英國港僑協會
HONGKONGERS IN BRITAIN

English on the Way to Settlement

Learning needs among UK Hongkongers, for the settlement English requirement and for daily life beyond it

Community survey findings, February and March 2026

English Support Programme
Hongkongers in Britain (HKB)
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July 2026

97%

named a situation in the past 30 days where their English caused them stress

51%

say listening gives them more difficulty than speaking

83%

say progress felt real when a conversation with locals worked, well ahead of any test score

Contents

1. About this report

Hongkongers in Britain runs an English Support Programme for the Hongkonger community in the United Kingdom. In late February 2026 we asked members of that community how they learn English: what defeats them in an ordinary week, what they have tried, what they abandoned, and what they would change. 407 people answered.

It is written for two groups of stakeholders. The first commissions, funds and plans English provision for this community: local authorities and strategic migration partnerships, combined authorities and other funders, further education colleges, adult and community learning services, and voluntary-sector providers. The second designs and delivers it: curriculum and materials writers, ESOL tutors and volunteer teachers.

The body of the report covers the findings that bear on design decisions. Descriptive results for every question are at Appendix A, the questionnaire at Appendix B, and the statistical detail at Appendices C and D.

We are a community organisation, not a curriculum authority. Section 7 sets out what we would recommend on the strength of this evidence.

2. Summary of findings

> **Almost every respondent struggles with English somewhere in an ordinary week, and the difficulty is concentrated: understanding fast or accented speech, and getting through a phone call. Listening gives more trouble than speaking. Learning happens in short bursts, on weekday evenings and weekday mornings, and what holds people is content they can use the same day. What tells them they are improving is a conversation with a local that worked, far more than any test score.**

As we see it, ordinary ESOL courses supply much of what these learners need. What they supply less often is listening at natural speed, British institutional settings, and sessions short enough for the time people have. That shortfall is mostly a matter of design, and the six findings below are ordered by how much each bears on it. Each is set out in full in section 5, with the numbers and the statistical detail at Appendix C.

Table 1. What the survey found, and what each finding suggests for design.

Finding	What it suggests for design
Listening gives more trouble than speaking. But asked what they want, learners ask for speaking practice.	Listening needs taught hours of its own. Learner-reported demand will not produce them.
Weekday evenings and weekday mornings reach the most people. Weekend classes reach the fewest.	Put scarce timetabled capacity on weekday evenings and weekday mornings.
Progress feels real when a conversation with local people works. Test scores register with far fewer.	Make being understood the visible measure. Points and streaks reach the learners who need least help.
Among those who passed the Trinity B1 test at a high grade, the everyday exchanges they could prepare for are settled. What is left is fast, accented speech that nobody can prepare for.	Once the settlement English requirement is met, the objective shifts from speaking to understanding.
English runs out at work, at the GP and on the telephone. Several said what they learned in Hong Kong is too formal for any of it.	Build materials around those encounters, in spoken British English at natural speed.
AI is already in use across every age group, and its users are among the more engaged learners.	Teach with it rather than around it.

3. Planning around a policy intention that keeps changing

> **The settlement English requirement on the BN(O) route has not changed. What has moved twice in a year is the government's intention about it, and provision has to be planned while that is still open.**

The May 2025 immigration white paper proposed raising English requirements across the immigration system, including at settlement (Home Office, 2025a). The earned settlement consultation of November 2025 proposed B2 for settlement and, as published, brought the BN(O) route within its scope (Home Office, 2025b). On 5 March 2026 the Statement of Changes HC 1691 set B2 for settlement from 26 March 2027 across a list of routes. The BN(O) route was not among them, so B1 continues to apply (Home Office, 2026a, and Hong Kong Watch, 2026). The accompanying ministerial statement said further changes would be considered once consultation responses had been assessed (Home Office, 2026b). That is the position as at 28 July 2026, and the rules in force are at Appendix Hong Kong British National (Overseas) of the Immigration Rules (Home Office, 2026d).

The first BN(O) arrivals reached the five-year point for indefinite leave during 2026 (Home Office, 2026c), so this is not a distant question for the households concerned. The practical difficulty for anyone planning

provision is that a course designed around the current requirement may have to be rebuilt if B2 is extended to this route, while a course designed around that proposal is solving a problem nobody yet has.

The way through is to build around what learners cannot actually do. That holds whichever level applies. If B2 is never brought in on this route, the needs described here remain the needs. If it is, they become the binding constraint, because the step from B1 to B2 in listening is the step from exchanges you can prepare for to speech at natural speed, which is exactly where respondents say they are stuck.

4. What we did

An online questionnaire of fourteen questions, in Chinese and English, was distributed through Hongkongers in Britain's channels between 28 February and 8 March 2026. 407 people responded. Nine did not reach the demographic questions at the end. Two questions were open text and drew 190 and 211 answers.

This is a self-selected community sample, not a probability sample of UK Hongkongers, and is best read as evidence about a large and engaged group.

5. What the survey found

5.1 Almost everyone struggles, and two situations dominate: fast speech and phone calls

> **Almost every respondent had struggled with English in the past month. 97 per cent named at least one situation that caused them stress, and only 11 people in 407 said they felt confident.**

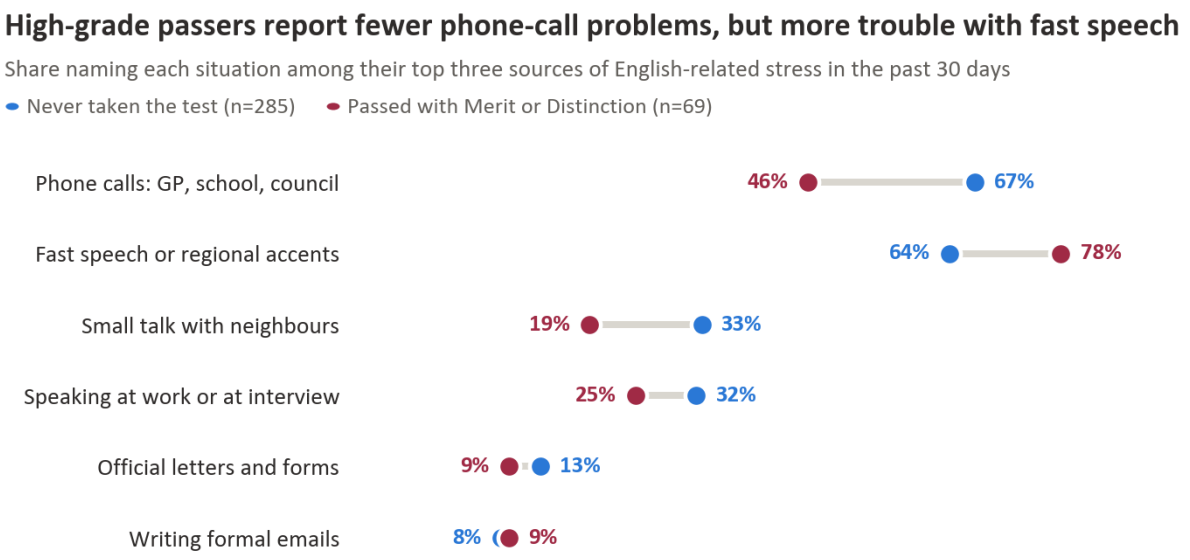
Two situations stand out and are effectively tied: understanding fast speech or regional accents, at 66 per cent, and telephone calls to a GP, a school or the council, at 65 per cent. The next item, speaking at work or in a job interview, is thirty-three points behind. Forty-seven per cent used all three of the answers the question allowed.

Almost everyone is struggling, so sorting learners into those who are coping and those who are not will put nearly all of them in the same group. On this evidence it is more useful to design around the situations people fail in, the phone call and the fast conversation, than around the type of learner.

5.2 Among high-grade passers, what remains is understanding fast, accented speech

> **Passing at a high grade, meaning Merit or Distinction, moves the problem rather than ending it. Understanding fast or accented speech takes up 42 per cent of the difficulty those passers still report, against 30 per cent among those who have never taken the test.**

Comparing respondents who have passed the Trinity B1 test with those who have never taken it shows where the remaining difficulty sits. The test is Trinity College London's Graded Examination in Spoken English (GESE) Grade 5, the Secure English Language Test most commonly taken for settlement on this route (Trinity College London, 2026). About a third of the sample had sat it, and 17 per cent passed at Merit or Distinction.

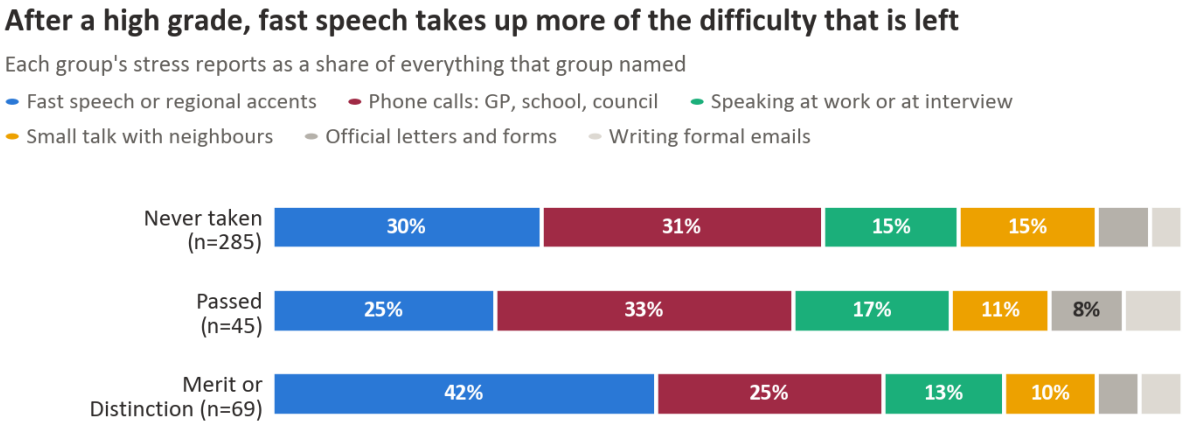


HKB survey of UK Hongkongers, February–March 2026 (n=407). Statistical detail at Appendix C.1 and C.2.

Figure 1. Situations named as a top-three source of English-related stress in the past 30 days, by Trinity B1 result.

High-grade passers are much less likely to name telephone calls, at 46 per cent against 67, and small talk with neighbours, at 19 against 33. They are more likely to name fast speech and regional accents, at 78 against 64. The first two of those differences hold after allowing for how many situations each respondent named, their age, their study time and their self-declared hardest skill. The difference on small talk does not survive that adjustment, so we do not press it. The models are at Appendix C.2.

High-grade passers also name fewer stressful situations overall, 1.9 on average against 2.2, so the shift shows up in the mix more clearly than in the total.



