

# Language Knowledge in the UK

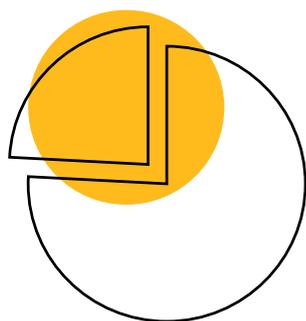
A closer look at our research

At Pearson, we believe that language learning is about more than words; it's about unlocking new forms of communication, culture and connection.

By fostering relationships, equipping students for a global life and careers, and sparking new dialogue across the world, languages can ensure today's students are fit for the future.

In February 2023, we asked 2,000 adults across the UK for their thoughts and experiences of learning languages. The results were weighted to form a nationally-representative picture of people and modern languages today. Here is what they said.

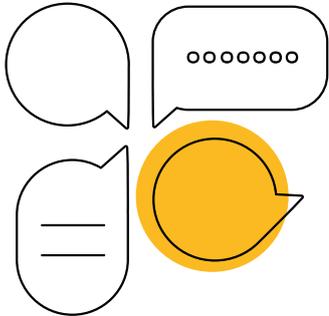
## Speaking other languages



**Three quarters of UK adults can only speak one language.**

- > **76%** of UK adults can speak one language only, while only **24%** can speak more than one.
- > Looking at demographics, this rises amongst ethnic minorities (**55%** compared to **21%** of White UK adults) and 18-34 year olds (**27%** vs **21%** of 55+ year olds).
- > Although the majority of UK adults are monolingual, nearly half believe it is more important to speak more than one language today than it was 20 years ago.

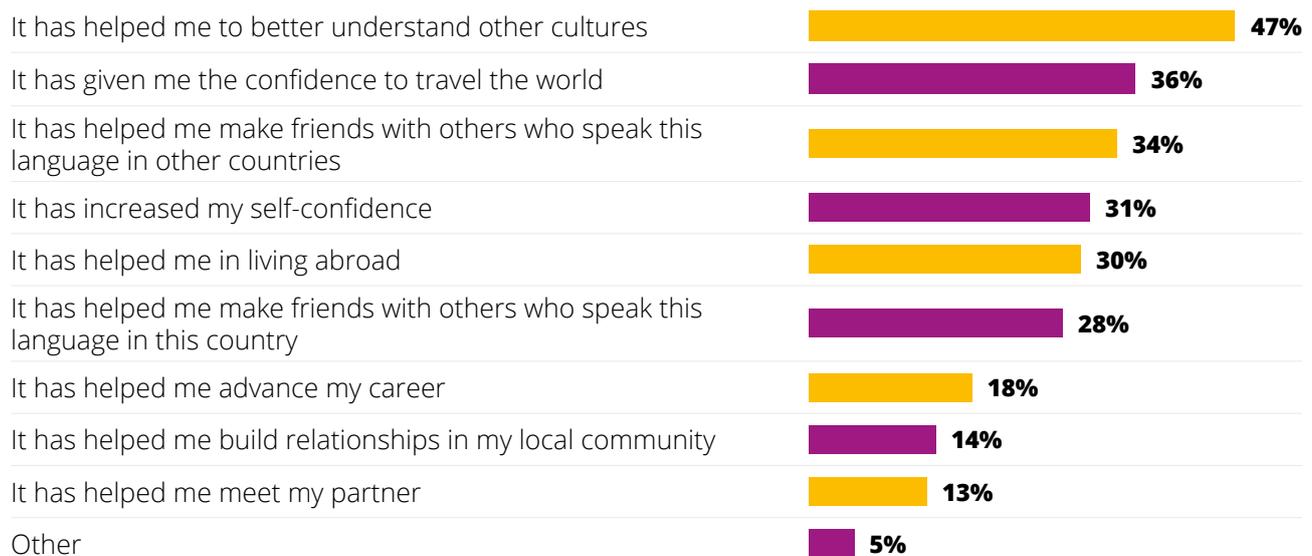
# The benefits of speaking other languages



**Half of UK adults that can speak another language understand other cultures better.**

**86%** of UK adults that speak another language say it has helped them in various ways, including helping them to better understand other cultures (**47%**), giving them the confidence to travel the world (**36%**) and helping them make friends with others who speak this language in other countries (**34%**).

