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2022 Duolingo Language Report

by Cindy Blanco

[English](#) · [हिन्दी](#) · [日本語](#) · [Tiếng Việt](#) · [中文](#)

The 2022 Duolingo Language Report presents the latest language trends and learner behaviors based on data from over 500 million Duolingo learners around the globe. Duolingo is the world's most downloaded education app, and we offer over 100 courses teaching 40+ languages—all for free. As a result, our data offers unique insights into what languages learners worldwide want to study and how their interests change over time and geography. Read about past trends in our [2020](#) and [2021](#) reports.



In 2022, many people took advantage of COVID-19 vaccines and boosters to return to their favorite activities, including music and concerts, gatherings of friends and family, and—of course—travel. The 2022 Duolingo Language Report reveals the ways in which learners embraced the return of pre-pandemic schedules and habits, and also how their approach to language learning has evolved. Learners around the globe used language study to bolster their interests in heritage, pop culture, and current events.

The biggest trend of 2022 was the global spike in people learning Ukrainian. In addition, this year's report explores how re-opened borders and eased travel restrictions impacted learners' study choices. Taken together, the insights from this year's global report show that language learning can reflect essential elements of a person's identity.

In the 2022 report:

- Language learners rally behind Ukraine.
- Learners prioritize English, but interests remain broad.
- Travelers are leaving new languages at home—for now.
- Learners around the globe take up multiple languages.

- [Language learning highlights from around the world.](#)
- [2022 Duolingo news—and what's ahead in 2023.](#)