HKB survey, February–March 2026. High-grade passers name fewer stressful situations overall, 1.9 on average against 2.2, so the shift is best read as a change in the mix rather than in the total.

Figure 2. The mix of stressful situations named, as a share of all situations named within each group.

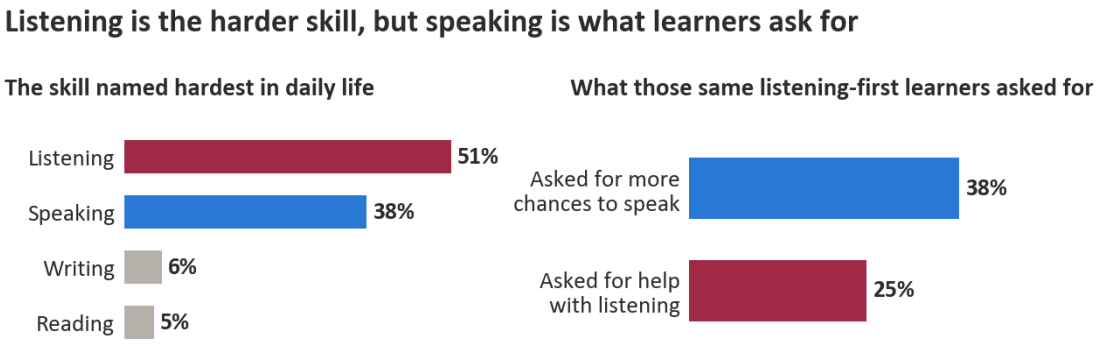
Respondents who have passed at a high grade have largely settled the exchanges they can prepare for: making the call, holding the doorstep conversation. What remains is the speech nobody can prepare for: fast speech, several people talking at once, and regional accents. That is a separate teaching objective, and a

natural next step for provision once the settlement English requirement is met. It is also, in substance, where B1 ends and B2 begins (Council of Europe, 2020).

5.3 Listening is the bigger problem, but learners ask for speaking practice

> **Learners name listening as their hardest skill and then ask for speaking practice. 51 per cent said listening against 38 per cent for speaking, yet more of those same learners asked for chances to speak than for help with listening.**

Of the 209 who named listening as their hardest skill, 107 went on to answer the optional question about what they would change, and among them speaking was asked for almost twice as often as help with listening, 46 per cent against 25. The ordering holds in every subgroup we tested, whether by age, gender, region, test status or study time, and is widest among the over-55s, at 62 per cent listening against 25 per cent speaking, and among men, at 59 against 33. Reading and writing together account for one in ten.



Left panel: all respondents (n=407). Right panel: the 107 respondents who named listening as their hardest skill and also answered the optional question on what they would most like to change. A few asked for both.

Figure 3. The skill named hardest in daily life, and what listening-first learners asked for when invited to name one change.

Both things are true. Speaking is what people can see themselves failing at, and it is what a conversation club obviously supplies. Listening failure is quieter: you nod, you miss it, you work it out ten seconds later. One respondent described exactly that, recognising a word they already knew only after the conversation had moved on.

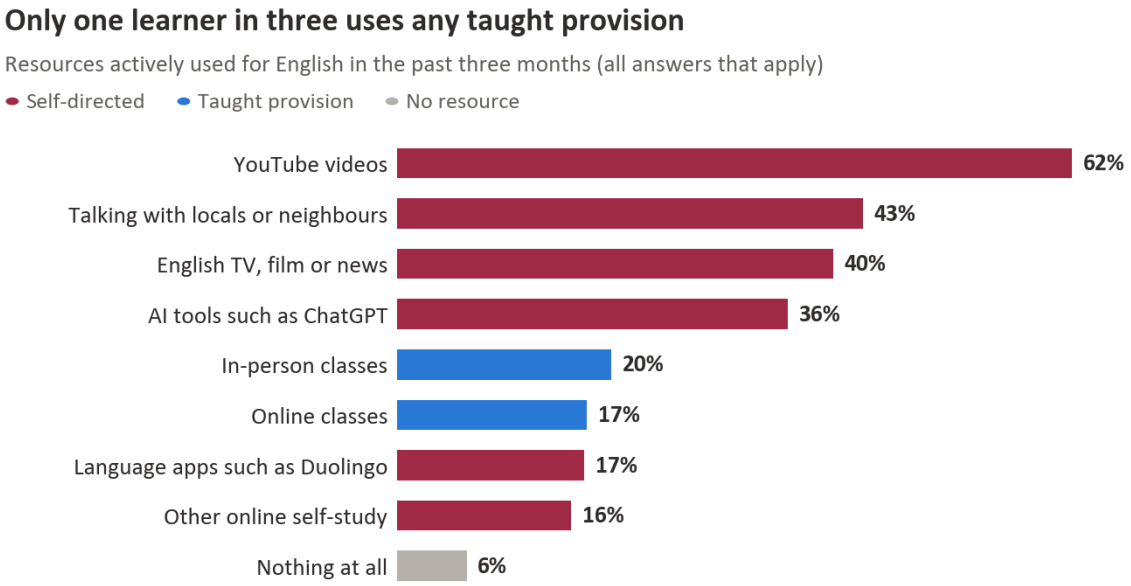
The consequence for providers is awkward. Design that follows learner-reported demand will under-supply the skill respondents themselves identify as their hardest. This is a familiar problem in the teaching of listening: comprehension tends to be tested rather than taught, and learners are left to pick up the underlying processes by exposure (Field, 2008, and Vandergrift and Goh, 2012).

There is a market signal here too. Listening-first learners use language apps at less than half the rate of speaking-first learners, 11 per cent against 26. Whatever language apps are currently selling, they are not reaching the majority of this group.

5.4 Classes reach the learners who can already sit down for 45 minutes

> **Classes reach the learners who already have time to sit down. 62 per cent of those who can study for 45 minutes or more attend one, against 9 per cent of those who manage ten minutes or less.**

Start with where the learning is currently happening.

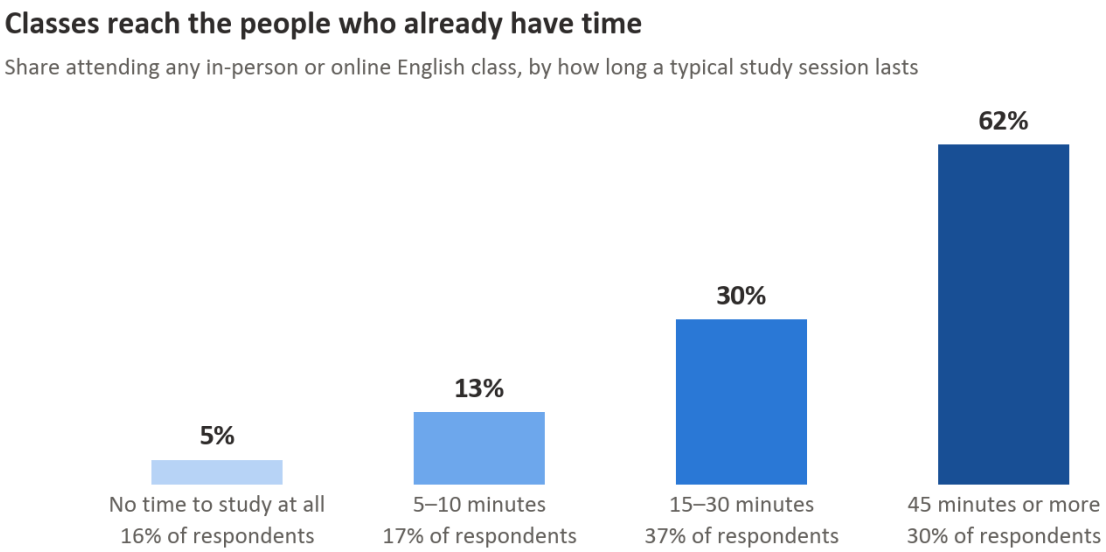


HKB survey, n=407. Respondents named 2.6 resources on average. Taught provision of any kind, in person or online, reaches 33 per cent of the sample.

Figure 4. Resources actively used for English in the past three months.

Taught provision of any kind, in a room or online, reaches a third of respondents. Everything above it on the chart is self-directed. The question worth asking is which third it reaches.

A third of respondents can study for ten minutes or less in a sitting, or have found no time at all recently. Another 37 per cent manage 15 to 30 minutes. Thirty per cent manage 45 minutes or more.



HKB survey, n=407. Once study-session length is taken into account, age, gender and region add nothing to the chance of attending a class. The model is at Appendix C.3.

Figure 5. Attendance at any taught provision, in person or online, by typical study-session length.

Attendance tracks study-session length closely. Most of the people sitting in a class come from the group with the longest study sessions, 58 per cent of them. We checked whether this is a demographic story in disguise,

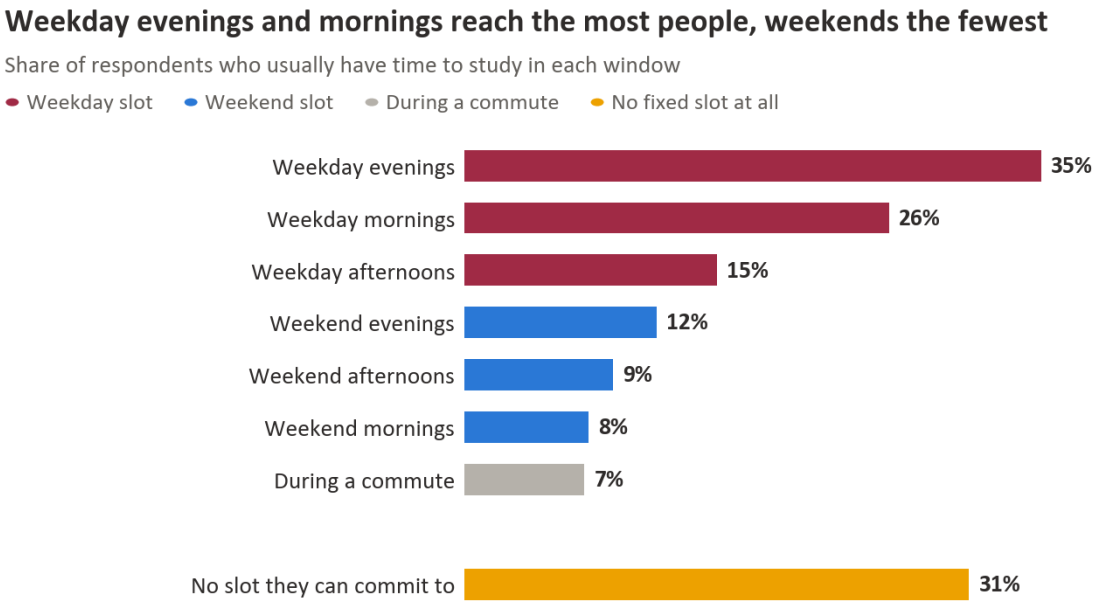
and it is not. In a model of class attendance, age, gender and region add nothing once study-session length is taken into account (Appendix C.3).

