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WIRED

新英文课堂

Technology

JUN 7, 2022 | 572 words ›

New EU Rules on USB-C Charging Could Force an iPhone Redesign

European lawmakers have mandated that mobile devices (looking at you, Apple) must charge using the same standard connector cable.

Legislators in the European Union have selected one charging port to rule them all. And that charging port is USB-C.

On Tuesday, EU officials ruled that any mobile electronic devices sold within the EU must come with a USB-C charging port by the fall of 2024. The new mandate applies to rechargeable mobile devices like phones, tablets, laptops, handheld game consoles,

headphones, and cameras. This move to standardize charging ports was executed as a way to limit e-waste—consumers will be able to buy devices without a charger in the box if they so choose—but also to make it easier for people to wrangle the energy needs of their many devices.

“This is a bit of a victory for common sense,” says Ben Wood, chief analyst at CCS Insight. “Consumers are fed up with having lots of different chargers, lots of different ports.”

Standardization around USB-C as the tech industry’s main connection interface has been a long time coming, with many manufacturers making the switch years ago. After all, USB-C generally boasts faster charging and transfer speeds than competing standards, and the cables are easy to find and use.

Still, there’s one big player that’s going to really feel this ruling: Apple. All current iPhones and the base model iPad use the proprietary Lighting port, which is exclusive to Apple devices. There are more than 1 billion iPhones in the world, and every model of iPhone Apple has released since 2012 has come with a Lightning port.

The most likely course of action for Apple is to just make the switch to USB-C across all its devices. It’s not like the company hasn’t seen this coming. It already uses USB-C connectors on MacBooks and most iPad models. Last month, Bloomberg reported that Apple has already been testing out new iPhones with USB-C ports.

So with the EU forcing Apple’s hand, there is a chance we may soon see a USB-C iPhone after years of speculation. However, a more radical scenario is just as likely.

“Then there's the nuclear option for Apple,” Wood says, “which would be to kind of pay homage to Jony Ive's obsession with minimalism and get rid of a charging port altogether and go completely wireless.”

Wireless charging is already supported across the whole iPhone lineup. And although

countless accessories and dongles attach to iPhones via the Lightning connector, Apple has proven it’s not scared of making big design changes that break that device compatibility; the company faced a huge backlash when it removed the iPhone’s headphone jack, but forged ahead anyway.

This also isn't the first time in recent history that an EU ruling has driven big changes at consumer tech companies. The GDPR, the EU's sweeping online data privacy legislation, caused what amounted to a global redesign of the web’s user experience. A law passed in France last year requiring device manufacturers to include repairability ratings on their products led to Apple and Samsung establishing consumer repair programs of their own.

“What’s interesting is that the legislators in the EU are able to almost shape global technology trends,” Wood says. “Whether it's right to repair, safety and environmental guidelines that they enforce, or something like this with the universal connector, the sheer size of the European Union as a market of 500 million consumers means that no major consumer electronics company can ignore this.” ■

BIG THINK

Smart skills

MAY 31, 2022 | 905 words

The 43:57 talking-listening ratio that makes for brilliant conversations

It's time to put on your listening hat.

Franklin D. Roosevelt hated small talk. As president of the United States, he was subjected to quite his fair share of it. Roosevelt argued that in most conversations of this kind, people never actually listened to what other people said, as if people were reading from a prompt card and politely waiting their turn. To illustrate his point, Roosevelt would sometimes greet people by saying, “I murdered my grandmother this morning.” Invariably, people nodded, smiled, and carried on as usual. Only once did someone actually listen, and replied, “I’m sure she had it coming.”

Roosevelt no doubt had a point. A lot of the time, people hardly ever listen to what's going on in a conversation. They either take in the gist or focus instead on getting their own response ready. A bad conversation is one where both parties are so intent on talking, that the "listening" is simply a silent gap waiting your turn. In these cases, the talking-listening ratio is all wrong.

So what makes a good conversation? How much should you listen and how much should you talk? And what practical applications can this give you?

Listening for good relationships

Talking about yourself feels good. A study from Harvard University shows that it even gives us similar kicks as does sex, cocaine, and good food. (If you do all three *and* talk about yourself, I imagine you're in for a good night.) But while monologuing at someone might be good for you, it'll probably leave your conversation partner much less happy. They'll go away and tell their friends, "Wow, that guy didn't stop talking about himself" or "It was like I wasn't even there."

