i. Terminology (i)

- **Modern Foreign Languages (MFL):** school-based, linguistic-focussed qualification – predominantly 'big 3' taught in schools (French, German, Spanish) – not necessarily 'foreign'.

- **Community languages:** languages learnt in home setting that is not dominant in society (also 'home' and 'heritage' languages).

- **Languages qualification:** qualifications inclusive of both MFL & community languages.

ii. Terminology (ii)

- Ethnicity is **fluid, multifaceted & complex**, differing between individuals & perspectives – can be difficult to define.

- Race ≠ ethnicity

In this presentation…

- **'BAME' (community):** referred to as 'ethnicity' - students identifying as part of the **'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' community**

- Term chosen to maintain consistency with govt reports & benchmark against previous data.

- **Take this term and my conclusions with caution** – try not to generalize, conflate and/or prioritise certain pan-ethnicities (e.g., 'Black' and 'Asian').

iii. Structure

1. Overview of current MFL uptake and attitude trends in England

2. Overview of current community language trends in England

3. Today's talk (my contribution, methodology and sample)

4. Attitudes towards language qualifications among minority groups

5. Wider sociolinguistic trends from additional underrepresented groups

6. Inclusive initiatives in the MFL classroom

7. Wrapping up

1. (Post-compulsory) Language trends in England: MFL and community languages

1.1. Overview of current MFL uptake & attitude trends in England

GCSE Uptake for Modern Languages, 2001-2019

— French — Spanish — German — Other MFL — Total MFL
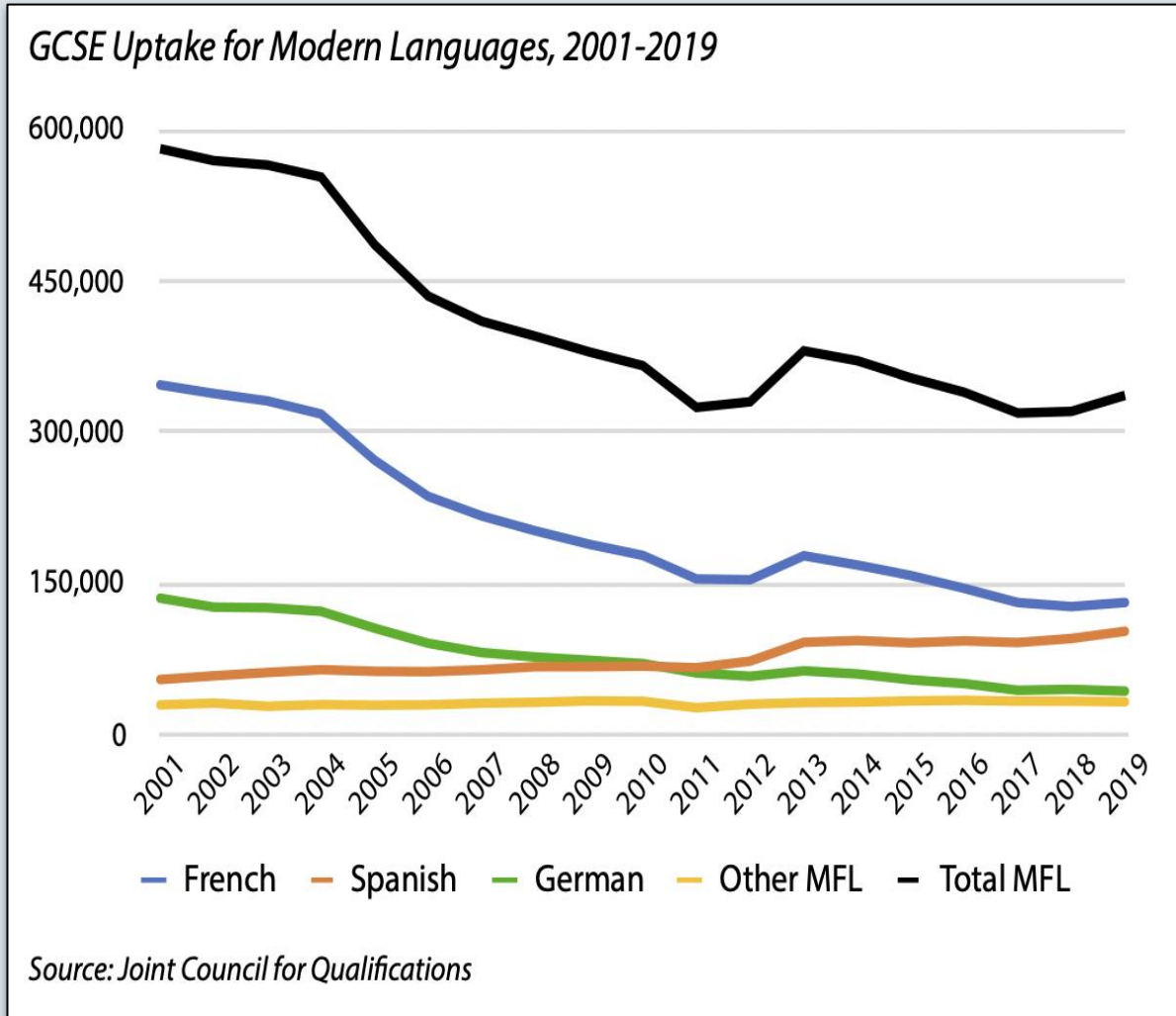
Source: Joint Council for Qualifications

Figure 1: Figure taken from Bowler (2020)

- Enrolment in MFL has declined significantly in the UK (Tinsley, 2004-present - see Figure 1)

- Dubbed as national 'languages crisis' (Bowler, 2020)

- German seen biggest decrease (Tinsley, 2004-)

- Students perform worse in national MFL exams than other subjects - scoring half a grade lower (Vidal Rodeiro, 2017)

- Our sample: 90% of sample studied MFL at post-14 (n = 280); 59% of those at post-16.

→ Bigger drop in uptake numbers at post-16 study, than at post-14 (Fahim, 2023).

1.1.i. MFL uptake trends in England & ethnicity (Fahim, 2023)

Respondents who undertook a MFL qualification (ethnicity trends)
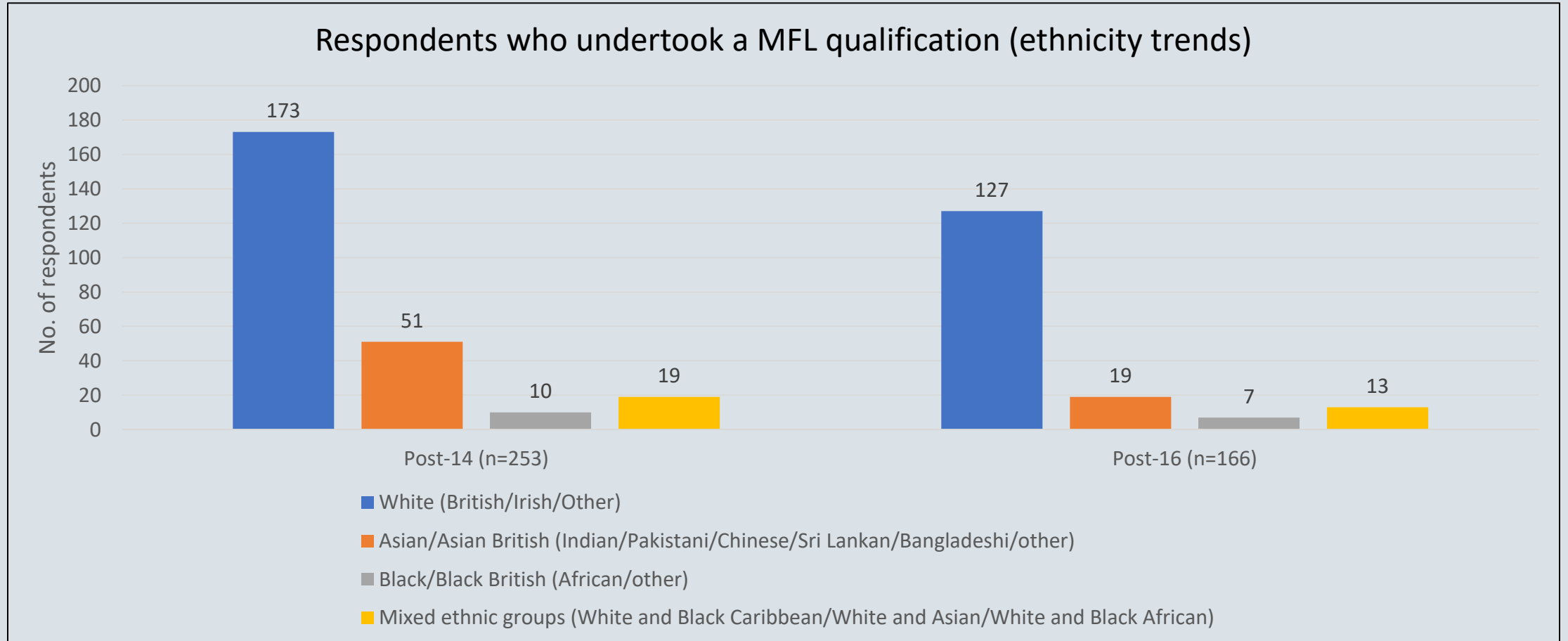
1.2. Reasons behind low uptake of MFL

