

**"Numeracy has  
opened doors for  
me in so many ways."**

Maryam, National Numeracy beneficiary



**"I urge you to take the  
National Numeracy  
Challenge."**

Martin Lewis,  
National Numeracy Ambassador



**A decade of impact, 2012-2022**

**"Numeracy gives you  
power and independence."**

Christine, National Numeracy beneficiary



[nationalnumeracy.org.uk](https://nationalnumeracy.org.uk)



## About National Numeracy

National Numeracy is a charity dedicated to helping people feel confident with numbers and using everyday maths. Our mission is to empower children and adults in the UK to get on with numbers so they can fulfil their potential at work, home and school. Our work improves how people understand and work with numbers in everyday life, sparking better opportunities and brighter futures.

For an in-depth look at our impact, research and partnerships, visit: [nationalnumeracy.org.uk](https://nationalnumeracy.org.uk)

## Our supporters

We are very grateful for our supporters' commitment and belief in National Numeracy's work as a vehicle for positive change. Could your organisation join us?

Working with us brings a host of strategic business benefits and we would be delighted to discuss how you can get involved. Please contact [ellie@nationalnumeracy.org.uk](mailto:ellie@nationalnumeracy.org.uk) to arrange a chat about how we can work together.

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St James' Place  
The Lord Mayor's Appeal  
TP ICAP  
Ufi VocTech Trust

## Why numeracy, why now?

The years bookending National Numeracy's first decade as the UK's only charity dedicated to everyday maths could not be more different.

2012 is ingrained in the national psyche as a celebratory year: the spectacular opening ceremony of London's Olympic Games and the gold medal rush of Super Saturday. 2022 witnessed the joy of a Platinum Jubilee, but it will be remembered for more sorrowful and challenging reasons.

From families navigating the cost-of-living crisis and businesses searching for skilled staff to communities recovering from the Covid pandemic and the quest for greater national economic, educational, and social equity; numeracy is fundamental to the fabric of our lives and future of our nation.

Together, we have made much progress. But the data shows the need to address low numeracy at the national level is as critical today as it was a decade ago, and the benefits could be more powerful than ever.

**"Our mission is to empower children and adults in the UK to get on with numbers so they can fulfil their potential."**



Our mission is to empower children and adults in the UK to get on with numbers so they can fulfil their potential at work, home and school. As an engine of social mobility, our work leads to better outcomes for society, the economy and, most importantly, individuals, particularly those in disadvantaged communities where the need is greatest.

Join us in putting the advantages of good numeracy at the heart of this country's next decade of development.

**Sam Sims**  
CEO, National Numeracy

**Perdita Fraser,**  
Chair, National Numeracy

# Top 10 learnings from 10 years of improving numeracy

**1**  
**Confidence is**  
crucial to unlocking  
skills improvement.

We put it at the  
heart of everything  
we do.



**2**  
**Social mobility is**  
held back by poor  
numeracy which  
has a dispropor-  
tionate effect on  
disadvantaged  
communities.

Our new strategy  
focusses on  
supporting those  
with low numeracy  
in disadvantaged  
communities,  
where the need is  
greatest.

**3**  
**Parents/carers are**  
key in breaking the  
cycle of negative  
attitudes to  
numeracy.

We help parents/  
carers support  
children and  
improve their own  
numeracy at the  
same time.



**4**  
**Levels of numeracy**  
(both actual and  
perceived) lag  
behind that of  
literacy.

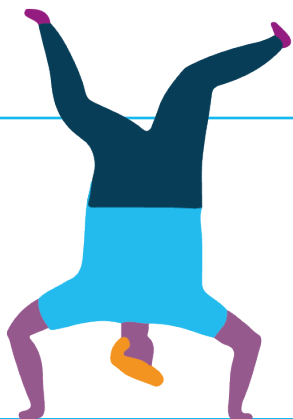
Our award-winning  
campaigns have  
inspired over  
700,000 actions to  
improve numeracy.

**5**  
**Gender – there is a**  
number confidence  
and skills gap  
between women  
and men across all  
age groups.

We purposefully  
support women  
and girls to build  
confidence and  
break down  
barriers.







6

**Productivity** - numeracy for getting into work and getting on at work is a key motivator for both employees and employers.

We help employers build skilled, resilient and adaptable workforces and communities, through training 'numeracy champions' to support colleagues.

7

**Business** leaders underestimate the UK's numeracy crisis and overestimate average numeracy levels.

We launched the National Numeracy Leadership Council in 2021 to collaborate on solutions.

8

**Policy** should focus on low numeracy hot spots as a potential lever to support more equitable access.

We help decision-makers by offering unique tools and insight, like the UK Numeracy Index.



9

**Motivation** to improve numeracy is boosted by valuing maths in daily life.

We focus on the reasons people give for wanting to improve their numeracy: work, managing money and supporting children.