The fact is that good conversations, like a game of catch, is a back-and-forth game. They need a talking-listening ratio that's not far from 50:50. When we talk incessantly — when we hog the ball — our partner can feel unwanted and unappreciated. When we listen to someone else, we allow them to deal with whatever stresses or bothers them. As such, it builds much deeper relationships with much higher satisfaction.

The fact is that when we listen to someone, we show we're willing to understand them. In our romantic relationships, this matters all the more. With those closest to us, we assume we know them; that they're as static and familiar as your own hand (which does, of course, change).

But as Kate Murphy writes in her book *You're Not Listening: What You're Missing and Why It Matters*, "How long would you want to stay with someone who insisted on treating you as if you were the same person you were the day you two met? […] Listening is how we stay

connected to one another as the pages turn in our lives."

The 43:57 rule

If you want someone to come away thinking well of you, you're going to need to listen more. It's true, especially, if you hope to get something out of the conversation. Several years ago, Gong Research Labs decided to analyze 25,537 sales calls and with the goal of answering the question, "what talking-listening ration makes for a great sales call?"

What they found is that "highest converting talk-to-listen ratio on sales calls is approximately 43:57." Inversely, the least successful sales pitches were ones where the salesman talked for more than 60 percent of the time. This means that you're most likely to persuade someone or get them to come around to your point of view if you listen more than you speak.

Obviously, this isn't an *absolute* rule — every conversation is different, and you ought to adapt to the demands of every interaction. But it does reveal how much more powerful listening is when it comes to getting something you want.

The power of learning

But listening does not always come easily to people. Here are three starter tips to rebalance your own talking-listening ratio:

1. *Let silence fall*. Silence is the space where conversation grows. In the same way the words on this page are defined by the space around it, silence incubates our ideas and catalyses discussion. Let people say more. Just because someone has stopped talking, it doesn't mean they're done communicating.

2. *Ask questions*. Don't prescript and line them up but respond organically to the meandering bends of the conversation. Ask for more information about something which interests you; peel back to a previous word or phrase they used or explore the details behind a half-told story. It's a hard skill to get right, but it gets easier with practice.

3. *Empathize*. It's easy to focus on yourself in a conversation. We often think, "what do they *want* me to say?" or "how will I look if I ask that?" But when we get bogged down in self-obsession, we miss the conversation. Imagine yourself as the person you're talking to and engage with their motivation behind speaking.

It's commonly said that everyone has something to teach you, and there's a lot of truth in this. When we listen to what other people say, when we read and learn from the world, we become better. Listening to what others have learned or what wisdom they have is greater (and far, far cheaper) than any university or school. It's the way humans are meant to learn. As Epictetus once said, "Nature hath given men one tongue but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak." ■

The Washington Post

Opinion

June 21, 2022 | 540 words

FDA cutting nicotine in cigaret tes is overdue

The FDA is taking a historic step to reduce smoking deaths. It's overdue.

The Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday made a decision of rare importance, concerning not a pandemic illness but the country's leading cause of preventable death: smoking. It is crucial the White House stick up for what would be the FDA's most assertive antismoking policy ever — one that will inevitably meet severe resistance.

The agency is preparing a rule that would mandate that tobacco companies dramatically cut the amount of nicotine in cigarettes sold in the United States, rendering their deadly products minimally or not-at-all addictive. This move has long been anticipated: Congress

in 2009 gave the FDA broad powers to regulate tobacco products. The agency started exploring this policy in 2017, and it should have used its authorities fully before now. It must move quickly. About half a million Americans a year die of smoking-related illnesses; any further delay would mean more unnecessary suffering and death.

The idea is to make cigarettes unattractive to people addicted to nicotine and to encourage them to get their fix in less dangerous ways — or simply to quit. While highly addictive, nicotine does not damage people's bodies the way other chemicals in cigarette smoke do. If smokers could not extract large amounts of nicotine from cigarettes, they would turn to vaping or smoking-cessation products such as nicotine gum or patches. Some questions remain about vaping's effects on health, but there is little serious doubt that it is a far less deadly alternative for chronic cigarette smokers. Meantime, anything that gets substantial numbers of people to quit tobacco entirely should be embraced.