- Result of a 'complex interplay of factors' (Parrish and Lanvers, 2018:282)

Only 38% of non-linguists from sample (n=97) regret not studying post-compulsory MFL (Fahim, 2023:23)

References: (1) Fisher (2001); (2) Bartram (2006); (3) Taylor and Marsden (2014); (4) Kohl (2019); (5-7) Fahim (2023)
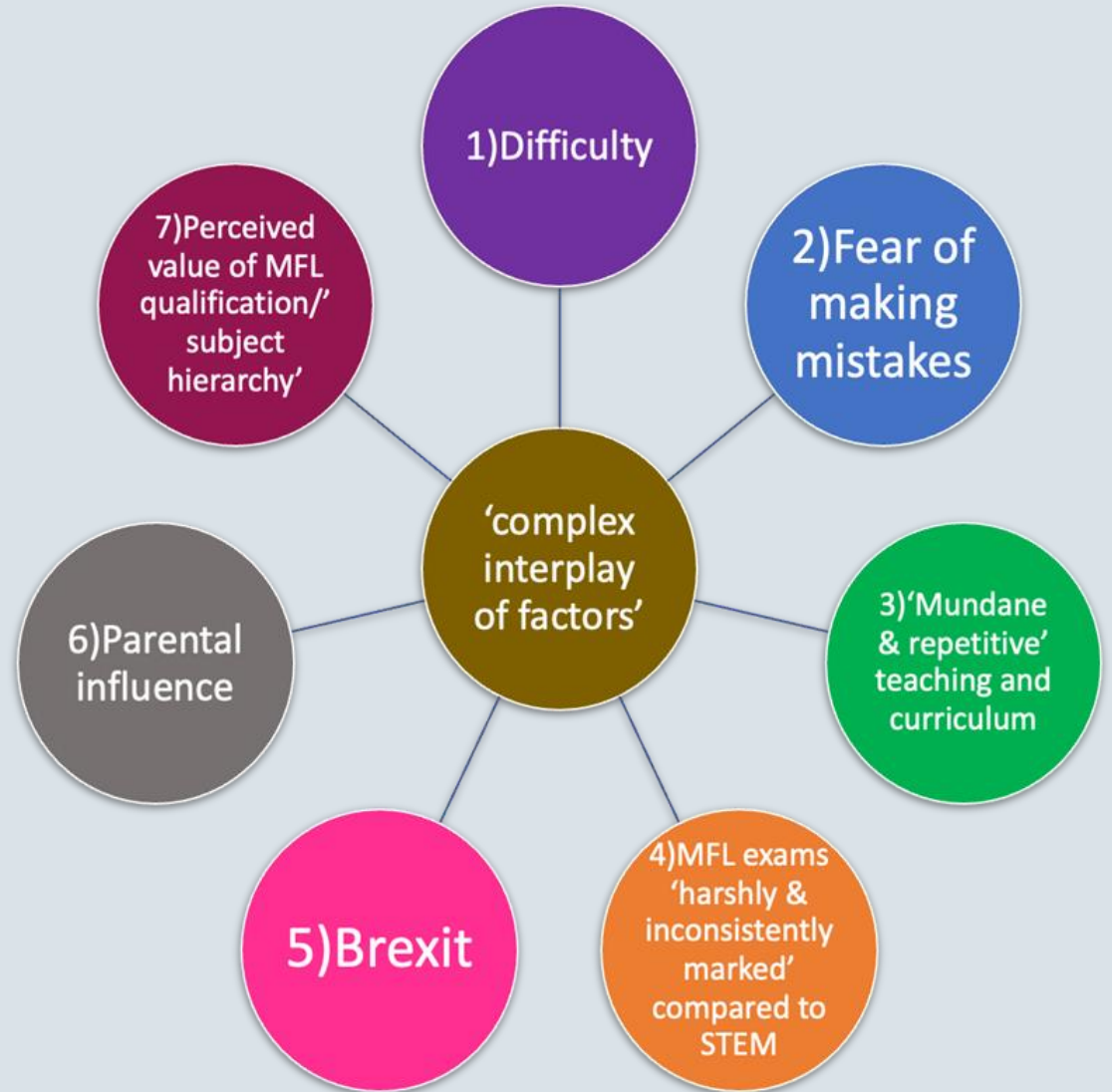
2. Community language trends in England

= Languages learnt at home during childhood, but not dominant language spoken in society (e.g., Urdu in the UK)

- 1 in 5 pupils registered as EAL in England (DfE, 2020)

- Increasing EAL speakers contribute to **'linguistic and pedagogical complexity'** in MFL (Finch, Theakston and Serratrice, 2020; Fahim, 2023:8)

- Only **39% of teachers** in England feel adequately prepared to teach EAL students (DfE, 2018)

- Wide **variety of community languages** offered (AQA, 2023); but uptake low (Fahim, 2023)

- Languages outside of 'big 3' (French, German, Spanish) placed at **bottom of subject hierarchy** (Collen, 2020; Carruthers and Nandi, 2020; Fahim, 2023) → Eurocentric curriculum & practices? (Fahim, 2023)

- L3 learners have **'fixed mindset'** to language learning (Zarrinabadi, Rezazadeh and Chehrazi, 2021)

GCSE German 8668
Past papers ›

GCSE Italian 8633
Past papers ›

GCSE Spanish 8698
Past papers ›

GCSE Bengali 8638
Past papers ›

GCSE Urdu 8648
Past papers ›

GCSE Modern Hebrew 8678
Past papers ›

GCSE Polish 8688
Past papers ›

GCSE Chinese (Spoken Mandarin) 8673
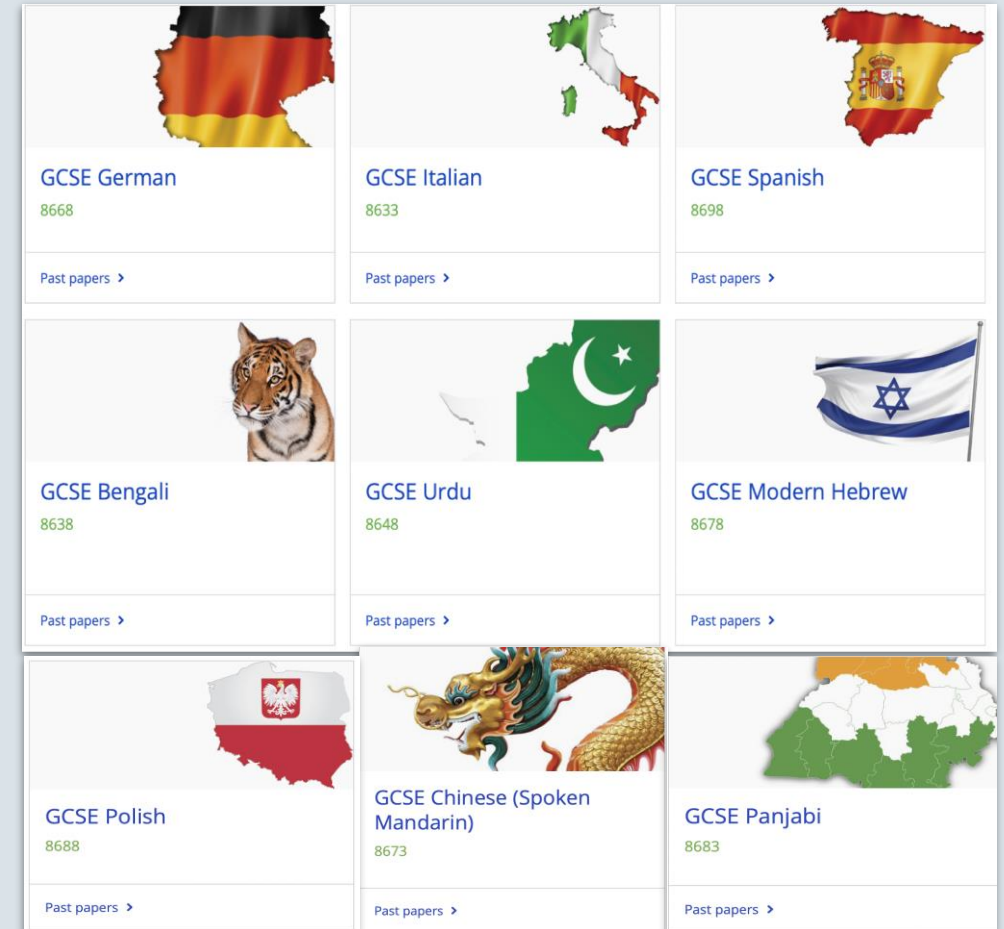Past papers ›