Outreach aimed at the right ages, areas or networks will not shift this, because what limits attendance is the length of session a course asks for. A course whose smallest usable piece is ninety minutes has already excluded a third of these learners before anyone is invited.

One caution. A cross-section cannot settle the direction of travel: enrolling on a course may itself create longer study sessions. What the data do establish is that time capacity and attendance move together far more tightly than any demographic characteristic.

5.5 Weekday evenings and weekday mornings reach the most people, weekends the fewest

Weekday evenings and weekday mornings are the two slots that reach the most people, and weekend slots reach the fewest. Around a third of respondents can commit to no fixed slot at all.



HKB survey, n=407. Respondents could name more than one window. Adding all three weekend slots on top of a weekday evening and a weekday morning brings in only 7 per cent more people, because the same respondents are largely available at both.

Figure 6. When respondents say they usually have time to study.

The question asks when people usually have time to study, which is the closest this survey comes to when they could attend. The two best slots are a weekday evening and a weekday morning. A provider who can staff two sessions a week should use those. Weekend sessions look attractive for working adults but reach fewest people here, and they largely reach people who are already free on a weekday. Adding all three weekend slots on top of a weekday evening and a weekday morning brings in only seven per cent more respondents.

The last bar matters as much as the first. Almost a third of respondents chose ‘no fixed routine’ and named no window at all. Their resource use looks like everyone else’s, so this is not disengagement, but no timetable will reach them.

5.6 Nearly a quarter stopped because they did not know what to study

> **Tiredness and lack of time are the biggest single reasons people stop. But nearly a quarter of those who stopped did not know what to study, and almost a fifth found the content had nothing to do with their life in the UK.**

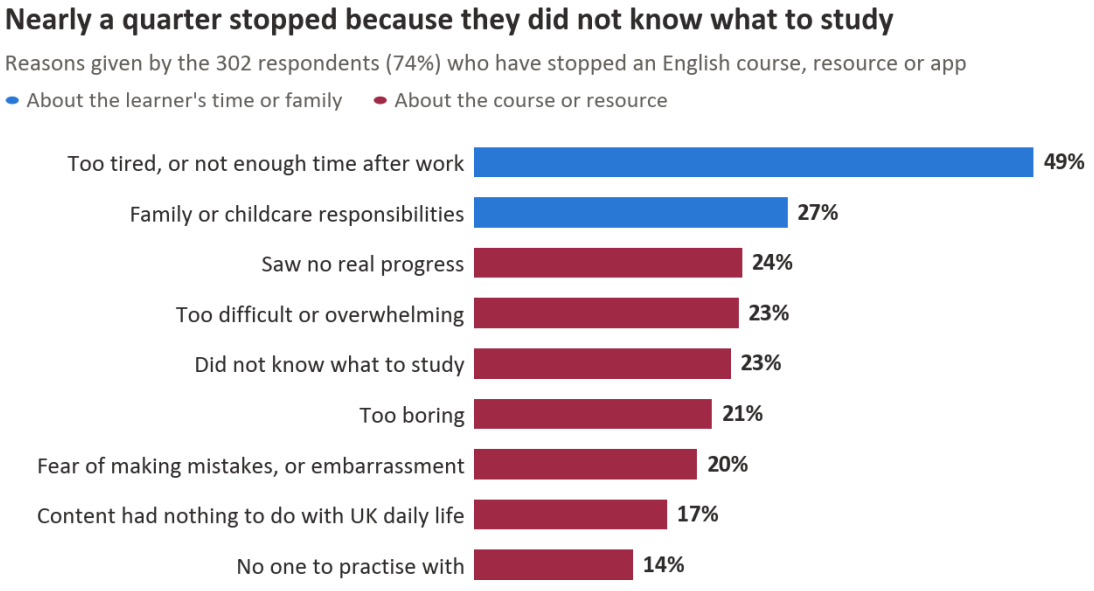


Figure 7. Reasons for abandoning an English course, resource or app, among the 302 respondents who have done so.

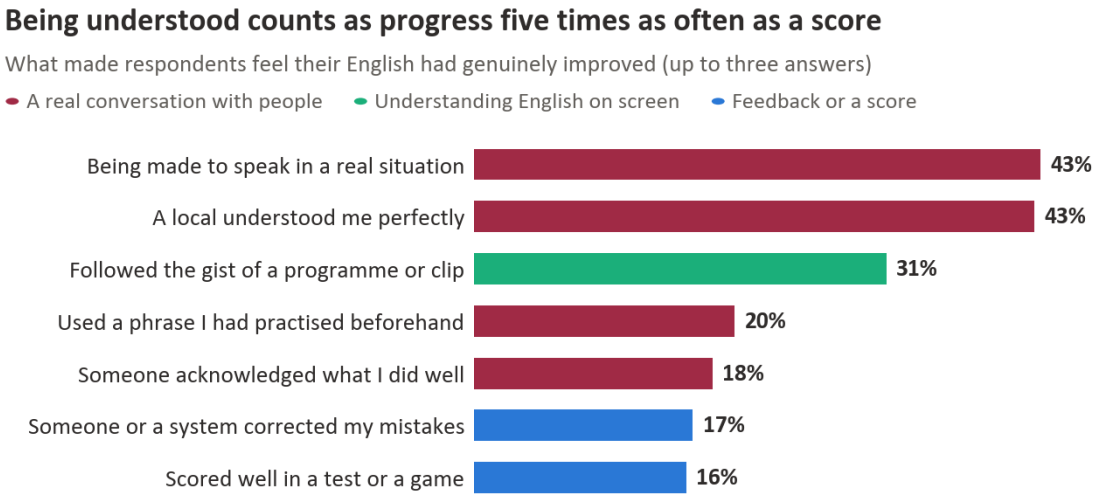
Being too tired or short of time after work is the largest single reason, at 49 per cent, with family or childcare duties at 27. Those are real, and mostly outside a provider's control.

The reasons below them are about the course rather than the learner. Nearly a quarter of those who stopped did not know what to study, almost a fifth found the content had nothing to do with their life in the UK, and a quarter saw no real progress. Thirty-nine per cent gave no reason connected to their own time or family. The first two can be put right before anyone starts teaching. The third is worth reading alongside section 5.7, because what learners count as progress is being understood, and a course that never produces that moment will not feel as though it is working.

Age matters here more than we expected. The over-55s stick with things far more often: 42 per cent have never abandoned anything, against 18 per cent of everyone younger. Persistence is concentrated in the group with the most discretionary time, which is the same group that already attends classes.

5.7 Being understood counts as progress five times as often as a test score

> **What makes progress feel real is a conversation that worked. 83 per cent name something that happened in real conversation with people, against 16 per cent who name a score in an English test or a language-learning app.**

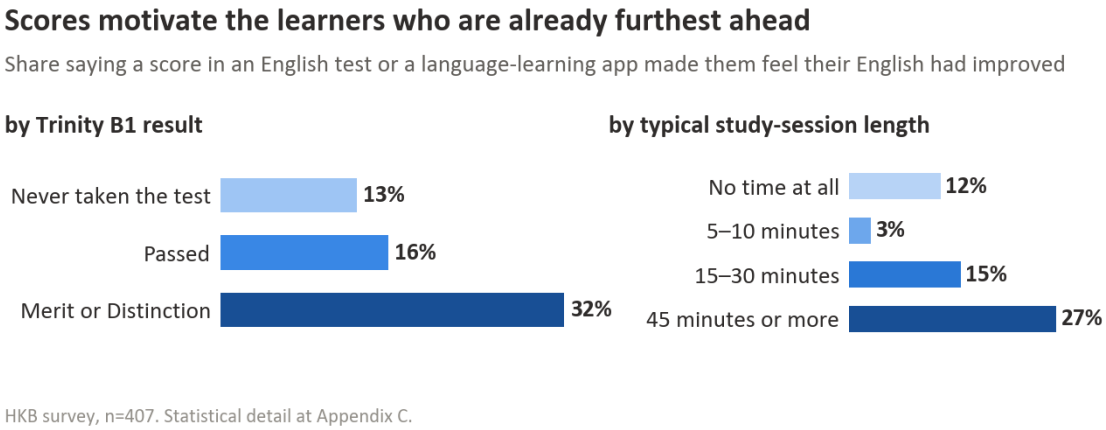


HKB survey, n=407. 83 per cent name at least one thing that happened in a real conversation with people, and 5 per cent name a test or app score with nothing from a real conversation alongside it.

Figure 8. What made respondents feel their English had genuinely improved.

Two answers lead and are effectively tied: being pushed into speaking in a real situation, at 43 per cent, and having a local understand them perfectly, also 43. Using a phrase practised beforehand and having someone acknowledge what they did well follow, each at about one in five. Only 5 per cent name a test or app score with nothing from a real conversation alongside it.

Scores of that kind are not useless, but they land unevenly.



HKB survey, n=407. Statistical detail at Appendix C.

Figure 9. Share citing a score in an English test or a language-learning app as evidence of improvement, by Trinity B1 result and by study capacity.

They register mainly with the learners who are already doing best. Merit and Distinction holders count a score as evidence of progress about two and a half times as often as those who have never taken the test, and learners who study for 45 minutes or more do so nine times as often as those who can only manage five to ten. A points system or a streak counter rewards the learners who need the least help and says almost nothing to the ones who need the most.

Corrective feedback sits in an interesting position. Only 17 per cent named it as what made progress feel real, and it was almost absent from the open-text answers about what people want changed. Where it did appear it was specific and insistent: several respondents asked for someone who would tell them, in the moment, what they had got wrong. It reads as a minority requirement held strongly.

