THE RICHMOND PROJECT

NUMBER NATION

Understanding the UK's relationship with everyday numbers

January 2026

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KING'S College LONDON

Purposeful Ventures

CONTENTS

KEY FINDINGS

1

Ninety percent of adults in the UK agree that being able to use numbers is an important skill. A majority (seventy-three percent) are confident completing everyday number tasks. Also, men are much more likely than women to rate their everyday number skills positively. Most people solve everyday number problems, calculate prices or use a calculator at least once a week. The most common way of using numbers was to solve everyday problems involving numbers - for example, working out travel times or measuring ingredients for cooking.

2

Only half of UK adults (fifty-two percent) say that they enjoy using numbers, compared to two-thirds who enjoy reading (sixty-six percent). A significantly lower proportion of women than men enjoy using numbers (sixty-one percent vs forty three percent). Twenty-three percent of UK adults feel overwhelmed or anxious when handling numbers or doing calculations and the only activity that made more people feel anxious was public speaking.

3

Competence with numbers is too low: only **forty-two percent of adults scored highly for numerical competence, and a majority of UK adults overestimate their own ability to use numbers,** with a gap of seventeen percentage points between reported competence and actual competence. The cohorts needing most support include younger women, and women in lower socio-economic groups. Women were fourteen percentage points more likely than their male counterparts to be classed “low confidence, low competence” in our analysis.

4

This can change: two-thirds of the public (sixty-five percent) are interested in improving their number skills. The desire to improve number skills peaks for those aged 25-34 and remains relatively high before gradually declining from the age of 45 onwards. Low-income mothers were particularly likely to show low confidence and a high desire to improve their number skills.

5

Ninety percent of parents are interested in improving their child's skills at using numbers, and seventy-eight percent are interested in improving their own skills. But one in five would not feel confident helping with maths homework. Mothers were significantly less confident than fathers in supporting their children with maths homework: sixty-nine percent confident compared to eighty-three percent. The most common reason for a lack of confidence was concern that methods taught today were different from what parents learned in school.

INTRODUCTION

Confidence with numbers is one of the core foundations of a thriving society. When people are competent and confident in using everyday numbers, they make better decisions, manage their finances more easily, seize opportunities at work, and support their families with greater confidence. Strong numeracy builds both individual dignity and national prosperity, and drives nationwide social mobility.

Yet this new research makes clear that our relationship with numbers in the UK is far from perfect, and far from equal. Though ninety percent of UK adults agree that being able to use numbers is an important skill, and seventy-three percent are confident in completing everyday number tasks, far fewer (fifty-two percent) enjoy using numbers. Indeed, twenty-three percent of respondents reported feeling 'overwhelmed' or 'anxious' when doing calculations. Competence with numbers is low too - only around forty percent of adults scored highly for numerical competence - and a majority of UK adults overestimate their own ability to use numbers, with a gap of almost twenty percentage points between reported competence and actual competence.

Numeracy in Britain is a question of both competence and confidence. Women, young adults, and those on the lowest incomes are consistently less likely to feel confident - people in the lower social grades are far more likely to avoid using numbers whenever they can. The cohorts needing most support include younger women, and women in lower socio economic groups. Women were fourteen percentage points more likely than their male counterparts to be classed "low confidence, low competence" in our analysis.

These gaps have tangible consequences. Low numeracy shapes daily life: budgeting, comparing prices, finding job opportunities, managing debt, understanding medical information, or supporting children at school. A routine decision that feels simple to some can feel daunting or shame-inducing to others. These emotional barriers translate into practical ones: missed opportunities, reduced career progression, and wider inequalities across society. Tackling low confidence and competence in numeracy is a social mobility issue as much as it is an economic one.

However, we do not need to simply accept the status quo. Indeed, two-thirds of the public say they want to improve their number skills, including many who currently feel anxious or avoidant. What has been missing is a transformative national effort designed not only to teach skills, but to build confidence, shift attitudes, and change the culture around everyday numbers.

At the Richmond Project, our mission is simple: to break down the barriers that hold people back from engaging with numbers, and to build a country where everyone feels able, not afraid, to use numbers in their daily lives.

We believe that nobody - of any age, background or ability - should feel left out when it comes to numbers. We want to end the idea that people are either "numbers people" or "not numbers people," and replace it with the belief that everyone can build competence and confidence with the right support. Just as the UK transformed attitudes toward literacy over generations, we now need a long-term cultural shift in how we think, feel and talk about numeracy.

As we began our work, we wanted a clear picture of how adults across the UK relate to numbers in practice. This landmark study starts to paint that picture. Working with Public First and The Policy Institute at King's College London, we surveyed 10,000 people in the UK from the ages of 4 to 80, and more than 7,000 teachers, creating the most comprehensive pictures to date of how people across the UK think and feel about numbers. We believe this is the largest, and most in depth, study of this kind that has ever been conducted in the UK.

These insights give us a roadmap. They tell us where the gaps are, who needs the most support, and what kinds of interventions will make the greatest difference. Above all, they show that improving numeracy is not only possible, but urgently necessary.

And this is only the beginning. Further research will follow, including focused work on financial literacy, families and parents whose experiences with numbers remain poorly understood.

Together, this body of evidence will guide the serious programme of support that Britain now needs. The Richmond Project will carry this work forward with a single aim: to help build a more confident and skilled number nation.

EVERYDAY NUMBERS

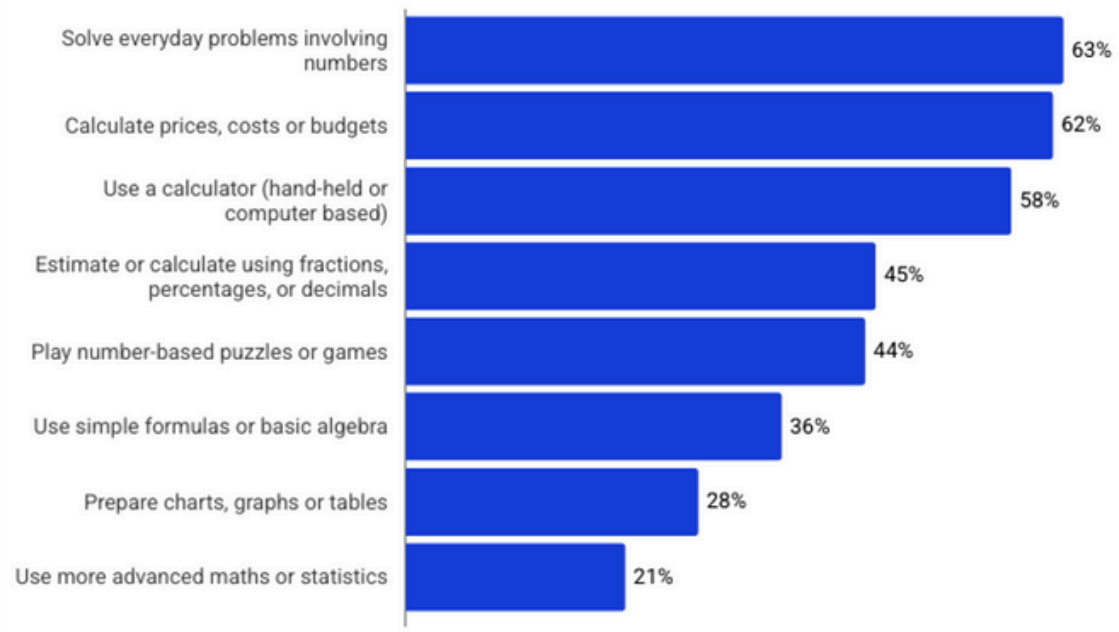
Interim Findings

Finding 1: Ninety percent of adults in the UK agree that being able to use numbers is an important skill. A majority (seventy-three percent) are confident completing everyday number tasks - especially problem solving and budgeting - at least every week.

How often do people use everyday numbers?

Ninety percent of UK adults say that being able to use everyday numbers is an important skill, as well as ninety-five percent of children aged 4-8 years old. Most adults solve everyday number problems, calculate prices or use a calculator at least once a week. As skills get more specialist, fewer people use them regularly: around twenty percent of people say they use advanced mathematics and statistics at least once a week.

The proportion of adults who usually use an everyday number skill at least once a week

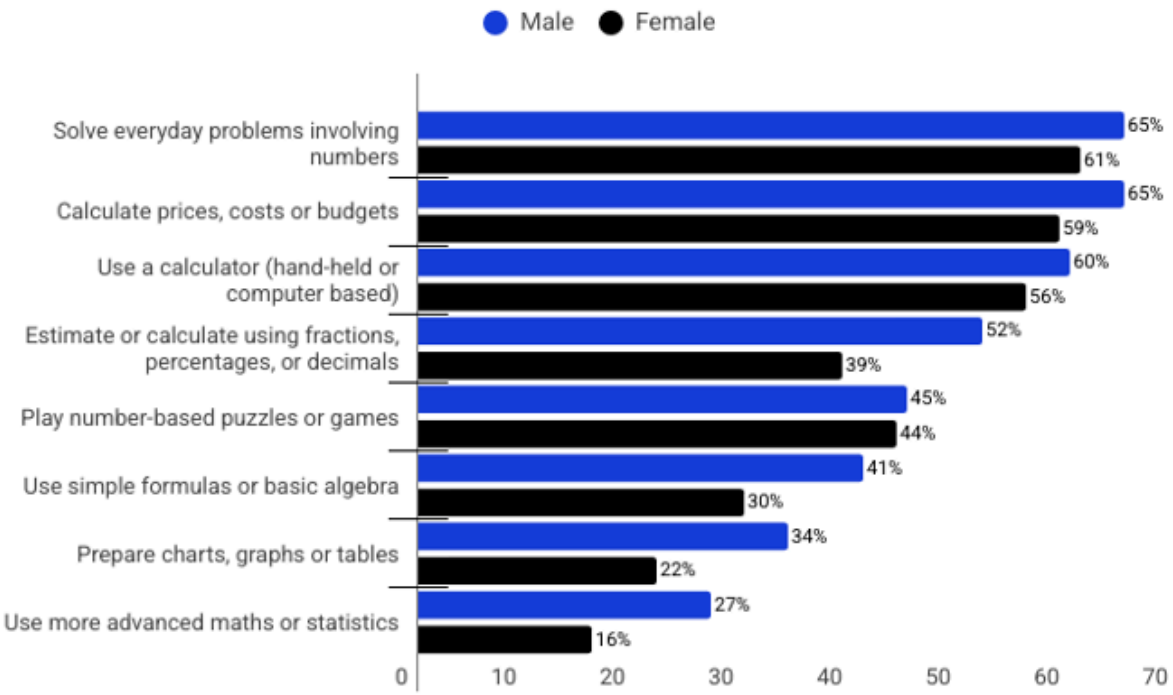


Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

In their daily lives, and in their jobs, women report using numbers less often than men - while fifty-six percent of women use numbers in their job at least once per week, sixty-six percent of men do the same.

