

## ORAL CONCOURS 2013

### ANGLAIS - LVII

#### **Adults struggling with basic maths, with one-in-five requiring a calculator for even the most simple sums**

Two per cent of those polled said they needed to use a calculator to work out all sums involving numbers larger than 10.

Adults struggle with simple sums and rely on the use of calculators for the most basic mathematics, according to new research.

A YouGov poll commissioned by BAE Systems found that around one-in-six adults in the UK say they are embarrassed by how difficult they find the subject, while one-in-five find simple sums difficult enough to require the use of a calculator.

The poll interviewed 2000 members of the public, 38 per cent of whom say their job requires a small amount of maths every day, while 50 per cent agreed that many of life's important decisions require an understanding of the subject.

Despite noting the significance of maths, 30 per cent of those polled said they found the subject "uninspiring" at school, while a quarter of them described it as having been their least favourite lesson.

As well as asking them about their experiences and attitudes towards maths, those questioned were also required to complete random multiplication tasks.

These tests surprisingly revealed the 11 times table to be the most difficult, with one-in-five making basic errors. This is despite the long-held schoolyard belief that the 11 times table's format (11-22-33-44-55-66-77-88-99 etc.) is by far the easiest to remember.

The study also found that two per cent of those polled said they needed to use a calculator to work out all sums involving numbers larger than 10, three per cent for numbers higher than 20, seven per cent for those over 50 and 13 per cent for numbers greater than 100.

BAE Systems group managing director Nigel Whitehead said: "Maths and science are crucial to the success of Britain's youth and our nation's future but it appears that we start to lose arithmetic skills as we grow up."

He added: "Good maths skills open up so many opportunities both personally and professionally. With increased competition for jobs it is more important than ever that students keep working at maths and the sciences - continued study of these subjects will likely lead to rewarding and sustained employment in the engineering and technology sectors."

National Numeracy chief executive Mike Ellicock said: "Being numerate means being able to use numbers and think mathematically, which is essential for so many aspects of everyday life and work, and this poll suggests that many people recognise that."

He went on: "We are developing the National Numeracy Challenge to respond to this and enable everyone to start to improve their maths. To anyone tempted to say 'I can't do maths', we say 'Yes, you can'."

*The Independent*, March 13, 2013