



THE JACK PETCHEY FOUNDATION

LISTEN UP!

REPORT

FOREWORD



Each year we present over 14,000 Achievement Awards to recognise the efforts and achievements of young people. The vast majority of young people are ambitious, want to make something of their lives, have opinions and already make a positive contribution to society.

As part of the Jack Petchey Foundation 10th birthday celebrations we decided to ask young people what they thought. A staggering 6,429 young people took part and the results are presented in the following pages.

Our young people have a voice and deserve to be listened to. Looking at this report I challenge us all to:

- Create more opportunities and activities to broaden horizons and raise aspirations
- Give young people praise and focus on their positive contributions - especially in the media
- Give young people more of a voice and responsibility in our political and social systems

I am proud of our youth and I think society has a duty to encourage and support them. In turn I believe they will grow and contribute even more to our society.

Yours,

OBE, Founder Jack Petchey Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

Soaring youth crime is linked to rising inner-city gang culture

Major inquiry announced to curb youth crime

Despair for 'a generation whose only ambition is to be talentless celebrities'

Girls of NINE lured by gang culture of drugs, sex and violence sweeping UK

Headlines like these appear in the media every week. The portrayal of young people is **overwhelmingly negative**, presenting them as the root of a wave of social problems experienced by communities across the UK, devoid of any ambition other than to become rich and famous.

The media image of young people comes from an adult perspective and the reality of their daily lives is very different. But how often do we take the time to really listen to and act upon what young people have to say? And what effect is this portrayal of them having on their confidence, aspirations and how they see themselves in the future?

This report has been compiled by youth charity the Jack Petchey Foundation, to encourage society to 'Listen Up!'

Every day the Jack Petchey Foundation works with young people aged 11-25 years old, from all walks of life. The programmes and projects funded by the organisation all share a common aim - to recognise and support the **overwhelmingly positive** contributions young people make to our society.

Through training opportunities, achievement awards, sporting events and public speaking competitions, the charity's partners and volunteers see the amazing and inspiring side of young people shining through. But

how does this compare to the dominant stereotypes about young people's interests, what they spend their time doing, and what they want out of life?

Perceptions of young people are often based upon a one-dimensional and unrepresentative depiction of what it's like to be young today. This report offers a different view.

Simply by asking young people to give their views, 'Listen Up' provides a chance to understand young people as they really are - not just as some have come to see them.

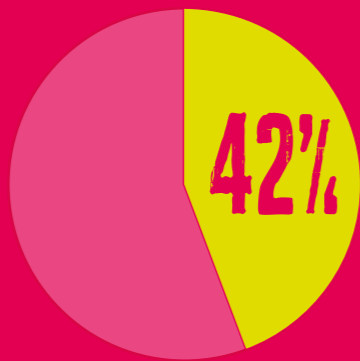


AMBITIONS AND ROLE MODELS

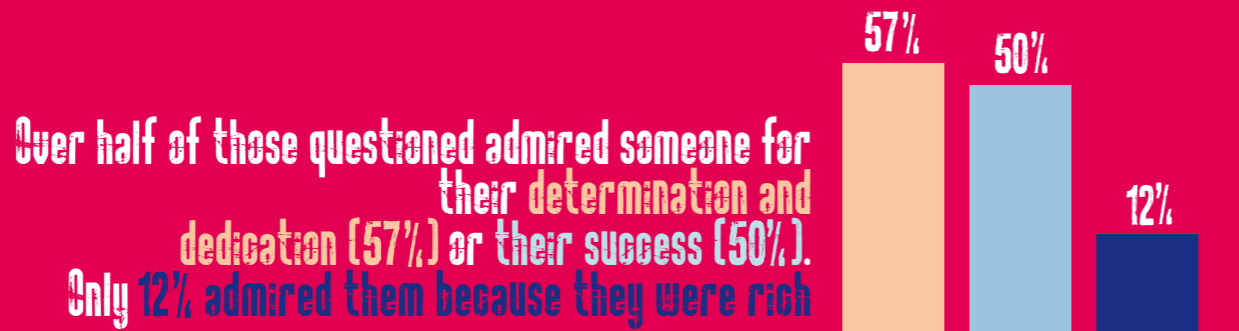
Over three-quarters (76%) of 11-16 year olds planned to go to as far as university or postgraduate level in their education **76%**

Contrary to popular belief, not all today's young people want to be famous. Despite the phenomenon of 'fame-making' TV shows like X Factor, Big Brother and Britain's Got Talent, and the popularity of celebrity-led magazines like Heat, Now and Hello!, young people are drawing their inspiration from those closer to home, and respect substance over style. Many young people look up to members of their family, and to adults whose determination and hard work has made them successful, who've transformed their financial or social situation or who devote their time to helping others. These positive role models have cemented in young people the same values, ambitions and aspirations as previous generations. Teenagers and young adults care far more about having a stable, loving family and about gaining a sense of fulfilment through helping other people than about being splashed across the pages of popular magazines.