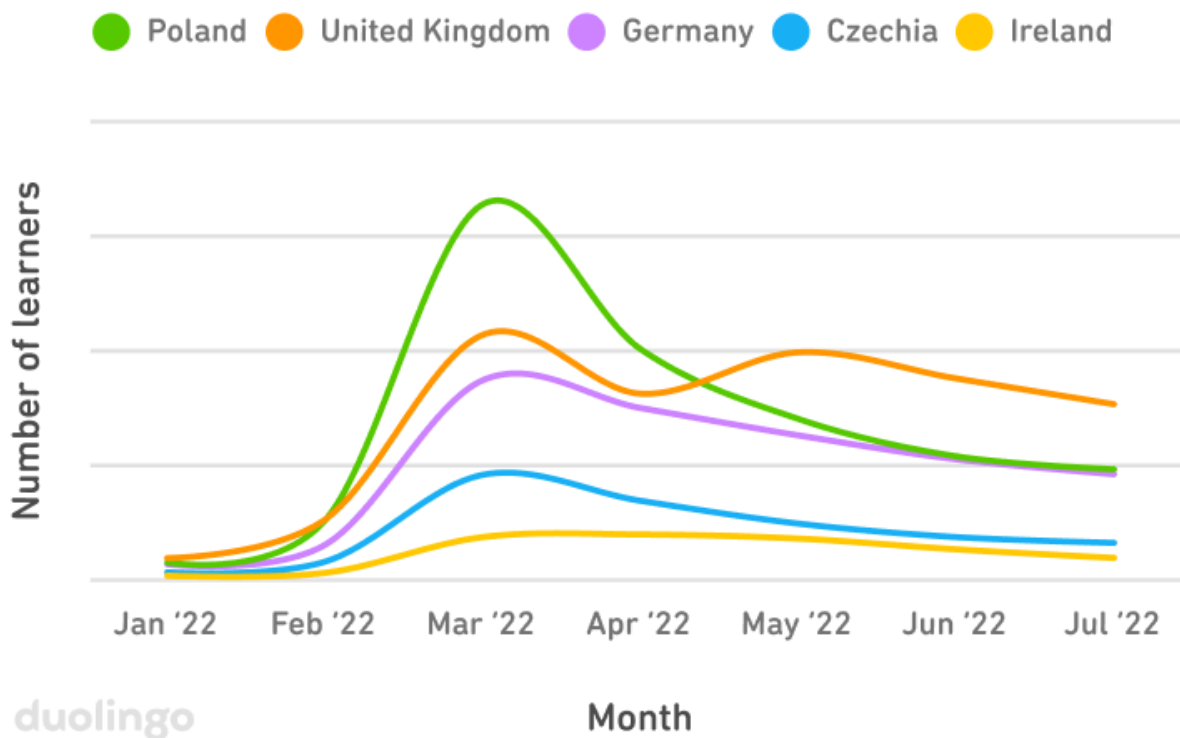
Language learners rally behind Ukraine



After Russia invaded Ukraine in February, **over 1.3 million people** around the world began studying Ukrainian in a show of solidarity. Interest in [learning Ukrainian](#) and [using Ukrainian in crisis situations](#) soared in the weeks after the war began, peaking in late March and remaining steady for the rest of 2022.

Among language learners, the global response to the war was united: Ukrainian was the fastest-growing language in countries far from the conflict, including Argentina, Japan, and Vietnam, and among Ukraine's neighbors as well. Countries receiving the [largest numbers of Ukrainian refugees](#) saw substantial growth: In the six months following the invasion, **people studying Ukrainian grew 1651% year-over-year in Germany, 1615% in Poland, and 1515% in Czechia.**

Growth in Ukrainian learners in 2022



Germans' commitment to supporting Ukrainians catapulted Ukrainian from the 36th most popular language to study in Germany in 2021 (of the 40 languages available on Duolingo in 2021) to the 15th most popular language in 2022. The growth of Ukrainian learners in the U.K. was also notable: Ukrainian jumped an incredible 20 places in the ranking of most popular languages, from 37th in 2021 to 17th in 2022. Although geographically further from the war, U.S. learners also turned to Ukrainian for a variety of personal and political reasons. In the U.S., Ukrainian rose from #36 in the language ranking in 2021 to #22 in 2022.

Countries with the largest growth in people studying Ukrainian in 2022

1. Ireland	2229%
2. Germany	1651%
3. Poland	1615%
4. Netherlands	1590%

5. Czechia

1513%

Ukrainians themselves also sought language resources during the massive upheaval that displaced millions. We see the impact of refugee resettlement in a country like Germany: German became the second most popular language to study in Germany in 2022, likely because Germany welcomed over three-quarters of a million Ukrainians in just the first half of 2022. The war also spurred record numbers of Ukrainians to take the Duolingo English Test (DET) to certify their English proficiency to study internationally—Ukrainian test takers increased 4000% year-over-year. Many Ukrainian university students who were uprooted from their home were able to continue their studies abroad, including several students at the University of Maryland who benefited from the DET's partnerships with the UNHCR and Ukraine Global Scholars to provide test fee waivers and incidental cost support for Ukrainian students.

