

## Multilingualism in the UK

“There are more than a million children between 5-18 years old in UK schools who speak in excess of 360 languages between them.” ([www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk))

In 2005, in Scotland, at least 11,000 children spoke at least 104 languages. In Wales, at least 8,000 children spoke at least 98 languages excluding the 116,300 and 187,868 who studied Welsh as a second language in primary and secondary schools respectively. Even in areas that have traditionally had few bilingual pupils, the situation is changing. For example, Portuguese and Russian-speaking families have come to the Scottish Borders to work in the fishing industry. (<http://www.cilt.org.uk>)

As of January 2011, 12.3% of all children in local authority maintained secondary schools in England had a first language that was known or believed to be a language other than English. In Leicester and Luton, over 40% of secondary school children had a first language other than English. The figure for London was 37.3% although it was as high as 48.9% in inner London. The figures for primary schools indicate that the number of children speaking a first language other than English is increasing. In January 2011, 16.8% of all children had a first language other than English. In Bradford, Leicester, Birmingham, Luton and London, the figure was over 40% and reached 55.3% for inner London.

A breakdown of first languages spoken in England (January 2008) lists the top ten first languages after English as Panjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Somali, Polish, Arabic, Portuguese, Turkish and Tamil. ([www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk)).

Some community languages, particularly Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Turkish and Urdu are taught to children in complementary schools after school or at weekends. Mainstream secondary schools also offer community languages as part of the core curriculum or after school hours. (<http://www.cilt.org.uk>)

According to The Guardian, figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the Poles (521,000) are the biggest UK community by foreign nationality. They are the second biggest UK community (after India) according to country of birth, ahead of Pakistan, the Republic of Ireland and Germany.

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/may/26/foreign-born-uk-population>)

In 2010 the leading sources of asylum applicants in the UK were Iran, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

([http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Briefing%20-%20Asylum%20v2\\_0.pdf](http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Briefing%20-%20Asylum%20v2_0.pdf) )