Critics object that smokers would simply smoke a lot more cigarettes or inhale more deeply. But an FDA study published in the New England Journal of Medicine rebutted that concern, estimating that the smoking rate would plummet from 12.8 percent to 1.4 percent by 2060. Some of this would come from product switching, some from people quitting and some from people not starting at all. By the end of the century, the number of new smokers would be reduced by 33.1 million, 8.5 million tobacco-related deaths would be averted, and 134.4 million life years would be gained.

Such an aggressive regulation might also create a black market for full-nicotine cigarettes, leading some to compare the policy to alcohol prohibition in the early 20th century. This is nonsense. Alternative nicotine delivery vehicles are pervasive. The FDA is not proposing to ban all nicotine products, just to discourage use of the deadliest. A massive, coordinated black market would have to form to put a substantial dent in the huge shifts in behavior the FDA projects. It would be of such a size and scope that federal authorities would easily be able to disrupt it.

To be sure, the FDA will have to write its regulations carefully so that smokers do not move

en masse to other dangerous combustible tobacco products, such as cigars and pipe tobacco. Another danger is that smokers might add nicotine liquids to their cigarettes manually.

But the greatest risk is that resistance from industry and its ideological allies will derail the long rulemaking process to come. The agency should proceed with all possible speed, and the White House should stand by the rule as it works its way toward finalization. ■

The Economist

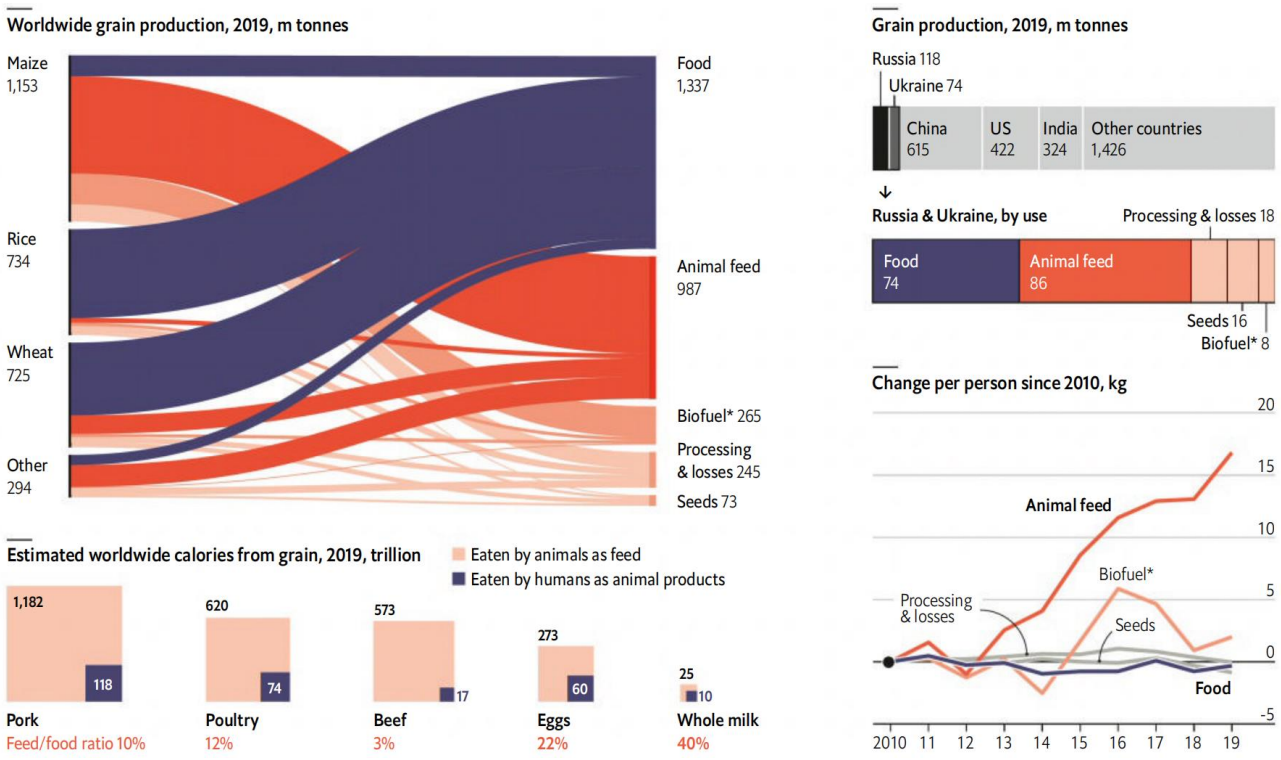
Graphic detail

Jun 25th 2022 | 592 words ›

World food

Against the grain

Most of the world's grain is not eaten by humans



The yellow and blue of Ukraine's flag evokes the country's bountiful wheat beneath a cloudless sky. Today, smoke from artillery has turned the skies grey. Tractors have been hauling heavy weapons, not grain, and a Russian naval blockade has prevented past harvests from reaching their destinations. The loss of this output has caused already high grain prices to surge. The World Food Programme warns that 47m people are at risk of hunger as a result.

