

VOICES HEADLINES – UK-WIDE

This document is divided into two parts:

- 1) A bullet-point summary along the same lines as the regional summaries; and
- 2) poll results given as percentages.

Part 1

Celebrity voices

Respondents voted these people as having the most pleasant voices (in descending order):

- 1 Sean Connery
- 2 Trevor McDonald
- 3 Terry Wogan
- 4 Hugh Grant
- 5 Moira Stuart
- 6 The Queen
- 7 Billy Connolly
- 8 Ewan McGregor
- 9 Joanna Lumley
- 10 Pierce Brosnan

Respondents voted these people as having the least pleasant voices:

- 1 Ian Paisley
- 2 Billy Connolly
- 3 Cilla Black
- 4 Paul O'Grady/Lily Savage
- 5 Jasper Carrott
- 6 Janet Street-Porter
- 7 David Beckham
- 8 The Queen
- 9 Frank Skinner
- 10 Tony Blair

Accents of English

73% of respondents think of themselves as having at least a moderately strong accent. 5% say they have no accent at all and 6% said they had a very strong accent. Generally people in the North and West of the UK (including Northern Ireland) identified with having an accent more than those in the south eastern parts of the UK.

16% of respondents say they don't like their accent and 17% say they're not proud of their accent. The majority of respondents do like their accents (53%) and are proud of their accent (54%), with the Northern Irish and Scottish the

highest ranked.

According to the majority of respondents (74%) the variety of accents they hear in everyday life is increasing and 74% say they like hearing this variety. Although, 22% said they thought that, generally speaking, we are becoming less tolerant of this diversity. 39% of respondents agreed that regional accents are becoming less distinct. A similar proportion (37%) disagreed with this statement.

61% of respondents think that British English is becoming more Americanised. 19% disagreed that this was the case and 20% neither agreed or disagreed.

59% of respondents wish at least occasionally they had another accent. The most-wished for accent was a Standard English accent, but 7% said they'd like a Southern Irish accent, 5% a Queen's English accent, 4% a Scottish accent in general and 4% an Edinburgh accent. The main reasons people would like to change their accent is that it sounded more pleasant than their own accents and to make themselves better understood.

81% say that who they are speaking to can cause them to change their accent, with 41% of those admitting that they change their accent when they meet people for the first time. The main reason respondents do this is to ensure that they are understood more clearly.

Some comments used by respondents to describe their accents included:

- "People outside Northern Ireland find me hard to understand."
- "I feel that because my accent is very London/south coast I am judged as being a 'common' person."
- "My accent makes me sound thick and gives the impression that I have straw coming out of my mouth."
- "I suppose we in Wales speak Wenglish, a Welsh version of English."
- "I have a posh Brummie accent, if there is such a thing!"
- "I have a Yorkshire accent which becomes more obvious when I drink alcohol (I'm afraid to say)."
- "Mancunian but not as bad as Oasis."
- "It is an accent called Orcadian, it comes from the Norse, it's a very lilting accent. Almost a singing accent."
- "Well I'm Scottish and proud of it and I never think of being English. Being Scottish means that you are something that no one else can be."
- "I cannot believe how thick my Geordie accent is and it makes me very reluctant to speak at meetings."
- "I live in Newcastle so I have a Geordie accent and I have had comments from other people outside of Newcastle commenting how they like to hear a Geordie accent."
- "A mix of Urban/Asian London accent, a bit of jargon used and Americanised"

words. Definetly not posh but not so slang.”

- “Queen's when needed, 'Sarf London' when appropriate.”

- “Cumbria has a distinctive accent of its own with regional words like yan for one and yeat for gate.”

Languages other than English

56% of respondents think that speaking another language is a bonus when it comes to getting a good job, but 20% don't think being multilingual is an advantage. Although most people say they hear more languages around them nowadays than previously, 22% say they don't like hearing languages other than English. 22% think that in general we are becoming less tolerant of hearing languages other than English.

The UK's opinions on accents

Respondents voted the Standard accent of English as their most pleasant accent and the accent most likely to help you obtain a good job. The Queen's English was voted the most prestigious accent. After respondents' own accents, the Southern Irish, Scottish (in general), Edinburgh, New Zealand and Queen's English accents were their next most pleasant accents, outranking a list of nearly 20 other UK accents and 10 other accents of English from around the world.

END OF SUMMARY

Results statistics follow toward the end of the document.

Part 2

VOICES – NATIONAL RESULTS

Question 17: I like hearing a range of accents

78% of agree

6% disagree

16% are undecided.

Q18: I hear a lot more accents around me in my everyday life nowadays than I did before

74% agree

12% disagree

14% neither agree or disagree.

Q19: In general people have become less tolerant of hearing a variety of accents

22% agree

56% disagree

22% neither agree or disagree.

Q20: The English language in the British Isles is becoming more Americanised

61% agree

19% disagree

20% neither agree or disagree.

Q21: Regional accents are less distinct than they used to be

39% agree

37% disagree

24% think neither.

Q22: Men tend to have stronger accents than women

28% agree

38% disagree

34% neither disagree or agree.