5.8 Where English runs out: work, the GP, the telephone, and language that is too formal

> **The moments when English ran out were mostly institutional, at work and in healthcare above all. More named a translation tool or an AI assistant than named a person.**

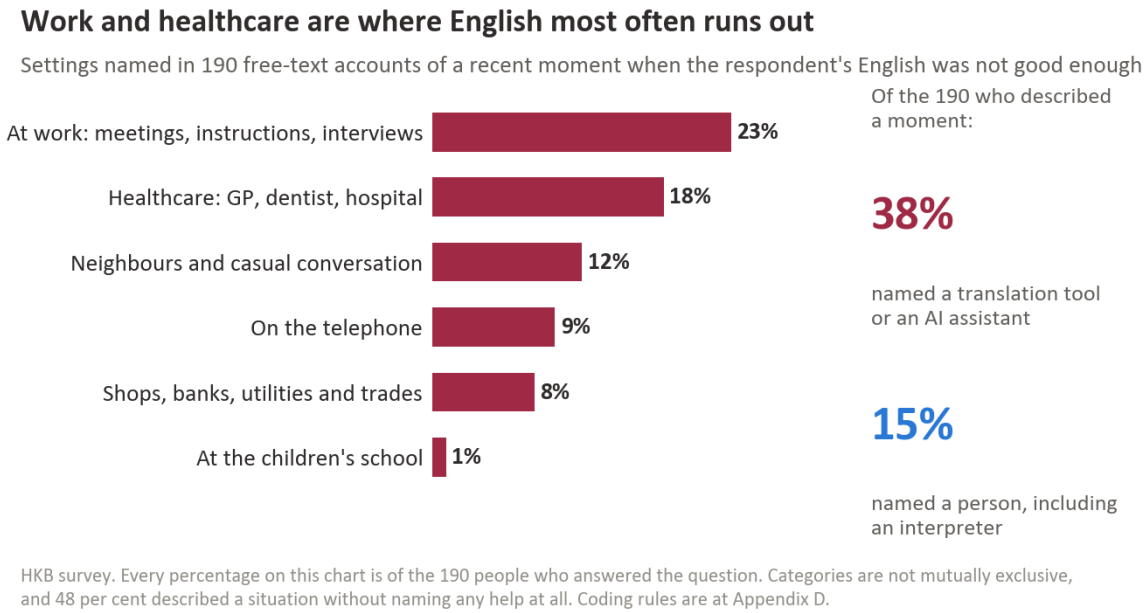


Figure 10. Settings named in free-text accounts of a moment when English was not good enough, and the help respondents said they wanted.

Work is the most common setting: not job interviews so much as half-understood instructions, meetings where several people talk at once, and the difficulty of raising a problem with a manager. Healthcare comes second, and is described with unusual precision. Medication names, symptom vocabulary, a consultant explaining a diagnosis, a clinic ringing to move an appointment. One respondent turned up for an eye appointment that had been cancelled by telephone in a conversation they had not followed. Another described being let go after a single day in a first job because they had only half-understood what a colleague explained.

What people reached for is as revealing as where they failed. Of the 190 people who described a moment, 38 per cent named a translation tool or an AI assistant and 15 per cent named a person, an interpreter included. Just under half named no help at all. In the moment, the instinct is to route around the language.

A distinct theme runs through the second open question: what respondents learned in Hong Kong does not match what they need here. Answers describe it as ‘old style’, ‘too formal’, ‘book knowledge’, and ask instead for the expressions locals actually use, for slang, idiom and phrasal verbs, and for small-talk formulae. Nine respondents said, unprompted, that they did not want to memorise vocabulary lists any more.

Together these describe a materials gap more than a teaching gap. The variety needed is spoken British English in institutional settings, at natural speed, with the regional accents people actually meet. Generic international ESOL topics do not supply it.

5.9 Phone calls trouble learners however long they study

> **Telephone calls trouble two-thirds of respondents, and study time makes no difference to it. The figure is 69 per cent among those who study 45 minutes or more, and the same among those who manage five to ten.**

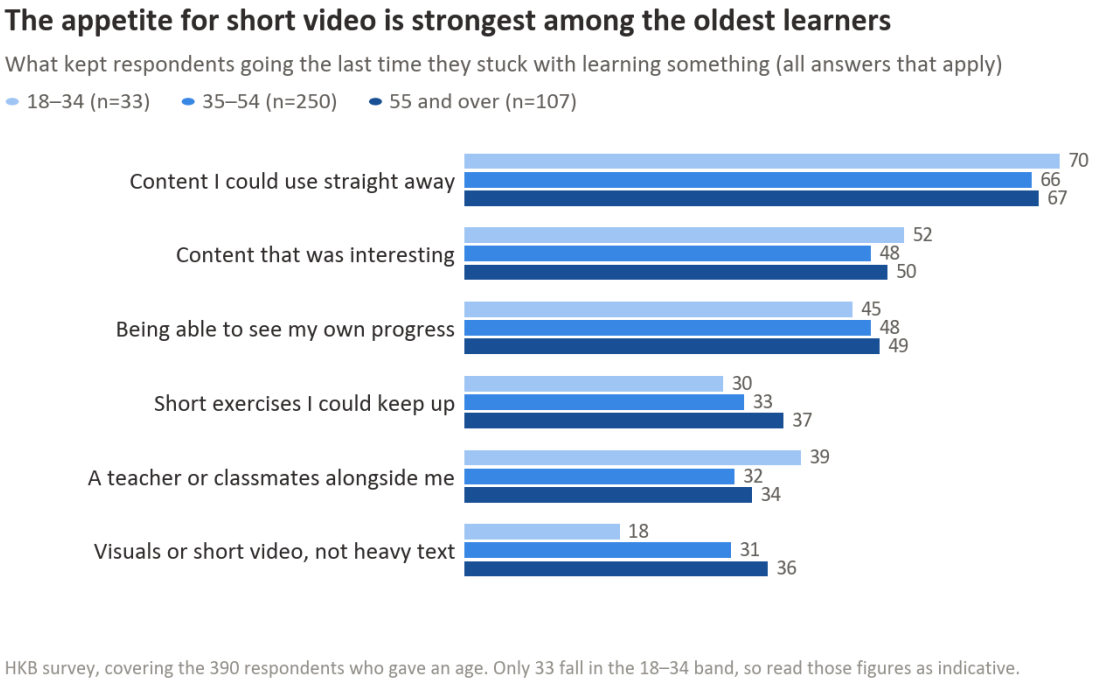
What does appear to help is rehearsal. Respondents who named phone calls as a stressor were much more likely to say that using a pre-practised phrase in a real situation had made their progress feel real, at 25 per cent against 11. They were also more likely to cite fear of mistakes as a reason for abandoning a course, at 20 per cent against 8, and 19 points less likely to have stuck with everything they started. These are associations in a single snapshot rather than effects we have watched over time.

Phone stress is therefore worth asking about for two reasons: it marks a specific, teachable, high-frequency task, and it flags the learners most at risk of dropping out.

5.10 Learners stay with material they can use straight away, and the oldest want it on video

> **What kept people going with past learning was material they could apply immediately in daily life or at work. Two-thirds chose it, ahead of everything else on offer.**

Interest and visible progress come next, both close to half. Company, meaning a teacher or classmates, comes fifth at 32 per cent, below short repeatable exercises.



HKB survey, covering the 390 respondents who gave an age. Only 33 fall in the 18–34 band, so read those figures as indicative.

Figure 11. What sustained past learning, by age band.

Most of that is stable across age. Two items are not. The appetite for visuals and short video is strongest among the oldest respondents. The youngest band instead stands out for wanting acknowledgement: 39 per cent said someone recognising what they did well was what made progress feel real, against 16 per cent of the 35-to-54s. The under-35 band has only 33 respondents, so read both as indicative, though each runs against the usual assumption that video is for the young and praise for the old.

5.11 AI users turn out to be the more engaged learners

> **Learners who use AI are more engaged across the board. The 146 who use it name 2.5 other resources on average, against 2.0 among those who do not.**

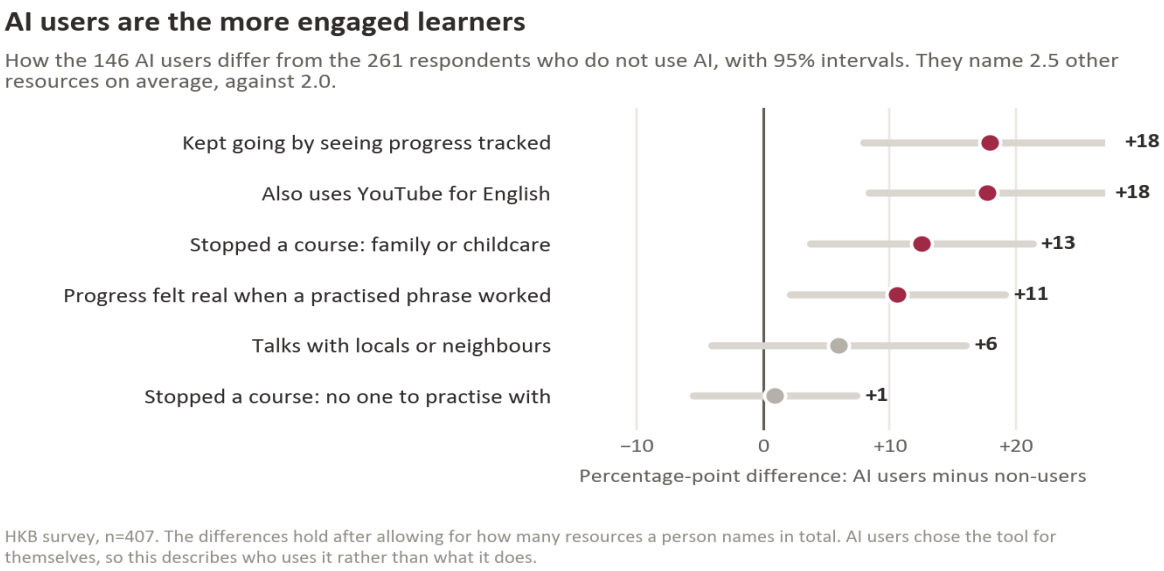


Figure 12. How AI users differ from non-users on selected markers.

They are more likely to be watching YouTube for English, more likely to report that a pre-practised phrase worked in a real situation, and more likely to be motivated by seeing their progress. They are also markedly more likely to have abandoned a course because of family or childcare duties, which suggests the tool is doing work for people whose time is fragmented.

The two markers that would show AI displacing human contact show no difference. AI users are no more likely to say they had no one to practise with, at 12 per cent against 11, and no less likely to be talking with locals. On this evidence AI sits alongside human practice.

Two cautions belong with all of this. Respondents chose the tool for themselves, so the chart describes who uses AI, and cannot tell us what AI does to them. And people who tick more boxes anywhere tick more boxes everywhere, so each difference above was checked against how many resources a respondent named in total. Each one survives that check. The prevalence is worth recording mainly because it is higher and flatter than most people assume. More than a third of respondents had used a tool such as ChatGPT for English in the past three months, and the rate among the over-55s is the same as among the under-35s.

6. Who existing provision reaches, and who it does not

Putting the findings together gives a rough map of who existing provision touches. The groups overlap, and no single provider could serve all of them. The map is offered so that a provider or a commissioner can see which group a given design is actually reaching.

Table 2. An approximate map of reach, using this sample.

