

JUNE 2023

# Perceptions & Impact of English Upskilling

## A Survey of Immigrant & Refugee Workers

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Since its launch in 2020, EnGen has fielded an annual survey of thousands of adult English learners, workers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds who access the EnGen platform via their workplaces or enrollment in educational institutions. The survey informs EnGen's annual impact report and also shapes strategies to improve and scale organizational reach and outcomes, with a focus on:

- **Level of English Improvement:** The extent to which learners' level of English has improved in terms of the categories used in the American Community Survey (ACS), an annual survey administered by the U.S. Census.<sup>1</sup>
- **Workplace Confidence, Competence, and Productivity:** The extent to which learners' EnGen experience has affected their workplace productivity, their confidence in the workplace, and their overall workplace skills.
- **Career and Social Goals:** The extent to which learners' EnGen experience has helped them achieve goals at work and at home, with options to indicate the types of goals achieved.

- **Confidence in Daily Life and Engagement:** The extent to which learners' use of English in public places has increased as a result of using EnGen.
- **Effect of EnGen on Employee Satisfaction and Persistence:** Whether or not workers would remain with their employer because EnGen is offered as an employee benefit and whether or not workers would be more likely to refer someone to work at their employer because EnGen is offered as an employee benefit (asked only to participants in employer-sponsored programs).
- **Perception of EnGen Effectiveness:** Whether or not learners have taken English classes in a classroom setting, and, if so, whether or not their English had improved more as a result of EnGen than in a traditional classroom setting.
- **Areas for EnGen Improvement:** What learners would change about their EnGen experience and whether or not EnGen could help them enroll in an additional educational or career training program.

## Background on EnGen Learners

### Number of Learners

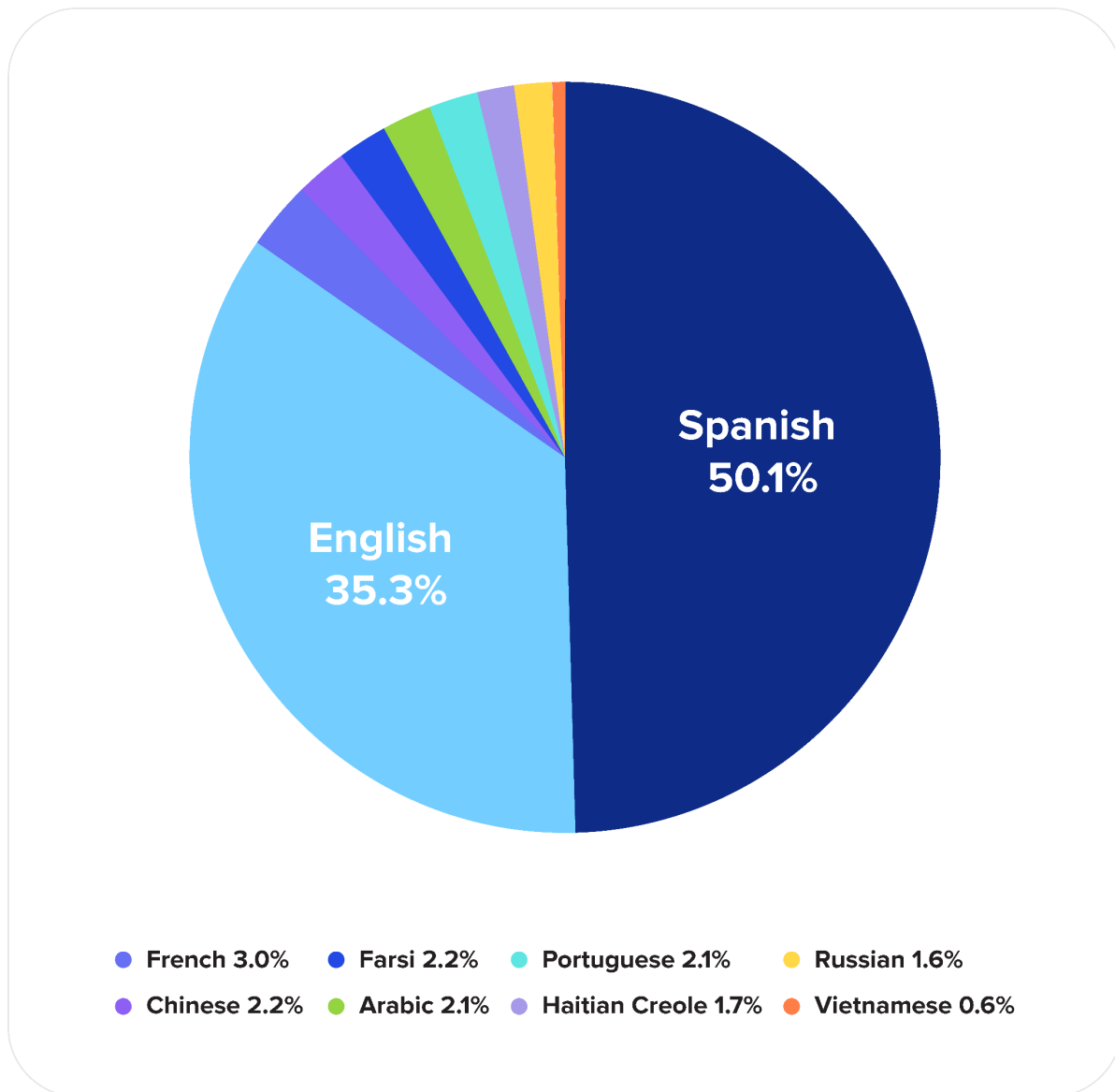
EnGen's learner count is cumulative: By the end of 2022, we had served a total of 26,471 adult English learners. From December 2022 to January 2023, we surveyed 6,261 of the 10,048 learners who actively engaged with the platform in 2022, achieving a 10% response rate.

