Opening doors: developing young people's skills and raising their aspirations

An evaluation of O_2 Think Big 2010-2012

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Evaluating Think Big

Think Big is a youth programme, supported by O2 (Teléfonica UK) to provide young people with funding and support to set up social action projects – helping to build young people's skills and capabilities and make a positive contribution to their local communities. . The aim of the programme is ambitious in scope. The programme hopes to engage and inspire young people to make positive choices for themselves and their communities. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can and do play in their communities.

> 'We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better society. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities'.

The purpose of this independent research report is to evaluate how the programme has progressed in its first three years of operation.[1]

1.1 Aims and structure of the programme

Think Big aims to benefit young people who lead projects or actively take part in them by:

- increasing aspirations, hope and confidence;
- providing new experiences, and acquiring new skills;
- improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; and,
- developing the leadership potential of young people.

The project is socially inclusive in its design – but is particularly keen to provide opportunities to young people from less advantaged backgrounds or who lack social or emotional resilience. It is expected that at least 50% of young people on the programme will come from less advantaged backgrounds (the target is higher, standing at 80% for young people who are recruited by partner organisations).

It is expected that all young people can benefit: the project expects to reach young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds; young people with disabilities or limiting illnesses; and, from all regions and nations of the UK. So, progress is being monitored to ensure the overall inclusivity of the programme. Think Big has been running since March 2010. The programme currently has two levels, as follows:

- **Think Big** projects are awarded to young people with good ideas about how to make a contribution to their community. They receive £300 in funding together with some other incentives to do their project and are given information, training and support along the way.

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[1] From 2013, the evaluation of Think Big across Europe will be undertaken by an in-house research team at Teléfonica Foundation, Madrid.

- ***Think Bigger*** projects get more funding: £2,500, and it is expected that they are larger in terms of scope, reach and ambition. Think Bigger is also accompanied by support and more in-depth training together with some further incentives to get involved and stay committed. Young people who apply to Think Bigger must have completed a Think Big project first.

Early evidence suggests that a small minority of Think Bigger projects could benefit from further investment to support them in becoming fully-fledged social enterprises, demonstrating the programme's capability to identify and harness young people's potential to start-up their own businesses.

Formal and informal support is provided in the programme by a range of individuals and organisations:

- **Think Big core partnership**: this includes contributions from:
  - **Telefónica Foundation** (the primary funder of the programme, providing strategic oversight, direction and advice on programme delivery)
  - ***O₂*** (Telefónica UK) (overseeing programme quality, website development and operation, campaigning, media and communications, providing and incentivising employee volunteers);
  - ***National Youth Agency*** (overall project management, partnership arrangements, recruiting and engaging Think Big national and regional partner organisations, providing opportunities for employee volunteers);
  - ***Conservation Foundation*** (managing the application process, coordinating the allocation of resources to young people, monitoring young people's progress through the Think Big journey); and,
  - ***UK Youth*** (coordinating training and mentoring for Think Bigger project leaders and employee volunteers).
- **Think Big partner organisations**: there are now over sixty youth partner organisations supporting the programme, including small local organisations and large national partners based across the UK.
- **O₂ Helpers:** are employee volunteers who provide support for Think Big.
- **Community stakeholders**: individuals (family, friends, community champions) and organisations (such as non-partner youth organisations, faith groups, schools and colleges) who encourage young people to apply and give support to the projects.
- **Think Big alumni**: Think Big alumni play an important role as programme ambassadors, supporting and inspiring other young people to take part and progress.

1.2 Approach to the evaluation

There are many approaches which can be adopted to evaluate the social impact of projects. While there are variations on the theme there are, essentially, three basic approaches:

- Qualitative methodologies which assess impact through in-depth interview and observation of the young people, practitioners and community stakeholders who are associated with interventions.

- Quantitative methodologies which collect evidence on the biographical characteristics and social circumstances of young people and the employment of research instruments to test how attitudes and behaviour have changed across the life-time (and beyond) of the project.

- Impact assessment measures (drawing upon either or both qualitative and quantitative evidence) which produce indications of the wider social benefit of the programme to society.

This was a well resourced social evaluation project which has now completed its third year. The objective of the evaluation was to monitor and analyse programme progress on the indicators and targets set out by O_2 outlined above. The research also aimed to demonstrate the impact of the programme in bringing new opportunities to young people and challenging negative stereotypes. The action research element of the evaluation involved close integration into the programme in order to help enhance and deepen the impact of the intervention.

There are several sources of evidence which have been used in the evaluation:

- Collection of quantitative biographical data on young people drawn from the Think Big website to assess inclusivity of the programme and map these data with national indicators of multiple deprivation to assess project reach.

- Collection of quantitative data on young people's pro-social attitudes and expectations about the impact of their projects collected from the Think Big website at different stages of their project journey.

- Gathering information on web usage through analysis of samples of projects.

- Observation and evaluation of training and mentoring of young people for Think Big and Think Bigger to assess how well they are prepared to undertake projects.

- In depth interviews with young people on a sample of project journeys throughout the life of the programme.

- Research on partner organisations' contribution to Think Big to assess the impact of the programme as a whole and to identify and embed good practice across the programme.

- Evaluate employee volunteering participation and experience through questionnaires, focus groups, observation and interview throughout the programme.

This report draws on a wide range of evidence, including:

- Qualitative interviews with young people undertaking Think Big (in 2011) and Think Bigger (in 2012) projects.

- Collection and analysis of quantitative biographical and pro-social data from all participants in the Think Big programme (from 2010-2012).

- Participant observation at Team Away days, events and participation in weekly team conference calls (from 2010-2012).

- Informal qualitative interviews with employee volunteers, observation at National Volunteer Day in Leeds and London, focus groups in Preston Brook and Slough and a survey of O_2 employee volunteers (from 2010-2012).

- In-depth interviews with (a selection of?) youth partner organisations (from 2010-2012).

Chapter two
Life transitions

2.1 Economic and policy context

An evaluation of a large scale youth programme such as Think Big cannot be undertaken in isolation from its social, economic and political context. This chapter provides a brief outline of the factors which affect young people's opportunities to make successful life transitions and offers some observations on those factors which can benefit or hold some young people back from achieving their potential.

The situation for most young people in the UK at present is undoubtedly difficult. Levels of unemployment are high and the prospects for finding work for many young people who have none or few qualifications or work experience is extremely challenging. And for those young people who are well educated, finding work commensurate with levels of qualification and experiences is challenging. In such a situation, more highly educated young people take jobs for which they are over-qualified as a temporary measure – further depressing the opportunities for those young people with few or no qualifications.[2]

In times of economic recession, young people tend to be affected much more seriously than other people. Employers can make young people redundant more easily than older workers because they have lower levels of employment protection. Similarly, in straitened times, employers are more able to recruit easily from a pool of available older workers who have the requisite skills and experience to do the job. Their wages may be higher, but lower levels of investment in training are needed and productivity tends to be high at the outset.

In 2011 the UK Government established a *Youth Contract* to help tackle the problems young people face in making successful transitions from school to employment. Key aspects of this contract included:

- ■ Wage incentive payments to employers to recruit unemployed young people aged 18-24.

- ■ An extra 250,000 work experience or sector-based work academy places.