Despite talks with Turkey over shipping Ukrainian grain, Russia is unlikely to let exports

pass through the Black Sea. Ukrainian grain is difficult to reroute by rail. If Ukraine remains cut off from world markets, it might seem like simple maths to infer that production elsewhere must expand to keep the world fed. But in fact, more than enough grain is already grown to meet humanity's needs. The problem is that 43% is either burned as biofuel or used to feed animals. That is equal to six times the grain output of Ukraine and Russia combined.

Less than half of the world's grain harvest is eaten by people. Take wheat, the most important crop grown by the two warring countries. In 2019, the latest year for which data are available, Russia and Ukraine jointly produced nearly 103m tonnes, less than the 129m tonnes fed to animals. Another 22m tonnes were turned into biofuel. The belligerents' second-biggest crop, maize, was even less likely to end up on a plate: humans ate just 13% of global output. Because Russia and Ukraine produce little rice, the total share of their grain output eaten by people was just 37%, below the global average of 46%.

Around the world, grain production went up by 17% in the 2010s, exceeding population growth by six percentage points. Consumption per person, however, remained flat, even as many went hungry.

Instead, the extra grain was put to other uses. Nearly one-tenth was converted into biofuel, which is used mainly to power cars. But the lion's share went to animals. In 2019 pigs ate 431m tonnes of grain, 45% more than the people of China did, according to our calculations. Overall, from 2010 to 2019 the amount of grain used for animal feed rose from 770m tonnes per year to 987m, as the world's pasturelands shrank and appetite for meat grew.

Some grain by-products, such as maize husks, are unsuitable for human food. And feeding grain to animals does generate food for people indirectly, in the form of milk, meat and eggs. However, this process is highly wasteful. For every 100 calories of grain fed to a cow, just three emerge as beef. Along with other feed crops and pasture, rearing animals also uses land that could produce human food.

In response to the war, governments are mulling policies to get a greater share of grains into grub. Germany and Belgium may ease biofuel mandates, and China has warned that it will “strictly control” the conversion of maize into ethanol. But with fuel prices soaring, the International Energy Agency nevertheless projects biofuel demand to rise by 5% in 2022.

In the long run, the only way to avoid such trade-offs is to get energy from other sources—ideally using renewables. That would benefit future harvests, endangered by climate change, too. But for now, reducing waste and turning wheat and maize into bread instead of animal feed is probably the best remedy. Ironically, one of the most effective ways for individual consumers to alleviate the world’s grain shortage is to eat more grain—at the expense of meat. ■

The Economist

Britain

Jun 22nd 2022 | 697 words ›

Public-sector pay

Wage fright

The government is trying to hold down inflation by practising pay restraint

Britain's train network came to a halt on June 21st and June 23rd as striking rail workers protested against a below-inflation pay offer, among other things. With further strikes planned for June 25th, the disruption threatens to endure. It also threatens to spread. The biggest teachers' union has warned of industrial action in the autumn. Doctors, nurses and local-government employees could go on strike, too. Together the health-care and education sectors account for around 60% of public-sector employment.

The underlying problem is that high inflation is eating into people's income. In May prices rose at an annual rate of 9.1%, the highest level since 1982 and much more than was

expected when the government set departmental budgets last October. The Bank of England expects the inflation rate to hit double digits later in the year.

