

Purpose & Aims:

This study aimed to identify how female asylum seekers and refugees experience ESOL classes, including their motivations for learning English, how they experience accessing and attending courses and the impact that English language learning has on their lives.

The purpose of this research was to:

1. Better understand **the preferences and needs of female ESOL learners** to inform the creation of **more effective provision**.
2. **Identify and share best practice** experienced by different ethnic groups to **increase access to ESOL for all women**.
3. **Determine any challenges** that female asylum seeker and refugees face when accessing ESOL classes and **how these can be reduced**.

Research Methods

Mixed-Methods Study:

Stage 1: **Online Questionnaire.**

An online questionnaire was hosted on Microsoft Forms and was open to both men and women who had attended ESOL classes with the aim of capturing a general snapshot of ESOL provision and to compare male and female experiences. 106 responses were collected.

Stage 2: **Focus Groups.**

Four face-to-face focus groups with a combined total of 15 female asylum seekers and refugees. Groups were organised by ethnicity to identify any similarities or differences between experiences.

Data collection took place from October 2022 and ended in January 2023. The data was then thematically analysed.

Findings:

Female asylum seekers and refugees shared numerous ways in which ESOL had impacted their lives. Confidence was noted by many participants. Unfortunately, the focus groups suggested that more support is needed to improve job outcomes for women learners.

- Increased confidence
- More independence in the UK
- Better understanding of UK culture
- Ability to participate in UK family life
- Potential to continue studies or find a job

Only 30% of participants stated that **ESOL helped them to find a job.**

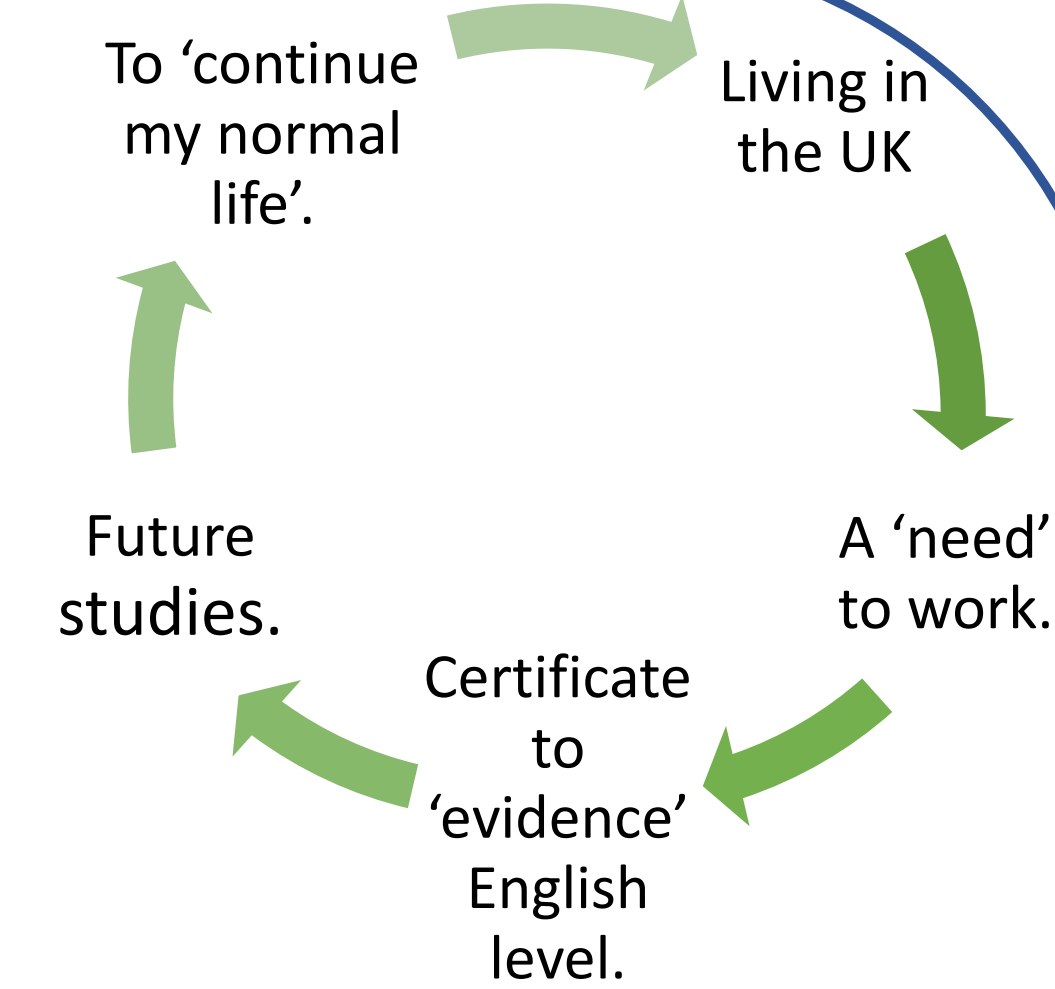
95% of all participants had a positive experience studying ESOL.

