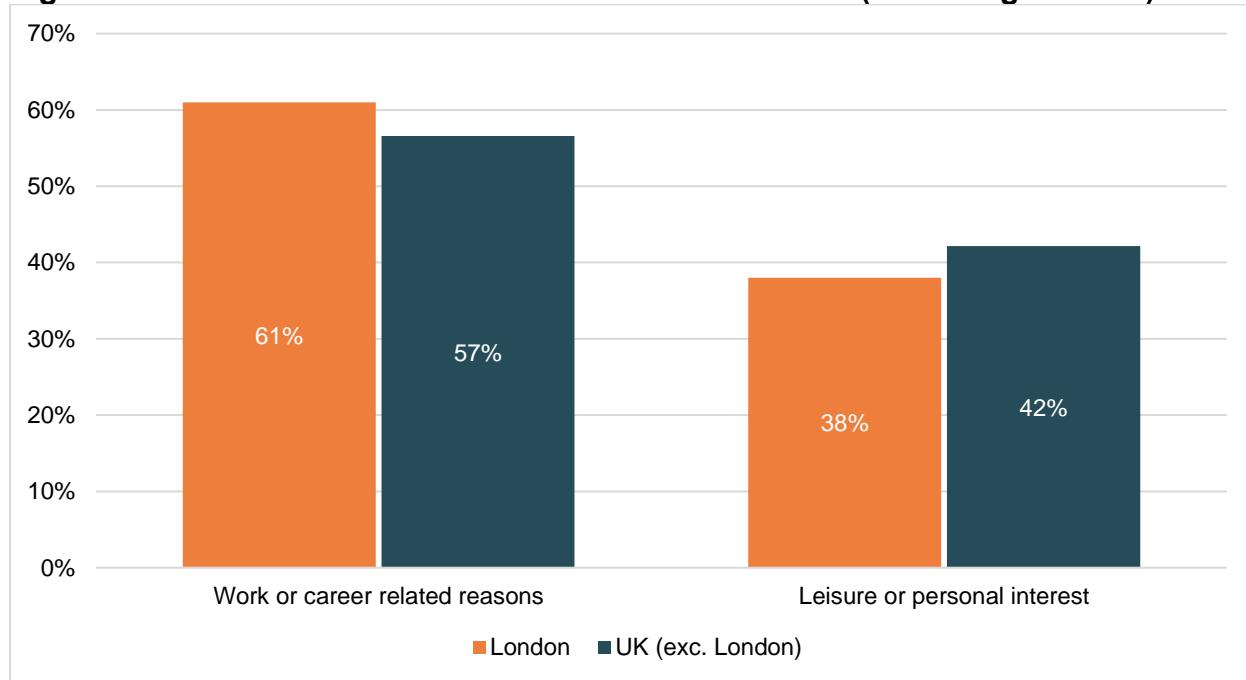
Base: London respondents. 'Don't know' responses have been taken out. Weighted base = 1093, Current or recent learner = 725, Not current or recent learner = 368. Unweighted base = 401, Current or recent learner = 885, Not current or recent learner = 473. Base: UK (excluding London) respondents. Weighted base = 7813, Current or recent learner = 3671, Not current or recent learner = 3831. Unweighted base = 8178, Current or recent learner = 3923, Not current or recent learner = 4255.

## 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 London, three in five adults (61 per cent) said they took up learning for work or career related reasons, while just under two in five (38 per cent) said they took up learning for leisure or personal interests (Figure 11).

In London, adults are significantly more likely to say that they started their main learning for work or career related reasons, than the UK average (57 per cent). The proportion of respondents in London who took up learning for leisure or personal interests (38 per cent) is similar to the rest of the UK (42 per cent).

**Figure 11: Motivations to learn in London and in the UK (excluding London)**



Base: all current or recent learners in London. Weighted base = 751, unweighted base = 855. 'Don't know' responses have been taken out due to the small sample size. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 3645, unweighted base = 3923.

## Learning delivery

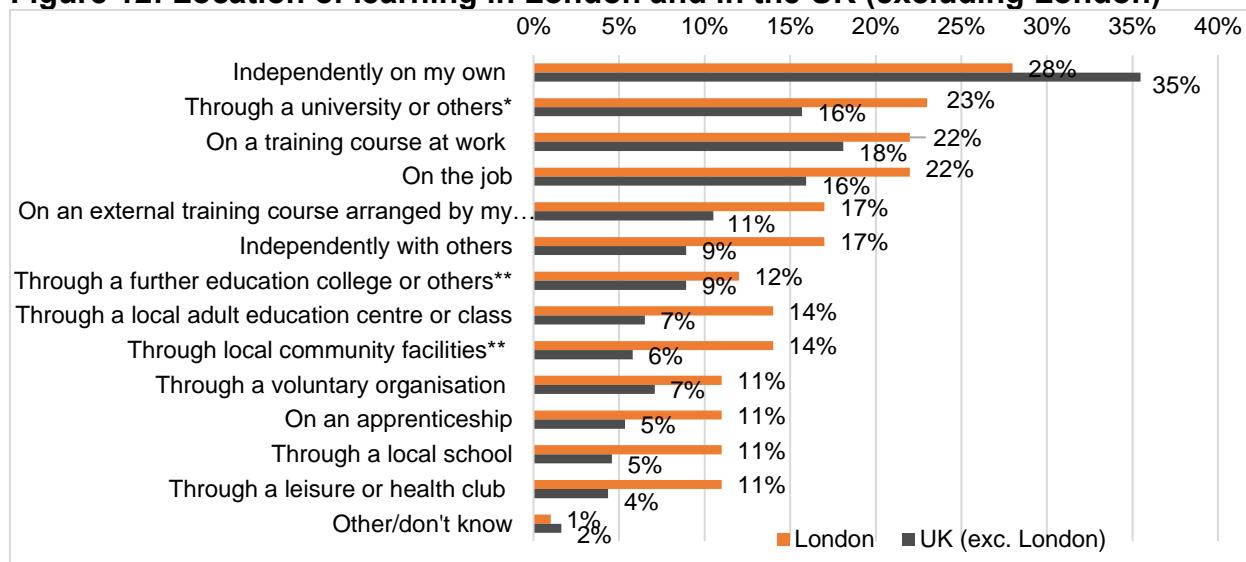
Adults who reported that they are currently learning or have done so in the last three years were asked how they did or are doing their main learning. In London, 28 per cent current and recent learners said they learned independently on their own (Figure 12). This is significantly lower than in the rest of the UK, where 35 per cent of learners said they had done so independently.