### Responses by Language and Category

EnGen learners are able to have their platform navigational instructions in English or in a preferred language; survey respondents had their platforms set to 26 different languages, with the majority in Spanish. We issued our survey in ten languages, and the majority of the learners responded in Spanish and English, with dozens of responses in other languages (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

**EnGen Survey Responses By Language**



**Additional Demographic Data**

We were able to collect additional demographic information for 461 survey respondents through a seven-question needs assessment delivered at the start of their EnGen program.

## Years Studying English

The first of those questions concerned the number of years that learners had spent studying English prior to beginning their EnGen experience. A full 27% of the respondents had not studied English at all; 37% had studied English for one to two years; 18% had studied English for three to five years; and 18% had studied English for more than five years (Figure 2). The survey did not ask EnGen learners where this English instruction had taken place . Given the limited access to adult ESL classes available to most adult learners in the U.S. it is likely that the majority of learners had taken English classes as children in a K-12 setting, either in the U.S. or in a different country. in their countries of origin.

FIGURE 2

### EnGen Learners' Time Spent Studying English Prior to Using EnGen

How Many Years Have You Studied English?	Number Of Respondents
0	126
1 - 2	170
3 - 5	82
Over 5	83
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>461</b>

## Time Available To Study English

The second demographic question concerns the amount of time that learners have to invest in improving their English skills on a weekly basis. The majority of learners indicated that they had 3 or more hours per week (Figure 3). It is worth pointing out that the number of hours that learners spend on the platform varies widely, with some clocking over ten hours per week while others spend less than one hour.

FIGURE 3

### EnGen Learners' Weekly Time Investment

How much time do you have to spend working on English?	Number of Respondents
1 hour per week	18
2 hour per week	52
3 hour per week	207
Less than 1 hour per week	10
N/A	24
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>311</b>

## Age Range

The final demographic question asked learners their age range. EnGen learners and survey respondents were much more likely to be over the age of 30, with only 11% of respondents indicating an age range between 15 and

29. 36% of the respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49, and 30% were over 50 (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

### Age Range of EnGen Learners

What is your age range?	Number of Respondents
15-18	2
19-25	26
26-29	28
30-39	106
40-49	184
50+	151
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>497</b>

#### ADDITIONAL DATA

### Net Promoter Score (NPS)

EnGen regularly surveys learners to determine their Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is a customer experience metric that is reported on a scale from -100 to 100. NPS indicates the extent to which the surveyed population would recommend something (in this case, EnGen) to a friend. NPS is calculated as the percentage of detractors subtracted from the percentage of promoters. If everyone were a detractor, it would be a score of negative

100. If everyone were a promoter, it would be a score of positive 100. Good NPS scores are +30 or above.

In 2022, EnGen received NPS survey responses from 1462 learners (roughly fifteen percent of the learners who used the platform throughout 2022) with an NPS of 44. Of the learners who completed the EnGen Learner Survey, 153 also submitted NPS responses, and the NPS of those learners is 54.9.