GCSE Panjabi 8683
Past papers ›

Figure 2. (non-exhaustive) List of languages offered by exam board, AQA (2023)

3. Today's talk

Given we have just seen healthy numbers in post-compulsory MFL study from most ethnic groups at post-14 (from our sample), I argue it is *not* about attracting minoritized students towards post-compulsory MFL; the challenge is ***keeping* students in (post-compulsory) MFL education.**

3.1. My contribution

- 'Choosing to study post-compulsory MFL in England: Motivations, Sociolinguistic Trends and the Context of BAME', undergraduate dissertation, University of Birmingham (2021);

- published (peer-reviewed) article, *Journal of the Undergraduate Linguistics Association of Britain* (2023);

- British Educational Research Association (BERA) issue (2024a) on community languages barriers and forthcoming policy paper in *Language, Society and Policy* (2024b) on exclusionary HE admission policies (with Dr Eva Eppler (Roehampton) and Dr Yuni Kim (Surrey)).

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3.2. Aims and methodology

- First study exclusively into underrepresented groups (namely 'BAME' students).

- Apply previously researched motivations to students of underrepresented and/or minority groups.

- Online questionnaire with mix of quantitative and qualitative responses.

- Snowball sampling via social media → 'diverse and representative' sample with 319 respondents from all regions of England.

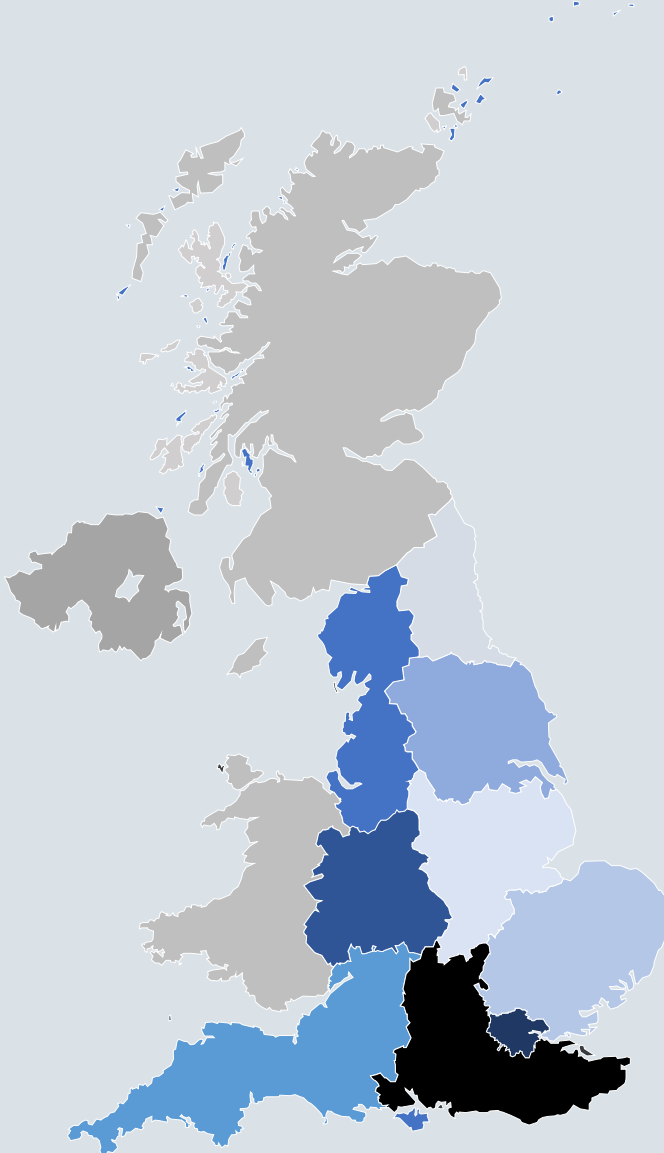- Final sample (n = 280): 245 females; 34 males; 1 non-binary persons.

3.3. Sample: Ethnicity
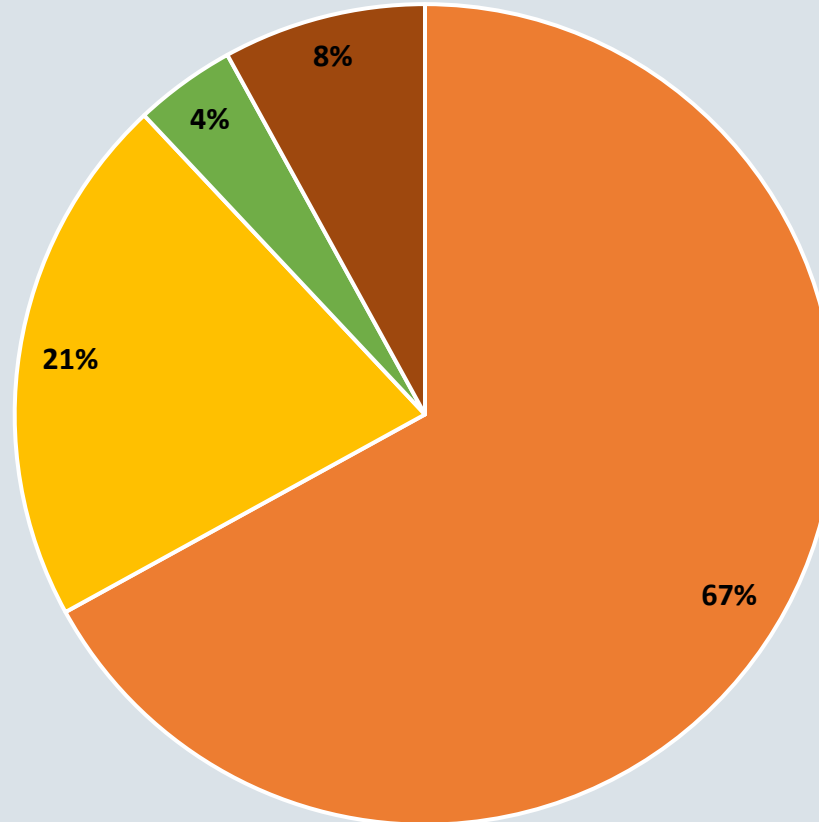
- White (British/Irish/Other)
- Asian/Asian British (Indian/Pakistani/Chinese/Sri Lankan/Bangladeshi/Other)
- Black/Black British (African/other)
- Mixed ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean/White and Asian/White and Black African)