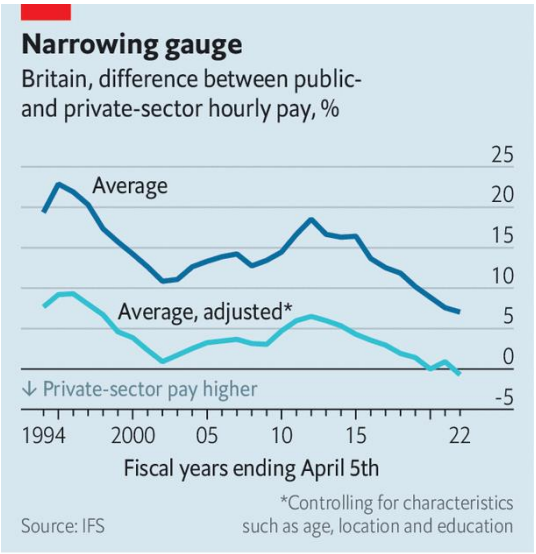
That has made conflict over wages all but inevitable. Public-sector employees want their pay to keep pace with rising prices: one teachers' union is demanding a 12% pay award, for example, against a government suggestion of 3%. But each one-percentage-point increase in the wage bill would cost the government around £2.4bn ($2.9bn), or 0.1% of GDP. That would require offsetting spending cuts, higher taxes or more borrowing.

Reconciling these tensions will not be easy. Beyond the expense, the government fears that giving in to unions' demands would encourage workers in the private sector to raise their pay requests, too, risking a wage-price spiral. It also worries that higher borrowing could boost demand at a time when the economy would struggle to absorb it; tighter monetary policy would be the result. And the Treasury has already announced measures designed to offer the most vulnerable households protection against rising prices. An inflation-matching pay rise could compensate people twice, at least in the short term.

Arguments line up on the other side, too. Trade unions are not wrong to say that many staff will struggle to make ends meet. Next April the state pension will rise by at least September's rate of inflation—why should public-sector employees not be afforded the same protection as pensioners? It is ultimately for the Bank of England to keep inflation under control, and for the government to set the level and quality of public services it desires.

One increasingly salient consideration is the risk of public servants fleeing to the private sector—or not joining at all. Over the three months to April pay in the private sector, excluding bonuses, grew at an annual rate of 4.8%, compared with just 1.8% in the public sector. According to Ben Zaranko of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, a think-tank, average pay in the public sector is still higher than in the private sector but the gap between the two has narrowed significantly (see chart). Indeed, if you adjust for differences in the two

workforces for factors like age and education, the premium disappeared altogether in 2021-22, although this does not account for relatively generous public-sector pensions.



The Economist

Over the coming months the government will consider recommendations from eight pay-review bodies, and then haggle with an array of unions over the amounts. The upshot will be variety in the generosity of pay deals, both within and across occupations. Within occupations, workers at different levels of seniority are likely to get different pay bumps. During the austere 2010s, for example, more experienced teachers and higher-paid NHS staff got smaller increases than junior and lower-paid colleagues.

As for differences between industries, outcomes depend on everything from average salaries to political sensitivities. Workers in the National Health Service (NHS) will be trickiest to handle. Health-care workers draw on a deeper reservoir of public sympathy than, say, rail workers; reducing NHS backlogs is a political priority; and rising demand for private-sector health-care gives workers other options. Last year they were among the few groups of public-sector employees to receive a cash pay rise. One study found that 10% growth in the pay of NHS nurses in London, relative to the private sector, would enable a 7% increase in their employment. A shift in the other direction would pile more pressure on to a creaking system. Deals will eventually be struck. But expect more disputes in the meantime. ■