- ■ Funding for 20,000 additional Apprenticeship Grants to employers

- ■ More flexible adviser support delivered through Jobcentre Plus for all 18-24 year olds

- ■ A payment-by-results initiative focusing on 16-17 year old NEETs with no GCSEs grades A*-C.[3]

While the *Youth Contract* has attracted widespread critical attention from observers, it does make some attempt to address the issue of increasing the number of tangible opportunities for young people. That stated, policy makers continue to focus attention primarily upon support programmes which put the onus on young people to build their aspirations,

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[2] For useful critical discussions of the situation of young people in the UK, see Birdwell, J., Grist, M. and Mango, J. (2011) *The Forgotten Half*, London: Demos. ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment (2012) *Youth Unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford*, London, ACEVO.

[3] House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee 'Youth Unemployment and the Youth Contract', London: House of Commons, 19th September 2012.

strengthen their skill-set and widen their experiences so that they are more employable.[4] The assumption underlying such policies is that the responsibility for success lies primarily with young people – and by implication, this suggests that young people who find it hard to connect with the labour market are, in some sense, 'responsible' for their situation. Certainly, the very strong political emphasis on tackling the problems of NEET (not in education, employment or training) young people often indicates this.[5]

As discussed in more depth in previous reports on Think Big,[6] it is recognised that young people's attitudes and beliefs are crucially important in shaping lives – but it is also known that young people have different starting points in life, where some have significant advantage over others in terms of the quality of their educational experience, effective encouragement and support from their families, and an environment within which they have the resources and opportunities to flourish.

Figure 2.1 summarises the factors that affect young people's life chances, ranging from structural factors which they can do little or nothing about – such as the state of the labour market to factors surrounding individual differences such as temperament and talents.

Figure 2.1 **Factors affecting young people's life chances**

Structural factors	Situational factors	Relational factors	Personal factors
Social, political and economic change **Institutional constraints** (e.g. educational, legal, criminal justice systems) **Labour market opportunities**	**Local political, economic and environmental factors** **Local demography, culture and community cohesion** **Local labour market conditions, infrastructure and facility**	**Family life** (quality of relationships with parents and guardians, siblings, etc.) **Material well-being** **Peer influences and friendship networks** **Intimate relationships**	**Individual attributes** (intelligence, health and well-being) **Skills and aptitudes** (credentials, talents, attractiveness, etc.) **Personality and temperament**

Structural factors are largely out of the control of individuals, such as the legal and bureaucratic frameworks which shape the way the education system works, or the structure of the labour market. Structural factors are not static. Social and economic change can rapidly transform the landscape for young people. The most important statistic to

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[4] The Government's flagship youth support programme, the National Citizen Service, is the principal policy intervention to strengthen young people's aspirations, build skills and confidence and encourage young people to connect and engage with civil society. For an evaluation report of the NCS programme, see NatCen (2012) Evaluation of National Citizen Service Pilots (interim report), London: National Centre for Social Research, May.

[5] For a recent assessment of the UK Youth Contract, see House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee 'Youth Unemployment and the Youth Contract', London: House of Commons, 19th September 2012. A major European study on NEETS provides insightful explanations for the way that the term NEET can often be misleading inasmuch as it fails to identify the very different experiences of more or less advantaged young people who are categorised as such. See European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2012) *NEETS: Young people not in employment, education or training: characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe,* Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

[6] For a much fuller discussion of these issues, see Chapman, T. et al. (2012) *Building young people's resilience in hard times*, Durham, St Chad's College. www.stchads.ac.uk.

demonstrate the impact of structural factors is that of youth unemployment. Levels of unemployment amongst the under 25s is rising in most European countries due to economic turbulence and there is no immediate sign of improvement. Indeed, the International Labour Organisation recently reported that there were 10 million more unemployed young people in Europe in April 2013 compared with 2008.

> Youth unemployment has reached alarming levels. As of February 2013, the youth unemployment rate in the EU stood at 23.5 per cent – with rates as high as 58.4 and 55.7 per cent in Greece and Spain, respectively. Only in Germany has youth unemployment declined since 2008. Worryingly, almost 30 per cent of youth in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2011. [7]

In the UK, the situation remains bleak – with youth unemployment hovering stubbornly at the 1m mark since 2011 - as is indicated by a recent House of Commons briefing.

> In the period November 2012-January 2013, 993,000 young people aged 16-24 were unemployed, up 48,000 on the previous quarter but down 45,000 on the previous year. The unemployment rate for those aged 16-24 was 21.2%, up 0.9 percentage points compared with the previous quarter but down 1.1 percentage points compared with the previous year. 1.62 million 18-24 year olds were economically inactive in November 2012-January 2013, 62,000 fewer than in the previous quarter and 96,000 fewer than in the same period in the previous year. The claimant count – the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) – for those aged 18-24 was 415,000 in February 2013, down 2,600 on January 2013 and down 65,200 on February 2012 (seasonally adjusted figures).[8]

The difficulties facing young people are not shared equally. Issues of place, gender, class and race interact particularly in limiting the opportunities of some young people. For example, poorer Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) young people are more likely to experience unemployment, as indicated in Figure 2.2. Gender differences are also evident from these data, where young black males appear to be particularly disadvantaged.

Figure 2.2   **Unemployment of 16-25 year olds by ethnicity**

	White		Mixed		Asian		Black		All	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2006	14.1	10.8	39.0	19.4	20.3	24.8	32.8	30.3	15.3	12.0
2007	13.9	10.8	33.3	8.3	21.0	23.6	31.8	24.1	15.0	11.7
2008	17.0	12.8	27.9	15.0	22.7	22.9	28.8	26.8	18.0	13.8
2009	20.6	14.6	26.9	23.3	32.3	27.1	41.4	52.0	21.7	16.1
2010	20.4	16.7	35.2	40.0	28.2	32.7	41.0	42.6	21.5	18.4
2011	23.9	17.2	22.3	22.6	27.1	26.1	55.9	39.1	24.9	18.5

Source: ONS, March 2012

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[7] International Labour Organisation, http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_209716/lang--en/index.htm: April 8th 2013.

[8] Evans, J. (2013) *Youth Unemployment Statistics*, London: House of Commons, 20th March.

Such data provides a strong argument to focus attention on young people for whom opportunities are the most limited and to devise ways of targeting investment at the most needy.[9]

Situational factors are influenced by wider structural factors, but the local situation can exaggerate wider influences in significant ways. The economic, cultural and demographic makeup of the local area can affect expectations and experiences of young people. Local labour markets, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, public safety and neighbourliness, and local infrastructure (such as public transport, sport, leisure and youth recreation facilities) all affect opportunities.[10]

Situational factors do not just shape opportunities. They also have a pernicious cultural impact on perceptions of what is possible and desirable. Often it is difficult for 'outsiders' to make sense of the choices people make in different contexts and fail to recognise what they mean or why they are valued. In short, situational factors affect opportunities from within the area and from without when outsiders' attitudes and beliefs affects their judgements on people from the area.

Relational factors refer to the relative strength and weakness of inter-personal ties. Young people can experience relationships in positive and negative ways. Some young people may have supportive parental and sibling relationships and yet suffer poor peer group relationships (through, for example, pressure to engage in risky behaviour or to become the object of ridicule, ostracism or physical bullying). Intimate relationships also affect young people's life choices. Relational factors often produce complex and unpredictable outcomes for young people's life transitions.