Group	Share of sample	What they currently use	What existing provision does not offer them
Long-session learners: 45 minutes or more at a sitting	30%	62% attend a class, and the highest use of online courses	The best-served group. Access is already there, and what remains is unrehearsed listening
Middle capacity: 15 to 30 minutes	37%	30% attend a class, with heavy YouTube and AI use	Something between a class and a video: structured, short, sequenced
Micro-capacity: 10 minutes or less, or nothing lately	33%	9% attend anything taught, and 78% of the 5–10 minute group use YouTube	Almost everything. A quarter of them stopped a course because they did not know what to study
No schedulable slot of any kind	31%	The same resource mix as everyone else, so not disengaged	Any provision that assumes a recurring appointment
Passed the Trinity B1 test at Merit or Distinction	17%	The highest AI use, and most likely to count scores as progress	Fast speech, several people talking at once, and regional accents

The third row is the one least well covered. Those learners are largely invisible to class-based provision, are not disengaged, and are at present served mainly by whatever YouTube recommends to them.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Programme design and commissioning

- Commission listening explicitly, set in British institutions: the surgery, the school office, the workplace. It is the biggest difficulty in this survey and the least supplied. Asked what they want, learners say speaking, so a commissioner who follows learner-reported demand will end up buying speaking practice.
- Commission for the stage after the Trinity B1 test. Those who passed it at Merit or Distinction name fast speech and regional accents as a top source of stress more often than those who never sat it, at 78 per cent against 64. That is where B1 ends and B2 begins.
- Put scarce timetabled capacity on weekday evenings and weekday mornings. Those two slots reach the most people. Weekend sessions reach fewest, and largely reach people who are already free on a weekday.

7.2 Teaching and materials development

- Organise content by encounter rather than by topic: the GP telephone call, the message from the school, the tradesperson on the doorstep, the meeting where three colleagues talk over each other.
- Introduce natural speed and regional accents early, with support, instead of holding clear studio speech until an advanced stage. The difficulty respondents report is speech as it is actually produced.
- Make ‘was I understood?’ the visible measure of progress, because that is already the measure learners use. Test and app scores register only with the learners who are furthest ahead.

- Teach spoken British usage explicitly, including idiom, phrasal verbs and small-talk formulae, and supply rehearsal scripts for the telephone, with a point in the course where the rehearsed line has to be used for real.

8. How to read these numbers

- The sample is self-selected and was recruited through one organisation's channels. It over-represents the North West of England, women, and the 35-to-64 age range, so the figures speak for a large and engaged group inside the community, and stop there.
- Difficulty is self-reported. 'Hardest skill' means the skill a respondent experiences as hardest, which need not be the skill they are weakest at.
- The 18-to-34 band contains 33 respondents, so differences involving it are indicative and are flagged as such where they appear.
- The findings are cross-sectional, so associations should not be read as causes. Method and statistical detail are at Appendices C and D.

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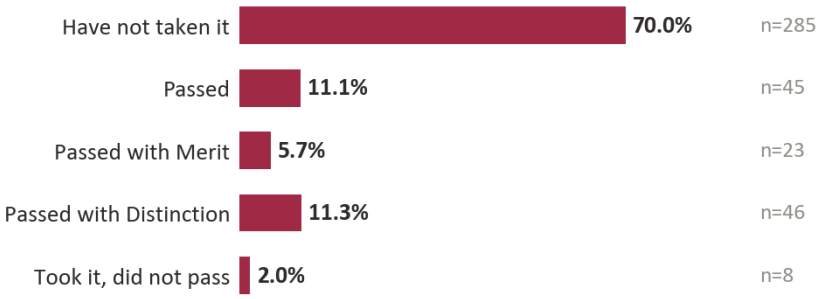
Appendix A. Descriptive results for every question

All figures are percentages of the 407 respondents unless stated otherwise. For questions allowing more than one answer the percentages do not sum to 100. Counts are shown beside each bar.

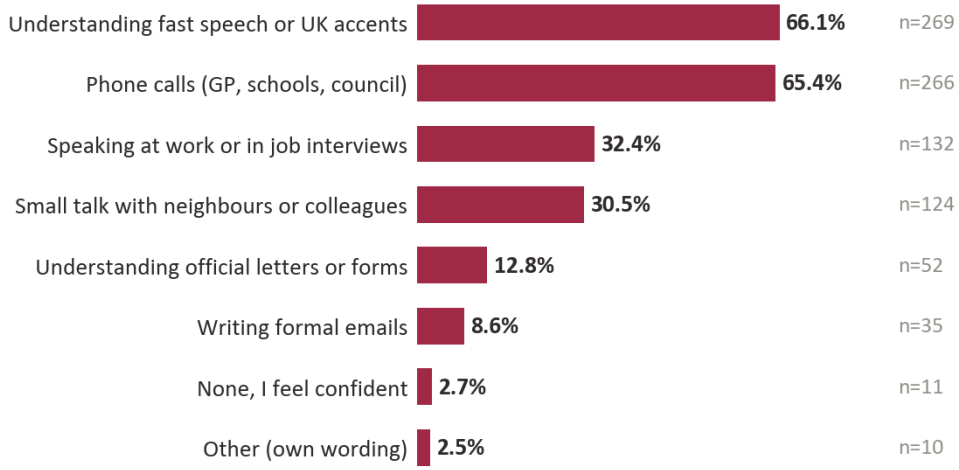
Q1. Have you ever taken an official Trinity College B1 English test for settlement?



n = 407. Single answer.

Figure 13. Q1. Whether the respondent has taken the Trinity College B1 test for settlement.

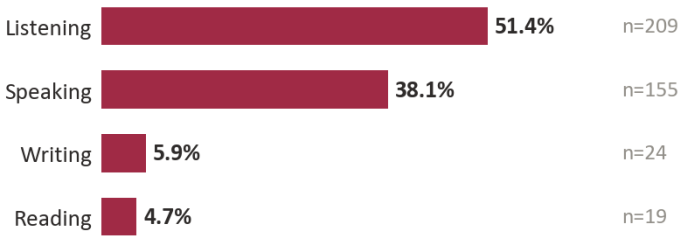
Q2. In the past 30 days, which UK situations caused you the most English-related stress?



n = 407. Up to three answers. Percentages are of all 407 respondents and do not sum to 100.

Figure 14. Q2. UK situations causing the most English-related stress in the past 30 days.

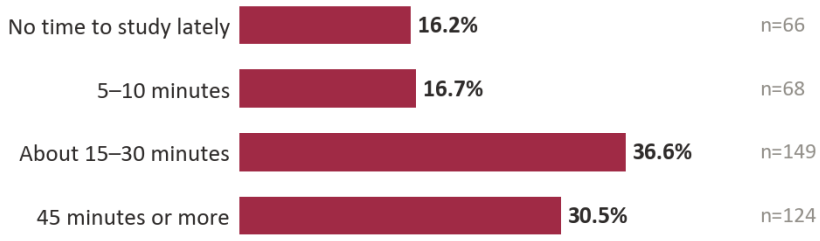
Q3. Which English skill causes you the most difficulty in daily life?



n = 407. Single answer.

Figure 15. Q3. The English skill causing the most difficulty in daily life.

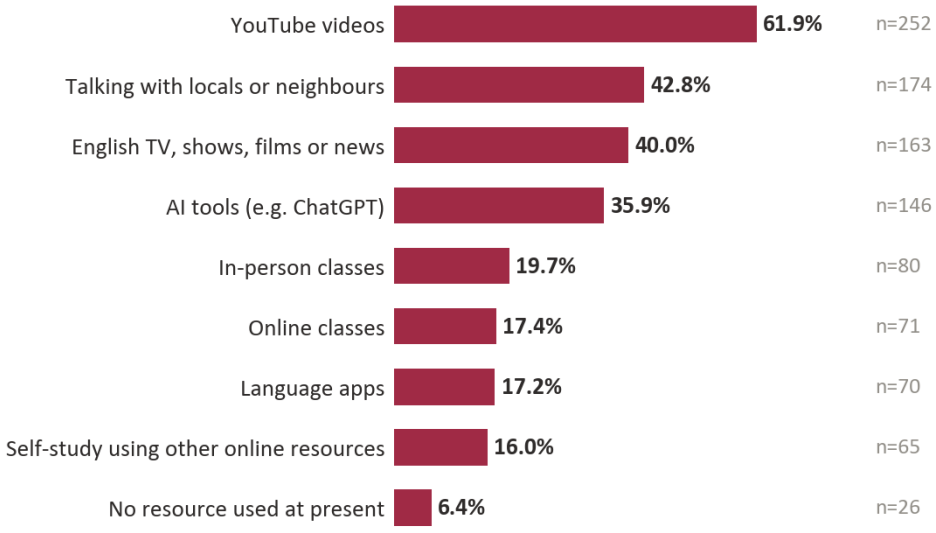
Q4. When you find time to study English, how long does a typical session last?



n = 407. Single answer.

Figure 16. Q4. Typical length of a study session.

Q5. Which learning resources have you actively used in the past three months?



n = 407. All answers that apply.

Figure 17. Q5. Learning resources actively used in the past three months.

Q6. Why did you last stop using an English course, resource or app?

n = 407. All answers that apply.

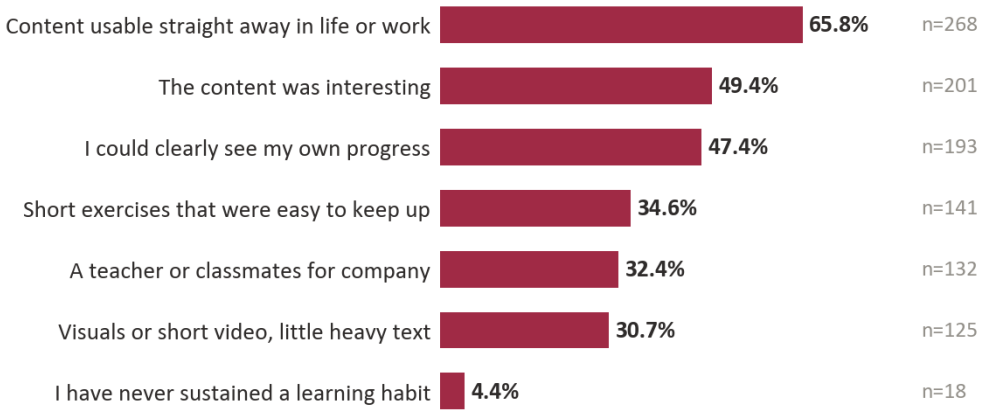
Figure 18. Q6. Reasons for last stopping an English course, resource or app.

Q7. Think of a recent time your English actually improved. What got you there?

n = 407. Up to three answers.

Figure 19. Q7. What made a recent improvement in English feel real.