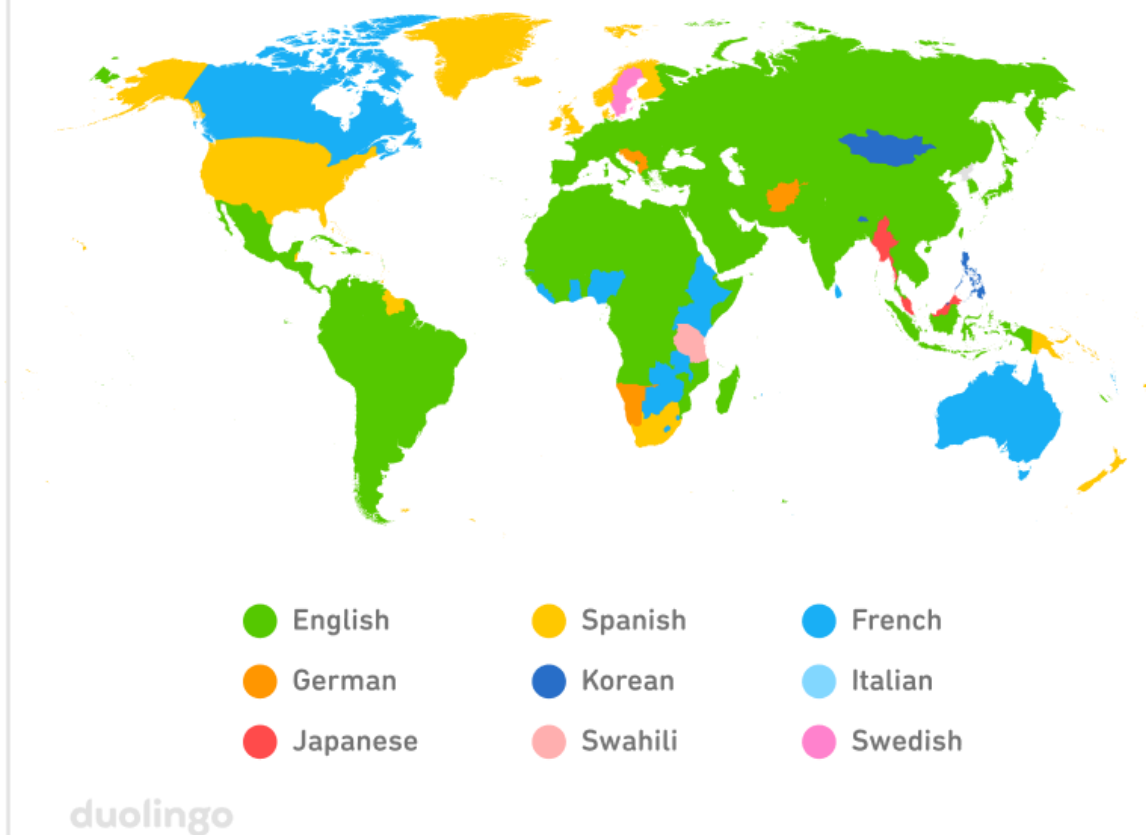
For language learners, the war in Ukraine was unusual in that it was covered by the media in ways that included language, thus setting it apart from other political and humanitarian crises on learners' minds. Due to the history of Ukrainian and Russian and the political histories of Ukraine and Russia, the differences between these languages were discussed widely. The reason that Ukrainian grew so dramatically is likely also related to learner perceptions about the language itself: Although Ukrainian uses the Cyrillic alphabet, learners may have noted its similarities with English and other European languages.

Learners prioritize English, but interests remain broad

For the last two years, language learners demonstrated more interest in understudied languages—for example, in 2020 Irish became the most popular language to study in Ireland. However, in 2022, we saw learners gravitate back towards the largest languages, with English, French, and Spanish holding strong as the most popular languages studied globally.

In 2022, the number of countries studying English as the first or second most popular language was basically unchanged (130 total in 2021 and 131 in 2022), but there were some changes for Spanish and French. The number of countries studying Spanish as a top language dropped overall (81 in 2022 vs. 90 in 2021), while French increased from a top ranking in 90 countries last year to 96 countries in 2022. The continued popularity of these three was supported in part by the growth of school as a top motivator throughout South America and in some parts of Asia, including India and Vietnam. We also saw a general desire among learners in many countries to study languages for practical and professional reasons.