Such factors impact heavily when families are under serious economic and social pressure. More affluent families tend to be able to cushion themselves from recurrent financial crises produced by ill-health, unemployment and so on. Furthermore, they are better placed to ensure that their children can attend the best schools and have access to constructive after-school activities. Understanding the education system, knowledge about the opportunities that can be afforded from it, and having the confidence to communicate fully with teachers eases the passage of young people through the system.

There is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate how the affluence of families affects educational outcomes. To illustrate this point, Figure 2.3 shows differences in terms of attainment on Key Stage test scores by ages 7 and 11 and GCSE scores at age 16 across five quintiles of the index of multiple deprivation.

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[9] The Local Government Association's report *Hidden Talents* published in March 2012, puts considerable emphasis on reducing the range of spending pots on young people to maximise the impact on total spend in key areas of priority. This approach resembles the principles developed in *Total Place* or *Place Based Budgeting* initiatives. In principle this makes a lot of sense, but in practice it can be difficult to achieve as it may result in significant losses to particular department budgets and also unstitch existing patterns of work which are contracted to the third sector. Being a difficult proposition, does not mean that it is not a good idea – but it may take time and demand compromise to make it happen.

[10] See, for example: Tunstall, R., Lupton, R., Green, A. Watmough, S. and Bates, K. (2012) *Disadvantaged young People looking for work A job in itself?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Figure 2.3   **Average test scores by socio economic profile of household**[11]
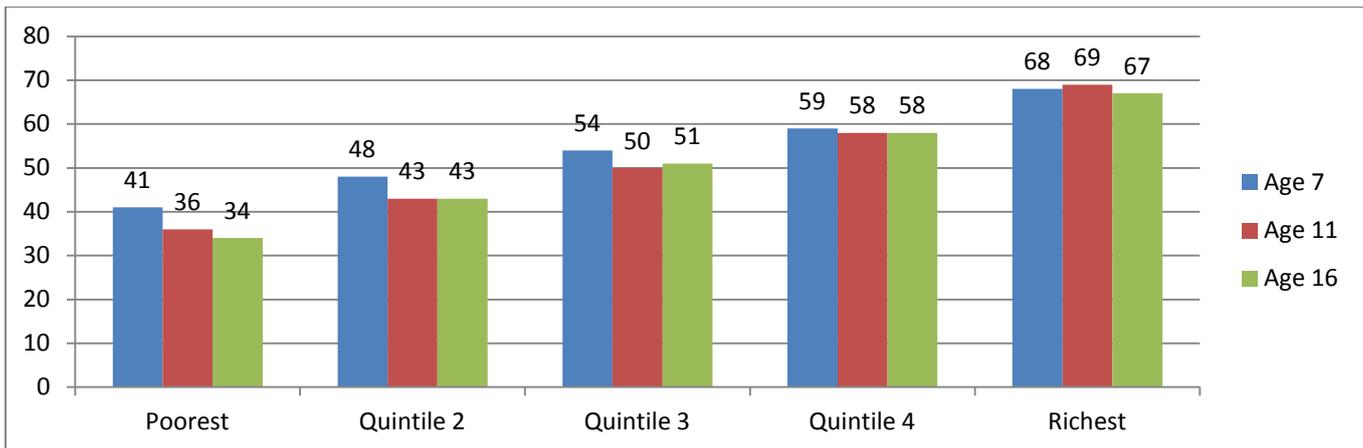
Individual differences* such as personality, temperament, skills and attributes all impact on individuals' behaviour. It is not uncommon for professionals and practitioners to make judgements on individual capabilities and thereby close down young people's avenues of opportunity if they appear not to match expectations. While the likelihood of successful life transitions may be estimated statistically in line with some factors, it is not possible to make effective predictions about the impact of deprivation, ill-health, educational underperformance, disability and so on, on an individual's life trajectory.

What is clear, however, is that irrespective of all of the structural, situational, relational and individual factors which can be considered, young people have quite uniform aspirations. There are also some serious concerns that received assumptions about low aspirations amongst less affluent young people may not actually be true. As a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study recently observed:

> …there is a lack of clarity about whether aspirations are fundamentally too low, especially among people from disadvantaged backgrounds, or are in fact rather high, but cannot be realised because of the various barriers erected by inequality (Kintrea et al. 2011: 7).

The problem this study refers to is a mismatch between aspirations amongst young people and the positions available in the labour market for them to be achieved. As Figure 2.4 illustrates, at age 15 young people want to get the best jobs, but their chances of realising these aspirations are limited by the number of positions available.

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[11] Adapted from Figures 4.1 and 5.1 (2010:27/33) First two columns refer to Key Stage Test scores and column 3 refers to GCSE attainment age 16. Source: Goodman, A. and Gregg, P. (eds.) *Poor children's educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Figure 2.4 **Aspirations compared to UK labour market at age 15**[12]

Legend:
- Managers, professions and associate professions
- Administrative, skilled trades and personal services
- Sales, plant and machinery operatives and elementary occupations

	Managers, professions and associate professions	Administrative, skilled trades and personal services	Sales, plant and machinery operatives and elementary occupations
Labour market positions	44.4	30	25.1
Ideal world aspirations	82.1	16.1	1.8
Realistic aspiration	66	29.6	4.4

A study by Goodman and Gregg demonstrates that as children get older, relative affluence or deprivation starts to have an impact on, amongst other things, self-belief, locus of control and involvement in risky behaviours (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 **Attitudes and behaviour age 14** (percentages)[13]

	Household socio-economic profile		
	Lowest quintile	Middle quintile	Highest quintile
Wants to stay on in full-time education at 16	79	83	93
Likely to apply for higher education and likely to get in	49	57	77
Ever involved in antisocial behaviour	41	31	21
Ever played truant	24	14	8
Reads for enjoyment weekly	70	75	81
Get a job that leads somewhere is important	70	70	67

When young people from less affluent backgrounds are perceived as 'different' from more affluent young people by onlookers, this is often due to false and often prejudicial assumptions about fundamental differences in their aspirations, capabilities and temperament. By focusing exclusively on the perceived attributes of the individual, out of context of structural, situational and relational factors can lead observers to make dangerously ill-informed judgements on the origins and outcomes of young people's failure to live up to social expectations about appropriate levels of achievement.

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[12] Kintrea, K., St Clair, R. and Houston, M. (2011:38) *The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
[13] Adapted from Figure 5.3, Goodman and Gregg, *ibid.* (2010: 39).

3.2   Wellbeing and resilience

Making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood requires young people to make good decisions about how they want to shape their future and act on these decisions in a positive way. Such decisions are made in the context of the opportunity structures that are available (or perceived to be available) to young people. Making such decisions involves choices which may be inherently risky. Risks might include the possibility (or even the probability in some contexts) of failure and disappointment. Not taking risks, by the same token can also have damaging consequences. There are few prospects available for achieving success for those people who are not prepared to take a chance.

Taking risks which may lead to positive outcomes requires young people to have self-belief and confidence. But where does it come from? There is much debate on this issue. From a sociological point of view, the environment within which young people grow up is regarded as being crucially important in shaping self confidence and ambition. Many sociologists argue that life chances are shaped, primarily, by socio-economic status. Affluence, as noted above, produces a higher degree certainty and stability in people's lives – it affords opportunities to plan ahead, build stocks of human and social capital, experiment with alternatives and have a safety net if things do not work out first time around.