The biggest gender gap in reported usage of everyday numbers is in fractions: while fifty-two percent of men make calculations using fractions, percentages or decimals on a weekly basis, just thirty-nine percent of women say the same.

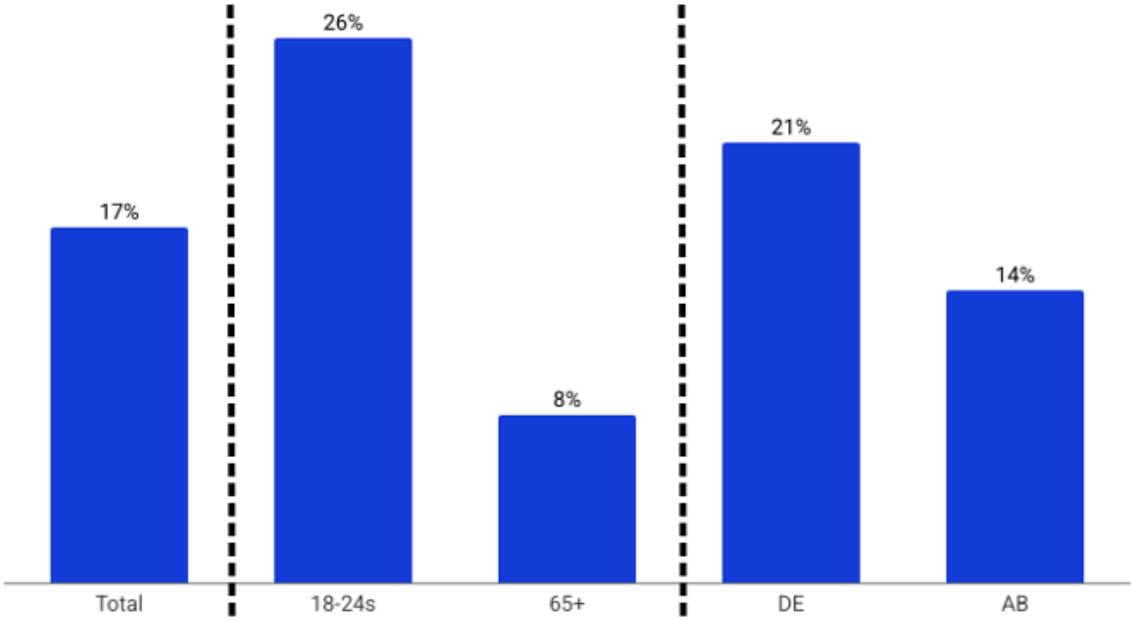
The proportion of adults who usually use an everyday number skill at least once a week, by males and females



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Despite headline figures of regular usage, a significant minority of seventeen percent say they avoid using numbers wherever possible. Younger adults are more likely than older adults to avoid using numbers. While eighty-two percent of those aged 18 to 24 say it is important to be good with everyday numbers, twenty-six percent also say they avoid using numbers when they can. Adults in the lower social grades are slightly more likely to avoid using numbers.

The proportion of adults who agree that they 'avoid using numbers wherever they can'

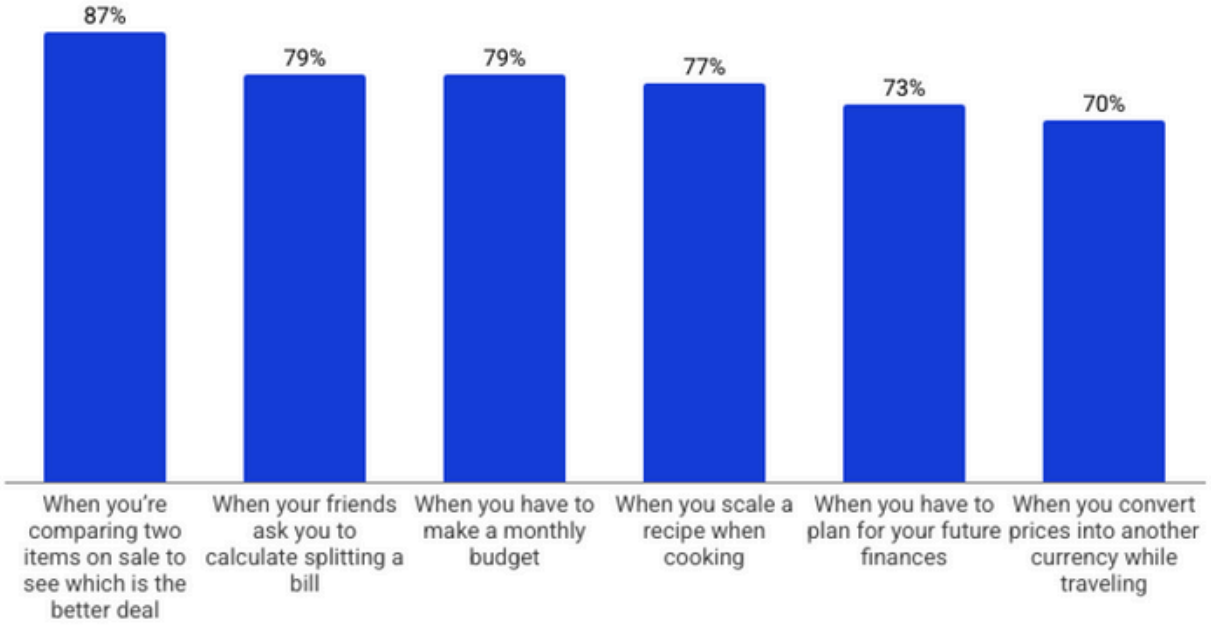


Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

How confident are people in using everyday numbers?

A majority of adults feel confident in their ability to complete everyday number tasks. Eighty-seven percent feel confident that they can compare the prices of items on sale, seventy-nine percent that they can split a bill with friends, and seventy-nine percent that they can make a monthly budget.

The proportion of adults who feel 'confident' that they can execute everyday number tasks well

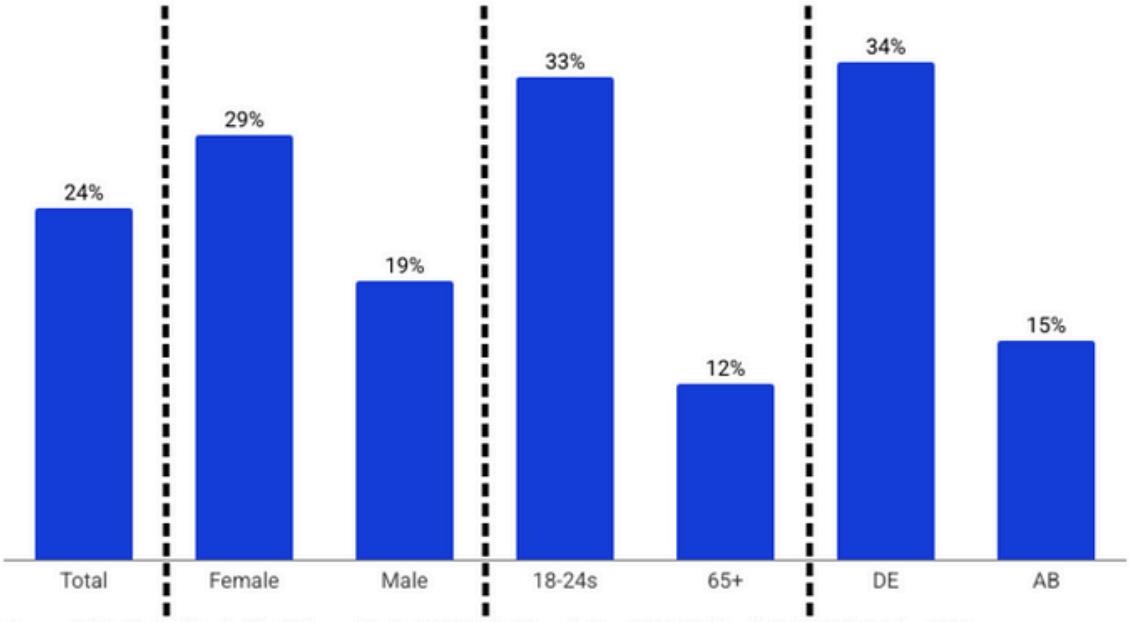


Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Who is more, and less, confident?

Women are much more likely than men to say they do not feel confident when planning for their financial futures (twenty-nine percent compared to nineteen percent). Young adults aged 18 to 24 are almost three times more likely to feel this way than those aged 65 and over. Adults in the DE social grades are more than twice as likely to lack confidence as those in the AB group.

The proportion of adults who feel 'not confident' when they have to plan for their future finances



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Among women aged 18 to 24 in the lower social grades, forty-one percent say they do not feel confident when planning their future finances. While forty-four percent of lower social grade mothers say they do not feel confident planning for future finances, this drops to eighteen percent of higher social grade mothers.

The heat map below shows how confident different demographic groups feel in their ability to handle numbers and data. Although the modal confidence level across all demographics is 'somewhat confident', some groups are more likely to show lower confidence than others. Those aged 18-24, those in the DE socioeconomic grade and women are slightly more likely to describe themselves as 'not very confident'.