10

**Belief** that maths ability is fixed is often the biggest barrier to improvement.

How people feel about maths and encouraging a growth mindset are central to our work.







## Our values

National Numeracy's 'Core Four' deeply held values define what's important to us. They guide our actions, drive our decision-making, and exemplify how we serve individuals and communities.

### 1 Community commitment:

**We put people first.  
We give 100% to our  
people, partners  
and communities.**

### 2 Trusted experts:

**We are the UK's  
numeracy experts.  
We use data and  
evidence to offer  
credible, trusted  
insight.**

### 3 Empowered futures:

**We empower people  
for positive change.  
We listen, build  
confidence and  
enable people to  
gain greater control  
over their futures.**

### 4 Always learning:

**We believe change  
can happen. We  
are persistent  
and passionate in  
supporting people,  
partners and  
communities to  
accomplish  
their goals.**



## References

1. National Numeracy commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey of 2,229 adults (18+) on between 12th–13th September 2022, to assess levels for numeracy and explore attitudes towards maths and numbers. The survey was carried out online. The final weighted sample is representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).
2. DBIS. '2011 Skills for Life Survey'. Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012.
3. YouGov survey of the nation (c.2000 people aged 16+) (September 2019), commissioned by National Numeracy.
4. Counting on the recovery: the role for numeracy skills in 'levelling up' the UK. 2021. Pro Bono Economics.

## New research and on-going impact

This short report combines the findings of new YouGov research (1) with some of our impact stories and reflections on a decade of working to build a numerate nation from partners and beneficiaries.

Over the past decade, National Numeracy has supported hundreds of thousands of people across the country to improve their number confidence and skills.



As a result, we have a deep understanding of how and why people improve their numeracy skills, the UK's largest data set about adult numeracy and a unique learning tool with the National Numeracy Challenge. But we haven't stopped there.

We have been curious about how people feel about maths. We have sought to understand their backstories, their motivations, the barriers in their way and their routes both in to and onwards from improving their numeracy. Many incredible partners and supporters have joined us in this endeavour, enabling our work, supporting our beneficiaries and pioneering new approaches and mindsets in their own organisations.

# How numerate is the UK?

Our new research indicates that at the national level, the numeracy issue has not improved over the past decade. Half the working age population has low numeracy levels, a shocking and stubborn statistic.

The most recent Government-commissioned survey of adult skills, 2011's Skills for Life (2) showed 49% of the working age population has the numeracy level expected of a primary school child. Our survey results in both 2022 (1) and 2019 (3) are broadly in line with that result, at 54% and 56% respectively.

Moreover, in 2022 we appear to care less about improving: 57% of respondents said they didn't want to improve their maths and numeracy, compared to 43% in 2019. (1)

Older age groups tend to be more numerate than younger people who are struggling, especially with the confidence to use numbers, just as they join the workforce. Meanwhile, working class and unemployed people, and part-time workers have the lowest skills, highlighting where help is most needed.

National Numeracy has had incredible impact on hundreds of thousands of people's lives over the past decade. But those with low skills or confidence number 15 million alone; we need to scale up and build out our proven programmes over the next ten years if we are to break this cycle. Progress will require systemic change and sustained collective action from organisations and stakeholders across government, the public sector, business, community groups and charities.

## Impact stories

**National Numeracy's launch** in 2012 followed work by Lord Moser and a 2010 report called **Count Me In** which called for a national campaigning body for numeracy. We remain the only charity in the UK dedicated to everyday maths.

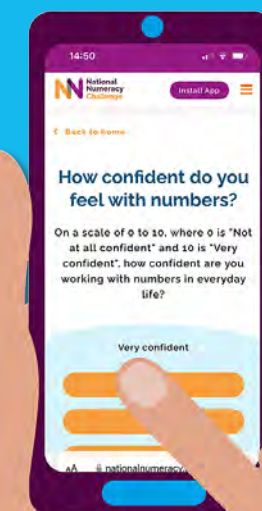
**National Numeracy Day**, the UK's only national campaign dedicated to everyday maths, launched in 2018 with the support of KPMG UK.

Having persistently campaigned for greater government investment in addressing the numeracy issue, we are delighted by the announcement of **Multiply**, the new £560 million numeracy initiative.

**The National Numeracy Challenge** launched in 2014. A unique and free online tool for numeracy improvement that has almost half a million registered users.

**Experian and National Numeracy** worked together in 2021-22 to create the UK Numeracy Index, mapping numeracy vulnerability across the country for the first time.

**The largest, most detailed data set about adult numeracy learners** in the UK allows our understanding of the numeracy issue to constantly evolve.