Deprivation, by contrast, limits the prospects of planning ahead and increases insecurity, closes down possibilities for building social and human capital, and restricts the range of opportunities available to young people. As shown above in this section, there is a wealth of statistical evidence to show that the more deprived the environment within which young people grow up, the fewer life chances they have and the higher risk that they will not make successful life transitions. Making generalisations about opportunity structures can mask the variety of responses that people might have to adverse circumstances. Research on resilience tends to focus on these responses from a psychological perspective (where environmental factors may not be taken as much into account) or social-psychological perspective (where the interaction of personality and environmental factors are considered).

Resilience researchers often focus on the balance between the 'assets' individuals possess and their chances of taking negative risks. Small and Memmo argue, for example, that:

> ...the lack of assets is directly related to a person's failure to thrive, but only indirectly related to problem behaviours. As is often the case among children with few assets, a failure to thrive occurs when a child lacks essential growth opportunities needed for normal development. However, these same conditions also may heighten vulnerability, because the positive features that are absent in asset-poor environments tend to be replaced by hazardous or socially toxic conditions that generate risk... We believe that in the presence of risk, rather than a lack of assets, that likely leads to problem behaviours. Therefore, while a youth with many assets may thrive developmentally, he or she may still exhibit problems if risk processes are present (2004:4).

Resilience, according to Small and Memmo[14], results from a combination of four main processes that helps young people '*retain those assets* necessary for a person to display competence and thrive developmentally, or avoid the development of problem behaviours despite their experience of risk' (2004:6 my emphasis).

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[14] Small, S. and Memmo, M. (2004) 'Contemporary models of youth development and problem prevention: toward an integration of terms, concepts and models', *Family Relations*, 55:1, 3-11.

- *Resilience resulting from the operation of protective processes*: this refers to the action of significant others who act to protect or cushion young people from risk factors often in conjunction with efforts to build personal assets.

- *Resilience resulting from exceptional personal characteristics*: this refers to characteristics such as intelligence or sociability which may be innate personality factors or emerge in response to their developmental history.

- *Resilience gained by recovering from adversity*: successful recovery from stressful situations or crises can result from reducing or eliminating the threat of recurrence or drawing upon other resources to aid coping strategies to make the situation manageable.

- *Resilience gained through the process of steeling*: steeling is the process by which individuals overcome challenges and strengthen their resolve in the face of adversity. It is a process of hardening a person against the impact of difficulties and disappointments.

A critical reading of these four interacting factors would indicate how resilience can work for people in positive and negative ways. Having a strong sense of resilience on its own does not necessarily indicate an inherent likelihood that people will behave in a socially constructive way. A more general assumption is, however, that the wider range of 'assets' an individual has at their disposal – the more likely that a strong sense of resilience will benefit them.

3.3 Summary

Positive youth development programmes, such as Think Big, which tend to focus on asset-building usually incorporate a mixture of 'protective processes' (such as the encouragement to get involved with positive confidence-building activities rather than negative risk taking); provide support, where appropriate, to aid recovery from previous adversity; and, channel efforts in positive directions so that young people capitalise upon their innate or socialised assets such as sociability, creativity and intelligence.

Being positive about young people, all young people, is the key to challenging society's (and often young people's own expectations) about what they can reasonably be expected achieve. Building assets to bolster resilience is a central part of this process so that good choices can be made within the range of opportunities that are open to young people. This report provides an evaluation of an 'open programme' for all young people who choose to take part – but in so doing, it recognises that some of these young people may have strong personal assets at the outset, while others have few. But it is not assumed that these differences will translate into particular outcomes for individuals – on the contrary, the point of the research, as it has proceeded over the years, was to assess many different and often unpredictable sources of benefit emerging from participation in Think Big.

Chapter three
Expectations and aspirations

3.1 Introduction

Think Big is a large, long-term programme which seeks to help young people make smoother and more successful transitions into adult life. As noted in the previous chapter, there is a tendency in such programmes to try to anticipate exactly what it is that young people need to achieve such an aim.

The key challenge is designing programmes which support youth transitions is the difficulty in predicting what success will look or feel like for young people in the future, and also the skills and capabilities which will be critical to this success. As argued in previous reports,[15] parents, teachers, politicians and others prepare young people for the world they *imagine* that they will inhabit when they grow up – but of course – when young people arrive in that world it will have changed.

For Think Big, there is a strong focus on self-confidence, resilience, leadership and entrepreneurial skills as part of the essential 'toolkit' to support young people's future life choices. However, in order to ensure that the programme continues to be relevant to young people's needs, it is important to find out what young people's perspectives on their priorities and expectations for the future.

3.2 The O$_2$ Youth Census

There are already many opinion polls on how public attitudes are changing. Some of these are scientifically credible and highly respected, such as the *British Social Attitudes* study of the general population, produced by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). But they take a long time to report and are limited to some extent, by their scope and fields of enquiry. There are also one-off polls on young people's attitudes on particular issues. Often they are commissioned by charities or think tanks to highlight the need for particular forms of action to help young people out. And there are also a few small-scale regularised studies of young people, such as the Prince's Trust Youth Index poll which has been running since 2009.[16]

It is important to note that many of these polls focus primarily upon what is 'going wrong' with young people's lives because they are devised to highlight particular issues that the sponsoring organisation is campaigning to address. The O$_2$ Youth Census poll is different because its objective is not produce shock findings for the media, as is the case in many other polls, but rather to get a generalised picture on the wellbeing and ambitions of different categories of young people to inform the direction of the Think Big programme.

It is important to collect generalised population data because we need to know where there are specific differences in attitudes, ambitions and needs so that the programme can be

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[15] See Chapman, T. *et al.* (2012) *Building Young People's Resilience in Hard Times: an evaluation of O2 Think Big in the UK*, Durham, St Chad's College, Durham University.

[16] Results from the latest Prince's Trust Youth Index can be found at this address: http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/what_we_do/research/youth_index_2013.aspx.

tailored to some extent to respond to these differences. Furthermore, these generalised findings on young people help to ensure that the programme delivery team are 'on the pulse' of the youth population in the UK and can respond flexibly to new or emerging issues. Randomised poll data, therefore, provides a baseline against which to compare the participants in Think Big with young people in general.

3.3 Characteristics of the sample

The Youth Census study is an opinion poll of 2,000 16-25 year olds. It is not claimed to be a rigorous social-scientific study of attitudes and behaviour – but rather, it aims to deliver interesting insights around the ways that young people position themselves in relation to the opportunities they perceive to be available to them. The poll is designed using specific quota sampling techniques to get answers from a specified range of young people.

The final sample was highly structured in this sense with an equal number of young people from each of four socio economic groups, an equal number of males and females, a balanced age range and a sample of respondents from each nation of the UK and from each English region. It does not, therefore, produce accurately weighted findings on young people in general.[17]

The O$_2$ Youth Census opinion poll was undertaken in November 2012 and included telephone interviews with 2,000 young people. The quota sample included equal numbers of respondents across four socio economic groups (SEGs). These categories are collapsed from the larger National Readership Survey (NRS) categorisation of social classes rather than the Office of National Statistics Registrar General's Scale.