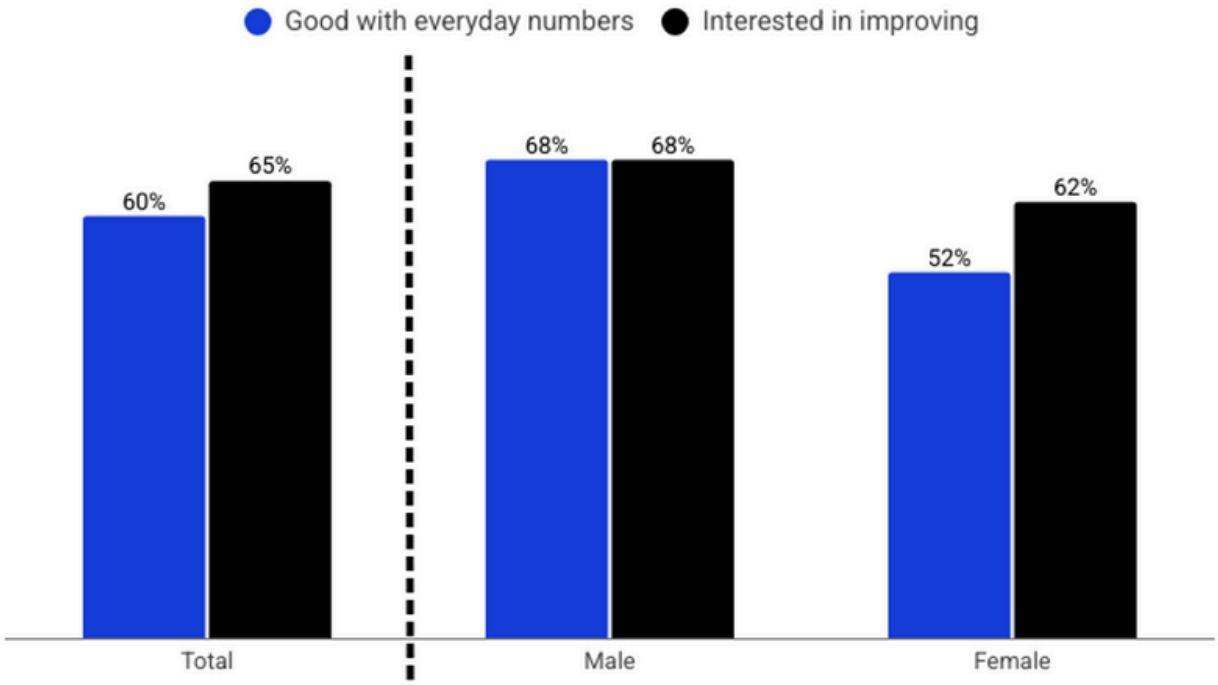
By contrast, those who live in London, or who are male, are more likely to describe themselves as 'very confident'.

The proportion of each demographic who show... confidence level when handling data or numbers				
	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident
Gender				
Male	4%	14%	48%	33%
Female	9%	23%	46%	20%
Age Group				
18-24	8%	26%	41%	23%
25-34	6%	17%	45%	30%
35-44	7%	19%	44%	27%
45-54	6%	19%	50%	22%
55-64	5%	17%	50%	24%
65+	5%	15%	49%	29%
Region				
East Midlands	7%	19%	46%	24%
East of England	4%	17%	51%	26%
London	5%	16%	44%	32%
North East	6%	20%	50%	22%
North West	6%	19%	48%	25%
Northern Ireland	4%	19%	48%	27%
Scotland	6%	16%	48%	27%
South East	6%	19%	47%	25%
South West	6%	21%	45%	26%
Wales	11%	18%	43%	25%
West Midlands	6%	20%	46%	25%
Yorkshire and the Humber	8%	19%	46%	23%
SEG				
A	2%	6%	38%	53%
B	3%	14%	45%	37%
C1	5%	16%	52%	24%
C2	7%	20%	49%	22%
D	10%	26%	45%	17%
E	11%	26%	39%	18%

In line with this confidence, six in ten adults describe their ability to use everyday numbers as good. Within this group, about half feel they are very good. A further quarter of the public place themselves somewhere in the middle. Thirteen percent say they are not good with numbers.

Men are considerably more likely than women to rate their everyday number skills positively: while two thirds of men rate their own skills as good, this falls to around half of women.

Adults who would rate their own abilities with everyday numbers as 'good', and adults who are interested in improving, by males and females



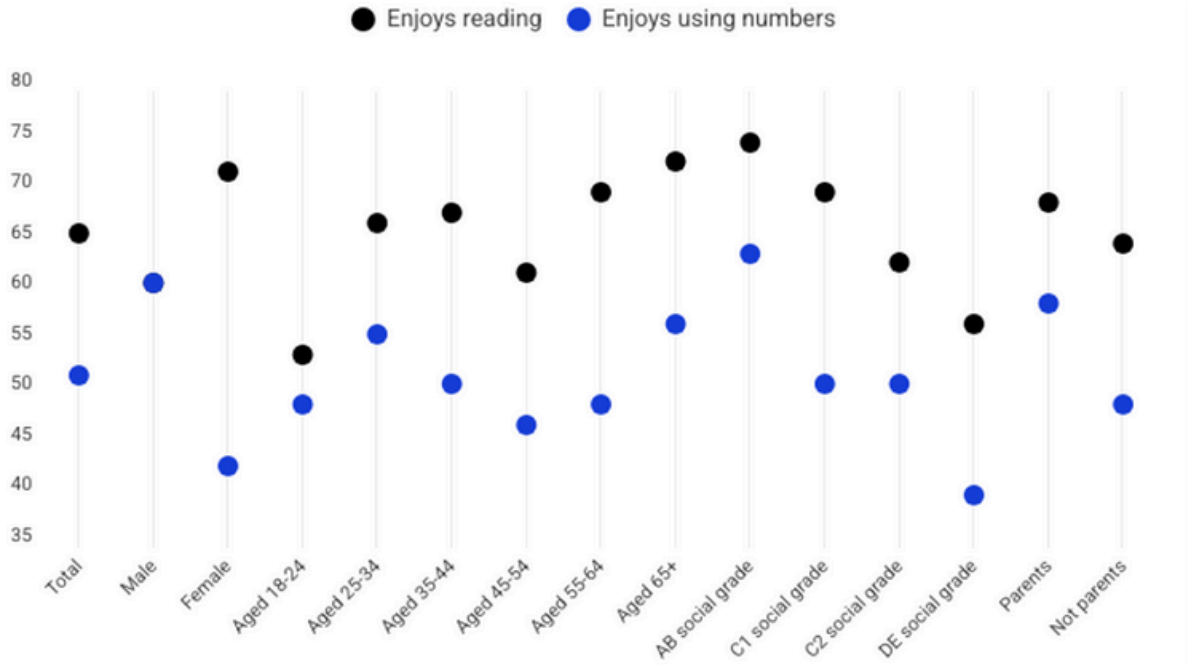
Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Finding 2: Only half of UK adults (fifty-two percent) say that they enjoy using numbers, with a significantly lower proportion of women than men enjoying using numbers (sixty-one percent vs forty-three percent).

Who is most, and least, likely to enjoy using numbers?

While just over half (fifty-two percent) of UK adults report that they enjoy using numbers, this is compared to around two-thirds who say they enjoy reading (sixty-six percent), and men clearly enjoy using numbers more than women do. Men are just as likely to enjoy reading as they are using numbers, but while seventy-two percent of women say that they enjoy reading, just forty-three percent say the same about using numbers.

The gap between enjoyment of reading and enjoyment when using numbers



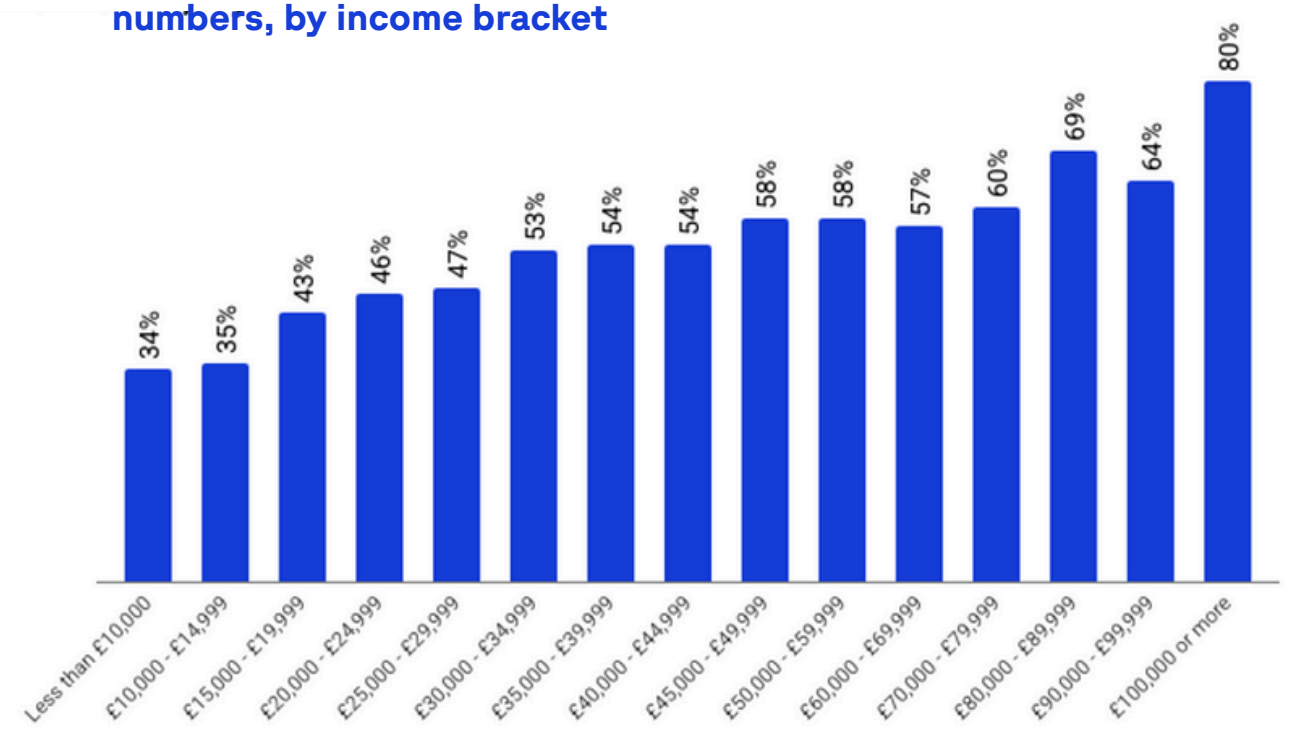
Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Even among groups with relatively few people who enjoy reading, even fewer individuals enjoy using numbers. While fifty-nine percent of lower socioeconomic grade women under the age of 35 enjoy reading (already relatively low compared to the whole population), just thirty-six percent enjoy using numbers.

