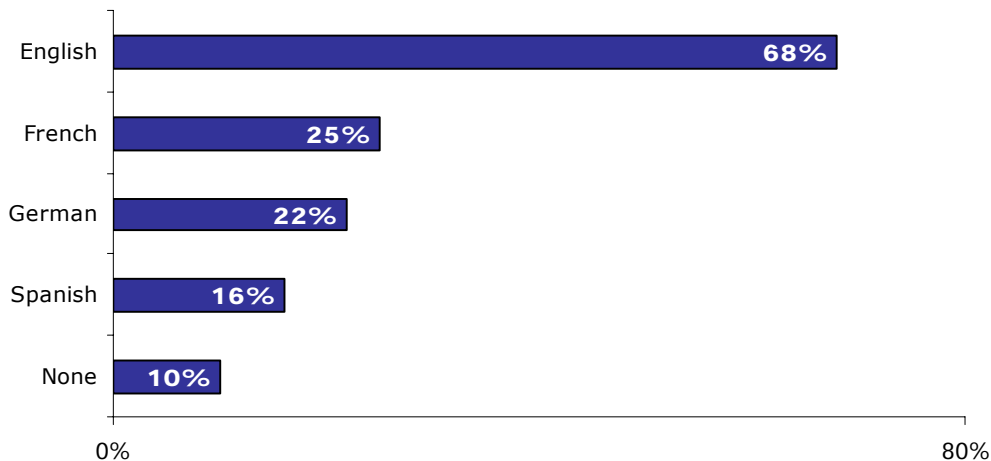


2.1.2 The Most Useful Languages

- English is rated as by far the most useful language to know –

Source Questionnaire: QA2a

QA2a Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are the most useful to know for your personal development and career? - % EU



As expected, **English is perceived by Europeans to be by far the most useful language to know** (68%). French (25%) and German (22%) follow next almost side by side, and Spanish ranks fourth with a 16% share. 1 in 10 Europeans do not see the benefits of knowing any language other than their mother tongue.

These results are not directly comparable with those obtained in 2001 due to a change in the wording of the question²⁹. Still, some trends can be described at the European level.

The gap between the observed usefulness of French and German is narrowing over time. In 2001³⁰, 40% of respondents rated French as useful and 23% assessed skills in German as beneficial. The respective shares in 2005 are 25% for French and 22% for German.

²⁹ Question in EB64.3 (QA2a) Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are the most useful to know for your personal development and career?
Question in EB54.1 (Q1.c) Which two languages do you think are the most useful to know apart from your mother tongue?

³⁰ EB54.1 *Europeans and Languages* in
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_147_summ_en.pdf

QA2a Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are the most useful to know for your personal development and career?

EB64.3	NMS10	EU15
English	72%	68%
French	5%	23%
German	48%	17%
Spanish	2%	19%
None	13%	9%
Russian	10%	2%

This development can again be partly explained by the entrance of the 10 new members to the European Union.

As is shown in the table above, English is perceived as the most useful language by citizens in both new and old Member States. There are variations concerning the anticipated benefits of knowing French, German, Spanish and Russian. **Russian** and **German**, in particular, are perceived significantly more useful by the more recent EU countries while **French** and **Spanish** maintain more support among the older Member States.

When analysing the results at the country level, **the weight of English becomes even more apparent**. In 26 out of 29 countries covered in this survey, English is rated as the most useful language to know. The shares range from 97% in Sweden to 59% in Portugal.

Only three exceptions are perceived: in Luxembourg (81%), the United Kingdom (62%) and Ireland (58%), French is assessed as the most useful language to know apart from the mother tongue.

Further variations can be observed when the languages perceived as the second most useful are considered.

German reaches second place as a useful language to know in 14 countries, particularly in Slovakia, Slovenia (61% each) and Luxembourg (60%).

French is rated as the second most advantageous language to know in 8 countries, especially in Belgium (53%) where it has the status of a state language, followed by 35% in Cyprus and Portugal.

Spanish is appreciated as the second most useful foreign language in France (37%) and the United Kingdom (34%).

Finally, the country-by-country analysis reveals some historically and geographically related patterns.