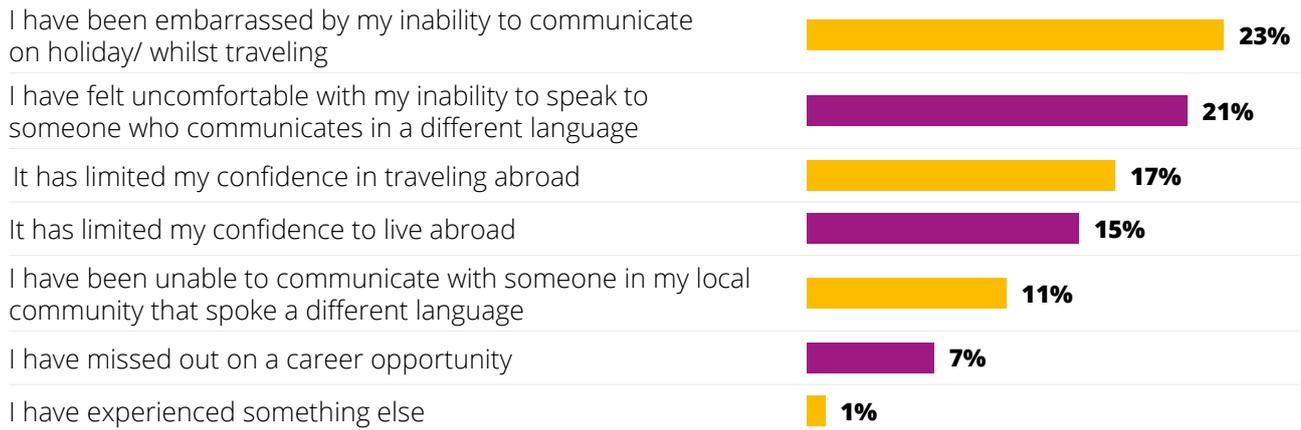
## How has speaking more than one language helped you?