The Economist

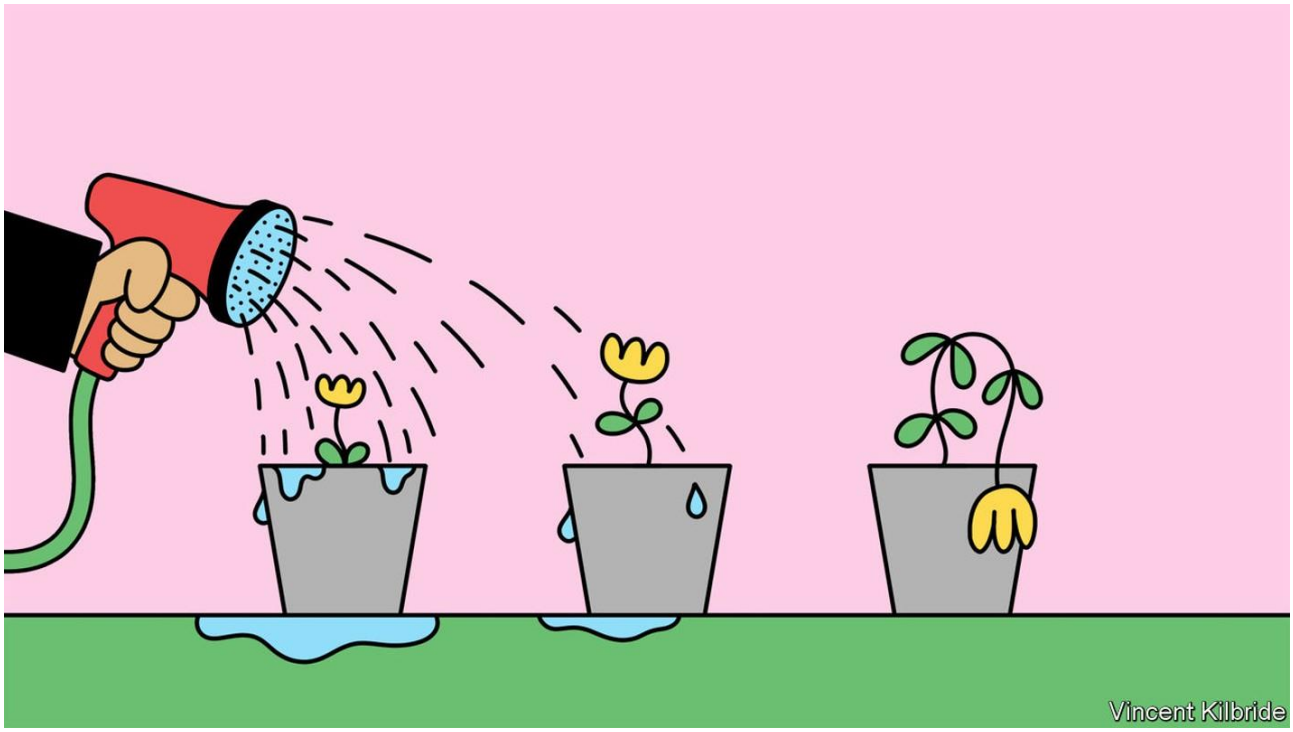
Leaders

Jun 23rd 2022 | 583 words

Britain's growth crisis

Tiddlers, not titans

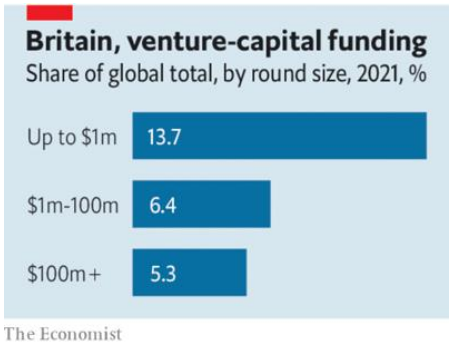
As new firms get bigger, the capital they need dries up



Britain is a good place to be a budding entrepreneur. The country's share of global venture-capital (VC) funding has doubled since 2018, to twice its share of global GDP. One out of every seven dollars the world invests in the earliest-stage "pre-seed" firms is invested in Britain. Although financial markets have taken a hammering this year, British VC funds have record amounts of unspent capital to throw at tomorrow's winners.

But Britain is not a good place to turn promising startups into titans. There are many reasons for that, from Brexit to poor productivity. But a big stumbling block is that as British firms grow, the capital they need dries up along the way.

By the time these companies are raising tens of millions of dollars, rather than a few hundreds of thousands, their share of global VC funding has halved. “Deep tech” ventures, which try to develop industry-disrupting new technologies like quantum computing or artificial intelligence, fare especially poorly. And at the top of the capital ladder, Britain’s once-mighty stockmarket has drifted into insignificance. In 2006 it accounted for 18% of the equity capital raised in global initial public offerings. This year it has raised under 1%.



America provides a sobering contrast. It has spawned four trillion-dollar behemoths in the past five decades. Britain has not created a business worth even a tenth as much in more than a century. In 2011 the FTSE 100 index of leading shares contained only two globally respected tech firms, Autonomy and Arm. Now it has none. Autonomy has been sold to Hewlett-Packard, an American giant, and its reputation tarnished by fraud claims (which its erstwhile leaders deny). Arm was bought by SoftBank, a Japanese conglomerate, and is now considering relisting on the NASDAQ.