- My mum and dad
- My brother
- Barack Obama
- My friend
- God
- My teacher
- Nelson Mandela
- Stephen Hawking
- Bill Gates
- Richard Branson



Almost half (42%) say a stable, loving family is their number one priority for the future



Over half of those questioned admired someone for their determination and dedication (57%) or their success (50%). Only 12% admired them because they were rich

36% One in three (36%) say 'helping other people' is a priority for the future

40% When asked about who they most admired nearly 40% said a MEMBER OF THEIR FAMILY

2% Only 2% of young people thought that "becoming famous" was very important

“ Sir Alan Sugar would be someone I most admire. He's determined and inspirational and has made a change in many people's lives, and provided them with memorable opportunities. Much like Jack Petchey, in ways in which he believes in young people and gives them new, brighter experiences. ”

“ I think that in my life time I have come to admire my father very much. he has taught me that nothing is impossible if you work hard enough, and now after all his hard work has a job he enjoys and that runs well with his life. ”

“ I want to make the best out of life, and make sure I help others to do the same. ”

13% ARTS The most popular career choice for young WOMEN (13%) was working in the arts (followed by 11% who said teaching)

11% TEACHING

The most popular career choice for young MEN (14%) was engineering (followed by 9% who said media)

ENGINEERING 14%

MEDIA 9%

My ambitions by Jonah Lataya Moffat, from London

“I am 17 years old and I have many dreams and aspirations. I am currently studying business at college and I would like to go to university in the next year or two. My ultimate dream is to be a criminal psychologist, but at the moment I am fulfilling another dream as I am setting up my own cheerleading academy.

“I am a fully qualified cheerleading coach and teach at my local youth centre, schools and colleges. I am also training to be a level one qualified gymnastics coach. I would like to use these skills to make my cheerleading team one of the best in London, incorporat-

ing gymnastics into all-star cheerleading.

“In the process of setting up my own cheerleading business, I received a £500 grant from a local organisation. Although this is a good start, I need more funding to continue this project. Cheerleading gives young people a positive outlet, keeps them healthy and helps them stay off the streets. Since I started the cheerleading squad at my local youth centre, I have become a positive role model for younger people. When a younger kid says to me “I want to be like you when I am older” this inspires me to become a better person, because I want them to be better.”



“ When I was little my stepdad would tell me stories of his time in the army which really inspired me. Now I’ve decided I want to go to an army foundation college when I leave school and then join the real army for four years. Then I’d like to be a fireman. ”

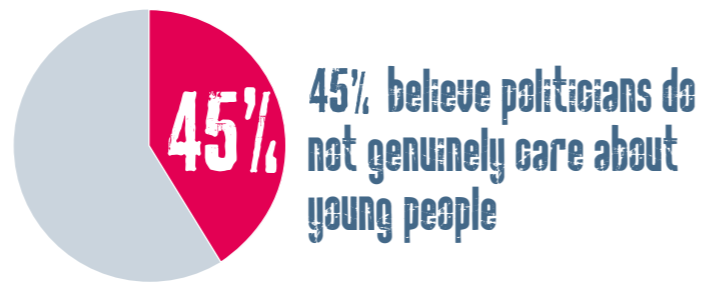
Yasmin Rodgers, aged 15 from Lewisham, says

“ I admire my mum because to me she’s done a lot of things. She’s a social worker but she’s also got three degrees, some of which she did through evening classes after I was born. I admire her for being able to do it. ”

“ I most admire my headteacher, because he always has a story that will motivate me to do more work in class. ”

“ It’s important to me to be living my life to the best I could and reach where I want to reach by my hard work so that my parents are proud of me. ”

POLITICS



“ We live in a democracy and it is important to make the most of that right that we have been given to vote freely which for many people around the world isn't possible. Also we are all affected by the decisions politicians make and so we should make the most of having our voice heard. ”