Most popular language studied on Duolingo in each country in 2022



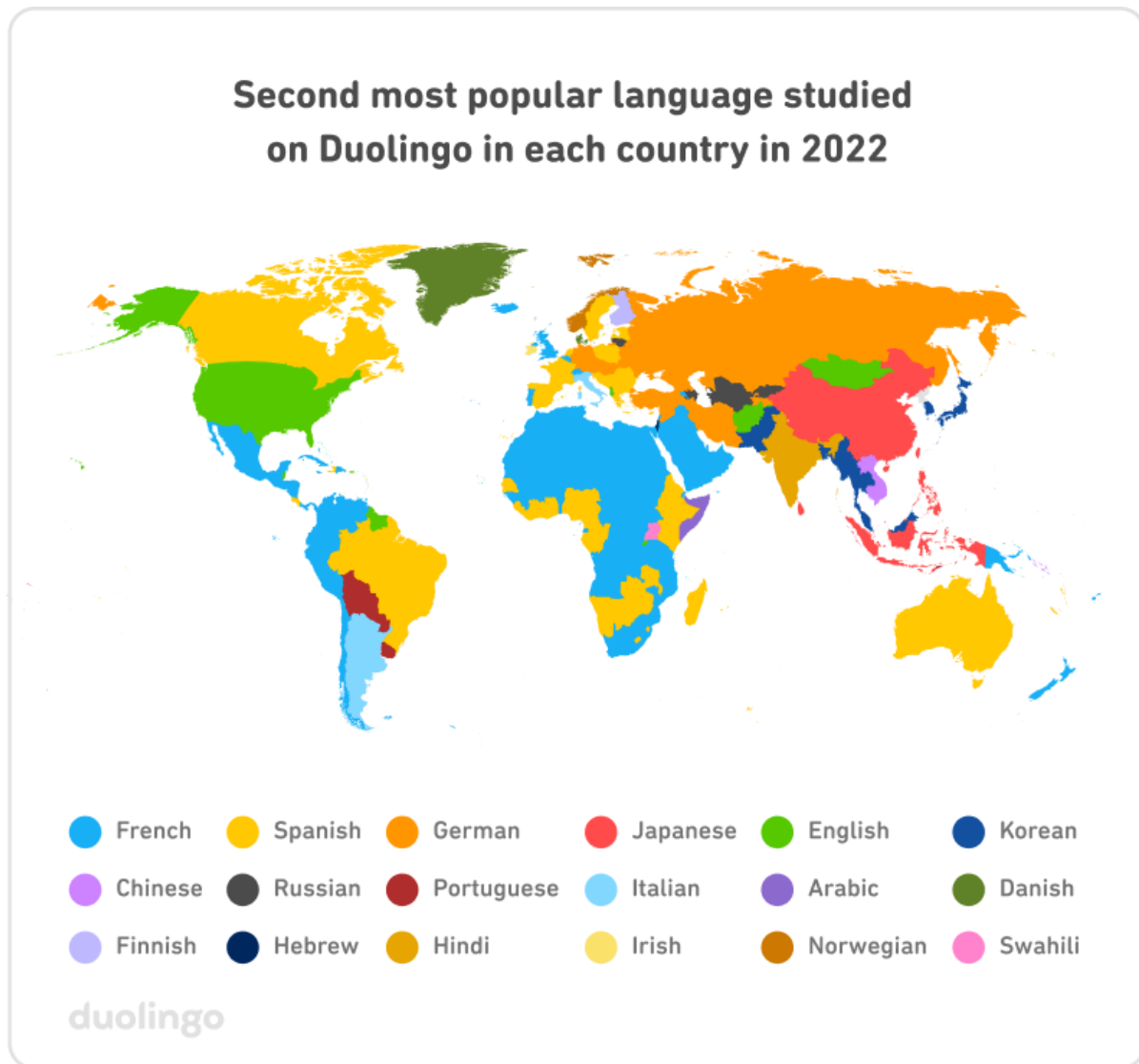
Number of countries studying most popular languages in 2022

ENGLISH	SPANISH	FRENCH
119	34	22
GERMAN	KOREAN	ITALIAN
8	4	2
JAPANESE	SWAHILI	SWEDISH
2	1	1

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Among the most popular languages by country, the 2022 list reverses a notable pattern that emerged in 2020: Irish has lost the top spot in Ireland, and now ranks #2 behind Spanish. On the other hand, Korean continues its growth around the globe. It's now the most popular language to study in four countries, including two countries where it now surpasses Japanese for the top spot (Brunei and the Philippines). Korean is still one of the fastest-growing languages in many countries around the world, including Argentina, Germany, and India, and it's among the top 5 most popular languages to study in China, India, Japan, and Vietnam.

Because English, Spanish, and French are so dominant around the world, interesting trends emerge when we consider the second most popular languages studied in each country. Here, we can see that learner interests are *more* diverse: This year, 18 distinct languages occupy a #2 spot around the world—an increase from 16 last year and the year before.



Number of countries studying second most popular languages in 2022

FRENCH	SPANISH	GERMAN	JAPANESE	ENGLISH	KOREAN
74	47	16	12	11	7
CHINESE	RUSSIAN	PORTUGUESE	ITALIAN	ARABIC	DANISH
6	5	4	3	1	1
FINNISH	HEBREW	HINDI	IRISH	NORWEGIAN	SWAHILI
1	1	1	1	1	1

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The number of countries where Chinese ranked #2 increased this year, and there were a number of languages to make the list that were absent in 2021: Arabic (the #2 language in Somalia), Hebrew (#2 in Israel), Irish (beat out by Spanish in Ireland), and Swahili (#2 in Uganda). Although the most popular languages held strong this year, there's evidence that learner interests are continuing to diversify year after year.