## **EnGen Learner Survey Results**

Results from a EnGen's annual survey offer insights into the impact of English upskilling.

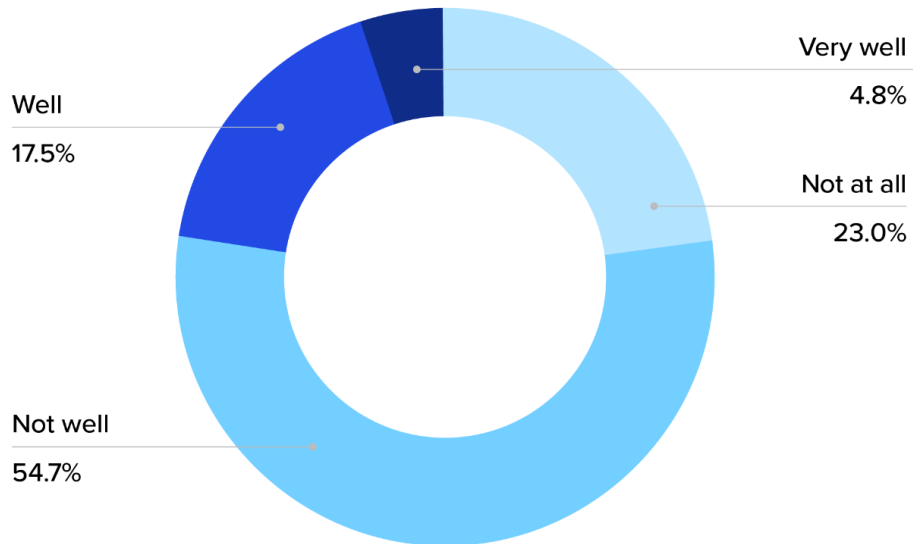
### **Level of English Improvement**

Of the learners surveyed, 23% reported that they did not speak English at all before beginning their EnGen program. After the EnGen program, 5% of learners reported not speaking English at all. Overall, 60% of respondents reported improving their English proficiency as a result of their EnGen program (Figure 5).

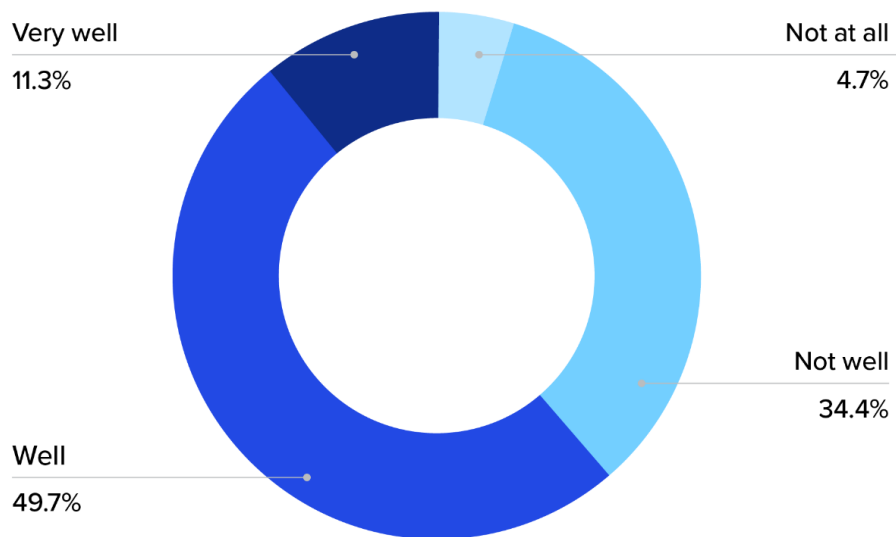
FIGURE 5

EnGen Learners' Improved English Proficiency

How well did you speak English **BEFORE** starting EnGen?



How well did you speak English now, **AFTER** starting EnGen?