The NRS categorisation is commonly used by consumer and opinion poll researchers. The Youth Census quota sample included 500 young people from each of SEG A, (i.e. higher professional and higher managerial backgrounds – about 4-5% of the population), SEG BC1 (supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional – comprising about 50% of the population); C2D (skilled and semi-skilled manual/technical/service workers – about 37% of the population); and, E (lowest grade manual and service workers, state pension and workless households – about 8% of the population).[18]

The number of males and females in the poll are equal. Age groups were equally divided between three categories: with 667 young people aged: 16-18, 19-21 and 22-25 (data were recorded separately for all ages within this range for analytical purposes with 222 young people in the sample from each age). Regional participation in the survey resulted in some

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[17] While it is the case that the population of young people sampled fit into the quota frame neatly, this does not mean that this constitutes a fully random sample. Indeed, it is likely that young people who are willing to answer questions are not fully representative of the whole population of young people. Young people are not always easy to persuade to take part in telephone interviews (just as is the case in the older adult population). Not all young people have phones, and of course the sample frame itself is limited by the access the polling company has to young people's contact numbers. With all of these factors taken into account, it is necessary to be cautious about the interpretation of findings. That said, a sample of 2,000 young people is quite respectable for a poll (many national polls on political and social attitudes are often based on just 1,000 members of the whole population – not a limited age range such as this). And its aim is to compare the attitudes of different categories of young people – not to produce simple headline statistics for a generalised population of young people, as is the case in, for example the Prince's Trust Youth Index.

[18] For an accessible and brief overview of socio-economic and other forms of consumer profiling methodologies, see: http://www.businessballs.com/demographicsclassifications.htm#nrs-social-grade-definitions-uk

variation in response but there is a generally good overall coverage of all UK nations and English regions.[19]

3.4 Summary of key findings

This section provides a summary of key findings. More detailed exploration of the data can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

Young people's ambitions for the future

Young people's ambitions for the future are similar, irrespective of their socio-economic background and gender. At some point in the future, most young people want to own their own home, have a fulfilling, secure and well paid job and enjoy a good standard of living. Furthermore, the majority want to get married and start a family. These findings suggest strong inter-generational continuity about broad life ambitions.

There are some gender differences.

- ■ Females put more emphasis on: owning their own home; enjoying financial security and a good standard of living; having a fulfilling and secure job; and, getting married and starting a family. But young men put a slightly higher premium on earning a lot of money.

- ■ While few young people want to run their own businesses – young males are more interested in this option: males are a third more likely to want to run their own business and twice as likely to want to run a social enterprise.

Think Big is an open programme to provide opportunities to all young people to develop their skills and capabilities and to make a contribution to their communities. But it has a particular ambition to support young people from less advantaged backgrounds. So it is important to identify if and how life expectations and ambitions differ among young people from more or less affluent backgrounds.

- ■ Young women from the most affluent backgrounds put a higher premium on: doing fulfilling work than their less affluent counterparts (95% SEG A against 86% EG E); getting a highly paid job (64% SEG A against 56% SEG E); owning a home (87% SEG A against 79% SEG E); getting married (77% SEG A against 64% SEG E); and most particularly, going to university (73% SEG A against 54% SEG E).

- ■ More affluent young men put more emphasis on owning their own home as an ambition (83% SEG A against 75% SEG E). Similar differences emerge in relation to getting a fulfilling job (83% SEG A against 76% SEG E); and, earning a lot of money (61% SEG A against 53% SEG E); There is a general emphasis amongst young men on earning more money than is the case with young women – but the differences are only a few percentage points apart.

A well accepted route to achieving higher income is to go to university. But males put a lower level of importance on this than females.

- ■ Amongst the most affluent, 73% of females say that university is important to them compared with only 60% of males.

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[19] The project numbers are as follows: North East England=88; North West England=206; Yorkshire and the Humber=212; English East Midlands=139; English West Midlands=168; Eastern England=137; South East England, 306; South West England=182; London=328; Scotland=139; Wales=72; Northern Ireland=23.

■ For the least affluent, 54% of females and 43% of males say that going to university is important.[20]

Expectations about the future

The survey results show that expectations about salary levels and lifestyle vary by the place where young people live. Differences by gender and socio-economic background are also pronounced.

Regional differences

■ Young people in London have, by far, the highest salary expectations: 49% of young people expect to be earning over £40,000 by the time they are 30.

■ Expectations of earning a salary above £40,000 are also higher in Scotland (39%), South West England (38%) and in the South East England (34%).

■ There are lower salary expectations in the West Midlands of England where 34% of young people expect to earn less than £25,000 by age 30. In Wales it is 31% and North East England 29% of young people (compared with just 14% in London).

Salary expectations are useful indicators of confidence, but it is also useful to compare them with the salary level they think they may need to live a fulfilling life.

■ In London, 64% of young people say that they need a salary of more than £40,000 to live a fulfilling life by the age of 30 compared with just 27% in North East England.

■ Just 9% of young people in London feel they could live a fulfilling life on less than £25,000 a year compared with over 20% in North East England, East Midlands of England or Scotland.

Gender and socio-economic backgrounds

■ 57% of young men from SEG A expect to be earning over £40,000 when they are 30 years old, only 33% from SEG E believe that this is the case.

■ Differences amongst young women are less pronounced: 46% of SEG A females expect to be earning over £40,000 when they are 30, whereas females from the intermediate SEGs is 30% but rises to 36% for the least advantaged young women.

■ Fewer than 5% of SEG A young males expect to be earning less than £25,000 a year when they reach the of 30, compared with 23% of SEG E males. The least affluent males, in other words, are four times as likely to expect to earn the lowest category of salary.

■ Young women from less affluent backgrounds expect to achieve much lower salaries – ranging from 32% expecting to earn less than £25,000 at age 30 in SEG E compared with 17% in SEG A.

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[20] This finding does not indicate that less affluent young people are now less likely to want to go to university. Indeed, even with significantly rising tuition fees, less affluent young people have not been deterred from application. But it still remains the case that more affluent young people are the most likely to want to go to university and the most likely to get a place. Evidence from Independent Commission on Fees reported in the Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/sep/11/tuition-fees-rise-disadvantaged-students-applying.

Confidence about the future

Confidence about the future for both males and females falls if they are from less affluent backgrounds: 62% of males from SEG A are confident about their future compared with 45% from SEG E. For females, the percentages are 56% and 47% respectively.

Clearly these data have implications for the aims of Think Big. The programme has always emphasised the importance of being an open programme but with a special emphasis on targeting young people from less affluent backgrounds where it was assumed there was a greater need for young people to get the kinds of experiences to give them confidence that more affluent young people may have enjoyed already.

The evidence presented in this chapter indicates that this objective is justified and that by giving priority to young people from less affluent backgrounds, a greater social benefit may be achieved. It is clear that it is not just the *least* affluent young people who need support. There are strong indications that young people in SEG C2D need to have confidence bolstered too – particularly so, perhaps, in areas of the UK where expectations are, understandably dampened by economic circumstances.

Some issues worry young men from some backgrounds more than others. Males from SEG C2D (that is, families with relatively modest incomes) are by far the most concerned about nearly all of the statements. They feel that:

- there is too much competition for jobs (50%);
- hard work isn't enough to get you ahead anymore (37%);
- there are fewer job opportunities (40%);
- economic conditions are much tougher (38%);
- it's so expensive to go to university that they probably won't go (38%);
- there aren't enough quality jobs these days (32%); and,
- the quality of education is worse now (22%).