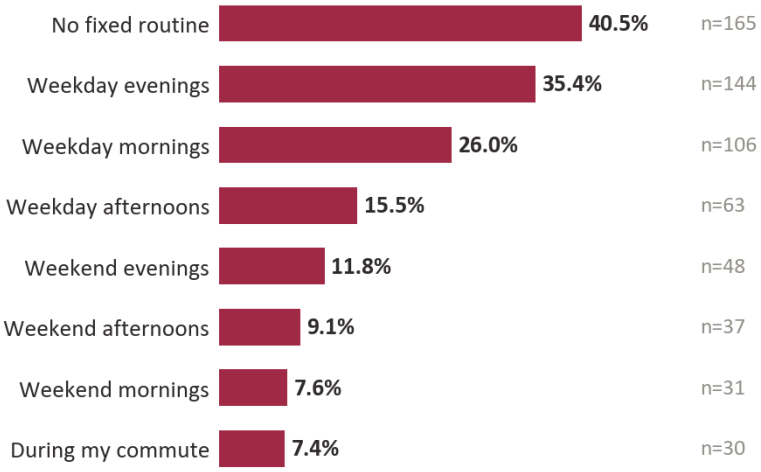
Q8. What kept you motivated the last time you stuck with learning something?



n = 407. All answers that apply.

Figure 20. Q8. What sustained the respondent through a past episode of learning.

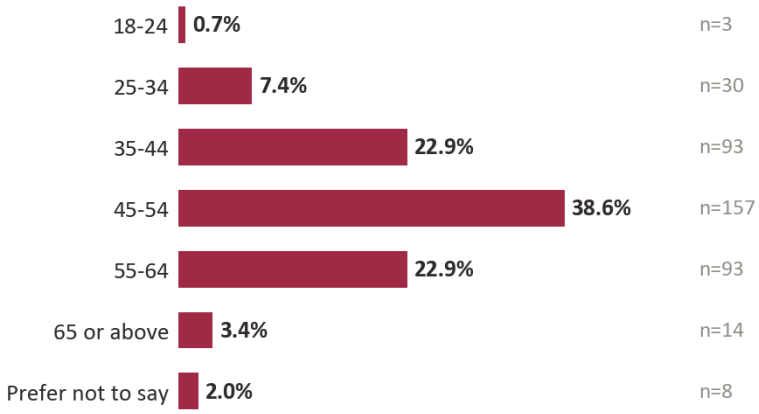
Q9. When do you usually have time to study?



n = 407. All answers that apply.

Figure 21. Q9. When the respondent usually has time to study.

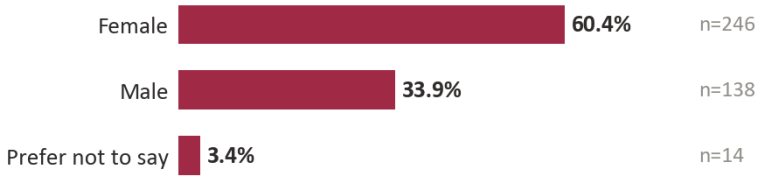
Q12. What is your age range?



n = 407. Single answer; 9 respondents did not reach this question.

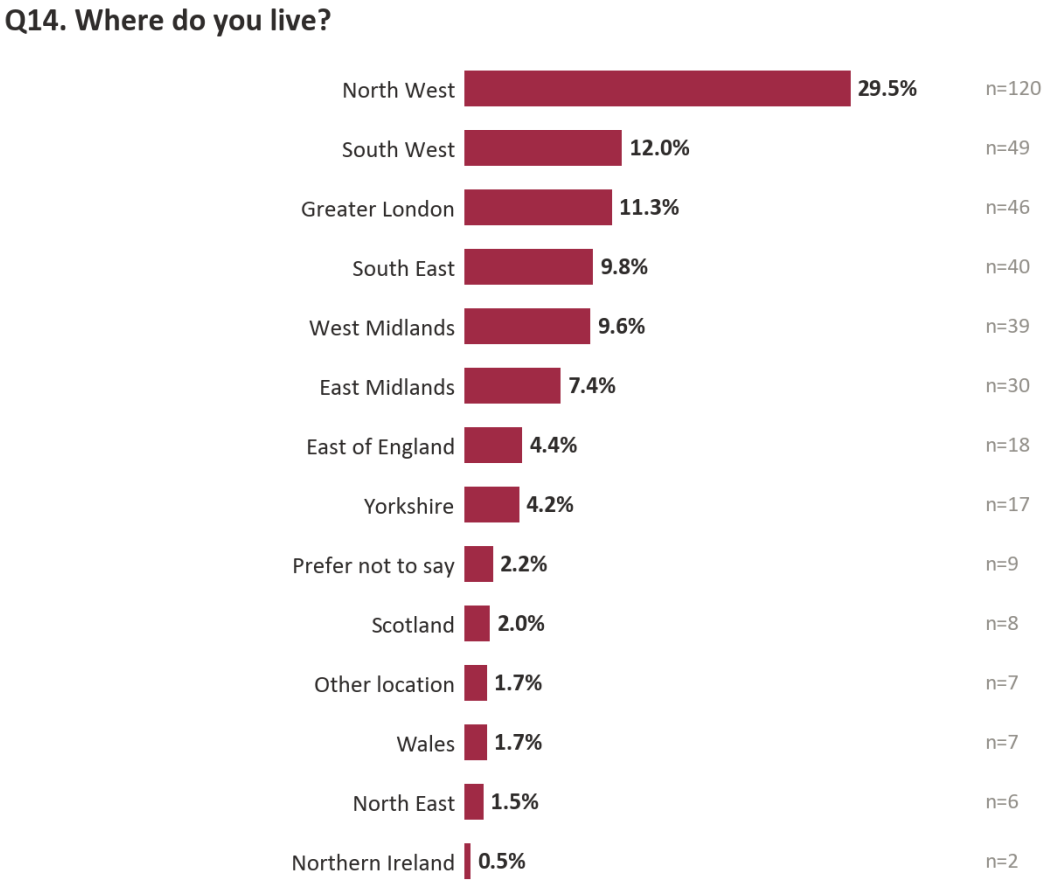
Figure 22. Q12. Age range.

Q13. How do you identify your gender?



n = 407. Single answer; 9 respondents did not reach this question.

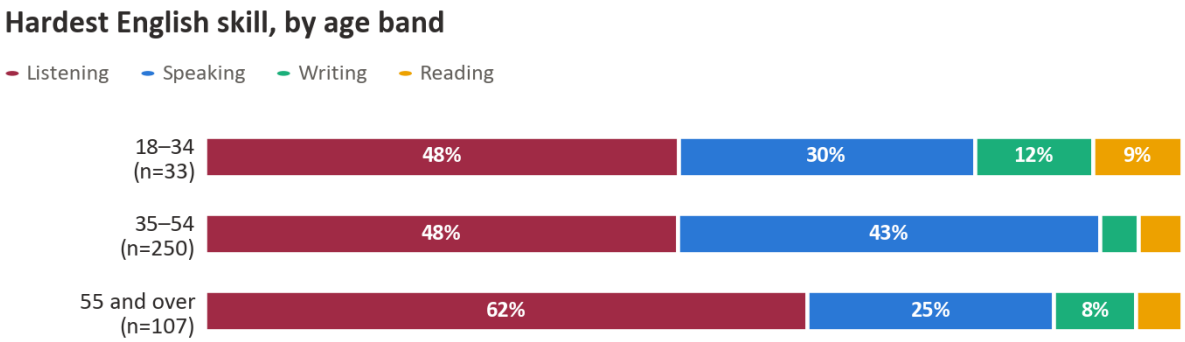
Figure 23. Q13. Gender.



n = 407. Single answer; 9 respondents did not reach this question.

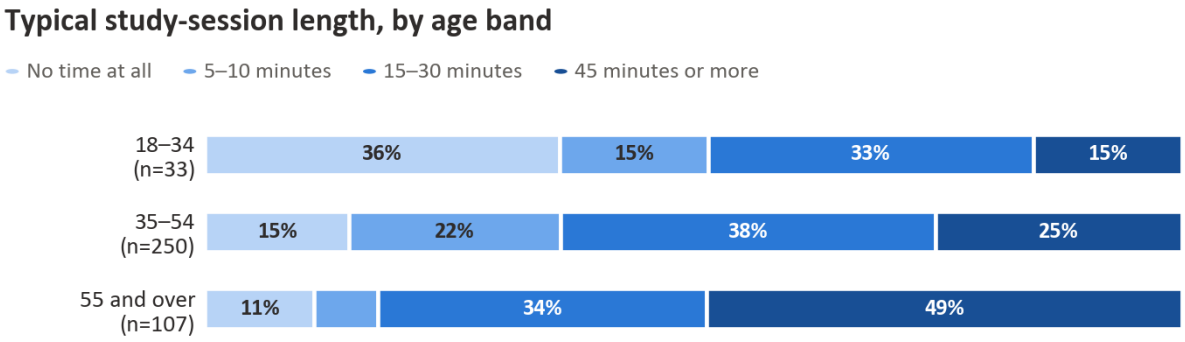
Figure 24. Q14. Region of residence.

A.1 Selected cross-tabulations



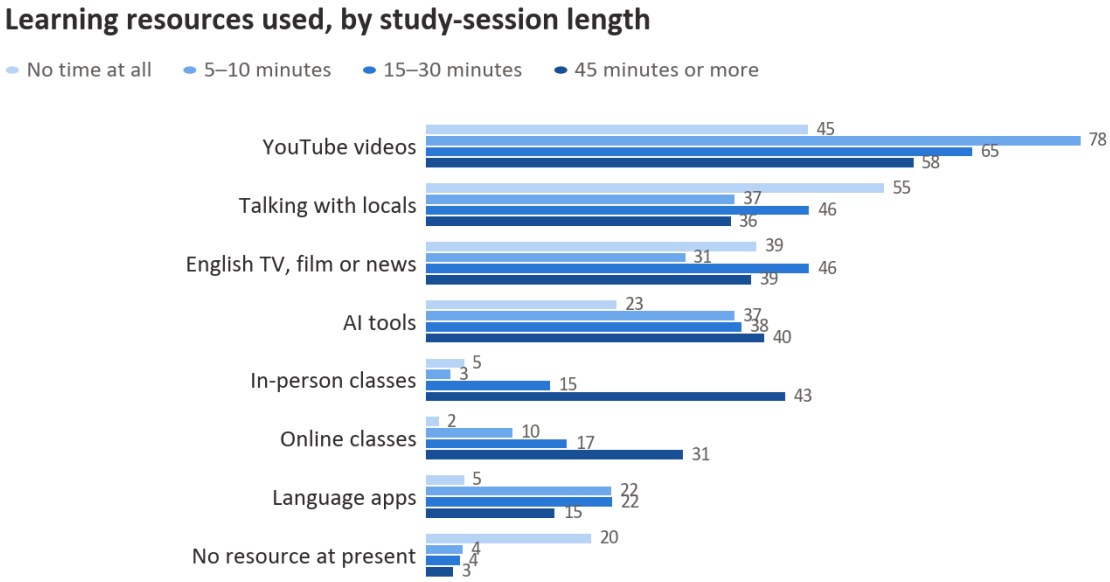
n = 390 respondents who gave an age. Row percentages.