## Workplace Confidence, Competence, and Productivity

Learners were asked to rate how much time they had saved at work as a result of their improved English proficiency. 93% reported saving time at work as a result of improved English skills, with 62% ranking their time savings at least a five on a ten point scale, with ten being “saved significant time” (Figure 6). Learners were also asked to rank their confidence in using English, with similar results: 95% reported improved confidence as a result of improved English skills, with 62% ranking their confidence level at least a five on a ten point scale, with ten being “confidence has greatly improved” (Figure 7) Finally, learners were asked to rank how much their job skills had improved as a result of using EnGen, with results mirroring the previous two questions: 93% reported improving their job skills as a result of their English program, with 57% reporting job skill improvement of at least a five on a ten point scale, with ten being “greatly improved” (Figure 8).

FIGURE 6

### EnGen Learners’ Time Saved at Work Because of Improved English Skills

0 = no time saved, 10 = significant time saved

Rate how much time you have saved at work because you have improved your English.	Number of Respondents
0	42
1	40
2	56
3	40
4	62
5	87
6	52

7	49
8	121
9	22
10	55
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>626</b>

FIGURE 7

### EnGen Learners' Improved Confidence in Speaking English

0 = no time saved, 10 = significant time saved

Rate how much your confidence has improved when speaking English as a result of your EnGen program.	Number of Respondents
0	33
1	46
2	61
3	51
4	61
5	88
6	53
7	68
8	59
9	28
10	78
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>626</b>

FIGURE 8

### EnGen Learners' Improved Job Skills

0 = no time saved, 10 = significant time saved

Rate how much your job skills have improved since starting your EnGen program.	Number of Respondents
0	43
1	58
2	63
3	51
4	50
5	83
6	65
7	60
8	60
9	27
10	62
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>626</b>

## Career and Social Goal Achievement

A full 87% of survey respondents report achieving at least one major career or social goal as a result of improving their English with EnGen, including pay raises, promotions, improved communication with co-workers, and the ability to help their families with schoolwork. 17% of the survey respondents indicated that they had achieved a career goal not captured on the list of possible responses, and 10% of the respondents indicated that they had achieved a social goal not included in the list of possible responses (Figure 9a-b ).

FIGURE 9a

### EnGen Learners Achieving Career & Social Goals

What career goals have you achieved as a result of EnGen and your improved English? (select all that apply)	Number of Respondents
a. I've received a promotion	28
b. I've received a new job offer	49
c. I've been given a pay raise	32
d. I'm better able to communicate with coworkers	309
e. I'm more likely to stay in my current job	155
f. I've started a new job training program	55
g. None of the above	183
h. Other	105

FIGURE 9b

What social goals have you achieved as a result of EnGen and your improved English? (select all that apply)	Number of Respondents
a. I communicate better in public places like supermarkets, banks, etc.	384
b. I have become more active in civic engagement and advocacy activities.	69
c. I engage more with my local community	118
d. I can help my family with school work	151
e. I have made friends	146
f. None of the above	130
g. Other	65

## Confidence in Daily Life and Engagement

A full 94% of respondents indicated that they had increased their use of English in public places to some extent since they started using EnGen, with 60% reporting increased usage of English of at least a five on a ten point scale, with ten being “I am using English significantly more in public places or with my surrounding community than I was before I used EnGen.” (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10

### EnGen Learners' Use of English in Daily Engagements

0 = I am not using English in public places or with my surrounding community more than I was before I used EnGen, 10 = I am using English significantly more in public places or with my surrounding community than I was before I used EnGen