Russian is assessed as the second most useful language in Latvia (54%), Lithuania (50%) and Estonia (48%), in countries where a significant Russian speaking minority resides. **Swedish** gains considerable support in Finland as the second state language of the country. The Maltese prefer to learn **Italian**, for reasons of geographical proximity.

EUROBAROMETER 64.3

VOLUME A Pondère Weighted

Terrain/Fieldwork : 11/2005

QA2a A l'exception de votre langue maternelle, quelles sont les deux langues qu'il est le plus utile de connaître pour votre développement personnel et pour votre carrière ? (SPONTANÉ – MAX. 2 REPONSES)

QA2a Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are the most useful to know for your personal development and career? (SPONTANEOUS – MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

		TOTAL	German	English	Arabic	Bulgarian	Catalan	Chinese	Croatian	Danish	Spanish	Estonian	Finnish	French	Greek	Hungarian	Italian
UE25	EU25	24682	22%	68%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	16%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	3%
BE		1000	8%	83%	0%	-	-	1%	-	-	5%	0%	-	53%	0%	0%	1%
CZ		1029	55%	70%	0%	-	-	0%	-	-	3%	-	-	6%	0%	-	1%
DK		1031	55%	94%	1%	-	-	1%	-	2%	10%	-	0%	8%	0%	0%	1%
D-W		1007	6%	81%	0%	-	-	2%	-	0%	14%	-	-	29%	0%	-	3%
DE		1557	5%	81%	0%	-	-	2%	-	0%	12%	-	-	28%	0%	-	3%
D-E		550	2%	81%	0%	-	-	2%	-	0%	8%	-	-	21%	0%	-	1%
EE		1000	14%	76%	-	-	-	0%	-	0%	1%	12%	10%	2%	-	-	0%
EL		1000	30%	74%	0%	0%	-	0%	-	-	4%	-	0%	21%	-	0%	6%
ES		1025	11%	73%	0%	0%	2%	2%	-	-	5%	-	-	33%	0%	-	1%
FR		1012	20%	82%	1%	-	0%	3%	-	-	37%	-	-	2%	-	-	7%
IE		1000	37%	4%	0%	0%	-	3%	0%	0%	34%	0%	0%	58%	1%	-	6%
IT		1000	13%	80%	2%	-	-	3%	0%	-	15%	-	0%	24%	0%	-	1%
CY		502	19%	94%	0%	0%	-	-	-	-	4%	-	-	35%	1%	-	7%
LV		1000	17%	74%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%	0%	-	3%	0%	0%	0%
LT		1011	28%	87%	-	-	-	0%	-	-	1%	-	0%	4%	-	-	1%
LU		501	60%	37%	-	-	-	0%	-	-	1%	-	0%	81%	0%	-	1%
HU		1015	55%	62%	-	-	-	-	0%	-	1%	-	0%	4%	0%	0%	3%
MT		500	6%	91%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	2%	-	-	12%	0%	-	64%
NL		1031	47%	94%	0%	-	-	1%	-	-	16%	-	0%	19%	0%	-	0%
AT		1002	2%	72%	1%	0%	-	1%	1%	0%	8%	-	0%	16%	1%	2%	9%
PL		1000	46%	72%	-	0%	-	-	0%	-	2%	-	0%	5%	0%	-	1%
PT		1000	6%	59%	0%	-	-	-	-	-	6%	-	0%	35%	0%	-	0%
SI		1030	61%	78%	-	-	-	0%	-	8%	-	-	-	4%	-	0%	12%
SK		1044	61%	72%	0%	0%	-	0%	0%	-	2%	-	-	5%	0%	2%	2%
FI		1017	19%	88%	0%	-	0%	0%	-	-	4%	1%	3%	8%	0%	0%	1%
SE		1054	37%	97%	1%	-	-	1%	0%	2%	22%	-	2%	13%	0%	-	1%
UK		1321	27%	5%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	34%	-	-	62%	1%	0%	4%
BG		1004	34%	65%	-	4%	0%	0%	-	-	5%	-	0%	11%	2%	-	2%
HR		1000	54%	77%	0%	-	-	0%	0%	-	1%	-	-	4%	-	0%	12%
RO		1002	17%	64%	-	-	-	-	-	-	7%	0%	0%	34%	1%	2%	8%
TR		1005	40%	83%	8%	0%	-	2%	-	-	1%	-	0%	10%	0%	-	1%