“ I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO VOTE THEN YOUNG PEOPLE CAN GET THEIR VIEWS ACROSS AND WHAT THEY WANT FOR THE COMMUNITY AS MOST ADULTS DON'T LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE. ”

16%

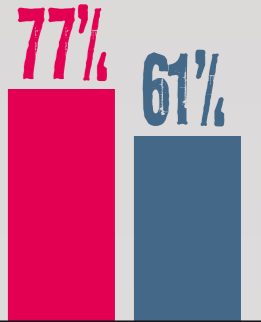
ONLY 16% FELT THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A VOICE IN POLITICS

The political landscape in Britain has changed dramatically over the last few years, so it is encouraging that the next generation shows real enthusiasm for playing an active role in it. Following the election of the first coalition government for more than 60 years, young people are keen to draw attention to issues they feel strongly about, such as university tuition fees and the availability of apprenticeships and job opportunities. Despite the prevailing stereotypes, the majority of young people are keen to use their vote to make themselves heard, yet many feel excluded from the political sphere and do not feel that politicians care about their generation.

If they could ask the government to do one thing for young people, a quarter (26%) would ask for the abolition of tuition fees for university students

26%

Over three-quarters (77%) of those eligible planned to vote in the General Election 61% of those under 18 said they would have voted if they were allowed to



My views on politics by Nirasa Muraleetharan, aged 15 from Lewisham

“My ambition is to get into politics. I'm not deterred by the many negative views of young people floating around because, to me at least, they are not true and do not represent the reality of British youth. It seems that we do not have a say in anything, even things that concern us and need our approval and I wonder why this is. After all we are the future generation and everything will be shaped by us, so why aren't our opinions important?”

“Most of us are turned off from politics and for this reason we are written off as being incapable of holding political views. But if only things were expressed in a way which we can understand and relate to, then things would be a whole lot different and the older generation would realise that in fact we are very aware of our surroundings and what goes on in the political sphere.”

“If I get to be a politician, one of the things I would campaign about is poverty. I recently found out that at least 80% of the world's population survives on less than \$1 a day and this statistic really shocked me. In a world where there are rockets and nuclear weapons, I can't comprehend why some people don't even have enough food and clean water. There are so many people here in Britain and in other countries who can't enjoy quality of life and I would like to address the root of the problem.”

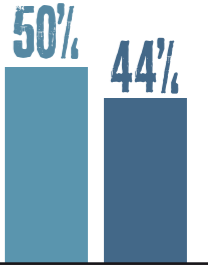
“I think politics is very important as it's the foundation of society. Everything is based on it and it has an effect on all our lives and the decisions we make everyday. I believe us youngsters should be given a chance to express ourselves and understand politics. We have our own minds and opinions and should be allowed to convey these.”

Antonia, aged 14 from Essex, says: “ Considering there's a recession going on the government need to consider what we need and how we feel. If they could cut down university tuition fees it would help a lot of young people. ”

“ I come from a poor background and my parents are not very keen on education as they believe that I should earn money and learn life quickly, however I am determined to get into university as I really enjoy my education. The problem is that I will need financial support and my vote will hopefully make sure that students like me are supported. ”

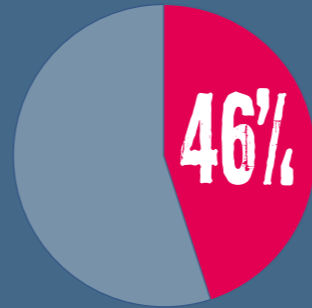
ADULT PERCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

50% of young people would describe their friends as happy and ambitious and 44% describe them as hardworking



An increasingly negative stereotype of young people has emerged in the UK, fuelled by the media's obsession with gang culture and knife crime¹. Older generations believe that youth violence is on the increase and previous research by the Jack Petchey Foundation showed that one in four adults would cross the road to avoid young people in the street. The impact that these preconceptions can have on a young person's feelings and their self

confidence is rarely considered. By assuming the worst in today's youth, the adult population may be in danger of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Young people feel that they are being misrepresented and therefore misunderstood. They want to see those who are making positive contributions to society receive the recognition they deserve rather than the focus remaining on a small minority of troublemakers.