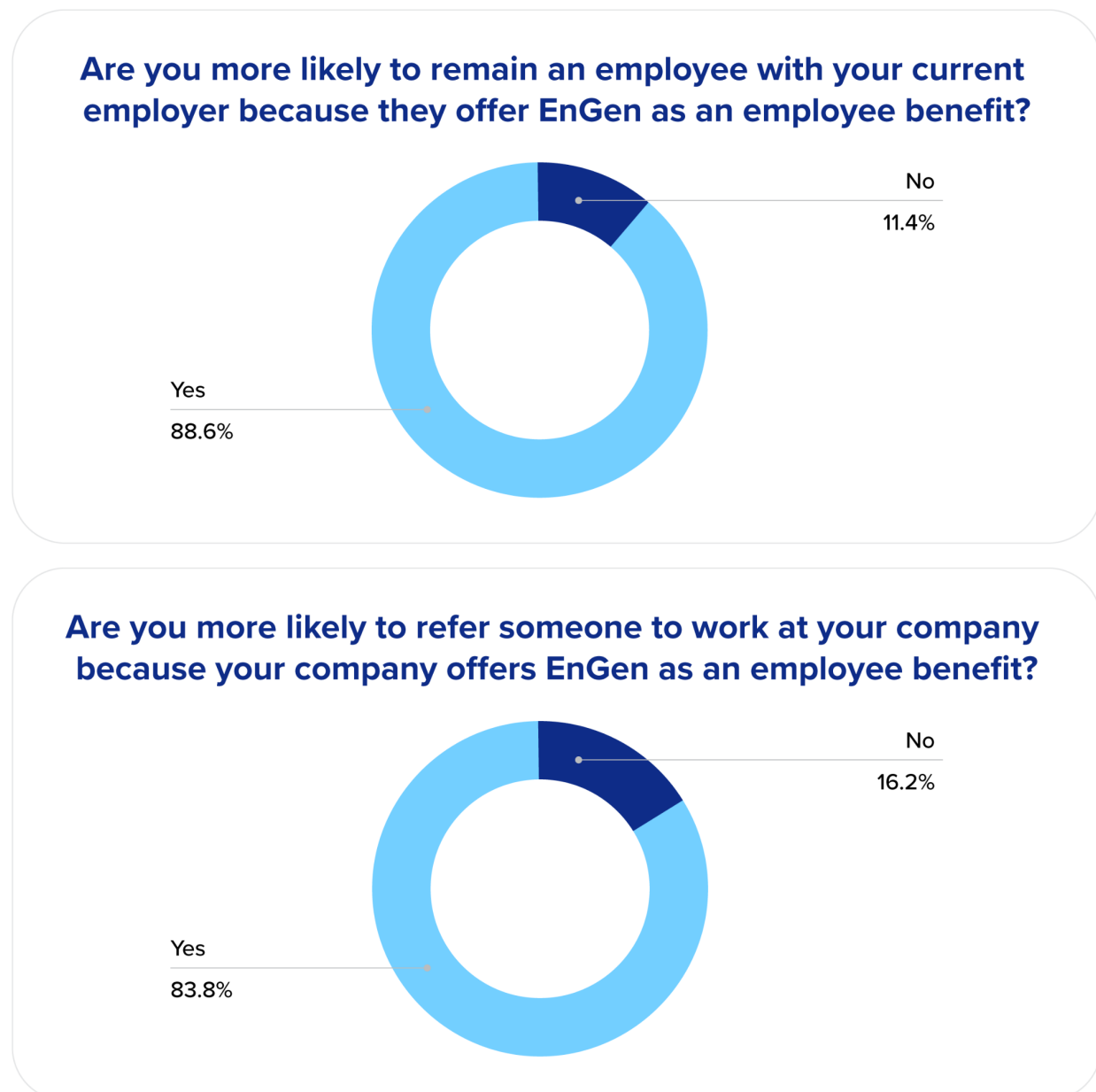
Rate how much you have increased your use of English in public places or with your surrounding community as a result of your work in the EnGen platform.	Number of Respondents
0	36
1	66
2	46
3	64
4	39
5	80
6	66
7	60
8	60
9	31
10	72
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>620</b>

### Effect of EnGen on Employee Satisfaction and Persistence

A full 57% of total survey respondents are using the EnGen platform through a program with their employers – and have been working with the same

employer since the beginning of their engagement with EnGen. Of those learners, 89% indicated that they are more likely to remain with their current companies because EnGen is offered as an employee benefit. Another 84% of the respondents indicated that they would be more likely to recommend their employer to a friend because EnGen is offered as an employee benefit (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11

**Workplace Retention & Recruitment of EnGen Learners**

## Perception of EnGen Effectiveness

The EnGen learner survey contained two questions intended to measure respondents’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the digital English upskilling approach when compared to more traditional methods of English language instruction: “Have you taken an English course in a classroom setting before (in a high school, community college, university, etc.)?” and “Has your English improved more with EnGen than in a classroom setting?”