Figure 25. Hardest English skill, by age band.



n = 390 respondents who gave an age. Row percentages.

Figure 26. Typical study-session length, by age band.



n = 407. Percentages within each session-length group; all answers that apply.

Figure 27. Learning resources used, by study-session length.

A.2 Open-text questions

Question 10 asked respondents to describe a recent moment when their English was not good enough, and what help or tool would have made the difference. 190 people answered (47 per cent). Question 11 asked for the one thing they would most like to change about how they learn English. 211 answered (52 per cent). Both were optional and answers were short, with a median length of 14 and 15 characters respectively.

Table 3. Keyword-coded themes in the two open-text questions. Themes are not mutually exclusive. Q10 n=190, Q11 n=211.

Theme	Q10 n	Q10 %	Q11 n	Q11 %
Wants more chances to speak	25	13.2	94	44.5
Wants better listening or accent comprehension	17	8.9	44	20.9
Wants colloquial or real British usage	4	2.1	11	5.2
Wants correction or feedback	1	0.5	5	2.4
Rejects rote vocabulary learning	0	0.0	9	4.3
Wants peers at a similar level, or a group	2	1.1	6	2.8

Theme	Q10 n	Q10 %	Q11 n	Q11 %
Mentions confidence or nerves	4	2.1	6	2.8
Wants a translation tool or interpreter	49	25.8	0	0.0
Names an AI tool	30	15.8	2	0.9
Names a person who could help	27	14.2	1	0.5
Cost or access barrier	11	5.8	2	0.9

Appendix B. The questionnaire as issued

The questionnaire was presented bilingually, with the Chinese and English text of every question and every option shown together. Both are reproduced here. Response options are listed as recorded in the export, and the order in which they appeared on screen may have differed.

1. 您曾否應考 永居 Trinity College 官方 B1 英文考試？ (單選)

Have you ever taken an official Trinity College B1 English test for ILR? (Single choice)

Single choice

- 沒有，我未曾考過。 / No, I haven't.
- 有，我已合格。 / Yes, I passed.
- 有，我以良好成績 (Merit) 合格。 / Yes, I passed with Merit.
- 有，我以優異成績 (Distinction) 合格。 / Yes, I passed with Distinction.
- 有，但我未能合格。 / Yes, but I didn't pass.

2. 過去 30 天內，哪些英國生活情境令您因英文而感到最吃力或有壓力？ (最多選 3 項)

In the past 30 days, which UK real-life situations caused you the most stress due to your English? (Select up to 3)

Select up to 3

- 電話溝通（例如：診所、學校、政府部門） / Phone calls (e.g., GP, schools, council)
- 理解官方信件或表格 / Understanding official letters or forms
- 在工作場合或見工時發言 / Speaking at work or job interviews
- 與鄰居或同事閒聊 / Small talk with neighbours or colleagues
- 理解快語速或各地英國口音 / Understanding fast speech or different UK accents
- 撰寫正式電郵 / Writing formal emails
- 沒有，我感到很有自信 / None, I feel confident

3. 哪項英文技能在日常生活中令您最感困難？ (單選)

Which English skill causes you the MOST difficulty in daily life? (Single choice)

Single choice

- 聽力（聽懂別人說話） / Listening (understanding spoken English)
- 說話（發音、流暢度、詞窮） / Speaking (pronunciation, fluency, finding words)
- 閱讀（看懂新聞、信件、規定） / Reading (understanding news, letters, rules)
- 寫作（寫電郵、表格、訊息） / Writing (writing emails, forms, messages)

4. 當您近期真正抽到時間學英文時，通常一次能維持多長的時間？ (單選)

When you actually find time to study English these days, how long does a typical session last? (Single choice)

Single choice

- 只能勉強擠出 5 - 10 分鐘 / I squeeze in 5 - 10 minutes
- 大約 15 - 30 分鐘 / About 15 - 30 minutes

- 45 分鐘或以上 / 45+ minutes
- 我最近完全沒有時間學 / I haven't had any time to study lately

5. 過去 3 個月內，您積極使用過哪些學習資源？ (可多選)

Which learning resources have you ACTIVELY USED in the past 3 months? (Select all that apply)

Select all that apply

- 語言學習 app（如 Duolingo 等） / Language apps (e.g., Duolingo)
- YouTube 影片 / YouTube videos
- 人工智能工具（如 ChatGPT） / AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- 實體課程 / In-person classes
- 網上課程 / Online classes
- 使用其他網上資源自修 / Self-study using other online resources
- 與本地人或鄰居交談 / Talking with locals or neighbours
- 看英文電視 / 節目 / 電影 / 新聞 / English TV/shows/movies/news
- 目前沒有使用任何資源 / Nothing currently

6. 回想您上次放棄某個英文學習機會、課程、資源或 app，主要原因是甚麼？ (可多選)

Think about the last time you stopped using an English learning opportunity, course, resource, or app. What were the MAIN reasons? (Select all that apply)

Select all that apply

- 下班後太累 / 時間不夠 / Too tired / not enough time after work
- 要照顧家庭或子女 / Family or childcare responsibilities
- 太沉悶 / Too boring
- 太困難或感到吃力 / Too difficult or overwhelming
- 看不到實際進步 / Didn't see any real progress
- 內容與英國日常生活無關 / Content wasn't relevant to my UK daily life
- 不知道該學甚麼 / Didn't know what to study
- 沒有人一起練習 / No one to practise with
- 怕出錯或感到尷尬 / Embarrassment or fear of making mistakes
- 我未曾放棄過任何學習 / I haven't stopped any

7. 回想最近一次您覺得自己英文確實有進步的時候，當時是甚麼情況？ (最多選 3 項)

Think about a recent time you felt your English actually improved. What got you there? (Select up to 3)

Select up to 3

- 被迫在真實情境中開口 / I was forced to speak in a real-life situation
- 本地人完全聽得明我的話 / A native speaker understood me perfectly
- 成功在真實情境用上預先練習的語句 / Successfully used pre-practised phrases in a real situation

- 能大致明白一段英文新聞、節目、電影或表演的內容 / Understood the main idea of an English news clip, show, movie, or performance
- 別人肯定我做得好的地方 / Someone acknowledged what I did well
- 別人或系統指出我的錯誤，讓我從中學習並糾正 / Someone or a system pointed out my mistakes, allowing me to learn and correct them
- 在測驗或遊戲中獲得了具體分數 / I achieved a specific score in a test or game

8. 回想您過去曾堅持學習某樣事物（不限於英文），最主要是甚麼原因讓您保持動力？ (可多選)

Think about a time you actually stuck with learning something (not limited to English). What were the MAIN reasons that kept you motivated? (Select all that apply)

Select all that apply

- 內容實用，能馬上用於日常生活或工作中 / The content was practical and could be applied immediately in daily life or at work
- 內容有趣 / The content was interesting
- 能清楚看到自己有進步 / I could clearly track my progress
- 只需短時間能完成簡單練習，容易持之以恆 / Short exercises that only take a few minutes, making it easy to stay consistent.
- 有老師或同學同行，感覺有陪伴和動力 / I had a teacher or peers, which gave me companionship and motivation
- 圖文並茂或配有短片，無需閱讀大量文字，輕鬆易吸收 / It used visuals or short videos, making it easy to digest without reading heavy text
- 我未曾堅持過任何學習習慣 / I haven't managed to stick with any learning habit yet

9. 您通常在哪個時段有時間學習？ (可多選)

When do you usually have time to study? (Select all that apply)

Select all that apply

- 平日早上 / Weekday mornings
- 平日下午 / Weekday afternoons
- 平日晚上 / Weekday evenings
- 週末早上 / Weekend mornings
- 週末下午 / Weekend afternoons
- 週末晚上 / Weekend evenings
- 通勤途中 / During commute
- 沒有固定時間 / No fixed routine

10. 最近有哪一次因為英文「不夠用」而令您感到吃力甚至尷尬？您覺得當時如果有甚麼人或工具幫助就好了？ (選填)

Think of a recent time when your English simply didn't feel "good enough," causing you stress or embarrassment. What kind of help or tool would have saved the day? (OPTIONAL)

Open text, optional

Free-text answer box.

11. 關於您目前學習英文的方法，您最想改變 / 最想要的一件事是甚麼？（例如：想多點開口機會、不想再死背生字等） (選填)

Regarding your current way of learning English, what is the ONE thing you'd most like to change or would love to have? (e.g., more chances to speak, stop rote memorising vocabulary, etc.) (OPTIONAL)

Open text, optional

Free-text answer box.

12. 您的年齡層是？

What is your age-range?

Single choice

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 或以上 or above
- 不願透露 / Prefer not to say

13. 您的性別是？

How do you identify your gender?

Single choice

- 女性 / Female
- 男性 / Male
- 不願透露 / Prefer not to say

14. 您居住在甚麼地區？

Where do you live?

Single choice

- Northeast 英格蘭東北部地區
- Northwest 英格蘭西北部地區
- Yorkshire 約克郡地區
- East Midlands 英格蘭中部東區
- West Midlands 英格蘭中部西區

- East of England 英格蘭東部地區
- Greater London 大倫敦地區
- Southeast 英格蘭東南部地區
- Southwest 英格蘭西南部地區
- Wales 威爾斯
- Scotland 蘇格蘭
- Northern Ireland 北愛爾蘭
- Other location 其他地區
- 不願透露 / Prefer not to say

Appendix C. Statistical detail

Tests are two-sided. Where an item was screened across a family of comparisons we report Benjamini–Hochberg false-discovery-rate-adjusted p-values alongside the raw values. Chi-squared tests are without continuity correction, and Fisher's exact test is used where an expected cell count below five. Cramér's V is bias-corrected.

C.1 Stressful situations by Trinity B1 result

Table 4. Prevalence of each stressful situation by Trinity B1 result, with risk differences (high-grade passers minus never taken).

