Who takes part in adult learning and how?

Technological innovations, digitalisation and demographic changes are rapidly changing our world. People need new skills and new ways of learning. Acquiring knowledge and skills in a ‘traditional’ way, meaning at school or at university, is no longer sufficient to equip people with the necessary skills for their future career and a good quality life. Life-long learning becomes a necessity, and governments, stakeholders and social partners will have to find ways to help people reskill and upskills throughout their lives.

**Forms of adult learning**
Across the EU, adults are more likely to engage in non-formal or informal learning rather than in formal learning.

- **Formal learning** – e.g. programmes in schools and universities
- **Non-formal learning** – e.g. language courses, in-company training or workshops
- **Informal learning** – e.g. learning from colleagues, visiting museums and reading (e-)books

**Who takes part in adult learning?**

- **Women** are more likely to take part in adult learning than men
  - Women: 11.8%
  - Men: 10%

- **Younger adults** are more likely to take part in adult learning than older ones
  - 25-34 years old: 17.6%
  - 55-64 years old: 6.3%

- **High-qualified adults** are more likely to take part in adult learning than low-qualified adults, and...
  - Low-qualified adults: 4.3%
  - Medium-qualified adults: 8.9%
  - High-qualified adults: 18.6%

- **People living in cities** are more likely to take part in adult learning than people living in towns, suburbs or rural areas
  - Cities: 13.3%
  - Towns and suburbs: 8.9%
  - Rural areas: 8.6%
Where and what do adults learn?

Employers and non-formal education and training institutions are the main providers of non-formal learning for adults.

Most companies, which upskill their employees focus on technical and practical skills.

- **64.6%** of companies develop technical, practical and job-related skills.
- **1.2%** of companies develop numeracy or literacy skills.

Motivations for adults to learn

The main reasons adults take part in formal or non-formal learning are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Employed people</th>
<th>Inactive people</th>
<th>Unemployed people</th>
<th>Low-qualified adults</th>
<th>High-qualified adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To do the job better and/or improve career prospects</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase individual knowledge on an interesting subject</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire useful knowledge and/or skills for everyday life</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the likelihood of getting or changing jobs</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For adults that wanted to take part in learning activities but did not, the main obstacles were:

### Low-qualified adults

1. Family responsibilities: 33.7%
2. Lack of time: 31.3%
3. Too expensive: 28.7%
4. Health or age: 22.9%
5. Lack of employer’s support or public services support: 19.3%
6. No suitable education or training courses available: 16.6%
7. Lack of entrance requirements: 16.5%
8. Distance: 16.4%
9. No access to a computer or internet: 7.8%
10. Negative previous learning experience: 4.8%

### High-qualified adults

1. Lack of time: 49.3%
2. Family responsibilities: 32.1%
3. Too expensive: 28.8%
4. Lack of employer’s support or public services support: 22.7%
5. Distance: 16.1%
6. No suitable education or training courses available: 13.2%
7. Health or age: 6.3%
8. Lack of entrance requirements: 4.7%
9. Negative previous learning experience: 2.2%
10. No access to a computer or internet: 1.1%
Personalised guidance is key in supporting learner’s progress through all the steps of the upskilling process, but few low-qualified adults benefit from it.

Population receiving guidance and counselling:

- **Age**: 31.5% 25-34 years old, 18.8% 55-64 years old
- **Gender**: 27.3% Women, 24.7% Men
- **Level of qualification**: 42.1% High-qualified adults, 12.8% Low-qualified adults
- **Working status**: 29% Employed people, 25.6% Unemployed people, 14.5% Inactive people

Share of adults who receive guidance and counselling in Member States:

In countries where more adults receive **guidance and counselling**, more adults take part in learning.