Travelers are leaving new languages at home—for now

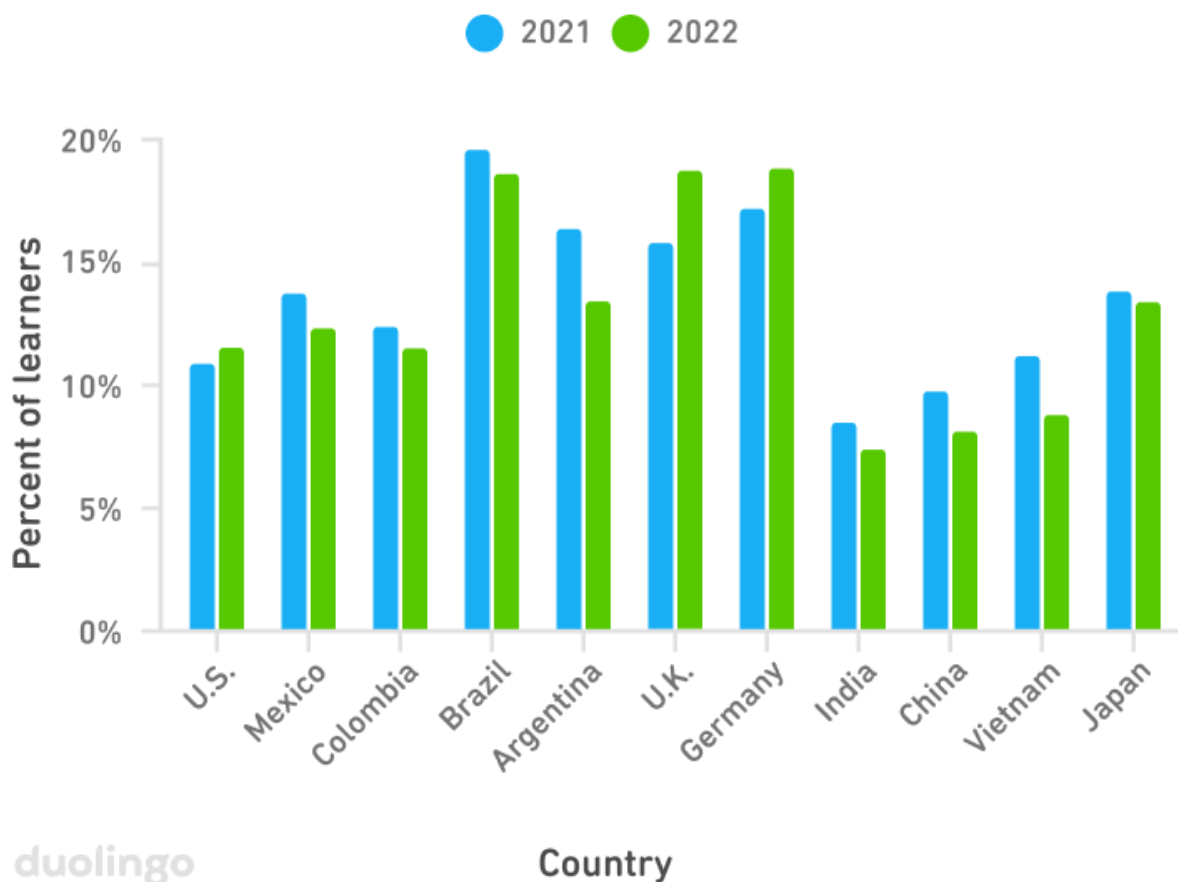


While 2022 tourism boomed, learners are not yet ready to study new languages to use abroad. The proportion of new learners studying primarily for travel reasons was lower in 2022 than in 2021, but there are early signs that language study for travel is set to return. In fact, **we expect 2023 to be the Year of the Confident Traveler.**

After two years of pandemic travel restrictions, people around the world were eager to take long-delayed vacations, but record flight cancellations, soaring travel costs, and high inflation led to mixed results. International travel rose sharply in 2022, though not quite reaching 2019 levels, and data from new Duolingo learners reveals something similar: Travel as the primary motivation for learning a language began to rise in some countries, but it lags behind 2019 (and even 2020) levels.