3.4. Sample: Regions in England

South East

65 respondents

London

53 respondents

West Midlands

49 respondents

North West

36 respondents

South West

25 respondents

Yorkshire and the Humber

23 respondents

East of England

16 respondents

East Midlands

10 respondents

North East

3 respondents

3.5. Sample: Type of school attended
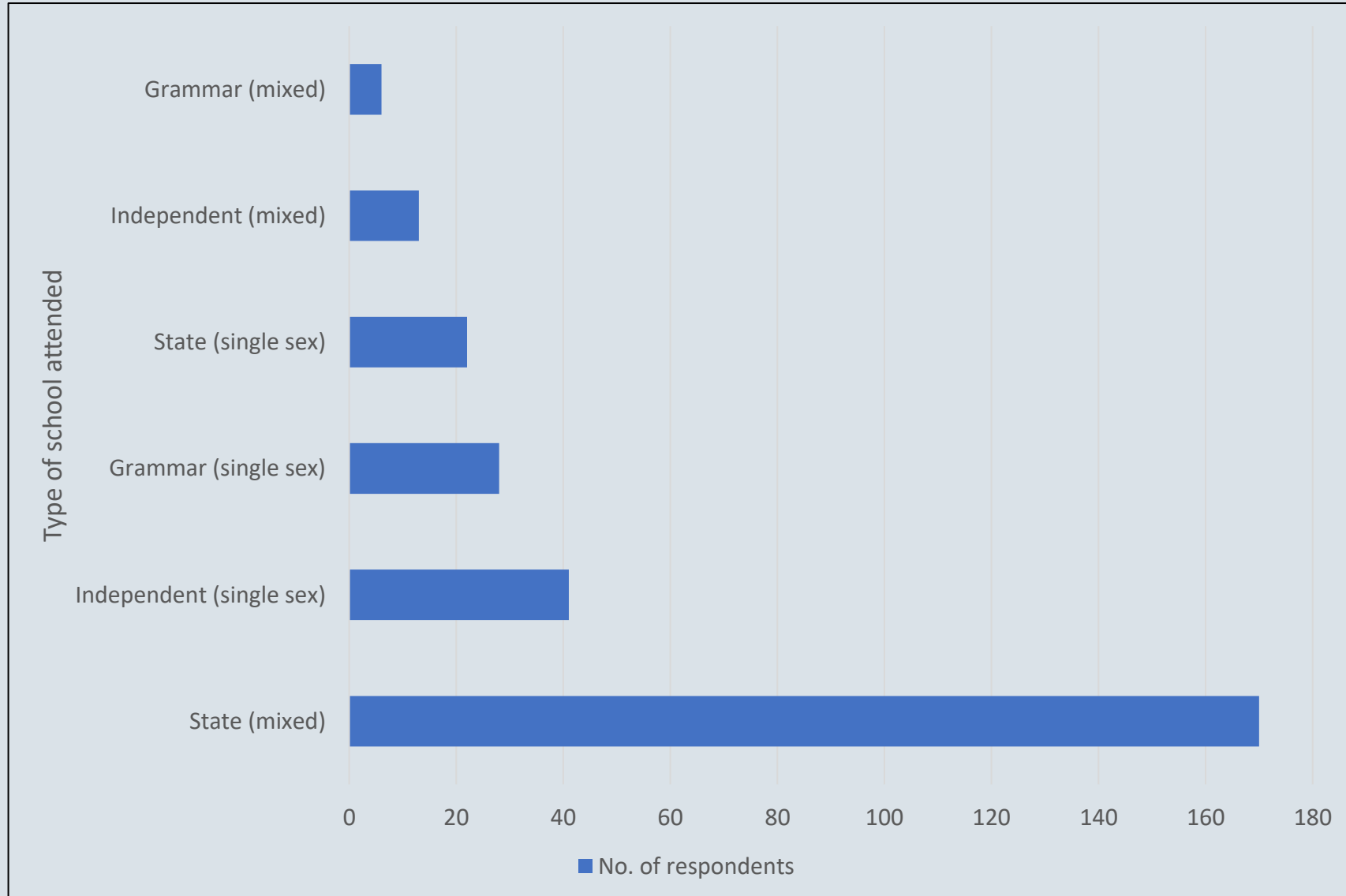
3.6. Why focus on minority students?

- Nearly 1 in 4 students in England are first- or second-generation immigrants. (UNESCO, 2018)

- Despite this, MFL uptake generally lower - total sample: 32% of BAME students at GCSE (total n=246); 18% at A-Level (total n=160)

- Post-16 drop is higher - 51% of total 'BAME' students at GCSE discontinued with post-16 study (compared to 26% of those from majority group)

- Groups particularly affected: post-14 - Black/Black British Caribbean students; post-16 - Asian/Asian British (Pakistani)

Very clearly a demographic absent from both the post-compulsory MFL classroom and from existing MFL research.

3.7. Minority groups, community languages & uptake

- Examining community languages uptake numbers in isolation, the picture is still the same.

- 76% of BAME students in sample (n= 93) knew at least one community language; 12% knew two or more.

- E.g. Urdu; Hindi; Gujarati; Telegu; Tamil; Arabic; Spanish; Cantonese; Mandarin; Farsi; Russian; Zulu; Patois.

- Qualifications in community languages: 82% of sample chose not to pursue a qualification.

Why? What do recent school leavers say..?

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4. Attitudes towards language qualifications amongst 'BAME' community

4.1. Eliciting attitudes from underrepresented groups

- Students asked to rank motivations (see picture)

- Students from this group commented specifically on:

- the impact of diversity in the MFL classroom;
- external pressures and exclusionary policies;
- impact of home languages on uptake.

- Qualitative answers explain in greater depth.

Motivation behind choosing not to study MFL post-16	Ranking
It wasn't needed for degree choice	1
I didn't have enough space in subject options	2
I prefer to learn languages in my own time	3
My Further Education centre didn't offer the preferred language(s)	4
I thought teaching was poor	5
I was influenced by parents who deemed MFL study unnecessary	6
I thought exams would be too difficult and I wouldn't do well in them	7
I found the discipline to not be diverse enough (both curriculum and teaching/peers)	8
I wasn't aware of the benefits of studying MFL jobwise	9
I didn't think MFL would be important after Brexit	10
I found languages to be 'boring'	11

List of motivations participants ranked inspired by Parrish and Lanvers (2018)

4.2.1. Familial and community pressures

"Sometimes attitudes towards [MFL] from family members growing up gave me the idea that it is a 'soft subject' which made me **worried about job prospects**, so I chose not to study it because of this **stigma**."

(Fahim, 2023:34)

4.2.2. Familial and community pressures

- More of a stigma and dismissal towards language qualifications within BAME community.

- General lack of awareness of job prospects attached to languages qualifications → (mis)label as 'soft subject.'

- Tendency towards risk aversion in career choice among immigrant families (Fahim, 2023:34)

→ **McMaster (2017):** minority students less likely to receive high degree classifications and more likely to be unemployed after graduation (Runnymede Trust, 2014).

4.2.3. Science capital within immigrant families

- **Archer et al (2012):** 'science capital' higher in families with second-generation immigrant children.

- = if parents had a STEM career, the 'science capital' already within families can influence children to pursue vocational paths that elder generations had deemed a 'success' (e.g., science, medicine, law etc.)

- Therefore, pursuing study of post-compulsory MFL and/or community languages at all – much less in mainstream settings – may not be viable or genuine option at all.

4.3.1. Preference for other subjects: difficulty of MFL

"I wasn't good at [MFL] at GCSE so didn't want to risk compromising my A-Level grades with the difficult exams and content."

"I'm really dyslexic so language learning is really hard for me […] – they would have been far too much of a jump in difficulty from GCSE."

"I loved doing French A-Level however thought it was a lot more pressure than my other A-Levels (Maths and History)."

(Fahim, 2023:23)

4.3.2. Preference for other subjects: difficulty of MFL

"[…] I felt there was a lot more pressure, a lot more work, but much less support by teachers [at A-Level]."

"Languages take a lot of dedication and commitment to learn, and I think that's what puts people off - it can be difficult to balance alongside other subjects."