The second most commonly reported type of provision was through a higher education institution (23 per cent). Other research has also found that participation in higher education has risen in London and is higher than the UK average.<sup>9</sup> Just over one in ten learners (12 per cent) said they did their learning through a further education college.

Work related learning was also commonly reported, with around one in five adults learning through a training course at work or learning on the job (both at 22 per cent), and just under two in ten (17 per cent) through an external training course arranged by their employers. Eleven per cent reported doing an apprenticeship.

Other provision reported by learners included a local adult education centre (14 per cent), community facilities (14 per cent), voluntary organisation (11 per cent), local school (11 per cent), or leisure or health club (11 per cent).

**Figure 12: Location of learning in London and in the UK (excluding London)**



Base: All current or recent learners in London. Weighted base = 751, unweighted base = 855. 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 London). Weighted base = 3645, unweighted base = 3923 \*higher education institution/Open University \*\*tertiary/6th Form college \*\*\* such as a library, museum, place of worship, bookshop etc.

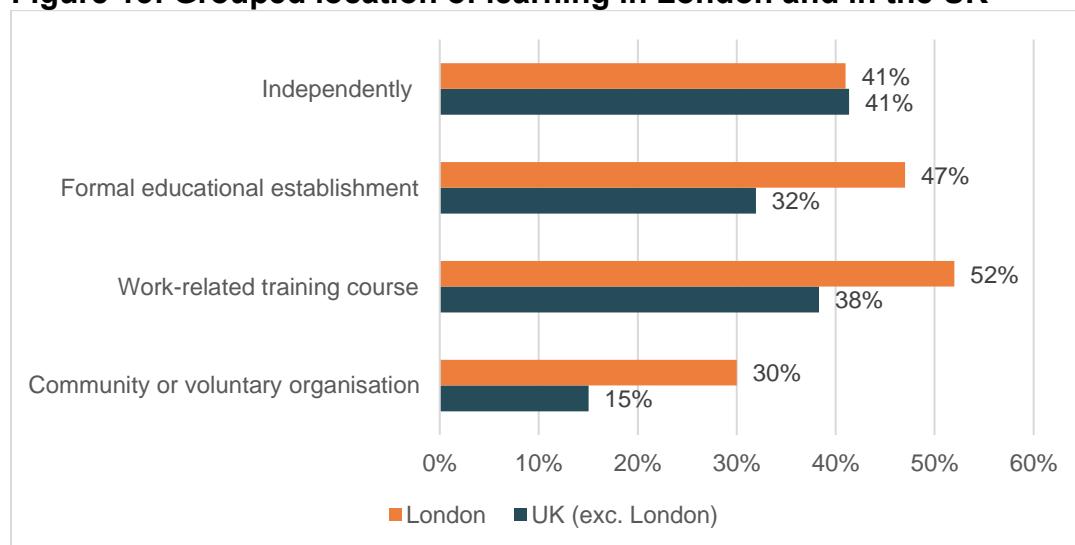
<sup>9</sup> Bosetti, N., Gariban, S. (2020) [City skills: Strengthening London's further education offer](#), Centre for London.

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.<sup>10</sup>

In London, two in five participants said they have done their learning independently (41 per cent), just over half of adults (52 per cent) said they have done their learning on a work-related training course, just under half of adults (47 per cent) said they have done their training through a formal establishment and three in ten adults (30 per cent) said they have done their training through a community or voluntary organisation (Figure 13).

Adults in London were significantly more likely to do a work related training course than in the rest of the UK (52 per cent compared to 38 per cent). Similarly, they were also more likely to learn through formal education establishment and community or voluntary organisation than adults in the rest of the UK (30 per cent compared to 15 per cent).

**Figure 13: Grouped location of learning in London and in the UK**



Base: all current or recent learners in London. Weighted base = 751, Unweighted base = 855. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding London) Weighted base = 3645, unweighted base = 3293.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