Among all adults who do enjoy reading but do not enjoy using numbers, three quarters are women, a quarter are aged over sixty-five, and around a third are in the DE social grade.

Enjoyment using numbers is particularly low among people on the lowest incomes. It rises steadily with income: eighty percent of adults earning more than £100,000 a year enjoy using numbers, compared with thirty-four percent of those earning under £10,000. The tasks people consider important change little across income brackets. Understanding money, managing time and solving problems are priorities for most adults. What differs is the extent to which people enjoy these tasks, with lower income groups reporting much lower levels of enjoyment.

The proportion of adults who would say they enjoy using numbers, by income bracket



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

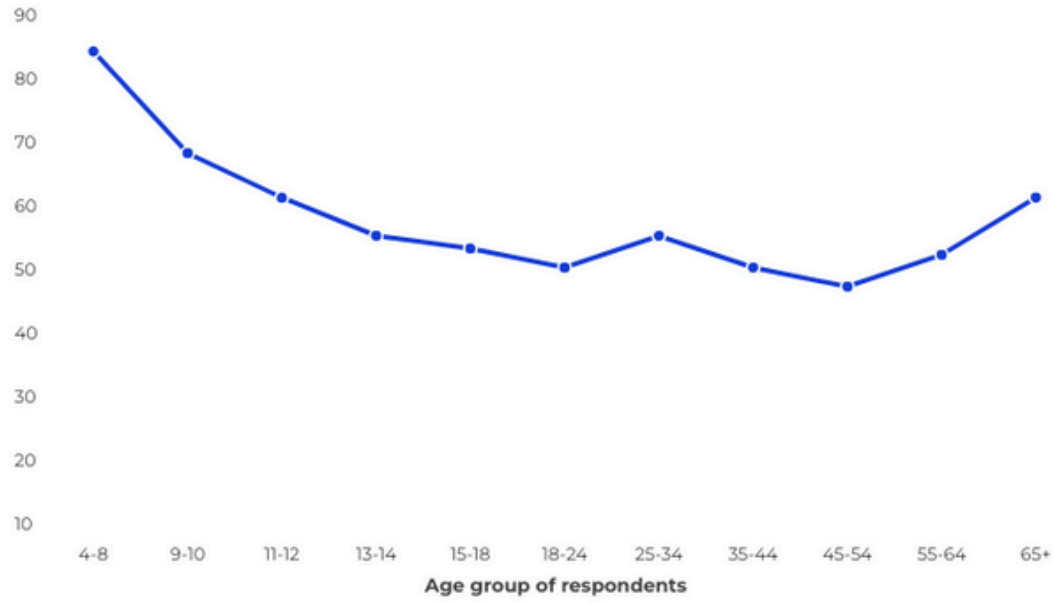
Among low-income women under the age of 35, enjoyment of reading is fifty-seven percent - a drop of ten percentage points, compared to the whole population. However enjoyment of numbers among this group is thirty percent - a drop of twenty-one percentage points compared to the whole population.

Enjoyment also appears to fluctuate with age. When we asked children as young as 4 years old if they enjoyed using numbers, eighty-six percent did. Among older children, enjoyment of everyday numbers tends to drop. Within this drop, we found a significant gender disparity.

Boys and girls show similar rates of enjoyment when they are aged 4-8 years old: both eighty-six percent. Among boys aged 9-18, enjoyment decreases to seventy-one percent. Among girls in the same age range, forty-nine percent say they enjoy using everyday numbers. Where boys' enjoyment drops by fifteen percentage points between the two age groups, girls' enjoyment drops by thirty-seven percentage points.

By adulthood, fifty-two percent of all 18-24s enjoy everyday numbers. Adult enjoyment peaks among over 65s (sixty-three percent).

Tracking everyday number enjoyment through different age groups

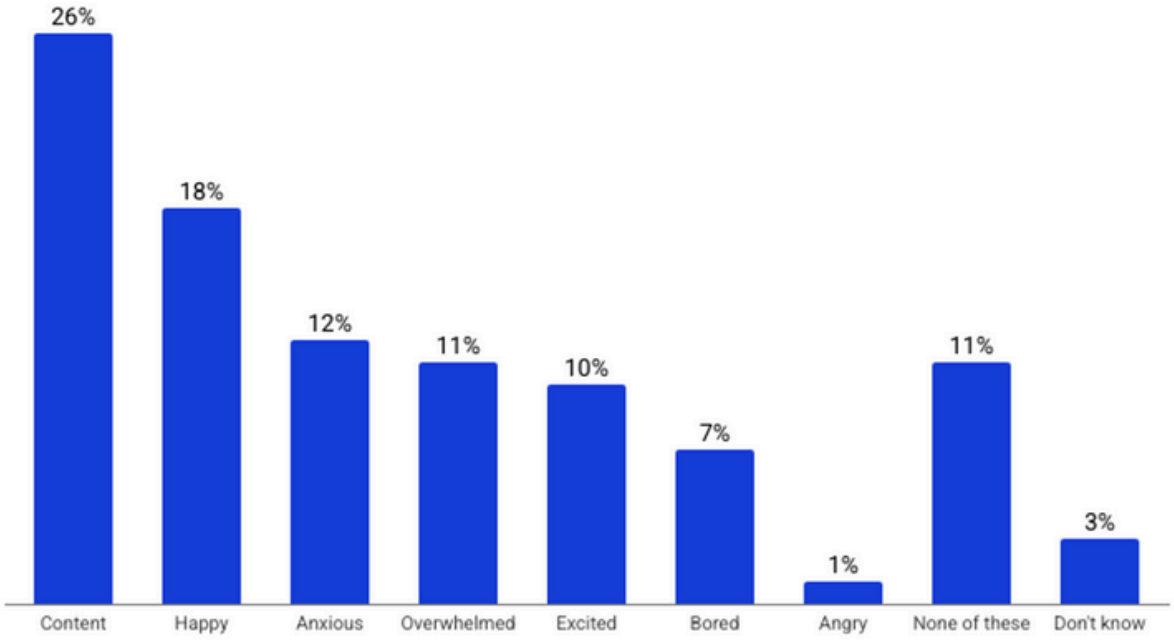


Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

What are UK adults' emotional responses to using numbers?

Twenty-six percent feel 'content' handling data and numbers, and a further eighteen percent feel happy. Ten percent say they feel excited when handling numbers.

The proportion of adults who feel each emotion when they are handling data or numbers

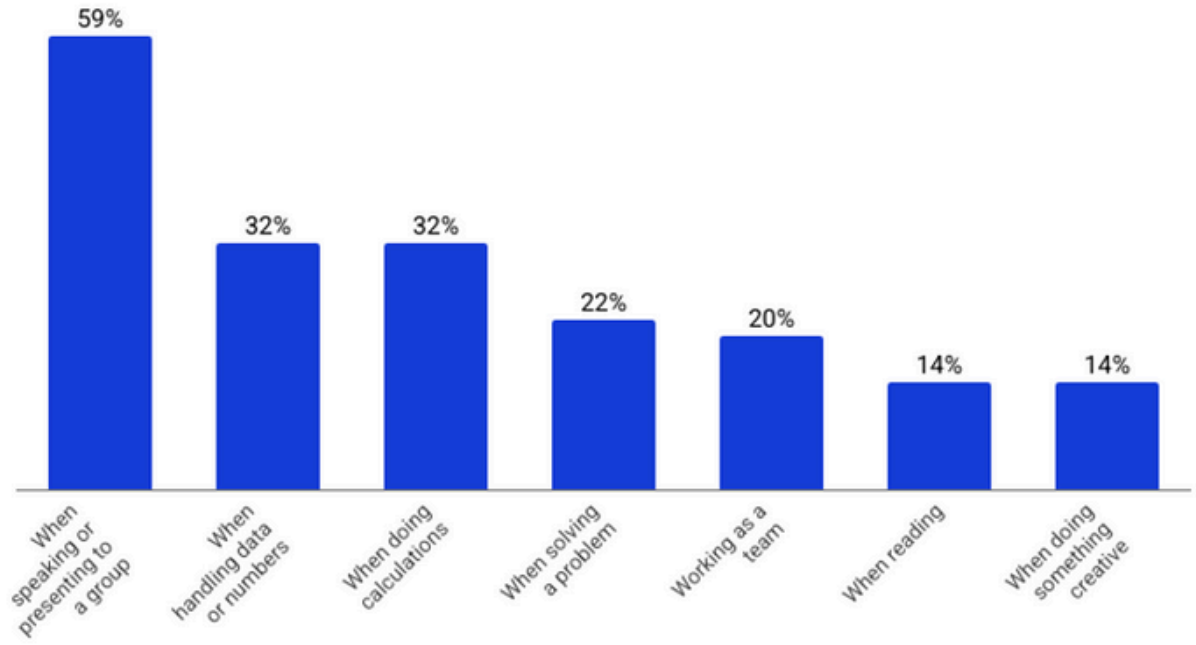


Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

But around one in five adults feel anxious or overwhelmed when using numbers - twelve percent say that working with data and numbers makes them feel anxious, and eleven percent say they feel overwhelmed.

Aside from public speaking, using data, numbers and making calculations are the day-to-day tasks which most commonly elicit a negative emotional response. Thirty-two percent said they felt negative emotions when working with numbers – more than double the percentage who feel the same way about reading.