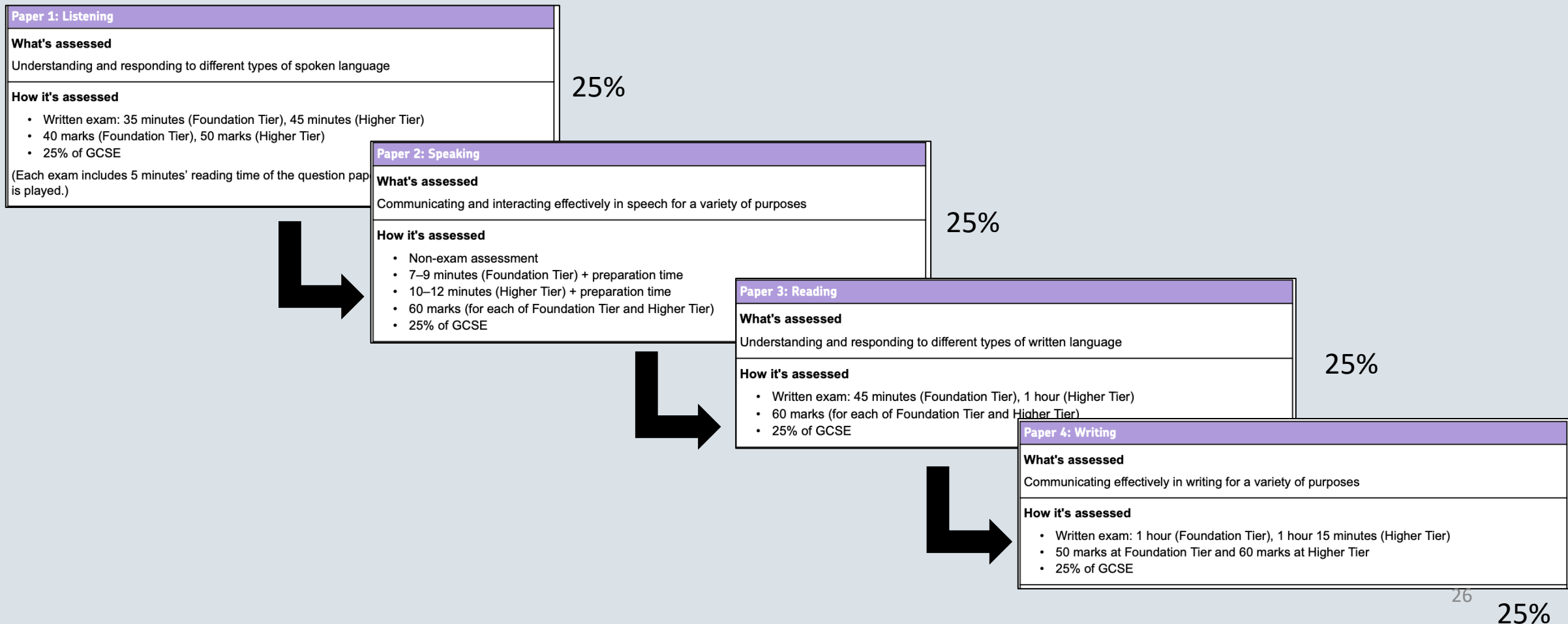"I don't think MFL is difficult per se, but just think lack of time in MFL is the biggest issue. I believe lots of people can do well in MFL, you just have to put in more effort to learn content compared to other subjects, which is maybe what detracts people."

(Fahim, 2023:23)

4.3.3. Preference for other subjects: difficulty of MFL

- Both linguists and non-linguists commented on difficulty of MFL A-Levels – of exams, grammar, time-consumption etc.

- **Tinsley and Board (2015)** & **Kohl (2019):** students dissuaded because of assessment types in MFL.

- MFL A-Levels are 'too unpredictable' and 'harshly and inconsistently' marked (Tinsley and Board, 2015)

- STEM increasingly promoted by govt to drive engagement (ibid)

- Often becomes STEM vs MFL - students in MFL typically score 0.5-1 grade lower than in other subjects (Myers, 2016)

4.3.4. Case study: STEM vs MFL (Assessments in MFL post-14)

- **MFL at post-14:** exams fourfold and equally weighted to reflect four skills

Paper 1: Listening

What's assessed

Understanding and responding to different types of spoken language

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 35 minutes (Foundation Tier), 45 minutes (Higher Tier)
- 40 marks (Foundation Tier), 50 marks (Higher Tier)
- 25% of GCSE

(Each exam includes 5 minutes' reading time of the question pap[er before the recording] is played.)

25%

Paper 2: Speaking

What's assessed

Communicating and interacting effectively in speech for a variety of purposes

How it's assessed

- Non-exam assessment
- 7–9 minutes (Foundation Tier) + preparation time
- 10–12 minutes (Higher Tier) + preparation time
- 60 marks (for each of Foundation Tier and Higher Tier)
- 25% of GCSE

25%

Paper 3: Reading

What's assessed

Understanding and responding to different types of written language

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 45 minutes (Foundation Tier), 1 hour (Higher Tier)
- 60 marks (for each of Foundation Tier and Higher Tier)
- 25% of GCSE

25%

Paper 4: Writing

What's assessed

Communicating effectively in writing for a variety of purposes

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour (Foundation Tier), 1 hour 15 minutes (Higher Tier)
- 50 marks at Foundation Tier and 60 marks at Higher Tier
- 25% of GCSE

25%

4.3.5. Case study: STEM vs MFL (Assessments in MFL post-16)

- **MFL at post-16:** students assessed in three unequal components

- Showcases students' application and 'language in use' skills

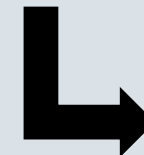- Awards marks for final product only – unforgiving system?

Paper 1: Listening, reading and writing

What's assessed

- Aspects of French-speaking society: current trends
- Aspects of French-speaking society: current issues
- Artistic culture in the French-speaking world
- Aspects of political life in the French-speaking world
- Grammar

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes
- 100 marks
- 50 % of A-level

50%
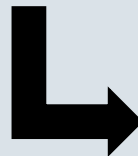
20%

Paper 2: Writing

What's assessed

- One text and one film or two texts from the list set in the specification
- Grammar

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours
- 80 marks in total
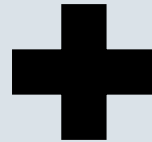- 20 % of A-level

30%

Paper 3: Speaking

What's assessed

- Individual research project
- One of four themes ie Aspects of French-speaking society: current trends, Aspects of French-speaking society: current issues, Artistic culture in the French-speaking world, Aspects of political life in the French-speaking world

How it's assessed

- Oral exam: 21–23 minutes (including 5 minutes preparation time)
- 60 marks in total
- 30 % of A-level

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4.3.6. Case study: STEM vs MFL (Assessments in Maths)

- **A-Level Maths:** exams also threefold, but equally weighted and specification lists topics included – not-open-ended like MFL

- Marks still given for 'working out process' even if final answer is wrong!

33.33% + 33.33%

Paper 1: Pure Mathematics 1 (*Paper code: 9MA0/01)
Paper 2: Pure Mathematics 2 (*Paper code: 9MA0/02)
Each paper is:
2-hour written examination
33.33% of the qualification
100 marks
Content overview
• Topic 1 – Proof
• Topic 2 – Algebra and functions
• Topic 3 – Coordinate geometry in the (x, y) plane
• Topic 4 – Sequences and series
• Topic 5 – Trigonometry
• Topic 6 – Exponentials and logarithms
• Topic 7 – Differentiation
• Topic 8 – Integration
• Topic 9 – Numerical methods
• Topic 10 – Vectors
Assessment overview
• Paper 1 and Paper 2 may contain questions on any topics from the Pure Mathematics content.
• Students must answer all questions.
• Calculators can be used in the assessment.

+

Paper 3: Statistics and Mechanics (*Paper code: 9MA0/03)
2-hour written examination
33.33% of the qualification
100 marks
Content overview
Section A: Statistics
• Topic 1 – Statistical sampling
• Topic 2 – Data presentation and interpretation
• Topic 3 – Probability
• Topic 4 – Statistical distributions
• Topic 5 – Statistical hypothesis testing
Section B: Mechanics
• Topic 6 – Quantities and units in mechanics
• Topic 7 – Kinematics
• Topic 8 – Forces and Newton's laws
• Topic 9 – Moments
Assessment overview
• Paper 3 will contain questions on topics from the Statistics content in Section A and Mechanics content in Section B.
• Students must answer all questions.
• Calculators can be used in the assessment.

33.33%

4.3.7. Case study: STEM vs MFL (Assessment comparison)

- Clear that MFL students must draw on wider repertoire of skills in one sitting – exams unevenly weighted and students tackling too many tasks in time available.

- Many of texts in MFL exams are too 'enigmatic' for students (Kohl, 2019).

- A-Level Maths designed in 'clear and accessible' ways (Pearson, 2017)

- Students specialise in topics they feel strongest in (i.e. tailoring exams) – allows effective revision.

- Are MFL exams fair enough and provide the same 'level playing field' as STEM?

4.3.8. Unattainability of MFL & native speakers

- Arguably no! In languages with fewer students (e.g., German) uptake is mostly comprised of native speakers.

- In turn, they raise grade boundaries & create impression that top grades are reserved only for natives.

- **Ofqual (2017):** in A-Level German, nearly 50% of students who were awarded an A* were German native speakers.