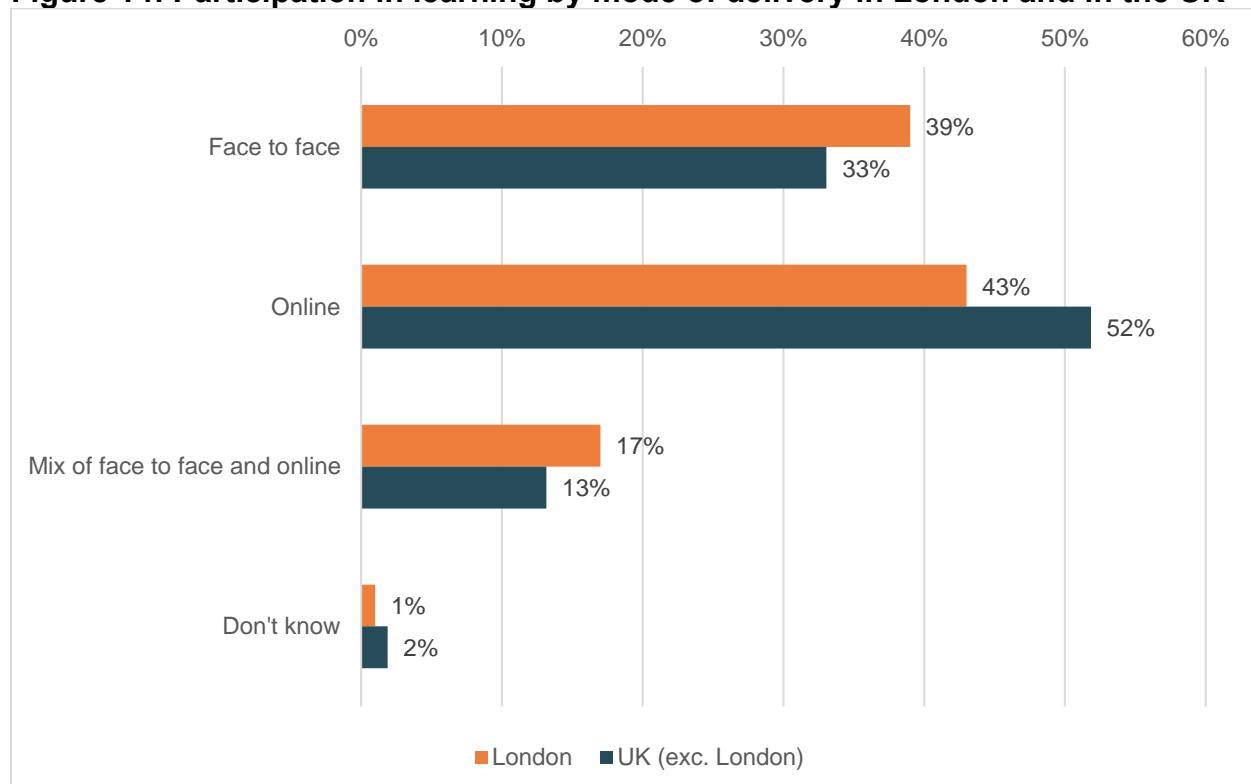
## Online and face to face

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 London, just over two in five (43 per cent) current or recent learners said they completed at least one of their learning online (Figure 14). Two in five adults (39 per cent) said they have taken up their learning face to face and just under one in five (17 per cent) said their learning has involved a mix of online and face to face learning.

The proportion of learners in London who said they have done their learning online is similar to the rest of the UK (52 per cent). **However, adults in London are significantly more likely to say that they have done their learning face to face than the UK average (34 per cent).**

**Figure 14: Participation in learning by mode of delivery in London and in the UK**



Base: all current or recent learners in London. Weighted base = 751, unweighted base = 855.

Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 3645, unweighted base = 3923.

## Fees

In London, just over four in five (83 per cent) current or recent learners said a fee was attached to their main learning (Figure 15). Most commonly, learners reported they paid the fee directly (36 per cent). One in three (32 per cent) of learners said their employer paid the fee. One in five learners said they paid their fee by taking out a loan (19 per

cent), with support from their friend or family member (15 per cent), with help from their institution (15 per cent), or with other government funding (7 per cent). Support by charities or non-governmental organisation was reported by just two per cent of learners.

**In London, people were more likely to say there was a fee attached to their learning than in the rest of the UK (65 per cent).** Londoners were significantly more likely to say that they paid their learning directly, their employer paid, they took out a loan or the learning was paid by a friend or a family member. The largest difference between the way in which Londoners and learners in the rest of the UK cover the costs of their learning was that they were more likely to take out a loan to pay for their learning (19 per cent compared to 8 per cent). This could relate to a higher proportion of Londoners reporting that they had done their learning through a higher education institution.

**Figure 15: How learning is paid for in London and in the UK**



Base: all current or recent learners in London. Weighted base = 751, unweighted base = 855. Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 3645, unweighted base = 3923.

## 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 London, people were significantly more likely to identify at least one challenge than in the rest of the UK. In 2023, four in five (80 per cent) current or recent learners identified at least one challenge while learning, compared with two thirds (67 per cent) in the rest of the UK.

Most commonly, current or recent learners identified work and other time pressures as a challenge, with one in four (25 per cent) of adults in London identifying these as a challenge (Figure 16).

Other common challenges relate to people's situation, such as the cost of learning (19 per cent). This could be linked to Londoners being more likely than learners in the rest of the UK to have a fee attached and to pay for their learning. It could also be linked with the cost of living crisis and Londoners facing a disproportionate fall in income.<sup>11</sup>

Learners in London were also more likely to identify situational barriers such as childcare arrangements or other caring responsibilities (18 per cent), transport (14 per cent), or an illness or disability (12 per cent) compared to learners in the rest of the UK (all 9 per cent).