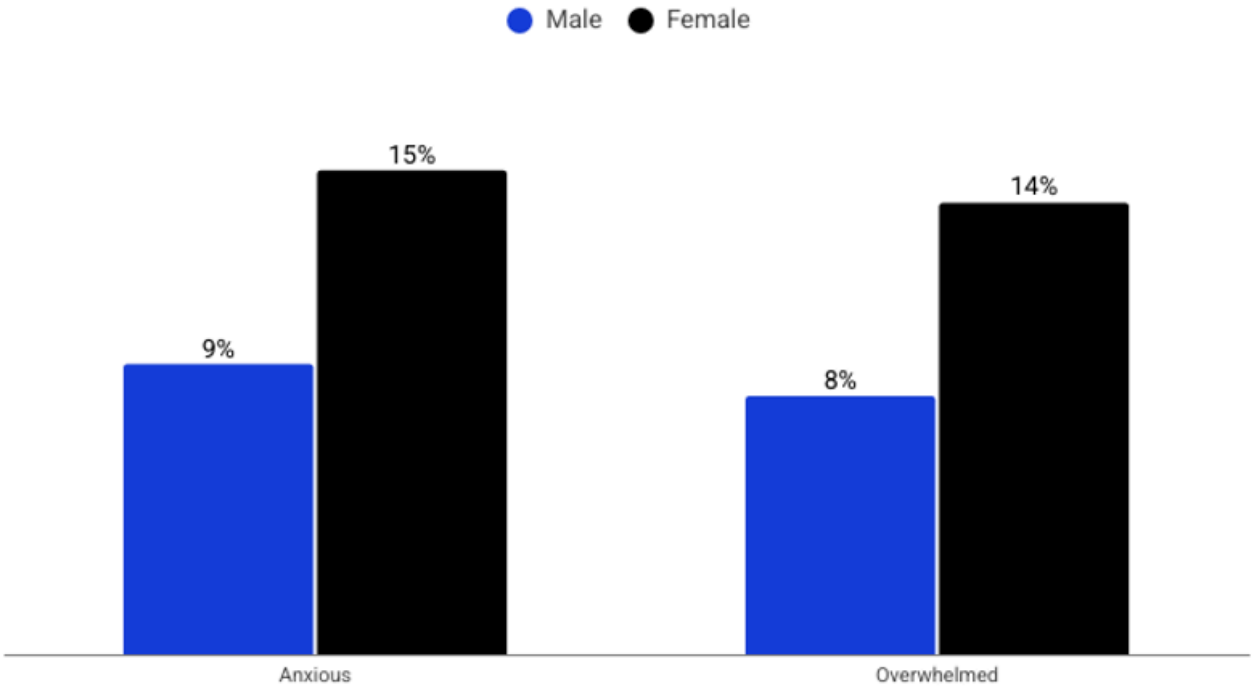
The proportion of adults who feel negative emotions when...



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Women are particularly likely to feel these negative emotions when handing numbers, compared to men. Nine percent of men say that handling data and numbers makes them feel anxious, compared with fifteen percent of women. Eight percent of men say they feel overwhelmed, rising to fourteen percent among women.

The emotions adults feel when they are handling data or numbers, by males and females



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

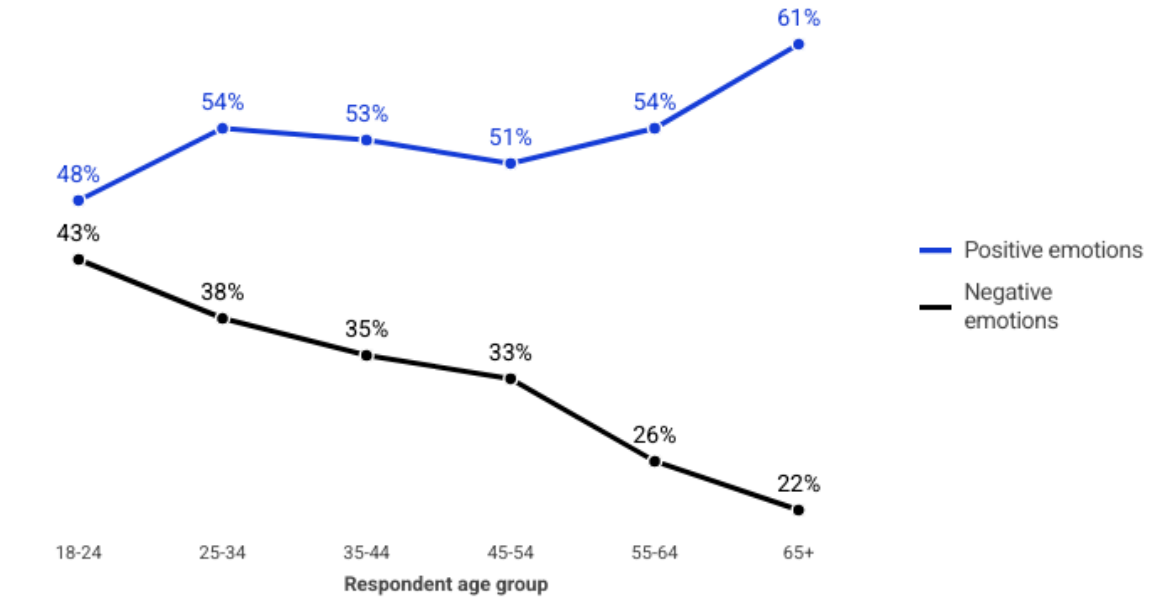
Younger adults are also more likely to feel overwhelmed than older adults. Fifteen percent of those under 34 report feeling overwhelmed when handling numbers, compared with seven percent of those aged 65 and over. People in the lower social grades are also more likely to report feeling anxious about numbers than those in higher grades.

Positive emotional responses to using numbers are more common among men, those in the higher social grades, and those with higher levels of education. Sixty-three percent of men report positive feelings, as do sixty-six percent of people with a Master's degree. Among adults with a doctorate, this reaches seventy-two percent.

Just eighteen percent of higher social grade men educated to at least an undergraduate level report negative emotions when handling data or numbers. By comparison, among non-degree educated, lower social grade women, forty-six percent have negative emotional responses.

Older adults tend to feel more positively about handling data and numbers than younger adults, demonstrating a need for more support as people start their careers and families. Among 18 to 24 year olds, there is a five percentage point difference between reporting of positive and negative emotions. Younger adults are slightly more likely to experience positive (rather than negative) emotions when handling numbers or data. This gap widens significantly to thirty-nine percentage points among those aged 65 and over. Older adults are nearly three times as likely to experience a positive emotion when handling numbers than a negative one.

The emotions adults feel when handling data or numbers, across the age groups



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

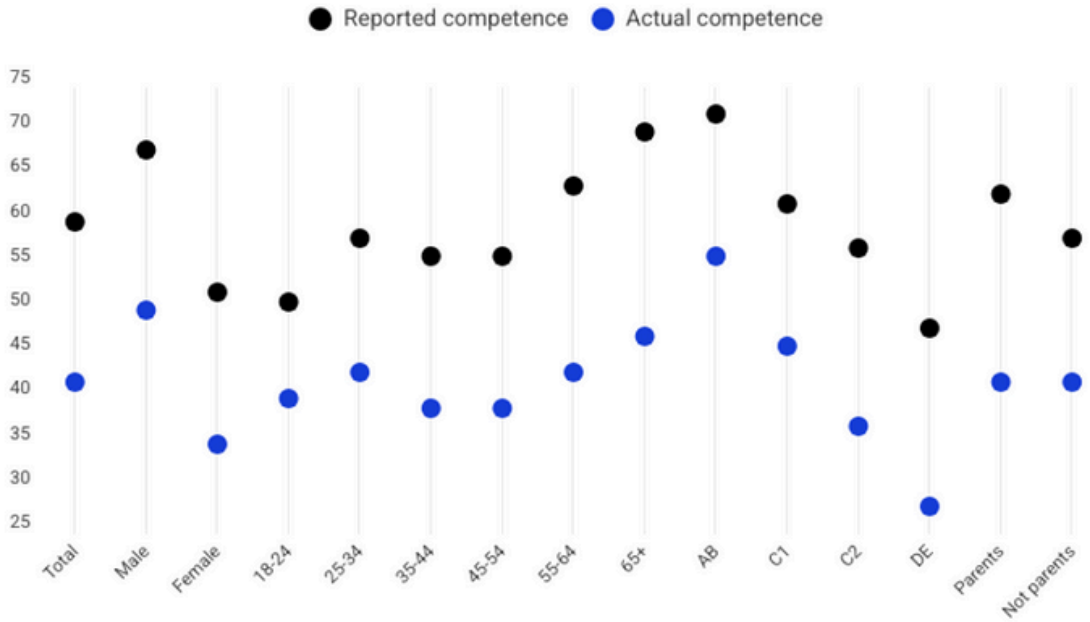
Finding 3: Only around forty percent of adults scored highly for numerical competence, and a majority of UK adults overestimate their own ability to use numbers.

Only around forty percent of adults scored highly for numerical competence in our analysis, despite sixty percent of respondents assessing their own abilities as high. Just about everyone overestimates their own ability to use everyday numbers. The chart below compares the proportion of people who say they are good at using everyday numbers with the proportion who actually score highly on the numerical competency index.

Across every demographic group we examined, respondents tended to rate themselves more positively than their tested competence would suggest. In each case, more people said they were good with numbers than demonstrated high or very high competency in practice.[1]

This over-estimation was greater among some groups than others. Young adults aged 18 to 24 show the smallest gap, at eleven percent. Among people aged 65 and over the competence gap reaches twenty-three percent. Forty-two percent of lower socio-economic grade women with children report good competency, while only twenty percent actually had a high or very high competency score - a gap of twenty-two percentage points.

The gap between reported number competence and actual number competence



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

[1] In this chart, 'reported competence' is the sum of all those who rated their competence either a 4 out of 5 or a 5 out of 5 on a likert scale. 'Actual competence' is all those who achieved a 'high' or 'very high' score on the numerical competence index.

How do numerical competency levels differ by demographic?