- Pushes students towards STEM → more even playing field?

- However, we must not discriminate against native and heritage speakers.

4.4.1. Role of the teacher: the good and the bad

"[…] If I wasn't inspired to take up MFL study through external factors, I wouldn't have studied [MFL]. I genuinely believe the reason MFL is not popular is because of the way it is taught."

"I was very fortunate that during my A-Levels my French teachers fostered the connection I was trying to make between my studies of French and History. This strongly influenced my decision to study both at university."

"MFL at school was a predominantly white subject. It's a shame the education infrastructure doesn't facilitate/encourage a larger intake of BAME students into language and the arts subjects."

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(Fahim, 2023:22-34)

4.4.2. Role of the teacher: the good and the bad

- 46% of schools in England have no BAME teachers (Weale, 2020)

- In 2018, only 14% of PGCE trainee teachers were from BAME backgrounds (NEU, 2018)

- 1 in 3 teachers typically leave after 5 years (Lough, 2020) → widespread teacher retention problem; what happens to BAME students?

- Teachers do not have sufficient cultural and/or 'advanced' linguistic knowledge to teach BAME students, esp those with knowledge of additional home languages.

> Are teachers doing enough to promote language study amongst minority students, especially those with knowledge of community languages?

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Teaching

Almost half of English schools have no BAME teachers, study finds

Researchers from UCL also found that even in diverse schools, leadership teams are almost always white

Sally Weale *Education correspondent*

Mon 14 Dec 2020 00.01 GMT

4.4.3. Role of the teacher: the good and the bad

- Increasing number of English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils in MFL classrooms → contributes to linguistic and pedagogical complexity (Finch, Theakston and Serratrice, 2020).

- Teachers not well equipped to teach these students (own abilities; timetable constraints; 'overburdening' schedule; little access to training and resources)

- Biggest concern for NQT/ECTs as EAL training only offered as CPD courses in mainstream school settings not beforehand.

- Only 39% of NQT/ECTs feel adequately trained to teach EAL students (DfE, 2018).

Should community languages then be offered and/or prioritised so this subgroup of learners do not miss out on gaining a languages qualification?

4.5.1. Exclusionary school policies: language (subject) hierarchies

"My school **wouldn't allow me** to take a non-European language for GCSE."

"My school didn't offer Punjabi GCSE as I went to a **white majority school**. I didn't even know I could."

"I **would've studied MFL** at A-Level, but I am interested in other languages not offered at my Sixth Form."

"I wanted to gain a qualification [in my HL], but I couldn't read or write it and **I had no formal education** in it at school like I did with French and Spanish."

"The languages on offer at my Sixth Form (French and Spanish) **would not help me** in my medical job, whereas knowledge of Romanian or Polish, for example, would really help."

(Fahim, 2023:35-36)

4.5.2. Exclusionary school policies: subject hierarchies & 'eurocentrism'

- Even if students want to study languages, they often cannot as community languages are seen as inferior to the 'big 3' (French, German, Spanish) (Fahim, 2023:40).

- Schools claim this is because of:

- the lack of specialist teachers;

- financial constraints;

- competition between languages and/or greater focus on STEM subjects which impact language provision.

- More worrying still how students are unaware or actively discouraged from studying their community language.

→ are schools doing enough to facilitate provision of language qualifications?

4.5.3. Exclusionary HE admission policies and language choices

- However, (community) language qualifications can have discriminatory impact, too (Fahim, Kim and Eppler, 2024).

- Many universities still will not accept language A-Levels, if a student has acquired *some* knowledge outside the mainstream setting (i.e., native, heritage speakers etc.)

- But there remains no unified national admission policies (Fahim, Kim and Eppler, forthcoming).

→ creates confusion and can detract students from study, especially if students fear their ethnically identifiable name could diminish perceptions of their achievement.

- We argue this creates *more* exclusion than inclusion → contributes to flawed 'native vs non-native' dichotomy.

- 'native speaker' = social construct: wide variation in language competence among heritage speakers that cannot be grouped into one group of speakers.

- Understandable why students may not choose a language qualification if it may not be accepted or can be discriminated against.

4.6. Exclusionary MFL curricula & classroom

- 'racially exclusive' Eurocentric curriculum and priority of 'big 3' languages

- The MFL classroom is one where students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can excel the most academically and emotionally, potentially outperforming their monolingual peers in MFL tasks and exams (Cenoz, 2013).

- However, Moore (2005) found students of colour may struggle to connect with content or draw parallels between their own language, culture and upbringing if not represented in MFL materials.

- Therefore, would a French-speaking student with Senegalese heritage would they feel represented in the MFL classroom, even if they are better equipped than their monolingual counterparts?

- Can teachers also facilitate this through CLIL or indirectly drawing parallels?

4.7. Recap

- Stigma & negative perceptions towards language qualifications among students, families and 'BAME' communities.

- Languages seen as difficult, too time-consuming and too unpredictable → pushes students towards STEM.

- Teachers can have good and bad impact – but challenges in funding, retention and lack of 'BAME' teachers.

- 'racially exclusive' and 'Eurocentric' MFL curricula misrepresenting 'BAME' students.

- Exclusionary school policies towards languages outside 'big 3' & subject hierarchy.

- Exclusionary HE admission policies only accepting certain languages by certain speakers.

5. Wider sociolinguistic trends from underrepresented groups

5.1.1. School type

Respondents who took an MFL qualification
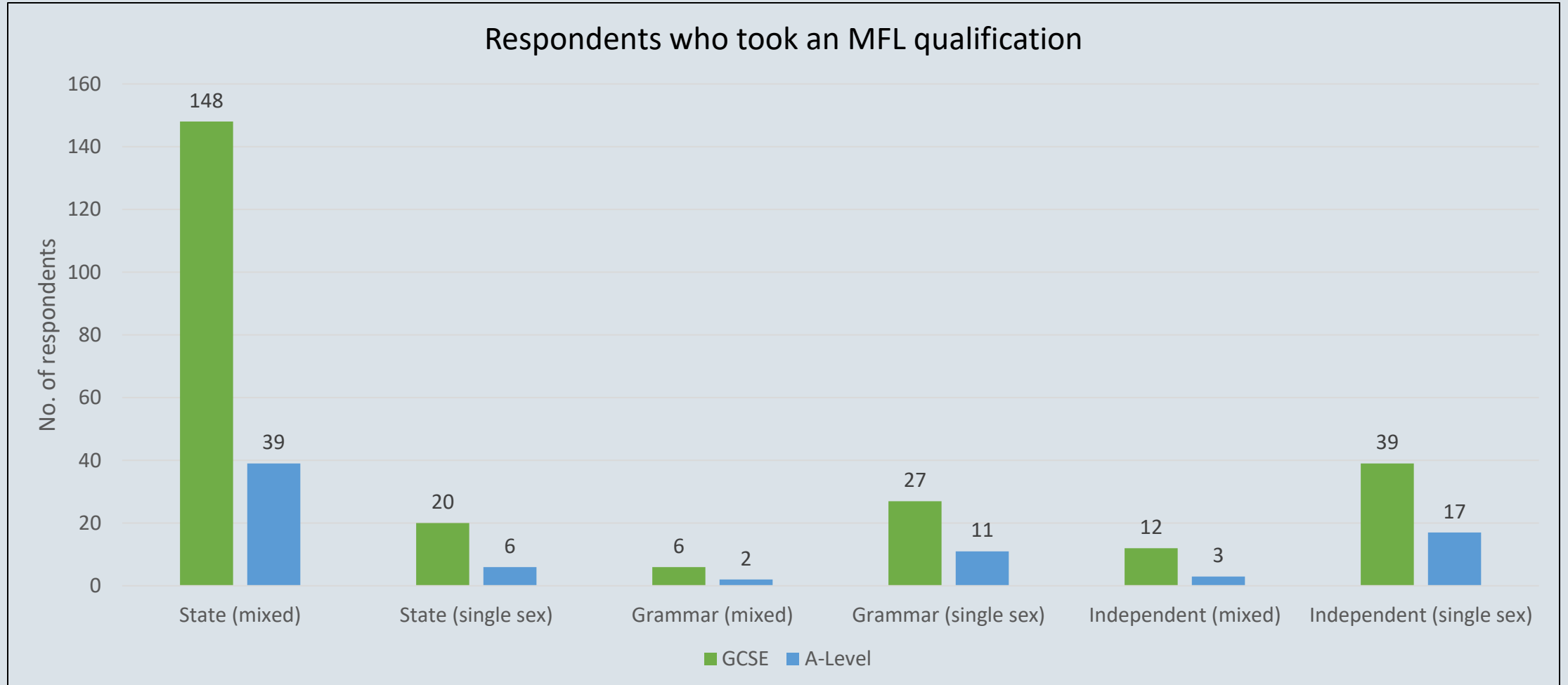
5.1.2. School type

- Magnified 'socio-economic stratification' in selective schools – little competition to secure funding against other (language) subjects.