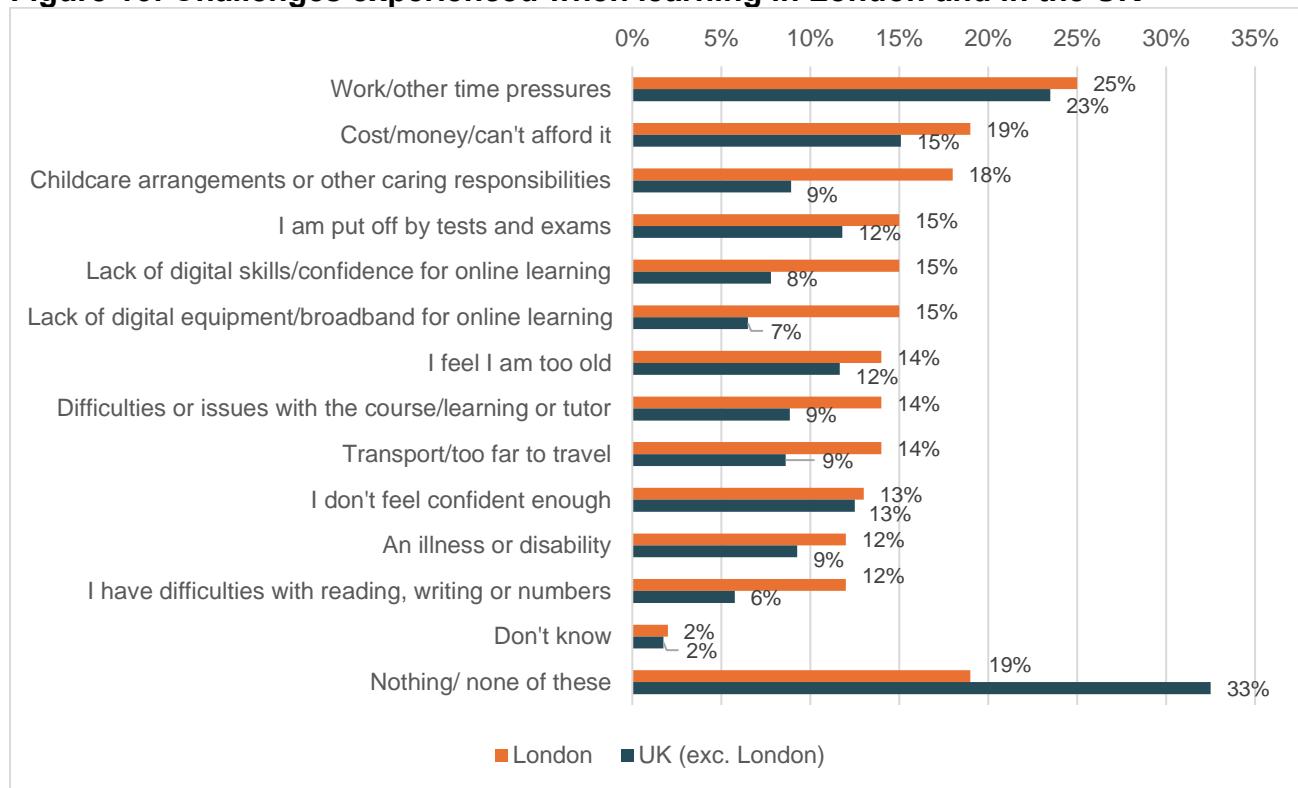
Respondents also identified challenges related to people's attitudes or perceptions of learning, such as being put off by tests and exams (15 per cent), feeling too old (14 per cent) and a lack of confidence to learn (13 per cent). Londoners were significantly more likely to report being put off by tests and exams and feeling too old than in the UK (12 per cent).

In London, learners were also significantly more likely to report experiencing digital barriers while learning due to a lack of digital skills or confidence for online learning (15 per cent) or a lack of digital equipment/broadband (15 per cent). In the rest of the UK, 8 per cent of learners reported lacking digital skills and 7 per cent lacking digital equipment.

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<sup>11</sup> Watson, J., Leeser, R., Smith, Y., Rocks, C., Fong, B., Wilson, M. (2022) [The rising cost of living and its effects on Londoners 2022](#).

**Figure 16: Challenges experienced when learning in London and in the UK**



Base: all current or recent learners in London. Weighted base = 751, unweighted base = 855.

Base: all current or recent learners in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 3645, unweighted base = 3923.

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 London, three in five adults (60 per cent) learners said they have experienced situational challenges (Table 1). Just over half (52 per cent) said they are facing dispositional challenges and a further 14 per cent said they are facing institutional

challenges. These proportions are all significantly higher than to the UK overall (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Grouped challenges experienced by current or recent learners in London and in the UK**

Group	London	The UK (excluding London)
Situational	60%	46%
Dispositional	52%	39%
Institutional	14%	9%
No challenges encountered	19%	33%

Base: all current or recent learners London. Weighted base = 751, unweighted base = 855. 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