Instead of immersive language experiences while on holiday, many—including travelers from the U.S.—opted for destinations closer to home, where new languages might not be necessary. It would seem that people are eager to relax and explore the world in the most accessible, comfortable ways possible... and learning a new language is not yet on their pre-trip checklist.

"Travel" as primary motivation of new learners in 2021 vs. 2022



However, multilingual and international travel are expected to increase in 2023. Major airlines are planning now for international travel volume at pre-pandemic levels, popular destinations like Japan are reopening to tourists and visitors, and language learners are starting to dust off their passports. The U.K., Germany, and (to a lesser extent) the U.S. saw moderate increases in learning languages for travel this year over last, and Brazil, the U.K., and Germany have maintained their high percentages of learners studying primarily for travel.

In 2022, a number of countries have also seen **growth in people studying the language of the country**. In March 2020, students, immigrants, temporary workers, digital nomads, and tourists left places of temporary residence in preparation for lockdowns. As a result, the country's own language(s) often dropped in the rankings of most popular languages—and learners in those countries turned to more diverse languages and languages related to a country's heritage. For the first time since the start of the pandemic, we see the return of learners studying a country's own language:

- **French** has become the most popular language to study in Mauritius—where French is commonly spoken! It knocked Spanish down to #2 in the island nation.
- **German** is now the second most popular language to study in Austria, Germany, and Lichtenstein, displacing Spanish.
- **Hebrew** is the #2 language studied in Israel, pushing ahead of Spanish.
- **Italian** is #2 in Italy and San Marino, ousting Spanish.
- **Spanish** is #2 in Costa Rica and Spain, replacing French.
- **Swahili** is #2 in Uganda, displacing Spanish.

To better understand the interaction between language study and travel—and the hesitance to use new languages abroad—we partnered with YouGov, Momentive/Survey Monkey, and Surveroid to learn more, and we see dramatic differences in the people’s travel plans around the world.

- When it comes to international travel, 55% of Latin Americans report that they are **more likely to travel internationally** in 2023 than they did in 2022, and this figure is 40% for Indians, 28% for people in the U.S., 20% for Germans, and just 15% for Japanese travelers.
- While **exploring new sights** is the top motivation for Japanese (43%) and U.S. (28%) tourists in 2023, **relaxing** is a high priority across Latin America (59%), Germany (45%), and India (39%).

Although travelers are looking for relaxing vacations abroad—if they’re looking abroad at all—they acknowledge the value of language learning for enhancing their experience. For example, 85% of respondents in the U.S. agree that learning a new language could make traveling a more enjoyable experience, and 80% also agree that learning a new language could make them a more adventurous traveler. With more and better opportunities to travel internationally in 2023, these learners are poised to be confident travelers.

But vacationing isn’t the only motivation to travel in 2023—students have also been itching to study abroad again. The pandemic hasn’t dampened people’s desire to seek out the best education, anywhere in the world; in a recent survey, 43% of young people in India said the pandemic had no effect on their desire to study abroad, while a quarter said it has actually increased their desire to attend school internationally. What’s more, the number of test takers of the Duolingo English Test grew more than 50% year-over-year in 2022 and included test takers from more than 213 countries and regions and over 20,000 cities.

Learners around the globe take up multiple languages

A common question we get at Duolingo is: "Can I learn more than one language at a time?"

Duolingo offers over 100 courses in more than 40 languages, and learners in some countries are taking advantage! The countries where the most learners study three or more languages on Duolingo are Finland (#1) and the U.K. (#2).

Finland's polyglot population isn't too surprising, given 93% of adults in the country report speaking more than one language. The U.K.'s place on the list of countries studying multiple languages may seem unexpected, but the U.K.'s linguistic and cultural diversity might be inspiring learners to get studying: Nearly 15% of the U.K. population was born outside the U.K., and the U.K. is home to many indigenous languages, including the Celtic languages Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and Irish. The U.K. also remains the most attractive destination for international study among students in China and India, according to Duolingo English Test statistics and polling.