Comparisons between Britain and America are often misplaced. Much of America’s success in nurturing corporate titans was forged in the crucible of Silicon Valley, which has far more than abundant growth capital to recommend it. First-mover advantage in the VC market, long-standing partnerships with America’s Department of Defence and a culture that celebrates enterprise—they all turbocharge innovation. But Britain’s courts, excellent universities and world-class financial centre should make it unusually fertile ground for firms to grow, too.

What should be done? One focus ought to be to simplify corporate-governance rules. Britain has had more iterations of its baroque governance code in the past 25 years than it has had prime ministers. The result is a tangle of worthy disclosure requirements that distracts fledgling firms. Another should be to seek to attract those rare experts capable of making sensible commercial decisions in deep-tech areas like quantum computing. Britain’s

excellent research universities are already a lure. One idea would be to create fellowships that combine an investment role with an academic one.

But the top priority is to direct the £4.6trn ($7.4trn) of assets held in British pension and insurance funds into more productive areas. Less than 1% of these assets is in unlisted equities. Defined-benefit pension schemes' allocation to the British stockmarket has sunk from 48% to below 3%. The government should dilute the pension-fee cap that crimps investment in early-stage firms. It should reform accounting rules that incentivise funds to load up on low-yielding gilts rather than riskier equities. The plethora of tiny pension funds—like the 90-odd local-government schemes—should be merged so they can invest at scale. Britain has assets seeking returns, firms hungry for capital and a financial centre that can bring them together. It can do better. ■

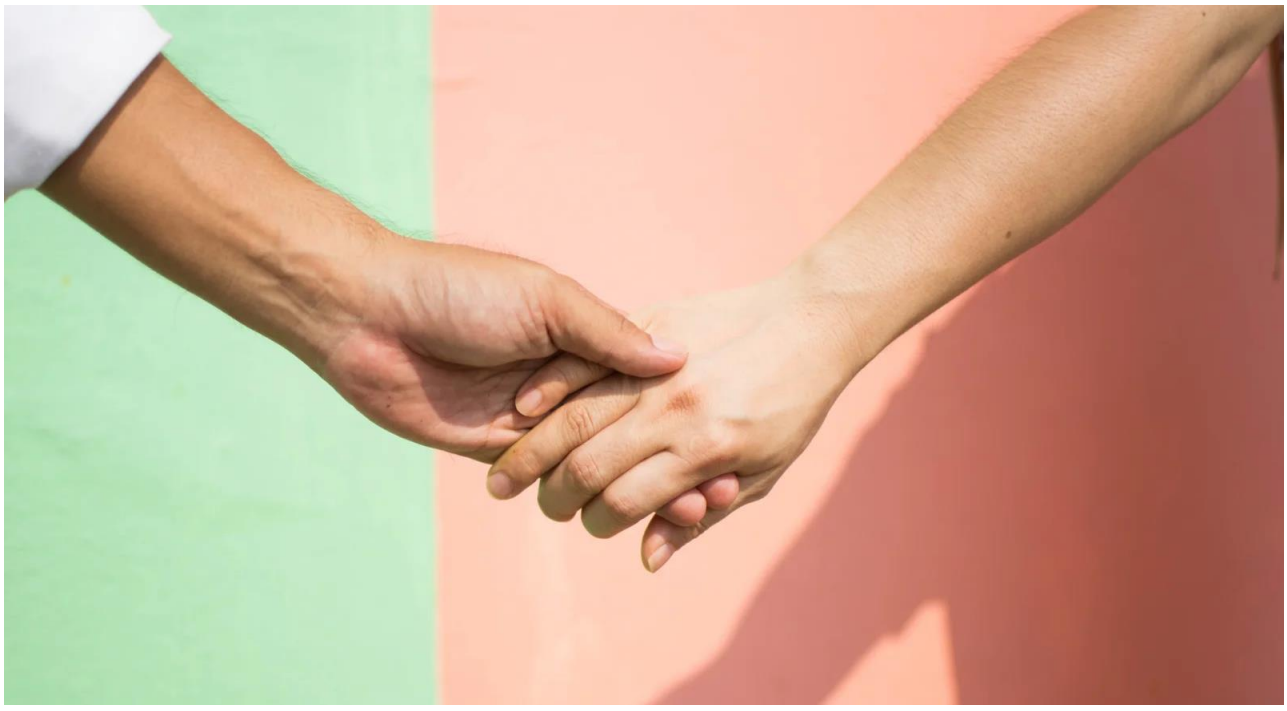
TIME

Health &Psychology

JUNE 22, 2022 | 897 words

Love Languages Actually Do Improve Your Relationship

People whose partners used their preferred love language had higher levels of relationship and sexual satisfaction than those whose partners didn't.