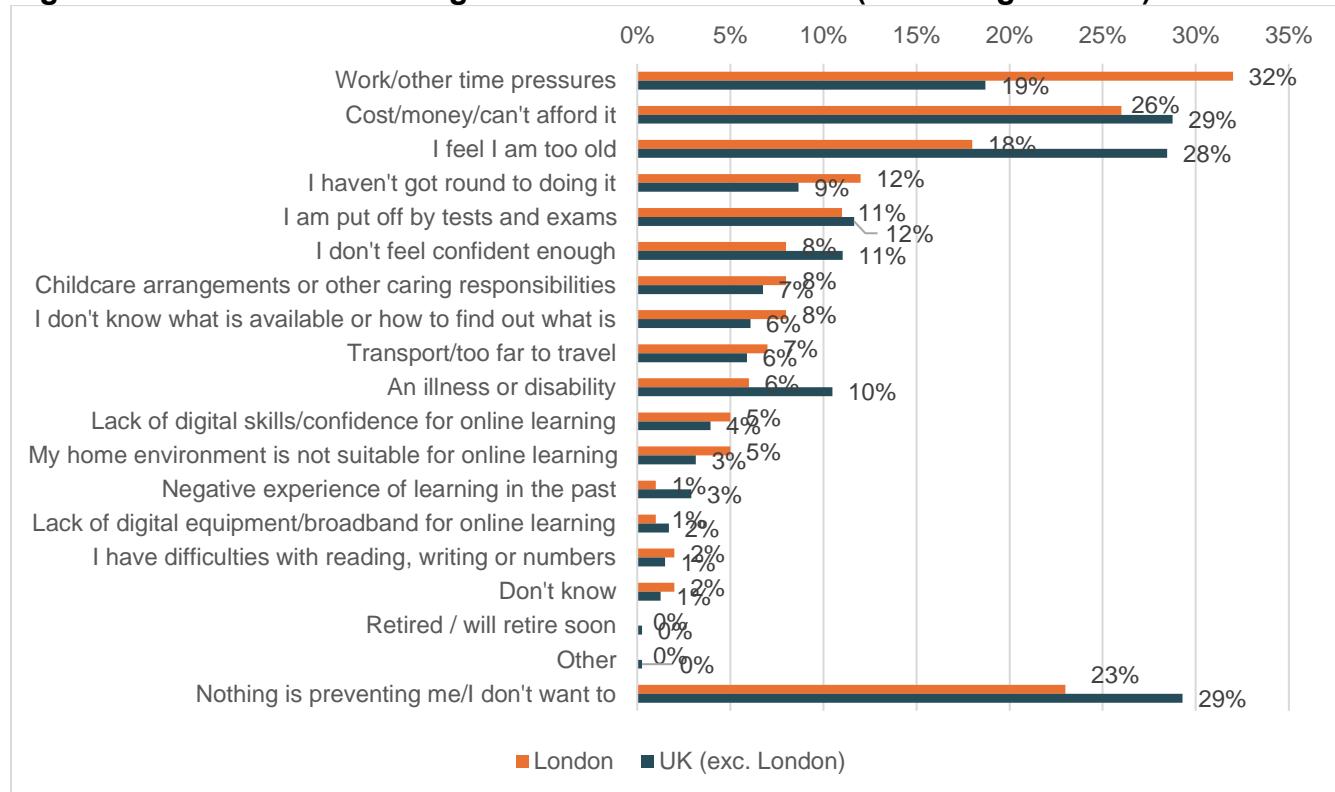
In London, adults who haven't engaged with learning within the past three years are significantly more likely to identified at least one barrier preventing them from participating in learning than adults in the other UK nations (75 per cent compared to 71 per cent). The most common barrier identified by adults in London who haven't taken up learning within three years is work/other time pressures (32 per cent) (Figure 17). Londoners were significantly more likely to cite this as a barrier for taking part in learning than in the rest of the UK (19 per cent). This was followed by one in four adults (26 per cent) saying they can't afford the cost of learning. This proportion of adults citing financial barrier as a reason for not taking part was fairly similar to the rest of the UK (29 per cent).

Almost one fifth (18 per cent) of adults in London said they feel too old to learn. This is significantly lower than in the rest of the UK (28 per cent), which could relate to a younger population in London.

Around one in ten adults reported that they are put off by tests and exams (11 per cent), not feeling confident enough (8 per cent), childcare or other caring responsibilities (8 per cent), or not knowing what is available or how to find out what is (8 per cent). These proportions were fairly similar to the rest of the UK. Londoners were significantly less likely to cite an illness or disability as a barrier to learn than in the rest of the UK (10 per cent).

Nearly one quarter (23 per cent) said they did not want to engage with learning or that nothing was preventing them from doing so.

**Figure 17: Barriers to learning in London and in the UK (excluding London)**



Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in London. Weighted base = 381, unweighted base = 427. Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in the UK (excluding London) Weighted base = 3818, unweighted base = 3971.

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.

**In London, people were significantly more likely to identify situational barriers (55 per cent) than in the rest of the UK (45 per cent). However, they were significantly less likely to identify dispositional barriers (43 per cent) than in the rest of the UK (52 per cent).** This is mainly driven by factors such as work/other time pressures, with adults in London being significantly more likely to report this barrier than the rest of the UK.

**Table 2: Grouped barriers faced by adults who haven't engaged with learning within the past three years in London and in the UK (excluding London)**

Group	London	The UK (excluding London)
Situational	55%	45%
Dispositional	43%	52%
No challenges encountered	23%	29%

Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in London. Weighted base = 381, unweighted base = 427. Base: respondents who have not participated in learning within the last three years in the UK (excluding London) Weighted base = 3818, unweighted base = 3971.

