UK NEWS

# King’s English and Cockney replaced by three new accents, study finds

Estuary English among most common new accents — but the old ones aren’t brown bread quite yet

[George Sandeman](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/profile/george-sandeman)

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[https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/kings-english-and-cockney-replaced-by-three-new-accents-study-finds-fx3q8rfsc](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/topic/london)



Sir Michael Caine’s Cockney dialect lent itself to roles in gangster films such as Get Carter, but the accent is becoming increasingly rare

Received pronunciation and Cockney have become vanishingly rare accents heard among young English speakers, according to research.

Three new accents have been classified by academics at Essex University who analysed the voices of nearly 200 people, aged 18 to 33, in southeast England using a computer algorithm.

Standard southern British English (SSBE), articulated by people including the singer Ellie Goulding and the comedian Josh Widdicombe, made up about 49 per cent of those analysed.



Jay Blades, a furniture restorer and presenter of The Repair Shop, speaks estuary ­English, an accent spoken by a quarter of participants in the study

GUY LEVY/BBC

It is considered the modern equivalent of received pronunciation (RP), said Dr Amanda Cole, who led the research and who lectures in language and linguistics at the university.

“SSBE speakers tended to say words like ‘goose’ with the tongue further forward in the mouth (sounding a bit more like ‘geese’) than what we would expect in received pronunciation,” she wrote on The Conversation website.

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She said that about 26 per cent of the people in the study spoke estuary English, which can be heard among the likes of the singer Adele and furniture restorer Jay Blades. The accent has [similarities to Cockney](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cockney-accents-gawn-on-a-ball-and-chalk-to-essex-xft89wvxb), articulated by the late Dame Barbara Windsor and Sir Michael Caine, but is more muted and closer to received pronunciation.

“The people in our sample who spoke estuary English would pronounce words like ‘house’ a bit like ‘hahs’, but not as extreme as you would find in Cockney. Estuary English is spoken across the southeast, particularly in parts of Essex,” Cole said.

About 25 per cent of the group spoke in an accent classified as [multicultural London English](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/well-all-soon-be-talking-in-london-patois-innit-fam-rs799h8nn) as used by the rapper Stormzy and the footballer Bukayo Saka. These speakers, when using vowels in words such as “boat”, started with the tongue at a point higher up in the mouth compared with SSBE speakers, so it sounded a little bit more like “boht”.

Cole said: “They tended to be Asian British or black British and many were from London, but there were also people from across the southeast who spoke with elements of a multicultural London English accent.”

Researchers said the changes could be attributed to increased movement within Britain and the influence of other languages. Cole added that education was also a factor as was “people buying into the idea that there is a ‘correct’ or ‘standard’ way of speaking”.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/kings-english-and-cockney-replaced-by-three-new-accents-study-finds-fx3q8rfsc>