## What partners say

"Our work with National Numeracy has been hugely rewarding over the last ten years. They are a shining example of how a charity can use innovative digital technology to support adults in the workplace and raise awareness of numeracy across the UK."

Louise Rowland, Deputy CEO, Ufi VocTech Trust



"Working with National Numeracy means working with a creative, engaged and ambitious team who are determined to move the dial on the UK's attitude to numeracy. We are so pleased by what we've achieved together and look forward to continuing our journey."

Roisin Murphy & Roisin Sharkey, Directors Co-Head of Corporate Responsibility, KPMG UK



## Real-life impact

"Being able to do maths makes me feel proud and empowered. If you could bottle the feeling it gives you, people would buy it. I wouldn't be where I am today without National Numeracy."

Stacey



"The National Numeracy Challenge has shown me that despite struggling at first, I was not bad at maths. With a bit of perseverance, I became less scared to face it."

Alba



"I looked at house insurance, car insurance, the mortgage. I've managed to save around £300 a month. I wouldn't have thought to do that without being maths confident."

Oreleo



# Number confidence and the gender gap

Lack of confidence with numbers is holding people back - especially women. National Numeracy has found that confidence is the single best predictor of numeracy skills; without the confidence to face numbers, skills-building is highly unlikely. But women feel significantly less confident with numbers than men, even when they have a high skill level.

Our new research (1) found that women are twice as anxious as men about using maths and numbers. Almost a fifth of the nation (18%) said maths and numbers made them nervous, but when split by gender a polarised story appeared: 24% of women agreed, compared to 12% of men.

Everyone can improve their numeracy, regardless of gender. But low number confidence acts as a barrier to applying the skills people have developed. Our research bears this out:

63% of working age women have the numeracy level expected of a primary school child, compared to 45% of men.

Less than a quarter of the working-age population (24%) has the numeracy level equivalent to a GCSE pass (Grade 4). A third of men (33%) but only 16% of women have reached this level.

This 'number confidence gap' affects many women's lives and careers and is a significant challenge for UK business. If people are not confident to use maths skills in every day situations, they miss out on the benefits of better numeracy, such as making informed decisions about finances.

Addressing this 'number confidence gap' would prove transformational for individuals, communities and the nation, especially in this time of uncertainty and change.

## Impact stories

We launched **Number Confidence Week** in 2020 with Founding Supporter TP ICAP with resources tailored specifically for those who have low number confidence, inspiring and encouraging them to feel better about understanding and working with numbers.

We added a suite of confidence-boosting resources to the **National Numeracy Challenge** in 2020-21 to ensure the tool addressed both confidence and skills, thanks to funding from Ufi VocTech.

Our unique confidence-based approach to numeracy supports **beneficiaries** to take their first step to numeracy improvement and support them throughout the journey.

4,813 schools, colleges, education providers and organisations signed up to be **National Numeracy Day Champions** in 2022, up from 73 in 2018.



## What partners say

"Numeracy matters – for individuals, for families, and for society overall. That's why TP ICAP is proud to have supported National Numeracy since 2018. Engaging people to improve their numeracy skills and build their confidence with numbers is a critical part of fostering social mobility."

Richard Newman, Group Head of Marketing and Communications, TP ICAP

"Experian is tremendously proud to have partnered with National Numeracy since 2018, it's a natural fit with Experian's mission to promote financial health. We are really excited to have worked with National Numeracy to create the first national view of UK numeracy vulnerability, helping target numeracy support and interventions where it is needed the most."

Mark Lindsay, Development Manager, Experian



## Real-life impact

"Numeracy should not stop you from progressing or taking opportunities ... it has opened so many doors for me, and it's exciting. I can't wait for other doors to open."

Maryam



"I took up the National Numeracy Challenge. I was a bit scared because my confidence with numbers wasn't there. But you learn at your own pace... which grew my confidence and eventually helped me when the kids asked for help."

Jason



"We used to get letters from the bank, we didn't understand them. I went back to the basics of numeracy and started building my confidence and was able to feel more in control."

Cathy





## How we value numeracy

The UK's entrenched culture of boasting about being bad at maths is as strong as ever, according to our new research (1).

Where 62% of adults would feel embarrassed to say they were no good at reading and writing, just 45% would feel embarrassed to say they were bad at numbers and maths. This difference is seen year in, year out with people being less worried about having poor numeracy by an average of 17 percentage points. But good numeracy and literacy are vitally important in our lives.

Worryingly, people place much less value on children's numeracy in comparison to literacy. Just one in five (20%) say they would be most proud of their child if they were very good at maths and numbers, while more than twice as many

(45%) would be most proud if their child were very good at reading and writing.

The chief reason 57% people say they don't want to improve their numeracy is because they think they are already good at it. But people are typically overestimating their skill. Nearly half (45%) of those who rated their maths and numeracy as good scored less than three out of five on the numeracy test, which roughly equates to the level we expect of primary school children.