## Learning for career change

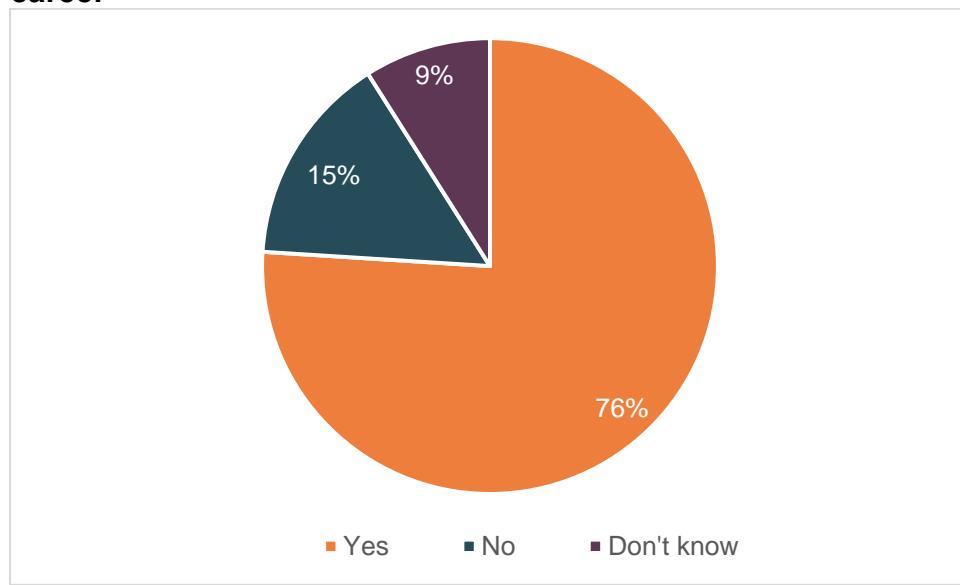
Advances in technology, including Artificial Intelligence, alongside longer working lives will see more people needing to change jobs and careers. The Coronavirus pandemic also had a profound effect on the labour market, with an increase in the number of people who are economically inactive and job vacancies 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 London, three quarters of adults (76 per cent) believe that people like them can change career (Figure 18). This is significantly higher than the UK average (71 per cent). Fifteen per cent of Londoners said they do not think that people like them could change careers and nine9 per cent said they don't know.

**Figure 18: Respondents in London who believe people like them can change career**



Base: respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in London.  
Weighted base = 988, unweighted base = 1129.

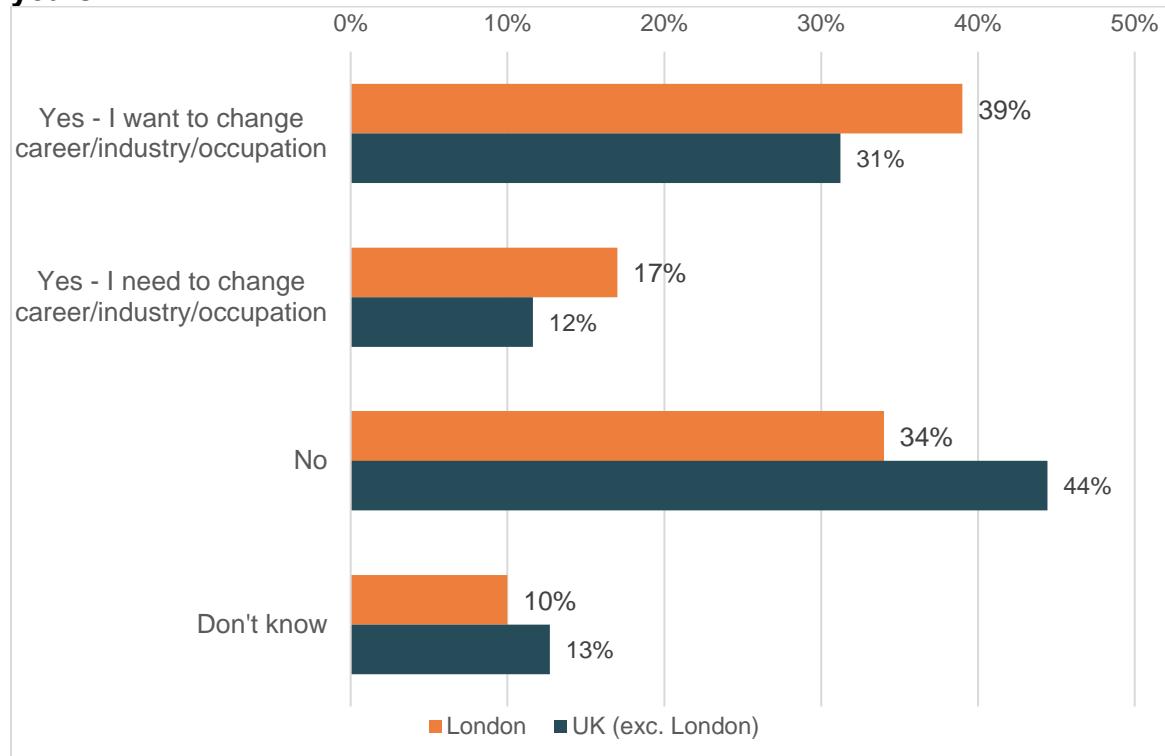
Most (56 per cent) of Londoners say they want (39 per cent) or need (17 per cent) to change their career, industry or occupation in the next one or two years (Figure 19).

Over one in three (34 per cent) said they do not need or want to change career and 10 per cent don't know.

In London, adults are more likely to say they either want or need a career change than in the rest of the UK, with 31 per cent of adults in the UK saying they want to change career, industry or occupation in the next one of two years and 12 per cent who said they need to. Londoners are less likely to say they don't want to or don't need to change career (34 per cent).

Wider research indicates that around six per cent of adults change occupation or sector each year.<sup>12</sup>

**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 London. Weighted base = 988, unweighted base = 1129. Base respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 4978, unweighted base = 5460.

<sup>12</sup> 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 London, the main reason cited was to earn more money (40 per cent). This was followed by wanting a new challenge (38 per cent).

Respondents also reported wanting to feel happier at work (37 per cent), to get a job that would be more interesting (32 per cent), more flexible (31 per cent), better suited to their skills (30 per cent), more fulfilling or worthwhile (29 per cent), or that's more stable (24 per cent). Nearly one quarter of respondents (23 per cent) reported that a change in personal circumstances was the reason for wanting a career change. Nearly two in ten (16 per cent) said they feared or were at risk of redundancy.