66% of women didn't know how they could find childcare.

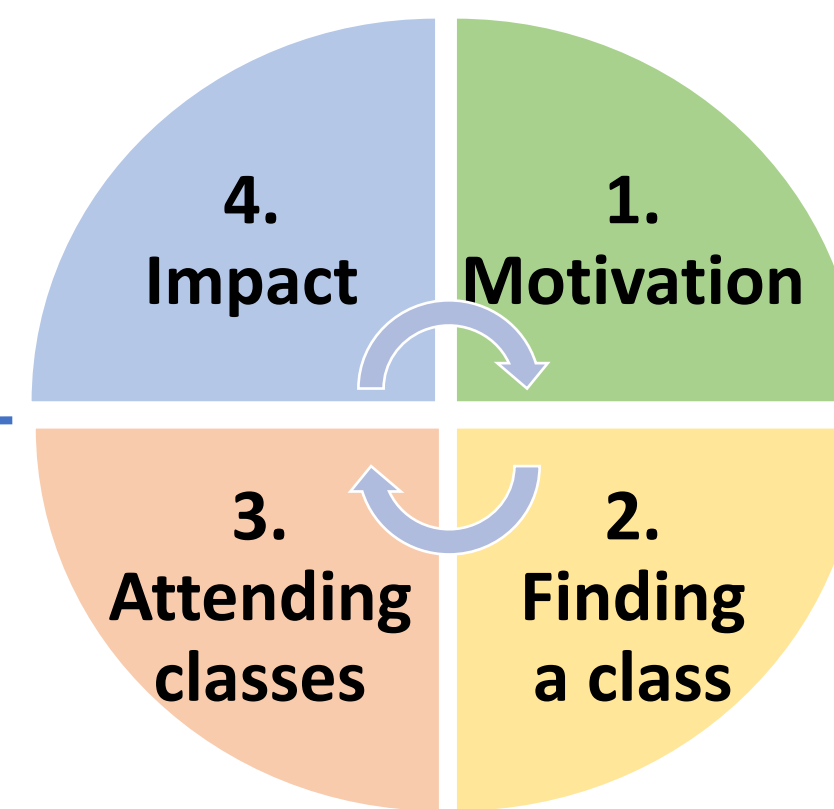
Most women referenced the frequency of classes and the amount of time required to complete a level of ESOL. They preferred frequent classes to speak English more often and progress quickly.

Women's perspectives on female experiences compared to males in the UK.

- Equality in British society.
- Differences in cultures.
- Support from government and online classes.



Participants discussed a 'need' to learn English and suggested a lack of choice. The cycle represents the connectivity participants stated between learning English, finding a job, upskilling themselves, investing in their futures, continuing their career and integrating into their life in the UK.