Q25: I hear a wider variety of accents on BBC television and radio nowadays than I did before

76% agree

8% disagree

17% neither disagree or agree

Q26: I would like to hear a greater variety of accents on BBC television and radio

46% agree

22% disagree

31% neither disagree or agree

Q27: To what extent do you think you have an accent?

51% said they had at least a moderately strong accent

6% said they had a very strong accent

5% of people said they had no accent at all.

Q28: I like my accent

53% agree

16% disagree

26% neither disagree or agree

Q29: I am proud of my accent

54% agree

17% disagree

24% neither disagree or agree

Q31: How often do you wish you had different accent?

59% of people wish at least occasionally they had a different accent

41% of people said they never wished they had a different accent.

2% of people said they wished they had a different accent all the time.

Q32: Which accent do you most wish you had when you speak English

36% Standard accent

7% Southern Irish

5% Queen's English

4% Scottish (in general)

4% Edinburgh

3% Welsh

3% French

3% Newcastle

Q33: What is the main reason you wish you had this accent?

(Of those who wished even occasionally they had another accent)

52% it sounds more pleasant than my accent

19% other reasons

17% to make myself better understood

7% to fit in better

4% to impress people

Q34: To what extent does your accent change depending on who you are with?

19% never

81% at least occasionally

5% all the time

Q35: With which of the following people do you feel your normal accent changes?

23% say their accent changes when they are talking to friends
24% say their accent changes when they are talking to more senior work colleagues
6% say their accent changes when they are talking to more junior work colleagues
7% say their accent changes when they are talking to work colleagues their own age
20% say their accent changes when they are talking to older relatives
10% say their accent changes when they are talking to younger relatives
6% say their accent changes when they are talking to relatives their own age
41% of people say their accent changes when they meet people for the first time.
15% of people say their accent changes in other situations

Q36: What is the main reason you change your accent with these people?

(Of those who even occasionally change their accent depending on who they are talking to)

12% it sounds more pleasant than my accent
23% other reasons
39% to make myself better understood
21% to fit in better
5% to impress people

Q37: I like hearing a range of languages in addition to English

48% agree
22% disagree
29% neither disagree or agree

Q38: I hear a lot more languages nowadays than I did before

68% agree
13% disagree
19% neither disagree or agree

Q39: In general, people have become less tolerant of hearing a variety of languages

22% agree
50% disagree
28% neither disagree or agree

Q40: Men are better at learning foreign languages than women

65% agree
4% disagree
31% neither disagree or agree

Q41: To what extent do you think speaking a language other than English is helpful in getting a good job in the British Isles?

56% agree

20% disagree

24% neither disagree or agree

Q42: I am glad I speak languages other than English (answered by multilingual respondents)

84% agree

4% disagree

12% neither disagree or agree

Q13: How pleasant do you think each accent listed below sounds?

Q14: How much prestige do you think is associated with each accent listed?

Q15: How much do you think each of these accents would help someone trying to get a good job?

Table 1 ranks accents in decreasing order of pleasantness, prestige and helpfulness in getting a good job across the entire UK sample of the poll. Shaded cells are those where a majority of respondents rated the accent as more pleasant than unpleasant, more prestigious than unprestigious and more helpful career-wise than unhelpful, respectively. Unshaded cells are those where the reverse was true.

Table 1: UK average rankings for accent pleasantness, prestige and career helpfulness

RANK	PLEASANTNESS	PRESTIGE	HELPFUL CAREER-WISE
1.	Standard accent of English (like that of many newsreaders)	Queen's English	Standard accent of English (like that of many newsreaders)
2.	An accent identical to your own	Standard accent of English (like that of many newsreaders)	Queen's English
3.	Southern Irish	An accent identical to your own	An accent identical to your own
4.	Scottish	Edinburgh	London
5.	Edinburgh	Scottish	Edinburgh
6.	New Zealand	London	Scottish
7.	Queen's English	New Zealand	North American
8.	Cornish	North American	New Zealand
9.	West Country	French	Australian
10.	Newcastle	Southern Irish	Southern Irish
11.	French	Australian	French
12.	Northern Irish	Nottingham	Nottingham
13.	Australian	Cornish	Norwich
14.	Welsh	Norwich	South African
15.	Lancashire	West Country	Cornish
16.	North American	South African	West Country
17.	Spanish	Northern Irish	Bristol
18.	Norwich	Welsh	Welsh
19.	Nottingham	Spanish	Manchester
20.	Leeds	Lancashire	Lancashire
21.	Afro-Caribbean	Manchester	Northern Irish
22.	London	Bristol	Cardiff
23.	Belfast	German	Leeds
24.	Cardiff	Newcastle	Newcastle
25.	Bristol	Cardiff	German
26.	Swansea	Leeds	Spanish
27.	Manchester	Belfast	Swansea
28.	South African	Swansea	Belfast
29.	Glasgow	Glasgow	Glasgow
30.	Liverpool	Afro-Caribbean	Black Country
31.	Asian	Liverpool	Afro-Caribbean
32.	German	Black Country	Liverpool
33.	Black Country	Asian	Asian
34.	Birmingham	Birmingham	Birmingham