46% say that a lack of self-confidence is the greatest barrier to them achieving their goals



22% Only 22% think that adults see the best in young people

76% Over three-quarters of young people (76%) say that most attention is given to a minority of troublemakers rather than the young people who are making positive contributions to society

62% 62% feel that the media do not portray young people as they really are

Warren Gibson, aged 14, explains the effect this reaction has on a young person: "Even if I'm just walking down the street by myself some adults will cross the road to get away from me and it does actually hurt your feelings. It's only the smallest minority of young people that are looking for trouble but the majority of adults would cross the road. That's not fair. Sometimes it's not even young adults who are causing trouble in the evenings; sometimes it's the 50 year olds who've just come out of the pub."

59% Over half (59%) of young people say they are misunderstood by adults

42% 42% feel that young people do not have the opportunity to say what they think and have adults listen to them

¹YouGov survey commissioned by the Jack Petchey Foundation, November 2009

“Kira, aged 15 from Lewisham, says: Adults are always putting youth down and saying everybody's in gangs but not everybody's doing youth violence. It's only a few who do it and they bring the whole youth generation down.”

“After a while the parents had a conversation with me and they told me they didn't know I was articulate. They thought 'oh there's a job' but when they got to know me and that, they thought I was really quite bright.”

LIFESTYLE

Roxanne, aged 15 from Lewisham, says: **“ Me and my friend volunteer through our local church and we've painted a house for a single mum who lives nearby and helped clear out someone's garden. Last year we managed to raise £900 at school for the charity Scope. ”**



Yasmin Rodgers aged 15 from Lewisham, says: **“ In my summer holidays I'm planning to help out at The National Portrait Gallery, as I am a member of their youth forum. ”**

Generation Z, or the internet generation, may have grown up with technology at their fingertips but assumptions that they shun traditional extra-curricular activities in favour of playing on the computer are unfounded. Young people today may be tech-savvy but they still recognise the long-term benefits of

keeping active and eating well. There is also a real sense of social responsibility among today's youngsters, who gain real satisfaction from giving up their time to volunteer their services and help other people.



11% Only 11% of young people said they spent most of their time indoors

Only 8% of young people said they ate a lot of junk food **8%**

Chloe McFadyen, aged 21 from London, regularly volunteers at her local youth club and feels that the negative portrayal of young people needs to be reversed. She says:

“ We've got a festival coming up that we're organising for free entirely by ourselves for our local area. There are going to be performances by young dancers and DJs and it's that kind of thing that deserves to be in the papers. ”

75% Three-quarters of young people (75%) say they regularly volunteer or help other people

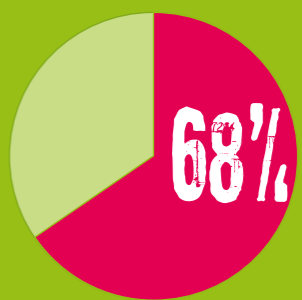
THEIR CONCERNS

Nirasa Muraleetharan aged 15, from Lewisham, says: “I feel sorry for people who don't have the option of being able to go to uni because they can't afford it. I have this problem and might have to put off going to uni for a while so I can earn some money to pay for it. Others may also be in this position because their parents can't help. Or they might feel they can't go to uni at all because of the debt it creates and that would be a shame.”