**More than half of UK adults that speak only one language have experienced difficulties.**

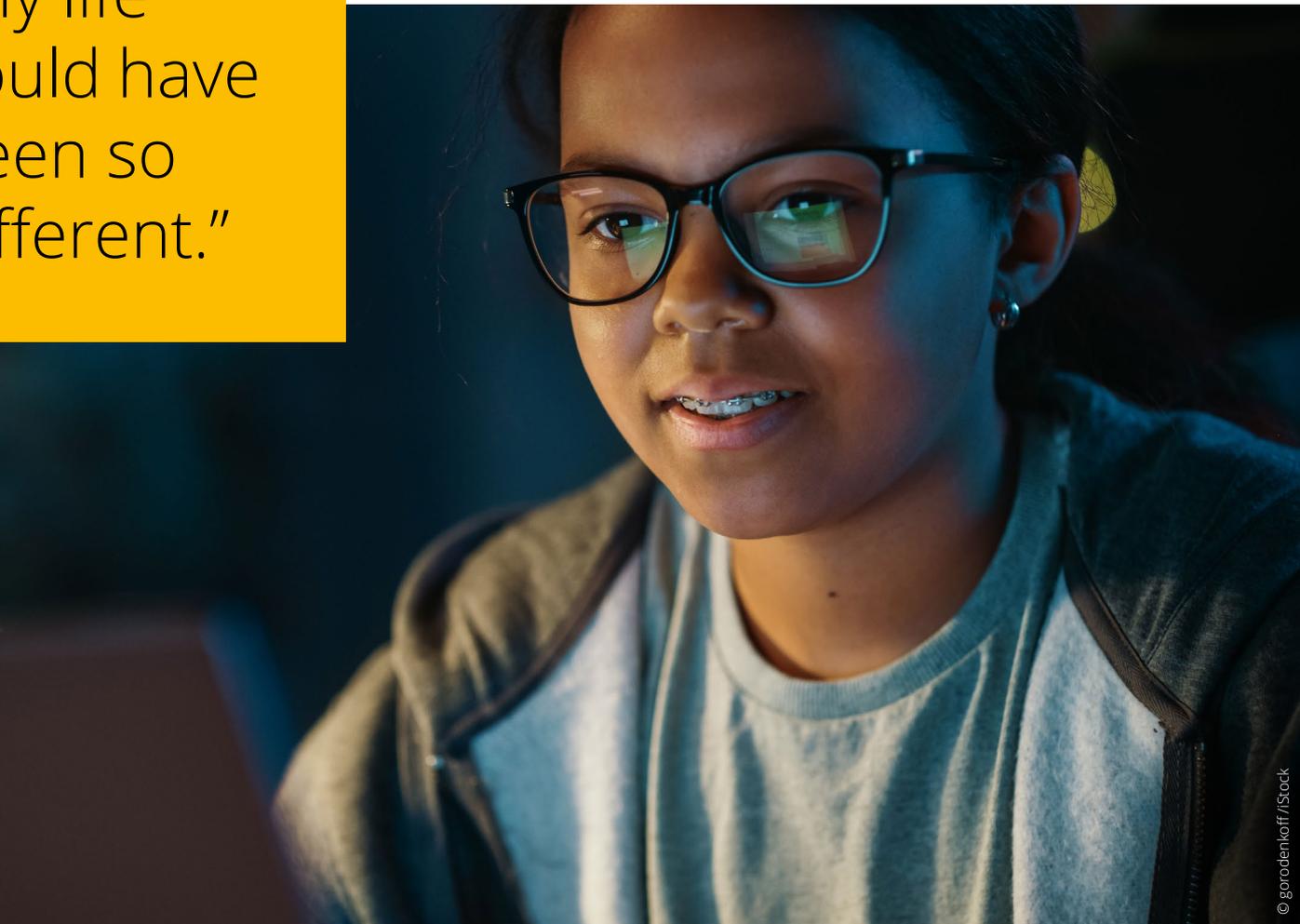
- > **Nearly a quarter** have been embarrassed by their inability to communicate on holiday or whilst travelling and one in five have felt uncomfortable as they could not speak to someone who communicates in a different language.
- > Demographically, ethnic minorities are more likely to say they have experienced difficulties in only being able to speak one language (**72%** vs **53%** of White respondents, as have those aged 18-34 (**70%** vs **44%** of those aged 55+).

**Which of the following, if any, have you experienced as a result of not knowing another language?**

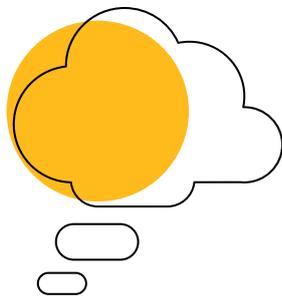


- > **73%** of UK adults that only speak one language wish they could speak another; **42%** wish they could speak another language fluently.
- > The desire to speak another language increases to **83%** amongst ethnic minorities (compared to **72%** of White UK adults) and to **86%** amongst those aged 18-34 (compared to **61%** of those aged 55+).

“My life could have been so different.”