- Selective schools also have larger MFL departments – average 12.6 MFL teachers in Independent schools, compared to 5 MFL teachers in State schools (Collen, 2020)

- State schools typically receive more disadvantaged pupils → teachers cannot run school trips abroad or international exchanges due to lack of passports, lack of teacher training to run such trips etc.

5.1.3. School type

"I feel support going into MFL at A-Level was non-existent at my school. Focus was instead given to STEM-related subjects and subjects related to popular degrees. I loved learning Spanish but it wasn't a viable option at my school compared to other subjects."

(Fahim, 2023:21)

5.2.1. Socio-economic background

Respondents who took an MFL qualification
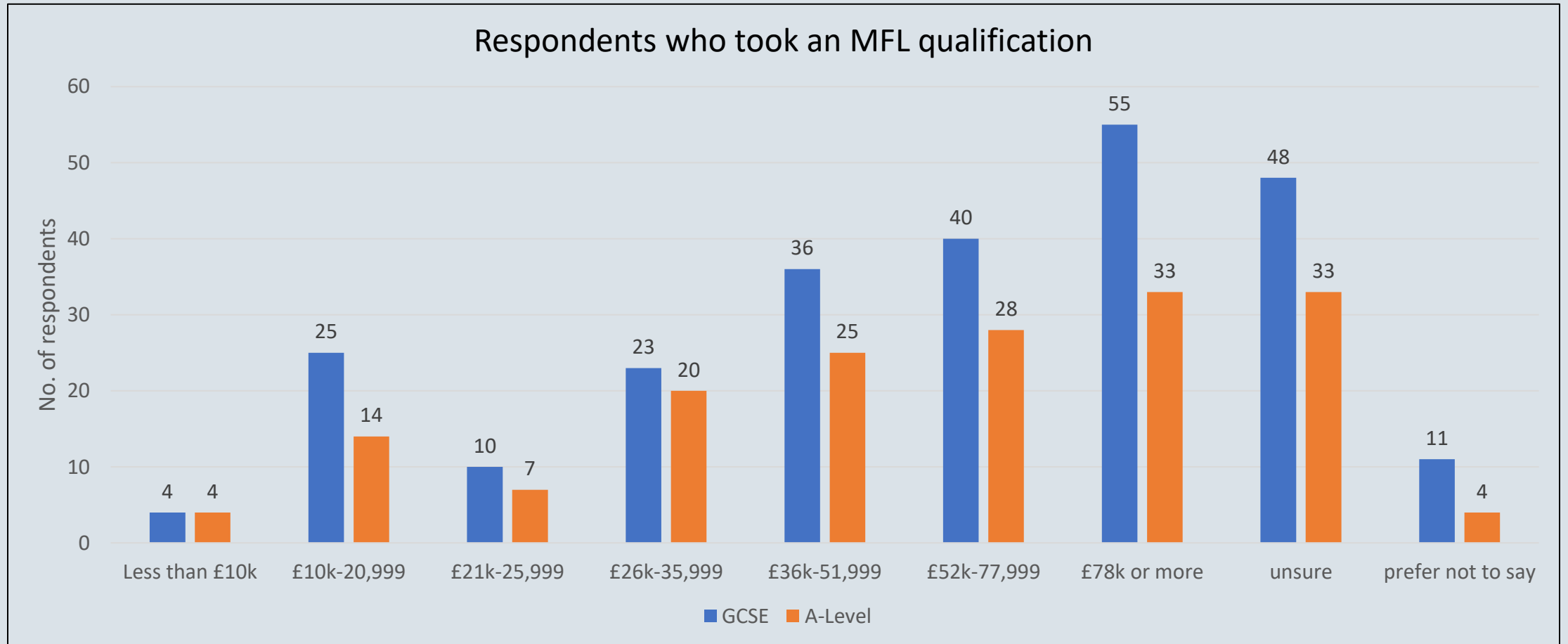
Average household income = £31,400 (2021)

5.2.2. Socio-economic background

- Selective schools (particularly grammar) are believed to be just as socially selective as they are academically selective (albeit indirectly) (Binwei Lu, 2020).

- E.g., high-income families supposedly place greater value on schools producing good exam results (Burgess et al., 2015), whereas working class parents typically emphasise schools with positive community values, associating selective schools with academic elitism (Cribb et al, 2013).

- Entry to (state-funded) selective school is seen as an investment (i.e., a more economical alternative to an Independent school).

  → Parents use financial and/or personal connections to pay for private tutoring etc. which lower income families may not have widespread access to.
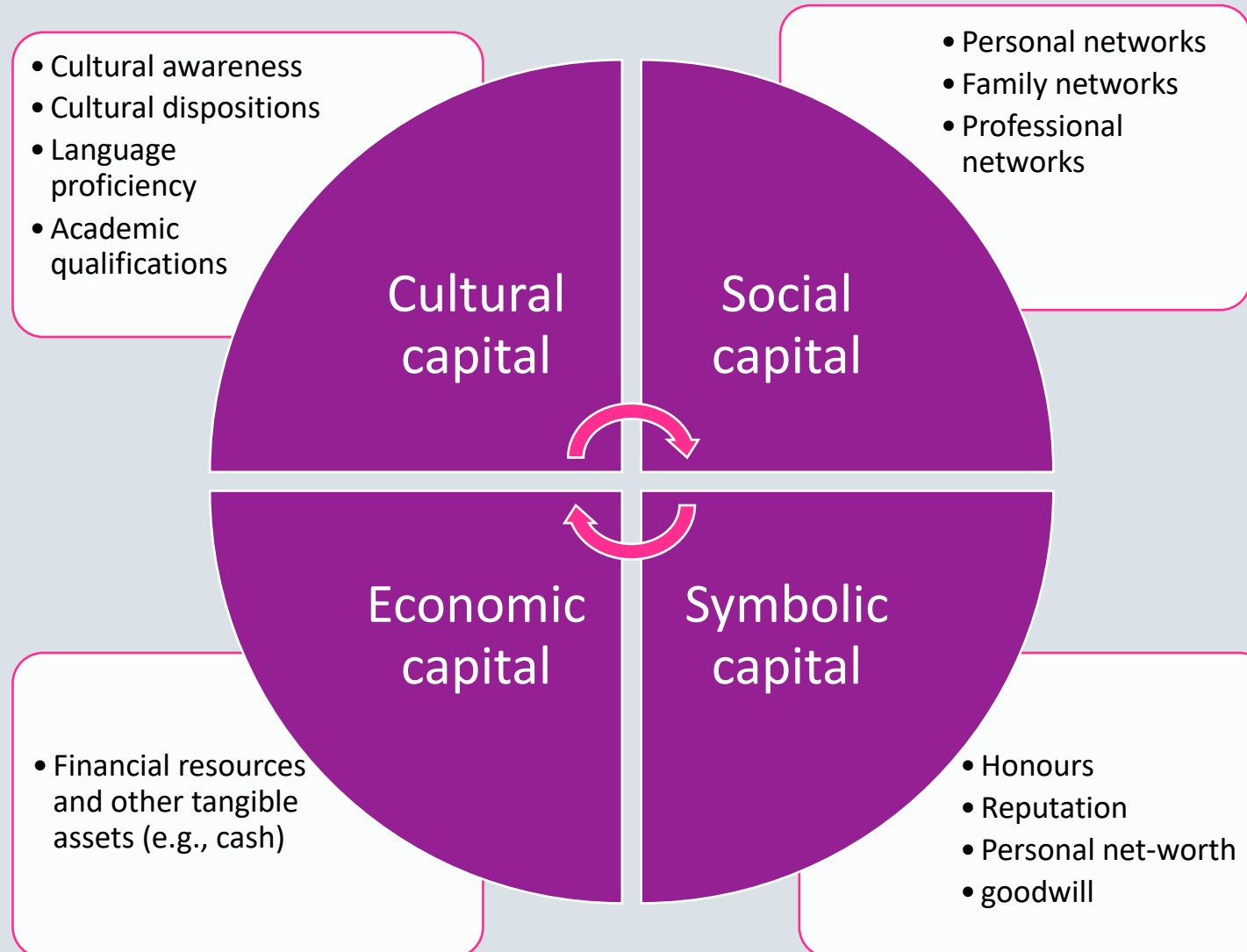
5.2.3. Socio-economic background

- Location of schools can cause disparities:

- Parents may sometimes pursue strategic house moves to gain entry to such schools, increasing house prices (Cribb et al., 2013).