Unfortunately, instead of being asked as two separate questions, the questions were asked together with an open response field due to a formatting error. The 605 free responses were categorized; 253 of them were usable. Of these, 27% of the respondents indicated that they had taken more traditional classes and that EnGen had helped them more; 21% of the respondents indicated that they had taken classes previously but did not give an indication of whether or not EnGen had helped more. Across responses, 58% indicated that EnGen was helpful, 37% did not offer information about EnGen’s helpfulness one way or the other, and 5% of the respondents indicated that EnGen helped them less than more traditional classes (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12

### EnGen Learners’ Experiences in Traditional Classroom Settings vs. EnGen

Category of Response	% Respondents
Has taken an English course in a classroom before. EnGen has NOT helped more.	5%
Has taken an English course in a classroom before. EnGen has helped MORE.	27%



Has taken an English course in a classroom before. EnGen ALSO helps.	13%
Has never taken an English course in a classroom before.	16%
Has never taken an English course in a classroom before, but EnGen helps.	3%
No information about prior English class experience, but EnGen helps.	15%
Has taken an English course in a classroom before. No information about how EnGen compares.	21%

## Areas for EnGen Improvement

The two final survey questions were open-ended, asking how EnGen could help learners more in terms of English upskilling and continued career or academic training.

When asked “What can EnGen do to help you learn more?,” 609 learners offered 702 unique ideas. These unique ideas were categorized into seventeen different areas for improvement (Figure 13). The largest single category – with 20% of the responses – was “other,” and contained learner- and organization-specific recommendations that defied categorization and universal applicability (e.g., resolving a specific technical issue, improving a particular learner’s experience, etc). The second-largest category – with 18% of responses – was “nothing.” The next two categories, with a combined total of 26% of responses, called for more opportunities for speaking and more live online classes.

FIGURE 13

### EnGen Learners' Platform Recommendations

Categorized responses to the question: "What can EnGen do to help you learn more?"	% Respondents
Other	20%
"Nothing"	18%
More speaking	16%
More online classes	10%
Wider variety of activities	6%
More grammar help	4%
More feedback	3%
Wider variety of content	3%
Listening help	3%
More writing help	3%
More vocabulary review	3%
Reading help	3%
Personalized one-on-one support	3%
More cultural activities (ex: movies, books) / resources to help improve English	2%
Request to extend their access to EnGen	2%
More videos	1%
More assignments	1%

When asked “What would you like EnGen to do to help you enroll in a career training program or an academic training program?,” 165 respondents offered an answer: 68% of respondents indicated that they would like EnGen’s support with further training and education; 22% indicated that direct help enrolling in a training or certification program would be useful; 24% said that they were not interested in EnGen’s help with this service, and 8% responded saying that they didn’t know what EnGen could do (Figure 14).

FIGURE 14

### EnGen Learners’ Desire for Additional Career & Educational Support

Categorized responses to the question: “What would you like EnGen to do to help you enroll in a career training program or an academic training program?”		% Respondents
"I don't know."		8%
"Nothing"		24%
"Yes." (didn't answer What)		29%
More content specific to more careers		16%
Direct help w/ registering in a program and resources for programs that are welcoming to immigrants / refugees		22%

## Sources

Bleakley, H., & Chin, A. (2004). Language skills and earnings: Evidence from childhood immigrants. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86 (2), 481-496.

Vickstrom, E. (2015). How Well Do You Speak English? Assessing the Validity of the American Community Survey English-Ability Question. U.S. Census Bureau.

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/research-matters/2015/10/how-well-do-you-speak-english-assessing-the-validity-of-the-american-community-survey-english-ability-question.html>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The ACS asks respondents to rank their ability to speak English on a four-point scale: very well, well, not well, or not at all. The EnGen survey presented the same question in two parts, asking respondents to reflect on their English proficiency before using EnGen and then after using EnGen. Independent research has shown that learners' perception of their English skills correlates strongly with their actual English skills (Vickstrom, 2015), and these levels can be used to predict wage gains (Bleaky & Chin, 2004). EnGen includes this data in our annual survey as a way of measuring the impact our platform has had on learners' earning potential.

## About EnGen

EnGen is a Certified B Corporation that delivers personalized, career-aligned, mobile-first English language upskilling to immigrants, refugees, and speakers of other languages across the U.S. Using patented technology that has served over 4 million language learners worldwide, EnGen is powered by real-world, career-aligned content as well as personalized learner success coaching and instruction. The platform's science-based, sector-specific approach is proven to help adult learners – internationally trained professionals and those with limited formal education – meet their educational and employment goals in high-demand fields. Working with Fortune 500 companies, regional employers, higher education, adult education providers, apprenticeship programs, government institutions, and immigrant and refugee-serving organizations, EnGen is advancing economic mobility, workforce inclusion, and talent pipeline development at the scale needed to serve both New American workers and the U.S. workforce.

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