These worries suggest that young males from modest backgrounds tend to be more likely to externalise reasons for their situation – they seem to be more 'fatalistic' than other young males (that external conditions mean that their fate is not under their own control).

In political circles, the socio-economic groups to which SEG C2D refer are sometimes called the 'squeezed middle' and often it is asserted that they miss out on the best opportunities in life, but also find that they miss out on some of the benefits and support that the poorest families can receive – so they may constitute a target group for a national programme such as Think Big.

Young women are more worried in general than young men in relation to some issues:

- In terms of competition for jobs, 47% of all females compared with 39% of males strongly agree that there is much more competition now.
- 35% of all females strongly agree that economic conditions are tougher now, compared with 27% of males.
- 35% of females strongly agree that there are fewer job opportunities compared with 28% of males.

The O$_2$ Youth Census has provided some interesting insights into the aspirations of young people, their priorities for the future, and their hopes and confidence in achieving their objectives.

The analysis provides a useful foundation of understanding on contemporary attitudes which will help to inform the analysis on the aspirations, attitudes and behaviours of young people who have participated in the Think Big programme in the chapters that follow.

Programme review

The Think Big programme began in March 2010. This section reports on the quantitative data which have been collected to monitor the volume and characteristics of projects and young people involved. The section is divided into three parts.

- The first part of the analysis presents data on the volume of applications, awards and completions for 2012 and compares these data with activity, where possible, in 2010 and 2011

- The second section explores the extent to which the programme reaches young people with different biographical characteristics including: gender, ethnicity, age, educational achievement, geographical area and disability.

- The third section considers the extent to which the programme reaches young people from less advantaged social backgrounds. This analysis considers the social economic situation of young people by other biographical characteristics including: gender, region, age and ethnicity.

The analysis will also provide the groundwork for subsequent analysis on pro-sociality, skill and confidence building in Chapter 4.

4.1 Programme volumes 2010-2012

This section of the report provides an overview of programme achievements. The analysis includes data on the number of applications and programme awards. Additionally, this year, data are presented on project completions, although, these data are less reliable indicators of programme progress because completion data refers to the year within which the projects were finished rather than the year in which they were started.

Figure 4.1(a) presents basic data on the number of applications, awards and completions from 2010 to 2012 at Level 1. The following headline findings can be observed:

- The volume of applications to the programme has increased significantly, from 1,037 in 2010, 2,498 in 2011 to 3,389 in 2012 – suggesting that the programme has built momentum in line with additional resources invested in Think Big.

- The volume of open applications has remained level in 2011 and 2012, but there is a significant increase in youth partner supported applications: from 668 in 2011 to 1,588 in 2012

- The number of awards has grown in similar proportions to applications (see below for more detailed analysis of award rates).

- Completions are rising significantly as the programme develops – but these data are not yet fully reliable as the methodology for recording completions has been subject to review and further development.

Level 2 programme applications, awards and completion are presented in Figure 4.1(b).

- Level two applications have almost doubled in 2012, rising from 120 to 211.

- The balance between open and youth partner sponsored applications has remained about the same.

- Award levels are broadly similar for open and youth partner applications (there is more analysis of award rates below).

- The number of completions currently remains quite low – this is presumably because of the longer duration of Think Bigger projects

It is useful to observe the pattern of applications and awards over time, given the duration of the programme. This helps to discern whether engagement in the programme is evenly distributed or is responsive to other factors.

Figure 4.2 shows the numbers of applications from March 2010 to December 2012. It is clear from this chart that applications were relatively evenly spread in 2010, but in 2011 and 2012, their distribution is more varied. This is due, in 2010, largely to the pattern of publicity and promotion of open programme applications in the late summer. In 2012, the distribution of open applications is relatively level.

Partner applications in 2011 rose significantly from June to August following more intensive involvement from the National Youth Agency (NYA) to increase interest and commitment. Similarly, from July through to December 2012, the NYA stepped up the level of communication with existing partners and drew in new partners in order to meet programme targets following an increase in funding of Think Big.[21]

Figure 4.3 presents data on the number of awards on a monthly basis throughout the programme's history. It is evident from this chart that award levels broadly follow the same pattern as applications. It is, though, clear that the responsiveness of the programme has increased over time – following faster turnaround of applications by the NYA as the programme procedures have been streamlined. There was a period of intensive activity from October to December 2012, in particular, to respond to a dramatic increase in applications – particularly from youth partner organisations.

Figure 4.1(a) **Think Big applications, awards and completions from 2010 to 2012 for Level 1**

Level 1 programme	Level 1 all completed applications	Level 1 youth partner applications	Level 1 open applications	Level 1 approved applications	Level 1 youth partner approved applications	Level 1 open approved applications	Level 1 completions	Level 1 youth partner completions	Level 1 open completions
2012 N=	3389	1588	1801	2228	1493	735	1401	782	651
2011 N=	2498	668	1830	1370	579	791	284	75	209
2010 N=	1037	323	714	338	78	260	28	5	23
Whole programme N=	6924	2579	4345	3936	2150	1786	1713	862	883

Figure 4.1(b) **Think Big applications, awards and completions from 2010 to 2012 for Level 2**

Level 2 programme	Level 2 all completed applications	Level 2 youth partner applications	Level 2 open applications	Level 2 approved applications	Level 2 youth partner approved applications	Level 2 open approved applications	Level 2 completions	Level 2 youth partner completions	Level 2 open completions
2012 N=	211	65	151	100	26	76	33	6	27
2011 N=	120	33	87	70	16	54	12	2	10
2010 N=	10	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whole programme N=	341	100	246	170	42	130	45	8	37