To understand the size of the gap between these two measures, we built a numerical competency index.[2] This gives every respondent a competency score for how good they are, in reality, at using everyday numbers. This score can then be compared to how good people think they are at using numbers, to understand which people over- or under-estimate their own ability to use numbers.

The four levels of competency score are: Very low, Low, High and Very high. The below heat map shows the proportions of each demographic that sit within each competency level. Based on our assessment, median numerical competency in the UK is low.

[2] For each individual respondent, we calculated a mathematical competency score. This score is a combination of attainment in Maths at GCSE/ National 5/ A-Level/ Scottish Highers, as well as responses to a series of mathematical questions that respondents had to answer in the survey itself.

The proportion of each demographic who show… competency level				
	Very low	Low	High	Very high
Gender				
Male	16%	34%	21%	28%
Female	27%	37%	16%	19%
Age Group				
18-24	20%	40%	20%	21%
25-34	20%	37%	21%	22%
35-44	22%	39%	19%	21%
45-54	25%	35%	20%	19%
55-64	21%	36%	19%	24%
65+	23%	30%	16%	32%
Region				
East Midlands	23%	37%	17%	23%
East of England	22%	36%	18%	24%
London	18%	37%	22%	24%
North East	21%	40%	17%	21%
North West	21%	35%	21%	23%
Northern Ireland	20%	36%	17%	28%
Scotland	18%	33%	19%	30%
South East	23%	36%	19%	22%
South West	22%	37%	18%	23%
Wales	29%	33%	15%	23%
West Midlands	25%	38%	17%	20%
Yorkshire and the Humber	26%	33%	18%	23%
Socioeconomic Grade				
A	11%	31%	23%	34%
B	12%	32%	22%	34%
C1	18%	36%	21%	25%
C2	24%	38%	19%	18%
D	32%	40%	14%	15%
E	39%	33%	12%	15%

Competency levels differ between demographic groups. Twenty-seven percent of women have very low number competency, compared to sixteen percent of men. Those in the lowest socioeconomic grade (usually those who are unemployed, or working in the lowest grade occupations) are more likely to fall into the very low competency category, than just low competency. As one's socioeconomic grade climbs, the likelihood of having very low competency falls, and the likelihood of being high or very high competency increases.

Although the modal competency in all regions is low, some places show up as hotspots for very low number competency. Twenty-nine percent of those in Wales, twenty-six percent of those in Yorkshire and the Humber, and twenty-five percent of those in the West Midlands have very low competency (compared to twenty-one percent of the whole adult UK population). At the other end of the scale, those who live in Scotland, the over 65s and men are more likely to fall into the very high competency category.

Sixty-two percent of those who say they enjoy using numbers a lot also have a high or very high numerical competency score. Among those who don't enjoy using numbers at all, just eleven percent have high or very high competency.

How does competence map against confidence by demographic?

We can combine scores on confidence and competence to see a fuller picture of numeracy levels across UK adults. Women - particularly younger women and those in lower socio economic groups - were fourteen percentage points more likely than their male counterparts to be in the low confidence, low competence group and fifteen percentage points less likely to be in the high confidence, high competence group.

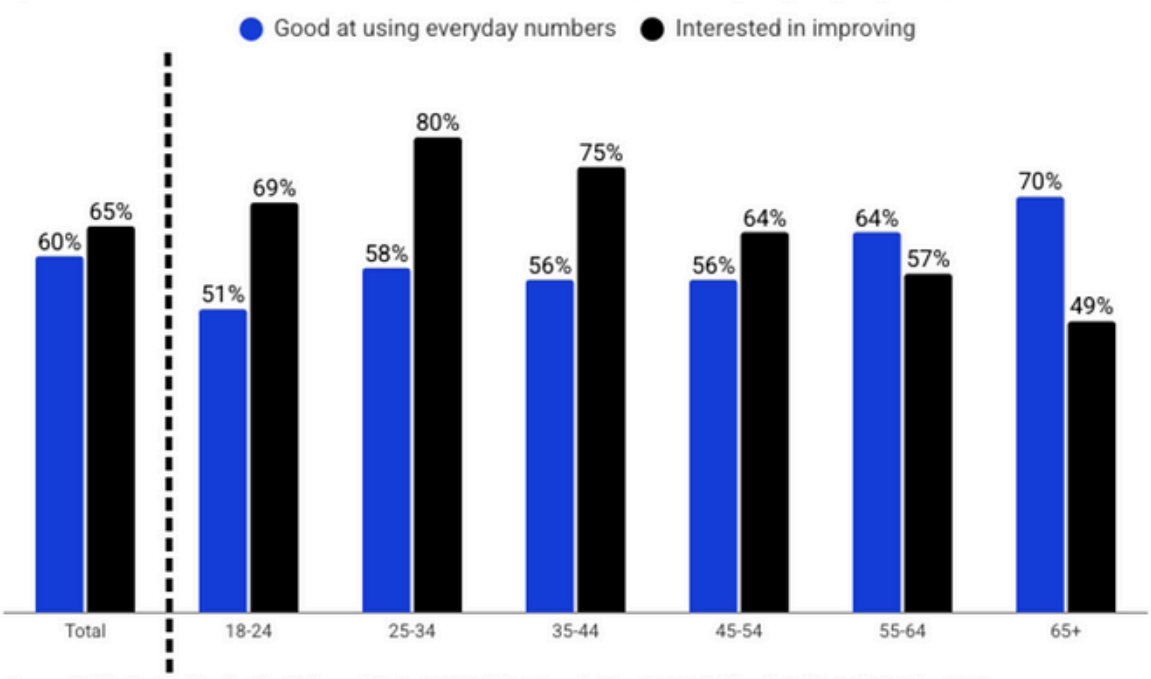
The proportion of each demographic who show…				
	Low confidence, low competence	Low confidence, high competence	High confidence, low competence	High confidence, high competence
Total UK adults	21%	4%	36%	39%
Gender				
Male	14%	4%	36%	46%
Female	28%	5%	36%	31%
Age Group				
18-24	26%	8%	33%	33%
25-34	18%	5%	38%	39%
35-44	22%	4%	38%	36%
45-54	23%	3%	37%	37%
55-64	20%	3%	36%	41%
65+	18%	2%	34%	45%
Region				
East Midlands	24%	3%	35%	37%
East of England	19%	3%	38%	40%
London	16%	5%	38%	41%
North East	21%	6%	40%	33%
North West	22%	4%	33%	41%
Northern Ireland	19%	4%	35%	41%
Scotland	17%	6%	33%	44%
South East	22%	3%	36%	39%
South West	23%	5%	35%	37%
Wales	24%	6%	37%	33%
West Midlands	23%	4%	40%	33%
Yorkshire and the Humber	25%	3%	33%	38%
Socioeconomic Grade				
A	4%	4%	38%	53%
B	13%	4%	31%	52%
C1	17%	4%	36%	43%
C2	23%	4%	39%	33%
D	32%	4%	39%	24%
E	36%	3%	35%	26%

Finding 4: Two-thirds of UK adults want to improve their number skills.

There is reason to be optimistic that these patterns can change. Two-thirds of adults want to improve their number skills: both men and women. Sixty-eight percent of men and sixty-two percent of women say they would be interested in bettering their number skills.

Younger adults remain more interested in improving their skills. Sixty-nine percent of 18 to 24 year olds say they would like to improve, compared with forty-nine percent of those aged 65 and over.

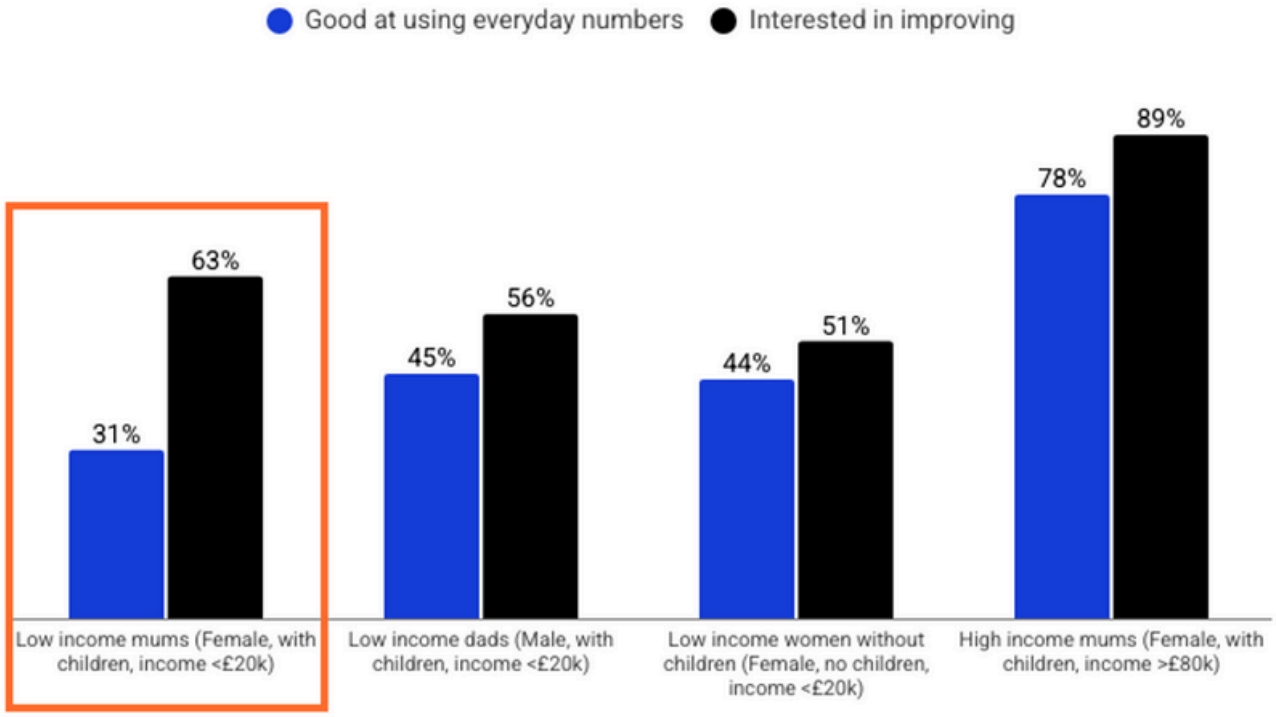
All adults who would rate their own abilities with everyday numbers as 'good', and those who are interested in improving, by age group



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Other groups are also likely to say they are not good at using numbers, but still want to improve; low-income mothers are one such group.