The motivations for career change in London are fairly similar to the other UK regions and nations (Figure 20). However, people in London are significantly more likely to say their motivation for a career change is that they feared or were at risk of redundancy (16 per cent), than the UK average (12 per cent). They are also more likely to identify a change in personal circumstances (23 per cent) than the rest of the UK (20 per cent). Londoners are significantly more likely to say they want to get a job that is more suited to their skills (30 per cent), than the UK average (27 per cent). This could be explained by the fact that many people in London are overqualified for the job they are doing – this is explained by a very competitive job market, with fewer graduate jobs than graduates.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://centreforlondon.org/reader/city-skills/chapter-1-challenges/#1-resource-and-participation>

**Figure 20: Reasons for wanting or needing career change in London and in the UK**



Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in London. Weighted base = 533, unweighted base = 632. Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 2133, unweighted base = 2349.

## 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 London, the most cited barrier was that they have always done the same type of job (25 per cent). This was followed by a fear of applying for jobs/job interviews (24 per cent) and financial barriers of not being able to afford to stop work to retrain (22 per cent) or can't afford training costs (22 per cent).

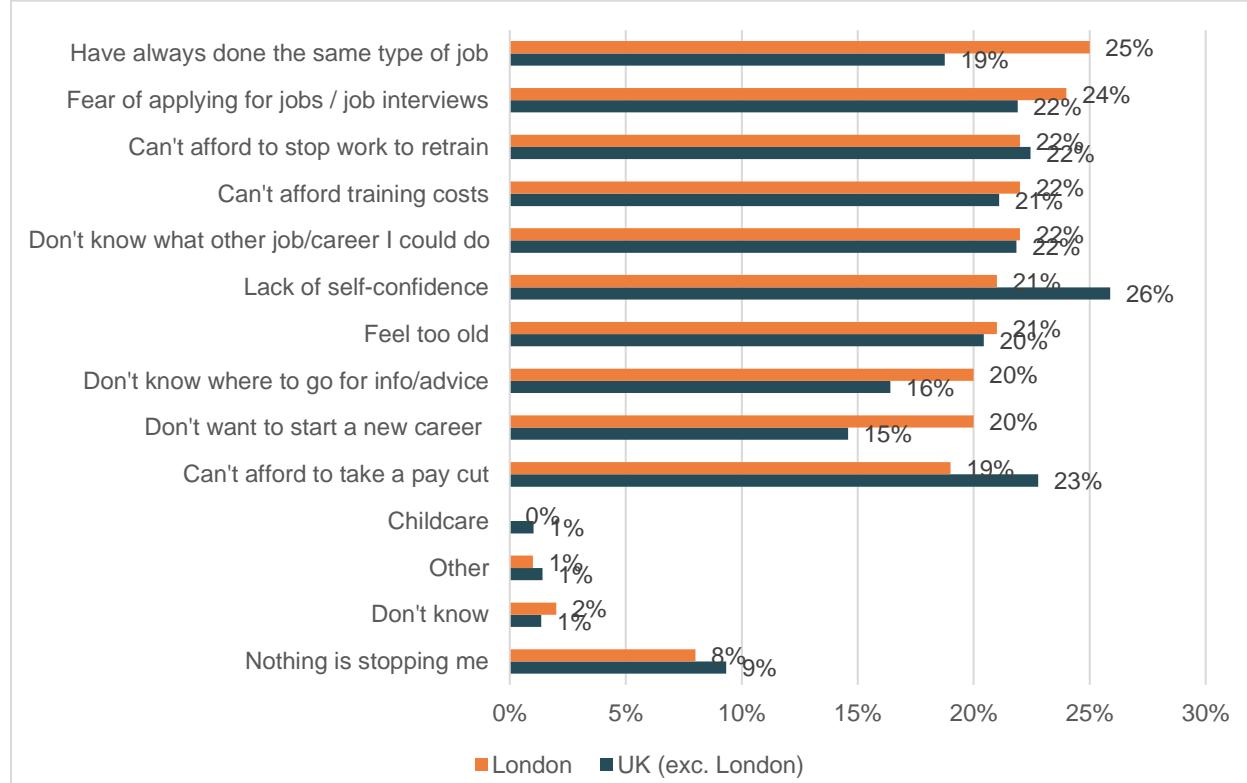
Some barriers relate to a lack of awareness of opportunities or guidance, with one in five adults not knowing what other job/career they could do (22 per cent). Or that they don't know where to go for information/advice (20 per cent). Dispositional barriers<sup>14</sup> were also commonly cited, including a lack of self-confidence (21 per cent) and feeling too old (21 per cent).

Nearly one in ten respondents (8 per cent) who say they want or need to change career say that nothing is stopping them from doing this.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

The barriers to career change identified by respondents in London are fairly similar to the ones identified in the rest of the UK (see Figure 21). However, adults in London are significantly more likely to say that the reason for not changing careers is that they have always done the same type of job (25 per cent compared to 20 per cent in the rest of the UK), they don't want to start a new career from the beginning (20 per cent compared to the UK average of 16 per cent), and that they don't know where to go for information/advice (20 per cent compared to 17 per cent in the rest of the UK).