Figure 4.2 Applications at Level 1, March 2010 to December 2012
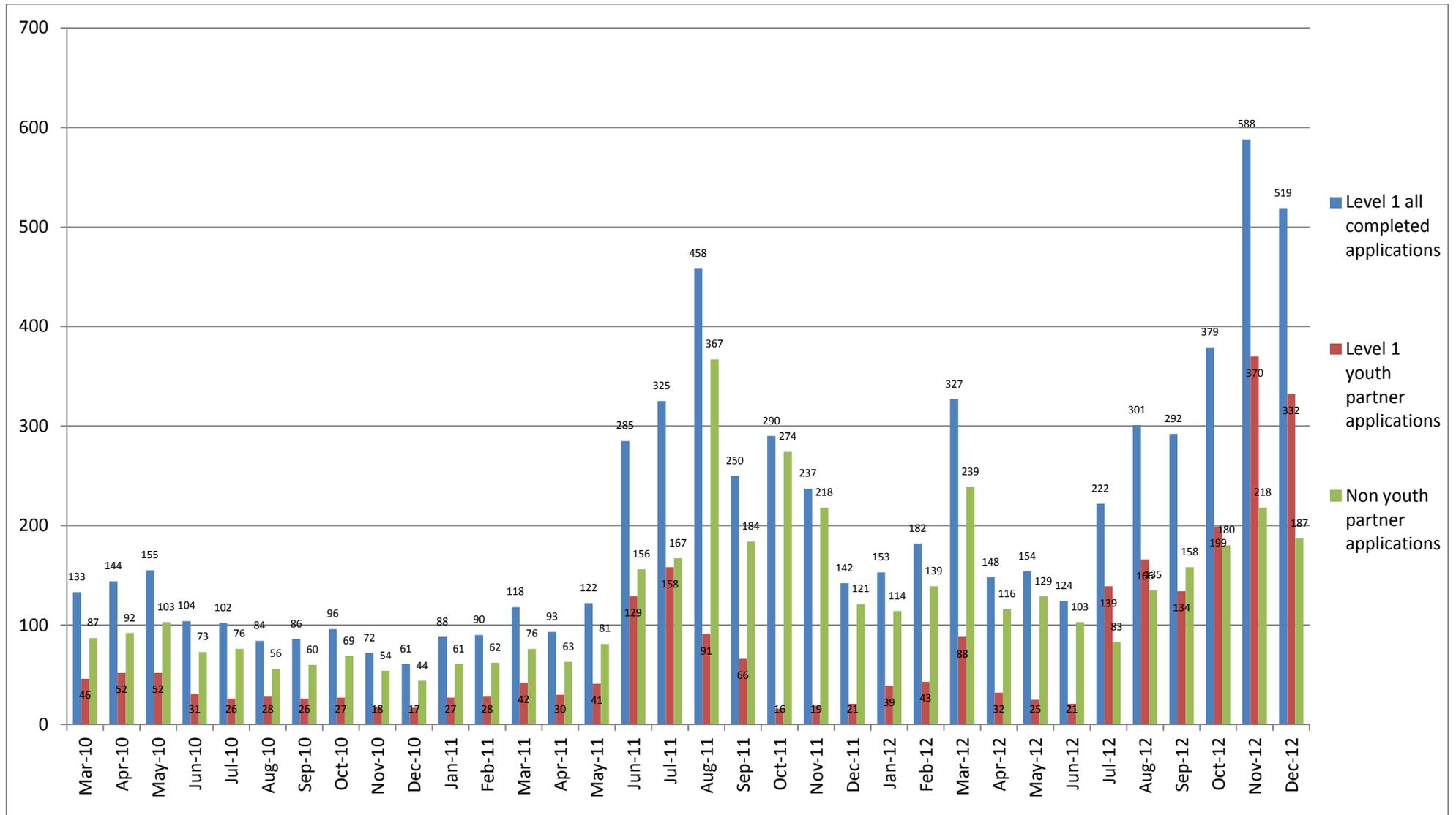
Figure 4.3   Awards at level 1, March 2010 to December 2012
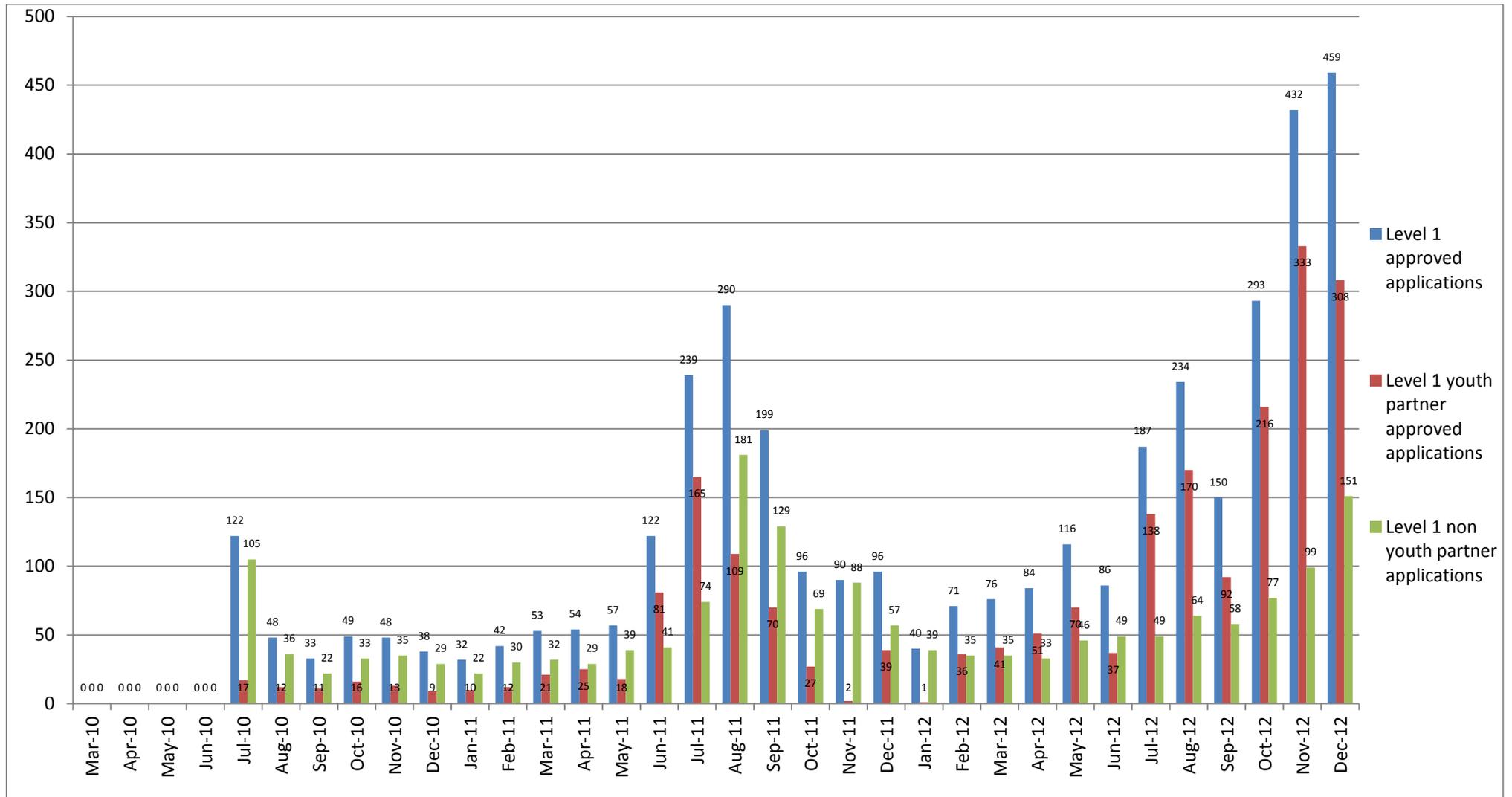
Figure 4.4 presents data on success rates of Level 1 applicants for each year of the programme. This chart shows that for the programme as a whole, success rates have increased steadily from just 33% in 2010 to 65% in 2012. The increased success rate stems primarily from the increased involvement of youth partner organisations which were incentivised to nominate and support a specific allocation of Think Big projects from 2011. The success rate of open applications remains relatively constant at around 40%.