All adults who would rate their own abilities with everyday numbers as 'good', and those who are interested in improving, by demographic profiles



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

Thirty-one percent of females with children in households earning under £20,000 per year say they are good with everyday numbers. This is noticeably lower than confidence among low income fathers, and low income women without children. High income mothers are 2.5 times more likely to say they are good with everyday numbers than low income mothers.

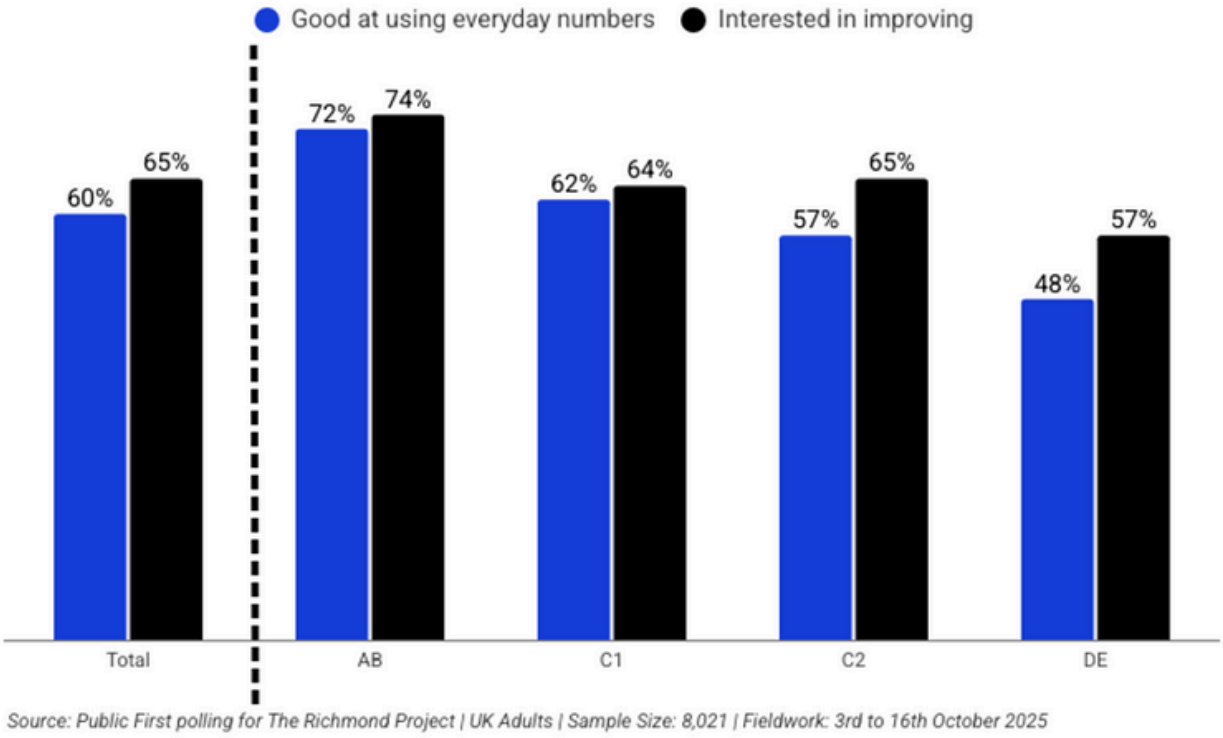
While three in ten think they are currently good at using numbers, twice as many low income mums want to improve their number skills (sixty-three percent).

Socioeconomic background also shapes levels of confidence and motivation regarding everyday numbers. Across all groups, most adults recognise that everyday numeracy matters, although this belief is strongest among those in the AB social grade, where ninety-four percent say it is important, compared with eighty-six percent in the DE group.

Confidence follows a similar pattern. Nearly three quarters of AB adults consider themselves good at using numbers, while fewer than half (forty-eight percent) in the DE group say the same.

Unlike in the case of gender or age, the group who are most likely to say they are already good with everyday numbers are also the group most likely to want to improve: those in higher socioeconomic grade. While seventy-four percent of AB grade people say they would be interested in improving, this drops to fifty-seven percent of those in the DE grade.

All adults who would rate their own abilities with everyday numbers as 'good', and those who are interested in improving, by socioeconomic grade



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

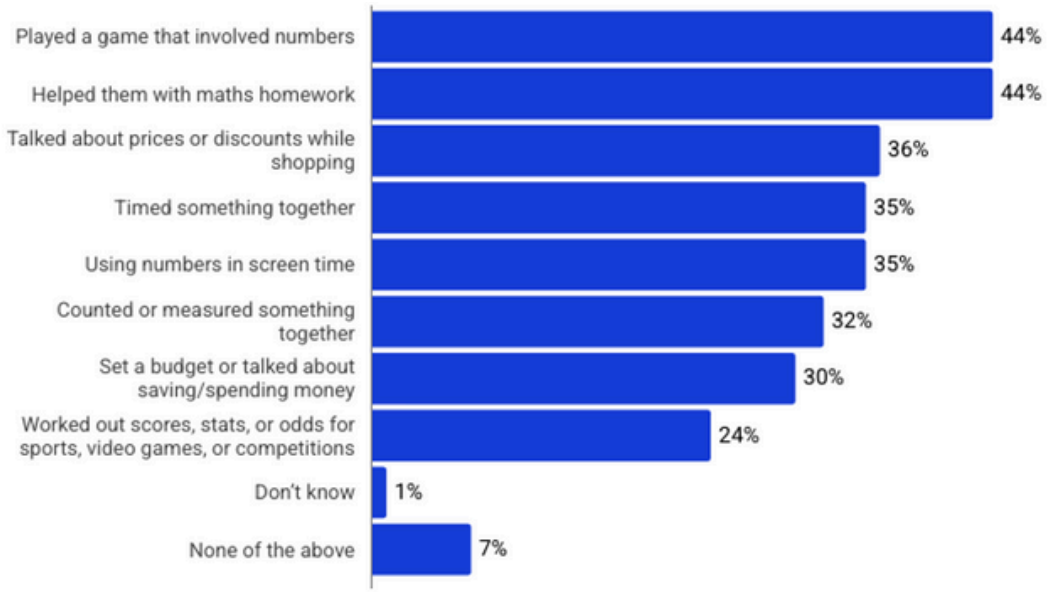
Seventy-four percent would support more government initiatives to improve the public's number skills and such schemes are most popular among those who already have very high numerical competence (with eighty-five percent support among this group, compared to fifty-eight percent of those with very low numerical competency).

Finding 5: Ninety percent of parents are interested in improving their child's skills at using numbers, and seventy-eight percent are interested in improving their own skills. But one in five would not feel confident helping with maths homework.

There is an overwhelming desire from parents to see their own child's number skills improve: fifty-four percent of parents would be very interested, and a further thirty-six percent indicated they would be somewhat interested. This is the case across the board, with parents of all social grades, income levels, genders and ages keen for their children to improve. This sentiment is also reflected among children aged 9-18, eighty-five percent of which said they were interested in improving.

When it comes to using numbers with children, parents engage in a wide range of activities. Forty-four percent say that in the last month they have helped their child with maths homework, and another forty-four percent have played a game that involved numbers.

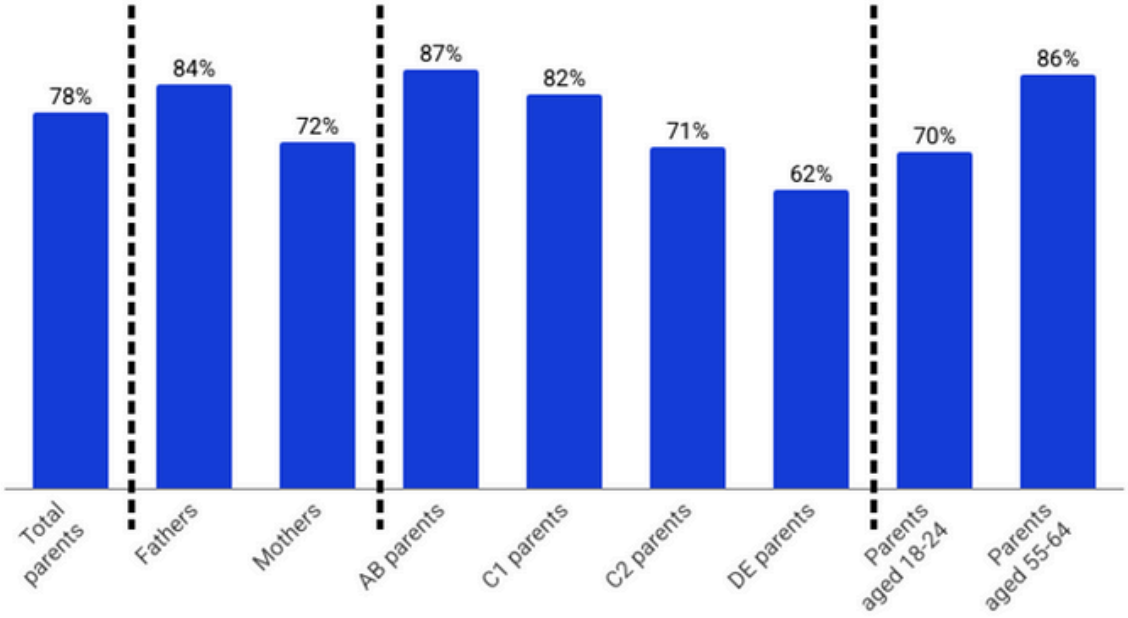
Parents who have completed each activity with their child in the last month



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

There's not a huge confidence gap between parents and non-parents when it comes to confidence handling data and numbers: seventy-eight percent of parents say they're confident, compared to seventy-one percent of non-parents. Compared to those without children, parents were thirteen percentage points more likely than non-parents to want to improve their skills with numbers - with seventy-eight percent of parents expressing interest in getting better. Thirty-five percent of parents wanted to improve their own numeracy skills because it would mean they could help their children better.