Three decades ago, Southern Baptist pastor Gary Chapman published The Five Love Languages: *How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. It was an instant and enduring hit: Book sales were four times higher than his publisher predicted at the time, and millions of copies have now been sold. In that book—and the many he's written since on the same topic—Chapman posits that we each have a primary love language, or a preference for the way we receive and express love: words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, quality time, or physical touch. The key to a happy relationship, Chapman says, is figuring out what language your partner speaks and becoming fluent in it.

That idea has become a pop-culture touchstone, inspiring dating-app questions, plenty of TikTok videos, and TV and movie scenes. But little research has explored the role love languages actually play in relationships. Now, a new study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* suggests that heterosexual couples' relationship satisfaction is, indeed, linked to whether their partner uses their preferred love language.

"It shows the importance of good communication, understanding your partner's needs, and being able to provide the things they want to affirm the relationship," says study author Gerald Matthews, a professor of psychology at George Mason University. "People don't always understand their partners as well as they think they do. You can't just assume that your partner wants what you want."

Matthews and his co-authors studied 100 heterosexual couples who had been together for 6 months to 24 years. The participants, who were ages 17 to 58, completed questionnaires in which they were asked to rate the extent to which they express love by engaging in certain behaviors. They also noted when they felt the most loved: when their partner gave them a hug, for example, or ran errands for them, or spent quality time with them. Participants' relationship and sexual satisfaction were measured through self reports by using standardized scales.

The results indicate that people whose partners used their preferred love language had higher levels of relationship and sexual satisfaction than those whose partners didn't. People who said they used the love languages their partners preferred to receive also reported greater relationship satisfaction. "The more tailored your love language is to your partner's needs, the greater their—and your own—satisfaction," says study author Maciej Stolarski, a psychology professor at the University of Warsaw in Poland. "Your satisfaction is boosted not only if your partner adequately responds to your love-language preference, but also when you do the same for them."

Overall, study participants' most frequently declared love language was quality time,

followed by physical touch, acts of service, words of affirmation, and receiving gifts. Since it's possible to have more than one preferred love language, the researchers also analyzed preferences and expressions as a set of dimensions. "Humans are not so simple," Stolarski says. "Each of us may prefer to receive love in more than one way, or may equally desire to be loved using three love languages."

Interestingly, people who reported the highest levels of affection for their partners in the study weren't necessarily more likely to share the same love-language preferences than people in less close partnerships. Matthews notes that it's common for the people in a relationship to have starkly different needs.

Despite the popularity of Chapman's five love languages, the concept remains relatively under-explored by researchers. Most studies have focused on validating the framework—confirming that love languages exist, which past studies have—rather than exploring the dynamics they lead to within a relationship. Chapman isn't a scientist, "and despite the extreme popularity of his books, the concept of love languages was often perceived as non-scientific," Stolarski says, which might have contributed to a hesitancy to take the phenomenon seriously.

Still, therapists have used the love-language framework for years. Andrew Bland, an associate professor of psychology at Millersville University in Lancaster, Pa., and a practicing psychotherapist, says it's helped many of his clients "simply because it's very easily understood." (Bland wasn't involved in the *PLOS ONE* study but has previously researched love languages and found that they may predict relationship satisfaction—and that by adapting our behaviors to meet our partners' needs, people can experience deeper self-development.) He appreciates that the new study contributes international support to the love-languages model, since it involved many European participants, particularly from Ukraine, Poland, and Belgium.

When Bland explains the significance of responding to a partner's preferred love language to his clients, he puts it like this: Imagine you're listening to the car radio, but then you drive

under an overpass, and the signal cuts out for a moment. With a love-language mismatch, “essentially what’s happening is the other person is trying to convey a sense of appreciation, but if they’re using their own love language, it’s not necessarily going to be received by the other person,” he says. “The signal simply doesn’t make it.”

So if you’re entering a new relationship—or hoping to improve an existing one—ask your partner about their love language, and share your own. Stolarski suggests planning a special day in which you focus on celebrating your partner’s love-language preferences, and then another that’s all about them responding to yours. “See what worked and how you and your partner felt that day,” he says. “Based on my own experience, it really does work.” ■