- E.g., parents would have to pay £45,700 more than the average house price in a catchment area of a top school (Cullinane et al., 2017).

- Even if families cannot live in catchment area, parents from a higher socio-economic background are better positioned to cover travel expenses for children to commute to schools in selective areas.

5.2.4. Bourdieu (1974) and his capitals

- Can draw on Bourdieu's (1974) capital theories (especially social, economic and capital).

- Cultural awareness
- Cultural dispositions
- Language proficiency
- Academic qualifications

- Personal networks
- Family networks
- Professional networks

Cultural capital

Social capital

Economic capital

Symbolic capital

- Financial resources and other tangible assets (e.g., cash)

- Honours
- Reputation
- Personal net-worth
- goodwill

5.2.5. Bourdieu (1974) in an MFL context

- Students who often undertake holidays abroad are more likely to study MFL.

- → provides them with a higher cultural and economic capital (Coffey, 2018)

- Studying MFL fits in with their international travelling lifestyle and world view, remaining applicable outside of the classroom.

- **Coffey (2018):** in school where MFL was not offered, students reported coming from families who did not enjoy international mobility for leisure, and thus placed little importance on studying MFL.

5.2.6. Exclusionary oral photo cards

- What about those with a lower capital? Are MFL exams designed for them?

- Arguably no - Is this accessible to a child who may not even own a passport or been abroad, let alone form an opinion about skiing? (which isn't a mainstream sport in the UK).

- Would they have the (specialist) vocabulary to describe such photo? Especially when on foundation tier..
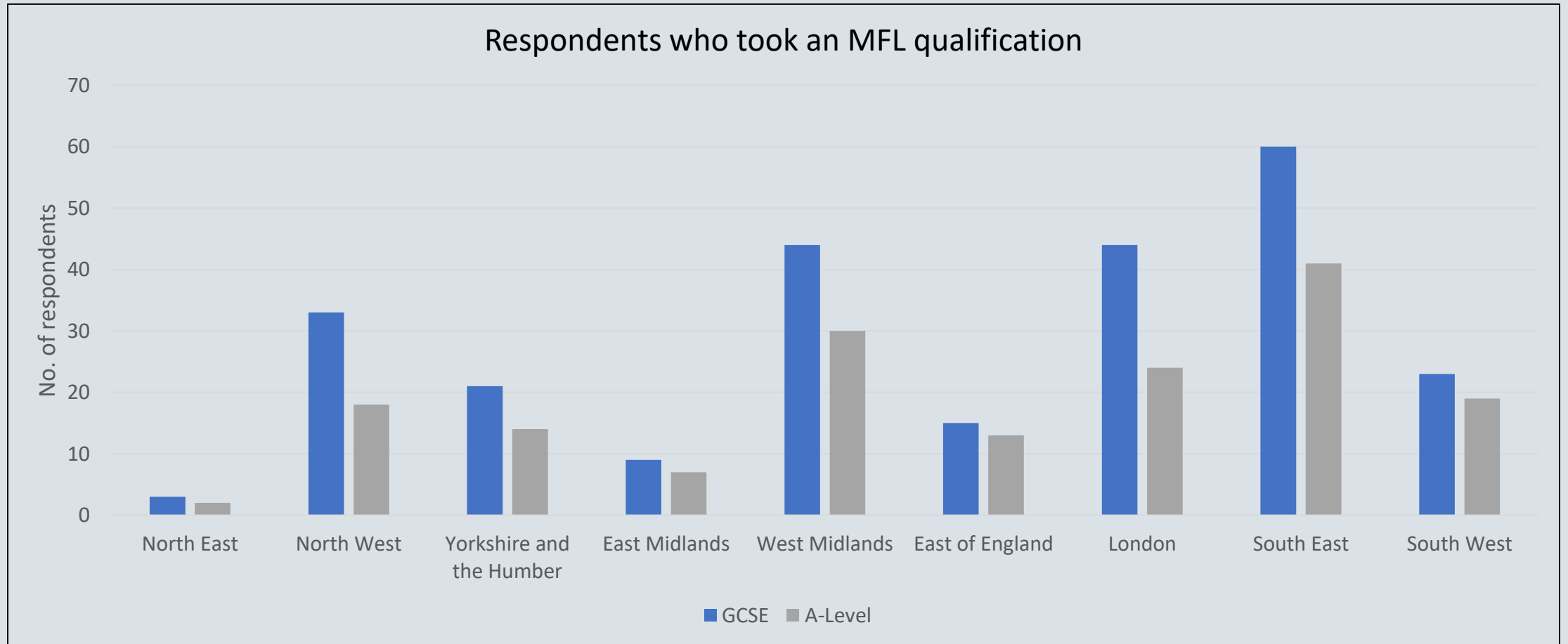

STIMULUS FP5

Topic: Holidays

(Source: © Westend61 GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo)

Schau dir das Foto an und sei bereit, über Folgendes zu sprechen:

- Beschreibung des Fotos
- Deine Meinung zum Skifahren
- Was du letztes Jahr im Urlaub gemacht hast
- Deine Pläne für den nächsten Urlaub
- Dein Lieblingsland für einen Urlaub

Edexcel GCSE German Foundation paper speaking photo card (2018)

5.3.1. Regional disparities

Respondents who took an MFL qualification

5.3.2. Regional disparities

- Geographical disparities regarding uptake – uptake higher in southern regions of England at both GCSE and A-Level.

- **Collen (2020):** similar regional differences; 65% of students in London boroughs study MFL compared to 43% in North East.

- Are we seeing a 'North-South' divide?

- Focus on intersectional disparities (viz. Bourdieu's (1974) capitals) – disparities in cultural and linguistic diversity across England.

- E.g., urban areas (i.e., London) enjoy greater linguistic diversity, higher rates of tourism and access to international flights which expose students to multilingualism on their doorstep.

5.4. Recap

• Uptake rates higher in selective schools → smaller cohorts, more MFL (specialist) teachers & assistants, more trips abroad, less competition between subjects.

• Uptake numbers higher among students with household income above national average → parents use their capitals to invest in education and provide linguistic/cultural opportunities and exposure.

• MFL exams perpetuate this and cater to higher capitals.

• Huge regional disparities and uptake numbers

→ Another 'North-South' divide? Though greater linguistic and cultural diversity expected in more urban areas (e.g., London).

6. Inclusive initiatives in the MFL classroom

- Based on my LAGB23/CliE presentation – supporting *Linguistics in MFL* project.

- Specifically, **Sociolinguistics**:

- language variation, dialects and attitudes/statuses of languages;

→ Not just visually representative but allows students to make connections with their own community (minority) language(s) in English society.

- **Move away from prescriptivism** – connect students to emerging youth vernaculars & language contact (e.g., 'Kiezdeutsch' – multiethnolect of Berlin).

- Draw (theoretical) **links between MFLs in school and community languages** (e.g., Spanish and Arabic; Kirschen, 2014) → drives engagement?

- **Promote decolonization** through historical linguistics – importance of learning about (linguistic) imperialism (incl. Creoles).

7. Wrapping up

- Uptake amongst minoritized and/or disadvantaged groups remains low, despite intrinsic interest and availability of languages.

- Seen clear barriers preventing minoritized and underrepresented students from accessing post-compulsory MFL education.

- Lots of scope to make MFL curricula, classrooms/teaching and exams more inclusive (e.g., through sub-branches of linguistics).

- But → many limitations and constraints – funding, teacher shortages, no unified national policies etc.

- Whose responsibility is it? Parents, teachers, national/educational policies..

MFL motivations paper (2023)

BERA community languages issue (with EE & YK; 2024)

LAGB23/CLiE presentation

NALA

National Association of Language Advisers

Thank you for listening!

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