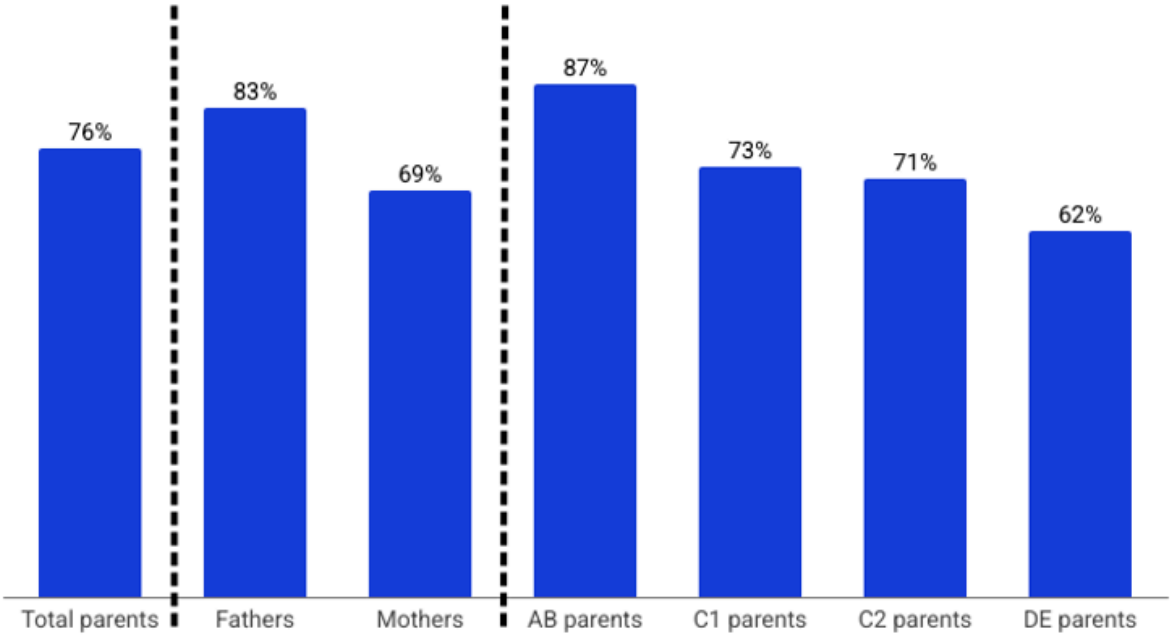
Parents who say they feel confident handling data or numbers



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

When it comes to helping out with maths homework, three-quarters of parents said they feel confident supporting their children in this. There were disparities in confidence, however. Mothers were less likely than fathers to feel confident supporting their children with homework (sixty-nine percent confident compared to eighty-three percent). While eighty-seven percent of parents in higher social grades feel confident giving homework help, this falls to sixty-two percent of lower social grade parents.

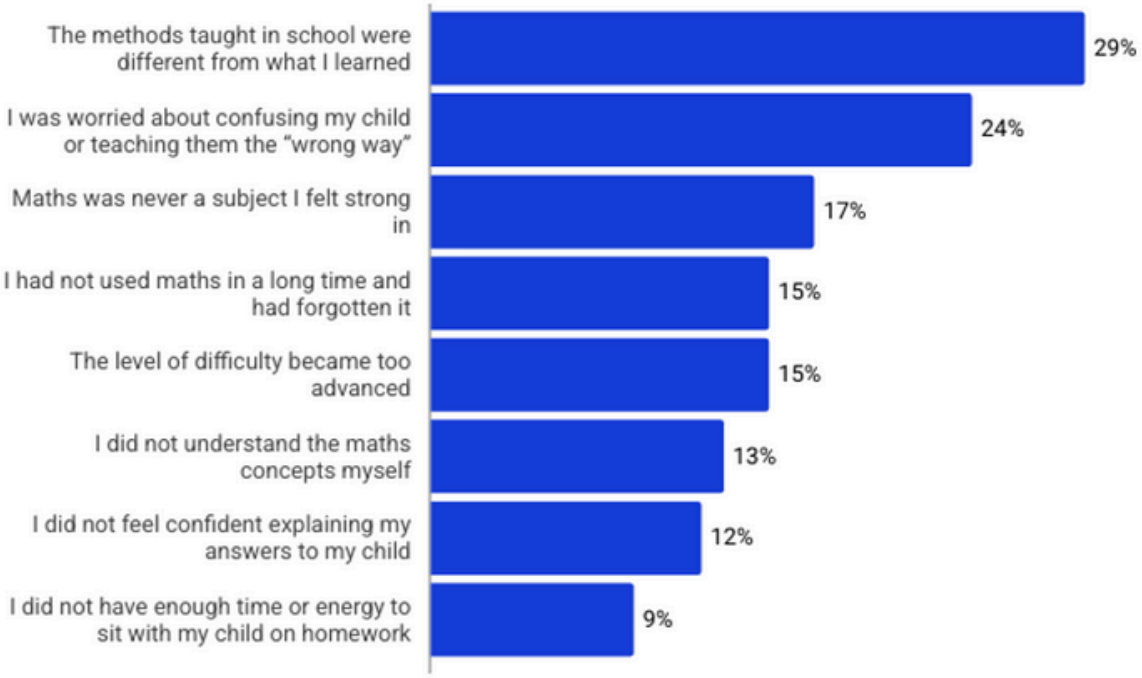
Parents who say they feel confident helping their child with their maths homework



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

The most common reason for a parental lack of confidence was because they felt that methods taught today were different from what they learned in school – selected by 29 percent of parents. This was followed by a concern about teaching their child 'the wrong way' (selected by 24 percent of parents).

The reasons that parents say they do not feel confident helping their child with their maths homework



Source: Public First polling for The Richmond Project | UK Adults | Sample Size: 8,021 | Fieldwork: 3rd to 16th October 2025

BUILDING A NUMBER NATION

This research provides a clear baseline for understanding how adults across the UK think about, engage with and feel about everyday numbers. It highlights a society where the value of numeracy is broadly recognised but confidence, enjoyment and competence are unevenly distributed. These disparities matter. They shape financial resilience, influence career progression and deepen existing inequalities.

Underlying this report is a powerful new dataset. Responses from more than 10,000 nationally representative people in the UK allow us to take a much closer look at attitudes to numbers than ever before. We can go beyond surface-level headlines, diving deep into demographic trends. We are not confined to only examining the difference between men and women – we can now expose the difference between low-income mothers and low-income fathers, for example.

This report scratches the surface of what is possible with this data, and we are looking forward to continuing our analysis of this unique resource.

Alongside this further analysis, we are conducting qualitative opinion research, using a combination of focus groups and innovative in-home family case studies. This will uncover not just the 'what' – what do the public think and feel about numbers – but the 'why' too. Why are attitudes towards everyday numbers the way they are in the UK? We will then use this unrivalled evidence base to shape and target policy interventions. These interventions will strive to close the gaps and make everyone, regardless of their age, background or ability, realise that they are "numbers people".

The findings set the direction for what comes next. They show where support is most needed, which groups face the steepest barriers and where a shift in culture could deliver the greatest impact. They will underpin the next phase of work, including deeper studies on financial literacy and the experiences of families, and will guide The Richmond Project as it develops a programme designed to build capability and confidence at scale.

This is the starting point for a long-term effort to reshape the nation's relationship with numbers. By grounding its future interventions in this evidence, The Richmond Project aims to ensure that the country's next steps are not only ambitious but targeted, practical and capable of closing the confidence gap for good.

METHODOLOGY

To understand how people feel about and use everyday numbers, we conducted several online polls with a range of different groups of people living in the UK. Two of these polls were distributed to adults in the UK.

The first was with a sample of 2,003 adults in the UK, from 4th to 12th September 2025.

The second, and the one upon which this report is based, was a sample of 8,021 adults in the UK from 3rd to 16th October 2025.

A third poll was conducted with a sample of 2,008 children aged between 4 and 18 in the UK, from 3rd to 16th October 2025.

All results are weighted using Iterative Proportional Fitting or 'Raking'. Results of the poll are weighted by interlocking age & gender, region and social grade to Nationally Representative Proportions. This report references “social grade” throughout, based on the ONS Social Grade is a socio-economic classification. This is a way of grouping people by type, which is mainly based on their social and financial situation. Social Grade has six possible classifications (A, B, C1, C2, D and E). Census data uses a combined, four-way classification:

- 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 occupation

About Public First

Public First is an independent policy, research and strategy consultancy, specialising in public opinion. Our team includes policy and communications experts, as well as economists who have worked in the heart of governments, academia, think tanks, and industry.

Headquartered in London, we work with global companies, governments, institutions and foundations around the world to tackle major public policy and strategic challenges. Most importantly, our work is rooted in an understanding of real people in real communities.

The Education Practice at Public First is one of the firm's flagship specialisms, comprising of former senior government advisors, civil servants, and think-tank experts. We provide strategic consultancy to a diverse roster of clients, including Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), universities, charities, and global brand - some of the most well recognised names in the education space.

Public First is a member of the British Polling Council and a Company Partner of the Market Research Society. All research was carried out in line with the professional and ethical standards set by these bodies, including our duty of transparency. Full polling tables are available Public First's website.

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About The Policy Institute at King's College London

The Policy Institute at King's College London works to solve society's challenges with evidence and expertise.

Part of the Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy, we combine the rigour of academia with the agility of a consultancy and the connectedness of a think tank.

Our research draws on many disciplines and methods, making use of the skills, expertise and resources of not only the institute, but the university and its wider network too.

About Purposeful Ventures

Purposeful Ventures partners with social entrepreneurs and philanthropists to improve the education and well-being of young people from their earliest years.

We do this by selecting, accelerating and, where we find a gap, incubating organisations which tackle particular issues. Together, we test and scale effective solutions and influence system change.