Situation	Never taken (n=285)	Merit or Distinction (n=69)	Difference	95% CI	p
Fast speech or regional accents	64.2%	78.3%	+14.1 pts	2.8 to 25.3	0.032
Phone calls (GP, school, council)	67.4%	46.4%	-21.0 pts	-34.0 to -8.0	0.002
Speaking at work or at interview	32.3%	24.6%	-7.6 pts	-19.2 to 3.9	0.247
Small talk with neighbours	33.0%	18.8%	-14.1 pts	-24.9 to -3.4	0.028
Official letters and forms	12.6%	8.7%	-3.9 pts	-11.6 to 3.8	0.415
Writing formal emails	7.7%	8.7%	+1.0 pts	-6.4 to 8.3	0.804
None, feel confident	2.8%	4.3%	+1.5 pts	-3.6 to 6.7	0.454

C.2 Adjusted models of the three situations that differ

Table 5. Logistic models of the three situations where high-grade passers differ. Reference categories are 'never taken' for the Trinity result, 18–34 for age, 15–30 minutes for study session and listening for hardest skill. Each model also contains study-session length and hardest skill, whose coefficients are not shown. The small-talk difference seen in Table 4 does not survive adjustment.

Outcome and term	Odds ratio	95% CI	p
Naming fast speech or regional accents (n=390)			
Passed	0.70	0.35 to 1.39	0.306
Passed with Merit or Distinction	3.09	1.54 to 6.19	0.001
Aged 35 to 54	0.40	0.16 to 1.01	0.051
Aged 55 or over	0.49	0.18 to 1.33	0.162
Number of situations named	1.95	1.50 to 2.53	<0.001
Naming phone calls (n=390)			
Passed	1.40	0.55 to 3.56	0.477
Passed with Merit or Distinction	0.33	0.16 to 0.67	0.002
Aged 35 to 54	3.38	1.28 to 8.90	0.014
Aged 55 or over	3.76	1.30 to 10.90	0.015
Number of situations named	5.35	3.75 to 7.62	<0.001
Naming small talk with neighbours (n=390)			
Passed	0.50	0.23 to 1.09	0.083
Passed with Merit or Distinction	0.66	0.32 to 1.36	0.265
Aged 35 to 54	0.96	0.40 to 2.30	0.929
Aged 55 or over	0.90	0.35 to 2.32	0.830
Number of situations named	2.87	2.04 to 4.04	<0.001

C.3 Attendance at taught provision

Table 6. Logistic model of attendance at any taught provision (n=365). Reference categories: 15–30 minute sessions, aged 18–34, female, North West. Pseudo-R^2 = 0.208, against 0.024 for demographics alone. Adding study capacity: likelihood-ratio χ^2 = 85.2, df = 6, p < 0.001.

Term	Odds ratio	95% CI	p
Studies 45 minutes or more	3.64	2.12 to 6.24	<0.001
Studies 5–10 minutes	0.30	0.12 to 0.71	0.007
No time to study at all	0.04	0.01 to 0.30	0.002
Aged 35–54	1.13	0.38 to 3.38	0.829
Aged 55 or over	1.32	0.42 to 4.16	0.636
Male	0.82	0.48 to 1.40	0.472
Outside the North West	0.93	0.54 to 1.60	0.801

C.4 Screening across items

Each of the three tables below screens one grouping variable against every multi-select option and the three other categorical questions. Only the ten strongest associations are shown. The adjusted p-value accounts for the family of tests in that screen, and V is the bias-corrected Cramér's V.

Table 7. Ten strongest associations with study-session length.

Item	χ^2	V	p	p (FDR)
In-person classes	65.7	0.39	<0.0001	<0.0001
Online classes	29.1	0.25	<0.0001	<0.0001
Nothing currently	23.5	0.22	<0.0001	0.0005
Too tired / no time after work	22.0	0.22	<0.0001	0.0008
Scored well in a test or game	21.3	0.21	<0.0001	0.0009
Never stopped anything	19.1	0.20	0.0003	0.0021
YouTube videos	16.4	0.18	0.0009	0.0067
Weekday mornings	16.1	0.18	0.0011	0.0069
Visible progress tracking	13.0	0.16	0.0046	0.0258
Fear of mistakes / embarrassment	12.2	0.15	0.0067	0.0305

Table 8. Ten strongest associations with age band.

Item	χ^2	V	p	p (FDR)
During commute	27.5	0.26	<0.0001	<0.0001
Study-session length (whole question)	37.4	0.20	<0.0001	<0.0001
Never stopped anything	23.3	0.23	<0.0001	0.0001
Too tired / no time after work	20.5	0.22	<0.0001	0.0004
In-person classes	12.1	0.16	0.0023	0.0239
Someone praised what I did well	10.6	0.15	0.0049	0.0414
Family or childcare duties	9.7	0.14	0.0079	0.0477
YouTube videos	9.5	0.14	0.0087	0.0477
Talking with locals	9.4	0.14	0.0092	0.0477
Used a pre-practised phrase	9.3	0.14	0.0093	0.0477

Table 9. Ten strongest associations with gender.

Item	χ^2	V	p	p (FDR)
Weekday mornings	12.6	0.17	0.0004	0.0201

Item	χ^2	V	p	p (FDR)
Weekday afternoons	7.8	0.13	0.0051	0.1299
Family or childcare duties	6.0	0.11	0.0145	0.2458
Interesting content	5.1	0.10	0.0236	0.3010
In-person classes	4.6	0.10	0.0329	0.3238
Talking with locals	4.0	0.09	0.0449	0.3238
Trinity B1 result (whole question)	9.7	0.12	0.0452	0.3238
Too tired / no time after work	3.7	0.08	0.0549	0.3238
Language apps	3.6	0.08	0.0582	0.3238
No fixed routine	3.4	0.08	0.0635	0.3238

C.5 Fieldwork phase check

Table 10. Responses received before 5 March 2026 (n=329) against those received on or after it (n=78), the date the Statement of Changes was laid. No difference survives adjustment.

Item	χ^2	V	p	p (FDR)
Nothing currently	—	0.15	0.0043	0.2170
Online classes	6.4	0.12	0.0116	0.2249
Visual / short-video format	6.0	0.11	0.0145	0.2249
Used a pre-practised phrase	5.6	0.11	0.0176	0.2249
Too boring	3.3	0.08	0.0685	0.6438
English TV / film / news	2.6	0.06	0.1089	0.6438

Appendix D. Method notes

D.1 Fieldwork and sample

The questionnaire was open from 28 February to 8 March 2026 and received 407 responses. It was distributed through Hongkongers in Britain's own communication channels, which are its mailing list, its social media accounts and its community messaging groups. Anyone reaching the form could answer it. There was no eligibility screen, no check on UK residence and no technical bar on answering twice, so the sample is defined by who saw the invitation and chose to reply. The questionnaire was written in Chinese and English together and reviewed internally by bilingual staff, but it was not formally piloted and the two language versions were not tested for equivalence. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no identifying information was collected. Nine respondents submitted without reaching the three demographic questions, which are therefore based on 398 responses.

Fieldwork straddled 5 March 2026, the date on which the Statement of Changes HC 1691 was laid before Parliament. We compared responses given before and from that date across every item and found no difference that survived correction for multiple comparisons (Appendix C.5).

D.2 Handling of multi-select answers

Google Forms exports multi-select answers as a single comma-separated string, and several option labels contain internal commas, for example ‘Phone calls (e.g., GP, schools, council)’. Splitting on the comma would therefore corrupt the data. Instead, each cell was matched against the exact text of every canonical option. Matched text was removed, and whatever remained was treated as a respondent's own wording and recorded as ‘other’. Ten respondents supplied their own wording at Question 2, and no other question received any.

A few respondents chose an exclusive option and a substantive one in the same question. Eighteen chose ‘I haven't stopped any’ alongside reasons for stopping, and they are counted as never having stopped, which is why Figure 7 rests on 302 respondents rather than 320. Six chose ‘nothing currently’ alongside a resource and are counted as using that resource. Thirty-nine chose ‘no fixed routine’ alongside a named time window, so ‘no schedulable slot’ is defined at D.3 as choosing the former and none of the latter. Each option became a binary indicator. Percentages for these questions are of all respondents, so they do not sum to 100. Respondents named 2.2 situations, 2.6 resources, 1.9 reasons for stopping, 1.9 progress signals, 2.7 motivations and 1.5 study windows on average.

D.3 Derived variables

- Trinity result was collapsed to four bands: never taken, took it but did not pass, passed, and passed with Merit or Distinction. The last two grades were combined because Merit alone has only 23 respondents.
- ‘Taught provision’ combines in-person and online classes.
- Study capacity uses the four session-length categories as given, and is treated as ordinal in charts and categorical in models.
- ‘No schedulable slot’ means the respondent chose ‘no fixed routine’ and no named time window.
- Reasons for stopping are grouped in two in Figure 7: those about the learner's own time or family, and those about the course or resource. The grouping is ours. The two groups hold different numbers of options, so the share of respondents naming at least one reason from each is not a fair comparison, and the report does not make one.
- Fieldwork phase splits responses at 5 March 2026, the date HC 1691 was laid before Parliament.

D.4 Statistical approach

The sample is non-probability, so all tests are treated as exploratory. Comparisons of two proportions use Fisher's exact test with a normal-approximation confidence interval on the risk difference. Contingency tables larger than 2×2 use a chi-squared test without continuity correction, with bias-corrected Cramér's V as the effect size. Where many items were screened at once, Benjamini–Hochberg false-discovery-rate adjustment was applied within each family and both raw and adjusted p-values are reported. Logistic regressions report odds ratios with Wald confidence intervals, and model comparisons use likelihood-ratio tests. The intervals in Figure 12 are normal-approximation intervals on the difference between two proportions. Models are fitted on complete cases. The models at C.2 use the 390 respondents who gave a usable age band, and the model at C.3 the 365 who also gave a binary gender and a region.

We also ran a k-means segmentation on the behavioural indicators. It did not produce stable or interpretable segments (silhouette coefficients between 0.05 and 0.07 for two to six clusters), so we have not reported it and have used the theory-driven groupings in section 6 instead.

D.5 Coding of open-text answers

Answers to Questions 10 and 11 are short: a median of 14 and 15 characters, and many are a single noun phrase such as ‘translation’ or ‘GP’. Full qualitative coding would over-interpret them. We instead applied a keyword scheme covering both Chinese and English, including Cantonese written forms, and report incidence rather than salience. Themes are not mutually exclusive. One coder built and applied the scheme, with no second coder and so no agreement statistic, which is a further reason to read these counts as indicative. The full pattern list is held with the analysis code, and the theme counts are at Table 3.

Quotations in the body of the report are translated from Chinese where necessary and paraphrased to remove identifying detail.

D.6 Reproducibility

The analysis was carried out in Python using pandas, SciPy, statsmodels and matplotlib. The scripts behind every figure, table and statistic are retained by Hongkongers in Britain and shared on request, subject to our review of the intended use. Enquiries may be directed to jason.chao@hongkongers.org.uk.