**Figure 21: Reason for not changing career in London and in the UK**

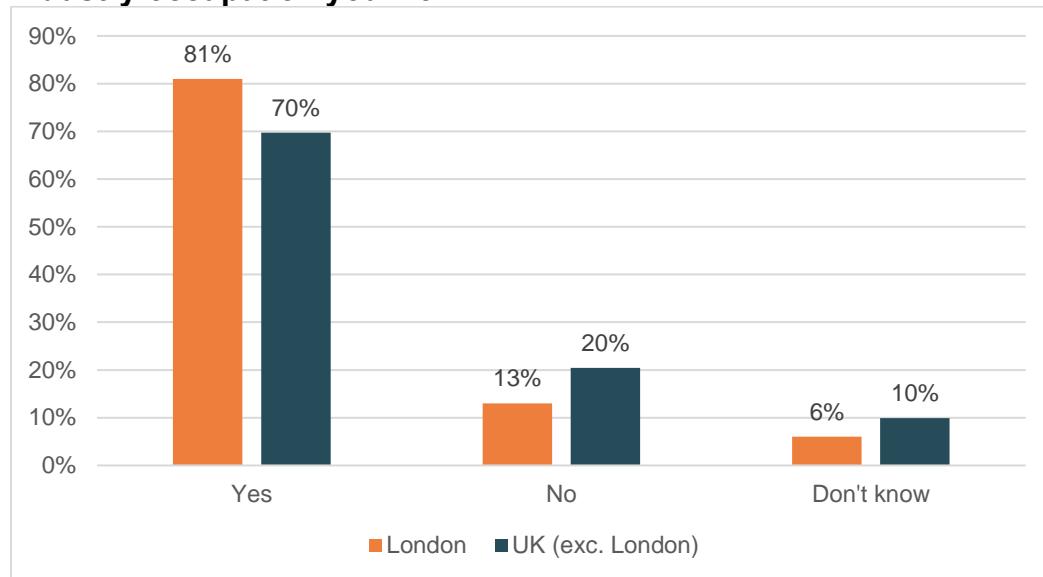


Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in London. Weighted base = 553, unweighted base = 632. Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the UK (excluding Northern Ireland). Weighted base = 2133, unweighted base = 2349.

## 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 London, four in five adults (81 per cent) said they need to develop their skills, while 13 per cent said they don't and 6 per cent said they don't know. These proportions are fairly similar to the rest of the UK, although Londoners are significantly more likely to recognise the need to develop their skills than the rest of the UK (70 per cent).

**Figure 22: 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 London. Weighted base = 553, unweighted base = 632. Base: respondents who want to change job/career in the next 1-2 years in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 2133, unweighted base = 2349.

### 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 London, respondents most commonly indicated that they would need learning or training to support them (32 per cent). This was followed by advice – on transferable skills (27 per cent), to choose the learning or training needed to change job/career (25 per cent), to help them choose the right job/career for them useful (24 per cent). Around one fifth of Londoners wanting to change job or career said they would find coaching useful, including when they first start a new job (22 per cent) or advice and coaching to help them get a job (21 per cent).

Respondents also commonly cited financial support, including towards living costs whilst learning or training (26 per cent) and towards the costs of learning/training (24 per cent). One in ten adults (9 per cent) said they didn't know what they would find useful.

Respondents in London identified similar support to the rest of the UK (see Figure 23). However, Londoners are significantly more likely to say that advice to help them choose the learning or training needed to change job/career (25 per cent), than the UK average (21 per cent).

**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 London. Weighted base = 988, unweighted base = 1129. Base respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 4978, unweighted base = 5460.

Respondents were asked where they would go for information and advice if they wished to change career (Table 3). In London, just over one in four respondents (27 per cent) said they would use a general online search to find information and advice. This was followed by friends, family and colleagues (26 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 social media (19 per cent), a professional sector or trade organisation (18 per cent), a recruitment consultant/agency (17 per cent), an education provider such as a college or university (16 per cent) and National Careers Service (15 per cent).

Just over one in ten adults in London responded with their current employer (14 per cent), prospective employers (13 per cent), and Jobcentre Plus (12 per cent). One in ten adults responded with a local community, voluntary or religious centre (9 per cent), a local or national charity (9 per cent), Citizens' Advice (8 per cent) and a Unionlearn representative (7 per cent). Eight per cent of adults in London said they don't know where to go.

These figures are similar to the rest of the UK (see Table 3). However, adults in London are significantly more likely to say they would go to a local community, voluntary or religious centre for advice (9 per cent) or a local or national charity (9 per cent) than all of the UK (4 per cent). This could link to adults in London being significantly more likely to be learning with a community of voluntary organisation, than adults in the UK overall (see Figure 13). In addition, adults in London are significantly more likely to say they would use the National Careers Service (15 per cent), than the UK average (12 per cent), or to go to a professional sector or trade organisation for advice (18 per cent), than the UK overall (15 per cent).

**Table 3: Where respondents go for advice on career change**

Source of information/advice	London	UK (excluding London)
General online search	27%	40%
Friends, family or colleagues	26%	23%
Education provider such as a college or university	16%	16%
Social media	19%	15%
Recruitment consultant/agency	17%	16%
Professional, sector or trade organisation	18%	15%
Jobcentre Plus	12%	15%
National Careers Service	15%	12%
Prospective employers	13%	12%
Your current employer (e.g. HR, line manager)	14%	11%
Citizens' Advice	8%	8%
Local community, voluntary or religious centre	9%	4%
Local or national charity	9%	4%
Unionlearn representative or Workplace Learning Advocate	7%	4%
Don't know	8%	12%

Base: respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in London. Weighted base = 988, unweighted base = 1129. Base respondents who are employed, unemployed and seeking work or in full-time education in the UK (excluding London). Weighted base = 4978, unweighted base = 5460.