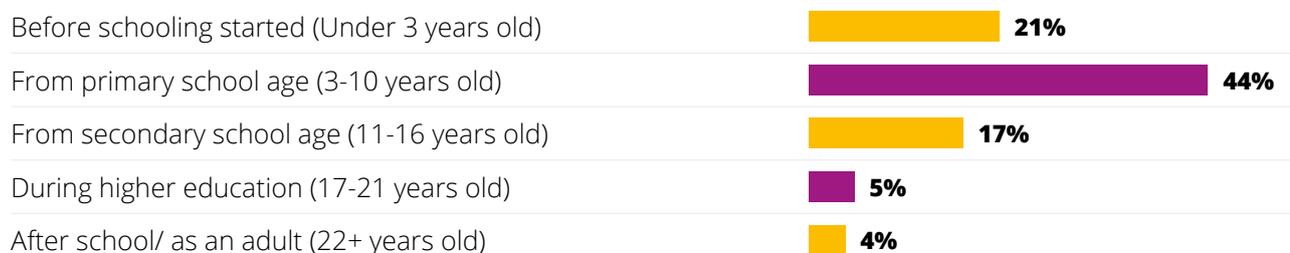
# Learning a new language: when and how?



**Two in five UK adults think primary school age is the ideal learning period for another language.**

When asked about the ideal age for when they would have chosen to learn another language, **44%** of UK adults say the ages between primary school (3-10 years old) would have been the ideal age to learn one, whilst **21%** said before schooling starts (under 3 years old).

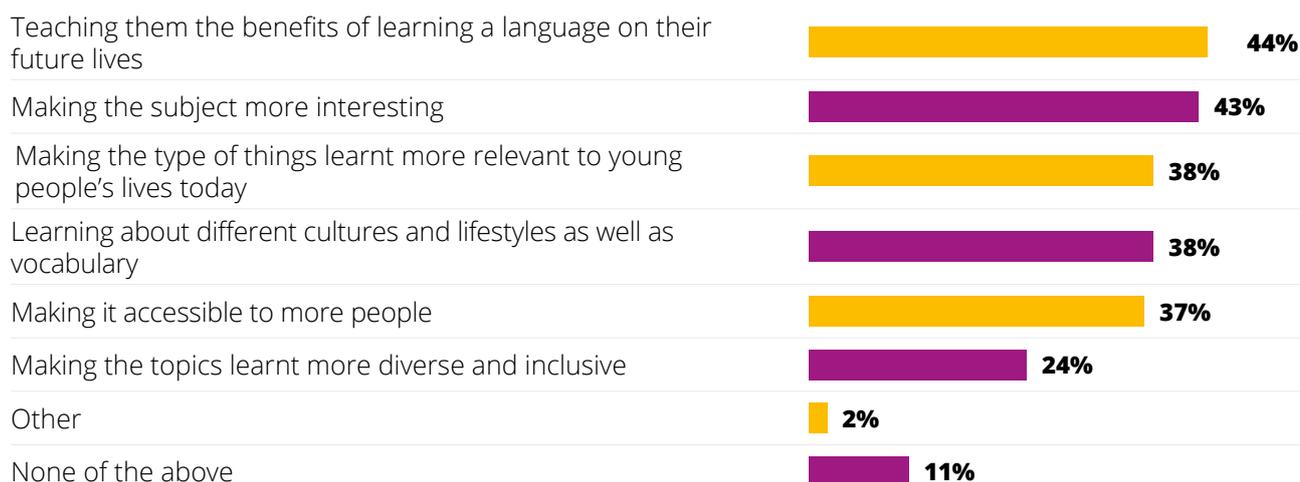
*If you could choose when to learn another language, when would you ideally choose/ have chosen to learn it?*



**Two in five UK adults think teaching the benefits of a new language would encourage young people to learn one.**

The majority of UK adults (**89%**) think there are ways to encourage young people to learn a new language, such as teaching them what the benefits of learning a new language could have on their future lives (**44%**) or by making the subject more interesting (**43%**).

*Which of the following, if any, do you think would encourage young people to learn a new language?*





In order to combat the decline of language uptake and to ensure students see the countless benefits to language learning, we have created **qualifications that take a student-centred approach** and cater to the needs of all learners, regardless of their background, ability or reason for studying a language.

Combining **clear, concise and straightforward assessments** with engaging, meaningful and relatable content, our new **2024 Pearson Edexcel GCSE Modern Languages** qualifications are built on a foundation of **inclusivity, accessibility and transparency**.