The British culture of ignoring numbers, or even boasting about being bad at them, must change. Our work is all about removing barriers and empowering adults and children to improve their confidence and competence with numbers, to help them in all aspects of their lives.

### Impact stories

Our parental engagement programme targets primary school children in areas of need and supports confidence and skills improvement by helping parents/carers support their children. In 2022 we are working with 17 schools, over 100 classes and more than 2200 pupils. PFG, John Lyons Charity and Garfield Weston are among those supporting this programme to serve low-income communities.

Our training programmes equip learners and 'numeracy champions' who go on to mentor others help people develop positive attitudes towards numeracy. We have trained over 200 Numeracy Champions and are establishing a network of at least 500 Champions by the end of May 2023. 94% of those attending our direct-to-learner sessions said they feel more confident to improve their numeracy.

Our celebrity Ambassador programme goes from strength-to-strength. We are enormously grateful for the support of Martin Lewis, Rachel Riley, Bobby Seagull, Katya Jones, Peter Sawkins, Harry Baker and Timi Merriman-Johnson. Look out for news of our newest Ambassador!



### What partners say

"Through our partnership we've been able to raise awareness of the importance of everyday maths to colleagues and customers. It has also helped us support UN Sustainable Development Goal Number 8 which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Cathy Prior, Social Impact Programme Manager, PFG

The logo for PFG, consisting of the letters 'PFG' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

"Amazon Web Services (AWS) is delighted to be associated with National Numeracy and their work in addressing poor numeracy and elevating the understanding and importance of the issue at the national level."

Vincent Dupre, Account Manager, AWS

The logo for Amazon Web Services (AWS), featuring the word 'aws' in a black, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a curved orange arrow underneath it.

### Real-life impact

"Sixteen years on, I decided to try maths again. What made the difference was finding the value in why I was doing it; the end goal was improving my numeracy so I could complete my apprenticeship."

Kelly



"Using the National Numeracy Challenge and reconnecting with maths has changed something in my life. I'm now about to begin studying Functional Skills maths."

Joanna



"I used to have maths anxiety but now absolutely love teaching maths, learning new techniques, finding resources and taking part in projects. It's definitely been a journey!"

Gillian



# Putting numeracy to work

Boosting numeracy levels in the UK is key to building a skilled nation able to recover from immense instability. The crisis of low numeracy is costing the UK up to £25bn a year (4).

Our new research (1) reveals one in four adults (26%) would be deterred from applying for a job if it listed numbers and data as a requirement. However, how people use numbers and data in their work is misunderstood.

We asked people which professions used maths and numeracy. People thought architects, teachers, builders, nurses and shop assistants 'always' did. But they believed politicians, police officers, delivery drivers, journalists and hairdressers only 'sometimes' did and that social media influencers 'hardly ever' needed numbers.

The leading reason people give for using the National Numeracy Challenge is 'to get on in work'. We have found improving number confidence makes people feel better able to get a qualification, find a job or get on at work. It is therefore crucial that greater attention is paid to improving confidence as a stepping-stone to improving skills, opening up access to learning and progression opportunities, and the benefits for employment that improved numeracy can bring.

## Impact stories

Capital One has enabled us to design and develop a new national corporate volunteering programme.

Since 2019, Amazon Web Services has enabled the hosting, security and management of our digital provision.

During 2020 and 2021 our Covid response included making the Family Maths Toolkit's 230 resources free, supported by TP ICAP, homeschooling help for parents and resources for the Oak National Academy.

The training with Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust led to an increase in staff completing functional skills programmes and

moving onto higher level apprenticeships.

National Numeracy and Health Education England (HEE) have worked together for many years to train and support NHS workers to feel more confident about maths in their roles.

Our Every Londoner Counts project, supported by the Lord Mayor's Appeal, will see us train 500+ numeracy champions to support 24,000 Londoners with low numeracy.





## What partners say

“Our partnership with National Numeracy is already helping breathe new life into our CSR strategy, engage our employees in new ways, and help us think how we can build numeracy skills into how our business is a force for good in society.”

Dave Richards,  
Head of Corporate  
Responsibility,  
Capital One



## Real-life impact

“Improving my numeracy has helped me become a Lead Apprentice. Doing the National Numeracy Challenge has made me feel more confident as a learner in general”.

Tamsin



“Improving my number confidence has opened loads of doors for me - my dream was always to become a teacher, and I achieved that dream.”

Shannon



“Once I'd completed the National Numeracy Challenge, I realised everyone else in our workplace needed to do this too, including managers, with no time limit and no pressure.”

Cara



“I have recently been offered a job... I walked in [to the interview maths test] proud, because I had confidence in my maths.”

Ijeoma



## Contact us

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