Rounding out the top 5 countries with learners studying multiple languages are Australia (#3), Estonia (#4), and Brunei (#5).

Language learning highlights from around the world

- **Top 10 languages studied around the world (in order):** English, Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Russian, Hindi. In 2021, Hindi was ranked #11 just behind Portuguese at #10, and this year it ousted Portuguese for the #10 spot globally.
- **Korean and Japanese have become more popular than ever in South Asia:** Korean is now the second most popular language to study in Pakistan (Turkish was #2 in 2021), and Japanese is #2 in Nepal and Sri Lanka (Spanish had been #2 in both countries in 2021).
- **Portuguese and French grow in South America:** Just as more traditional language choices grew globally in 2022, Portuguese and French returned to top spots in South America. In Paraguay, the former #2 Guaraní was displaced by Portuguese, and in Uruguay and Venezuela, Italian dropped from the #2 spot. Portuguese is now #2 in Uruguay, and French is #2 in Venezuela.
- **Southeast Asia is torn between Korean and Japanese.** These two languages have been popular in Southeast Asia for years, but they are now vying for the top spots: Korean was #2 in Indonesia in 2021, but Japanese has climbed the ranks for the #2 spot, while the opposite is true in Thailand, where Korean has ousted Japanese as the second most popular language. In

the Philippines, the competition is even tougher, and last year's ranking of Japanese at #1 and Korean at #2 switched in 2022!

- **In 2022, the countries with the most serious learners were (in order):** Japan, Belarus, Hungary, Russia, and Czechia. These countries had the highest average time spent learning across all learners.
- **Language learning for travel is on the horizon.** In Latin America, 68% of those polled reported they are already planning or considering a 2023 trip to a destination where they don't know the language, and 48% of those polled in India reported the same.
- **Latin American travelers value learning the destination's language.** In Latin America, only 6% of respondents said they don't feel the need to learn the language of their destination. In India, 10% of those polled feel this way; in the U.S. and Japan, it's 18%; and in Germany, nearly a third (32%) don't feel learning the destination language is necessary.
- **Vietnam embraces linguistic diversity.** Vietnam is the only country among Duolingo's 10 largest markets where every one of the top 5 languages comes from a different language family! The top languages in Vietnam are (in order): English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Korean.

2022 Duolingo news—and what's ahead in 2023

Duolingo continued to offer learners a broad range of languages that includes understudied, under-resourced, and underrepresented languages from around the world. In 2022, we created two new courses to highlight languages of the Black diaspora: Haitian Creole and Zulu. Duolingo also introduced two new courses teaching English to speakers of Bengali and Tagalog.

As part of Duolingo's commitment to making language learning free, fun, and effective, we also released the [new learning path](#). In the new path, learners complete lessons in a linear sequence developed by our learning scientists and based on [our successful "hover" method](#)—the path incorporates review, Stories, and targeted practice with more challenging exercises to replicate the study behaviors we know [lead to successful learning](#).

This year, we also continued to expand our education mission beyond language learning: The new [Duolingo Math](#) app for kids and adults joined Duolingo ABC, our literacy app for kids learning to read. In 2023, we'll be adding more advanced content at the [B2 proficiency level](#) to our biggest language courses (including [new advanced Stories](#)) and rigorously [testing the efficacy of our](#)

courses. There are also new features in the works to make learning on Duolingo even more fun, more motivating, and more social!

Thanks to our millions of passionate, inquisitive learners who have made Duolingo a part of their language-learning journey!

About the data

The 2022 Duolingo Language Report includes information about learners who studied languages on Duolingo between October 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022. The data was aggregated by country or by language to ensure learner privacy. Country aggregations are based on internationally-recognized, independent, self-governing entities as outlined [here](#). Age and motivation data are self-reported, and learners under 13 were excluded from all analyses. Also to the end of protecting learner privacy, rankings exclude countries where there are fewer than 5,000 Duolingo learners.

WRITTEN BY

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