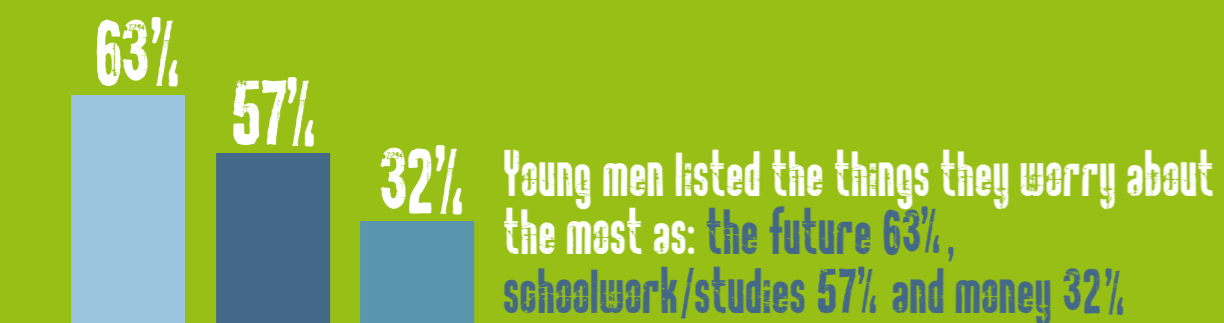
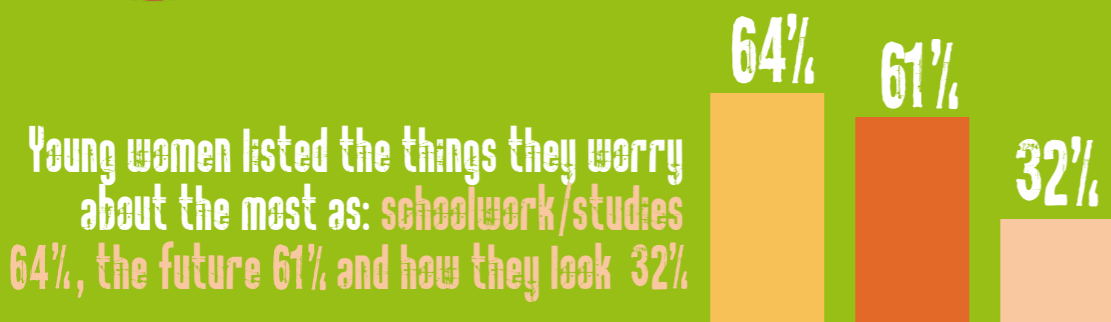
With prospects for the job and housing markets looking grim for the next generation, young people are only too aware of how the economic crisis will affect them. Fewer students will be able to proceed to university without financial backing and those preparing to enter the job market are concerned that the opportunities to get a foot on the career ladder simply won't be there. Fierce competition for jobs leaves young people feeling stressed and concerned about the future.

Over a third (34%) of young people said that they often felt stressed

34%



Two-thirds (68%) of 17-25 year olds said they were concerned about how the economic recession would affect their chances of getting a job after finishing education



The issues most important to young people were:

- REDUCING CRIME 29%
- EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES 25%
- LOCAL COMMUNITY 22%
- ENVIRONMENT 12%

Kira, aged 15 from Lewisham, says: “There's so much more competition for university and job placements that even if you've been to a good school and got four A Levels at grade A you still need something extra.”

CONCLUSION

BY TRUDY KILGULLEN, CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER AT THE JACK PETCHEY FOUNDATION

The Listen Up! report shows that the majority of young people in the UK care about others, have a real sense of social responsibility, and are ambitious and want to make something of their lives. However, it also shows how society's often negative perceptions and attitudes towards young people are in danger of undermining those ambitions, and young people's ability to achieve them.

It is an alarming statistic that almost half of young people feel the greatest barrier to them achieving their potential is a lack of self-confidence. It is equally alarming that almost 9 out of 10 feel they have no voice in our political system. A sense of self belief and a feeling of support needs to come from society as a whole, not only from family and friends. Factors such as a lack of money can't always be avoided, but providing support and encouragement is something we all can and should be doing, and it doesn't cost a penny.

If young people feel marginalised, see adults trying to avoid them, and hear nothing but negative stories in the media, that's bound to have an impact on the way they feel about themselves and the way they behave.

We're in danger of creating a negative, self-fulfilling prophecy in our younger generation. We need to join together to create the positive society we aspire to.

The Jack Petchey Foundation works to reward and highlight the positives in young people's lives. This report clearly shows young people can and do offer a great deal to society. Off the back of it, we urge the general public and politicians to:

- to create more opportunities to broaden their horizons and raise their aspirations
- to affirm young people and focus on their positive contribution - especially in the media
- to give young people more of a voice and responsibility in our political and social systems



We hope this report will inspire others to feel as positive about young people as we do.

WITH THANKS TO:

Prendergast-Hilly Fields College, Lewisham, London

Shelby, Yasmin, Narosa, Roxanne, Kira, Linda,
Tamar, Nicole. Staff: Gill Wijngaard, Julia White

Gateway Academy, Tilbury, Essex

Andrew, Robert, Nikkiesha, Antonia, Warren,
Luke, Lewis, Rhiannon, Lorraine, Jill.
Staff: Lorraine Fyal and Jill Bacon

The Avenues Youth Project, Paddington, London

Chloe, Jonah, Rio, Skevi, Yasser.
Youth worker: Joanna Peik-Azadi

Thanks also go to all 6429 young people who
took part in the online survey.

Acknowledgements

Amazon PR

Marisa Willemse (designer)



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