78% of participants found an ESOL class **within 6 months.**

50% of Asian, Arab, Black, Caribbean or African participants found it difficult to find an ESOL class compared to only **34%** of White participants.

Method of searching

Friends, Family, Online, Job Centre.

Difficult to find free classes online.

Support to find a class

Ukrainian women accessed online groups.

Afghan women had ESOL at their hotels.

Waiting times

The average waiting time was **3 months.**

Longer times for mothers and higher levels.

Ukrainian and Afghan learners recommended their support for all women.

Recommendations:

Motivations:

- Accredited provision is best practice for ESOL learners to ensure they receive certificates.

Finding a class:

- More support needed to inform ESOL learners on how the UK education system works.
- Support tailored by nationality or ethnic group was valuable to participants.

Attending ESOL classes:

- Information on how to access childcare is vital.
- Speed of progression is a concern to ESOL learners, they prefer frequent classes.

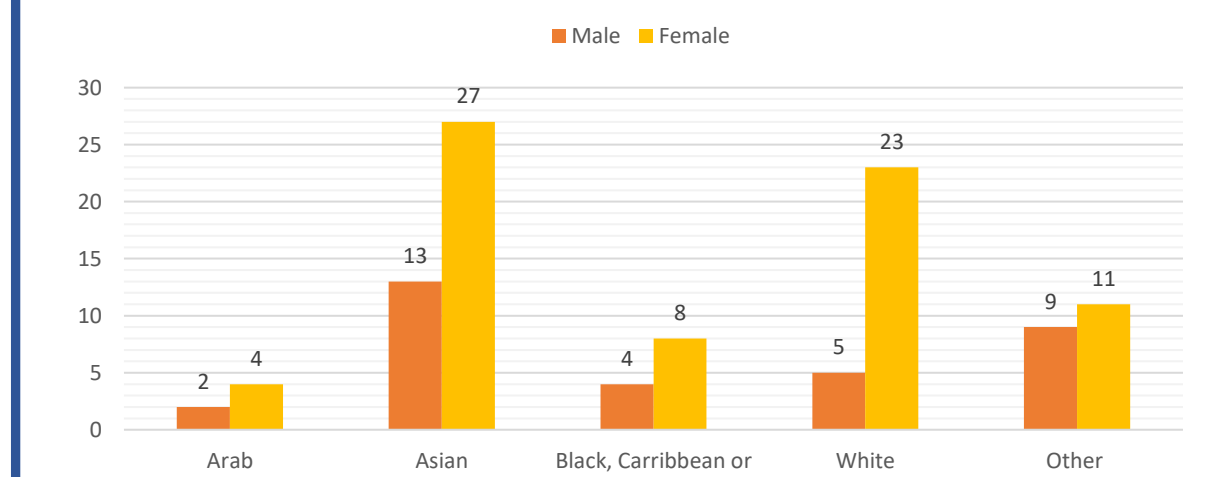
Impact:

- Participants noted improvements in their confidence, independence and wanted more lessons on life in the UK/cultural norms.
- Requested support to find a job or find their next course to continue their journey.

Demographic:

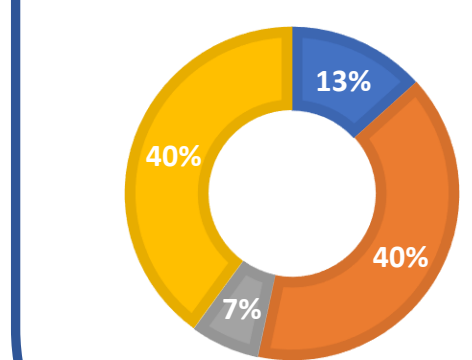
Demographic of the sample:

Questionnaire Participant Demographic



FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC

Legend: Arab (Blue), Asian (Orange), Black (Grey), White (Yellow)



The two largest ethnic groups were Asian and White populations. This reflects the percentages of asylum seeker applications from each ethnic group in 2022 (Gov UK, 2023).

Scan me to find out more!