Figure 4.4   **Award success rates Level 1**
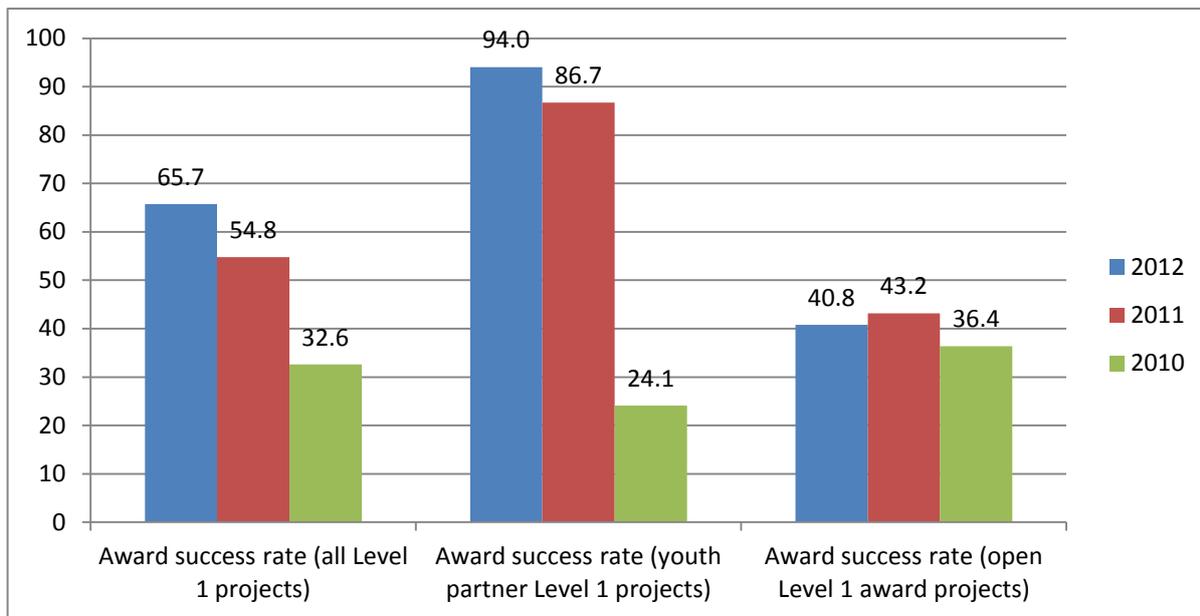
Figure 4.5 presents data on the success rate of applicants at Level 2 of the programme. Success rates have fallen from around 60% to around 45% in 2012 – which brings Level 2 more closely in line with the Level 1 programme.

Figure 4.5   **Award success rates Level 2**
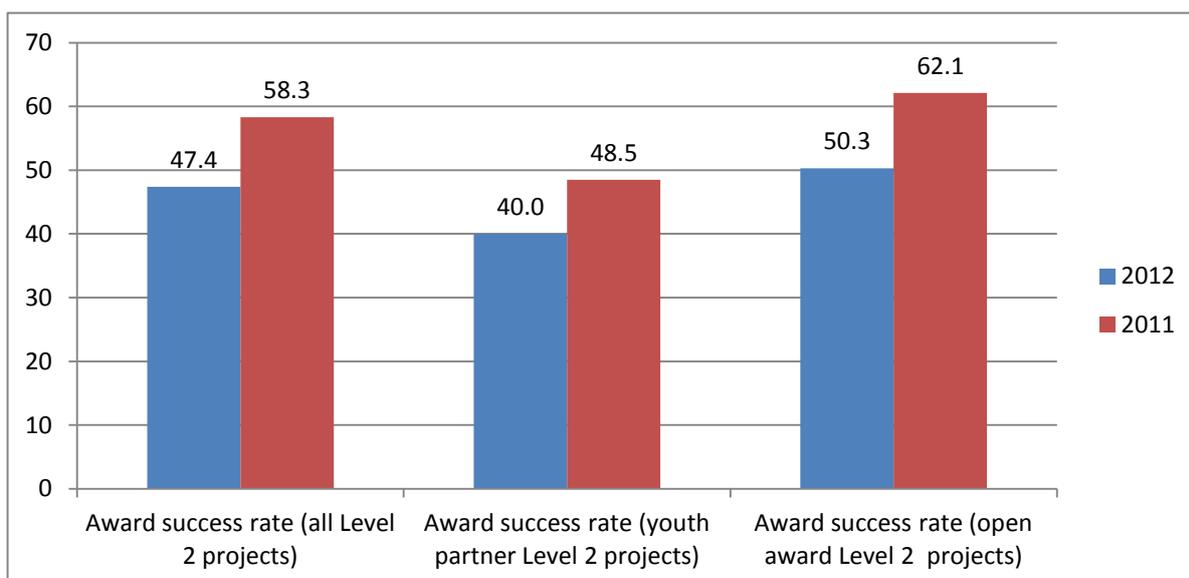
As noted above, completion rate data are not particularly reliable at the moment, for comparative purposes, as the methodology for recording completions has been under review and development. The much improved completion rates for 2012, therefore, does

not indicate a dramatic increase in projects being completed, but rather, a better mechanism for recording completions. In 2013, these data should be easier to compare in a reliable way. It will still be the case, however, that some projects will start in a different year from which they complete – so annual data may not be a very useful indicator.

Figure 4.6   **Completion rates Level 1**
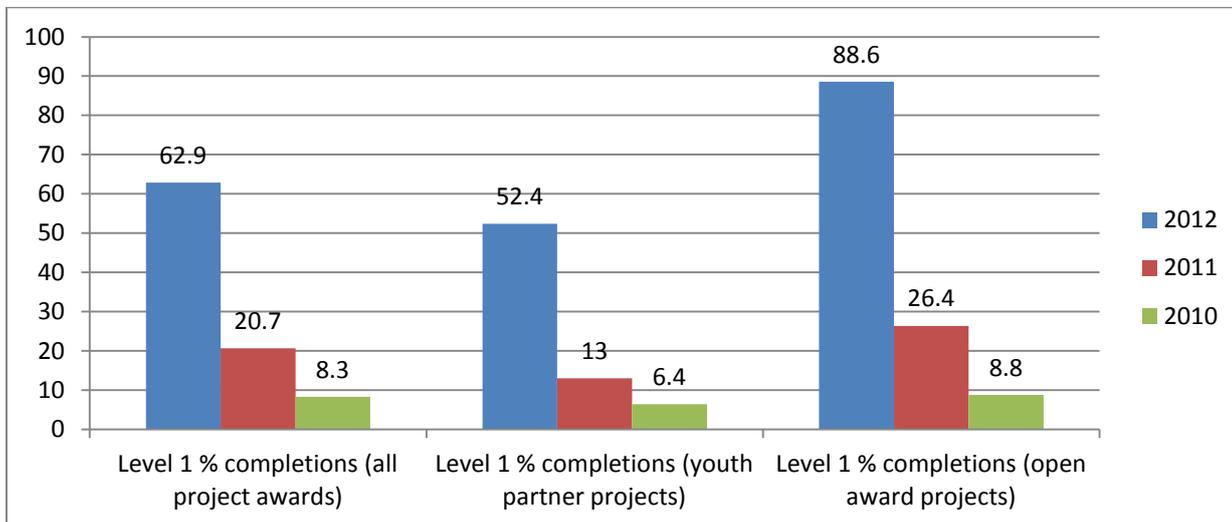
Completion rates at Level 2 are somewhat lower than for Level 1 at around 33% of project starts. At level 2 this is less to do with how completions are recorded and more to do with the longer duration of Think Bigger projects. In 2013, a significant increase in completions should therefore be anticipated.

Figure 4.7   **Completion rates Level 2**
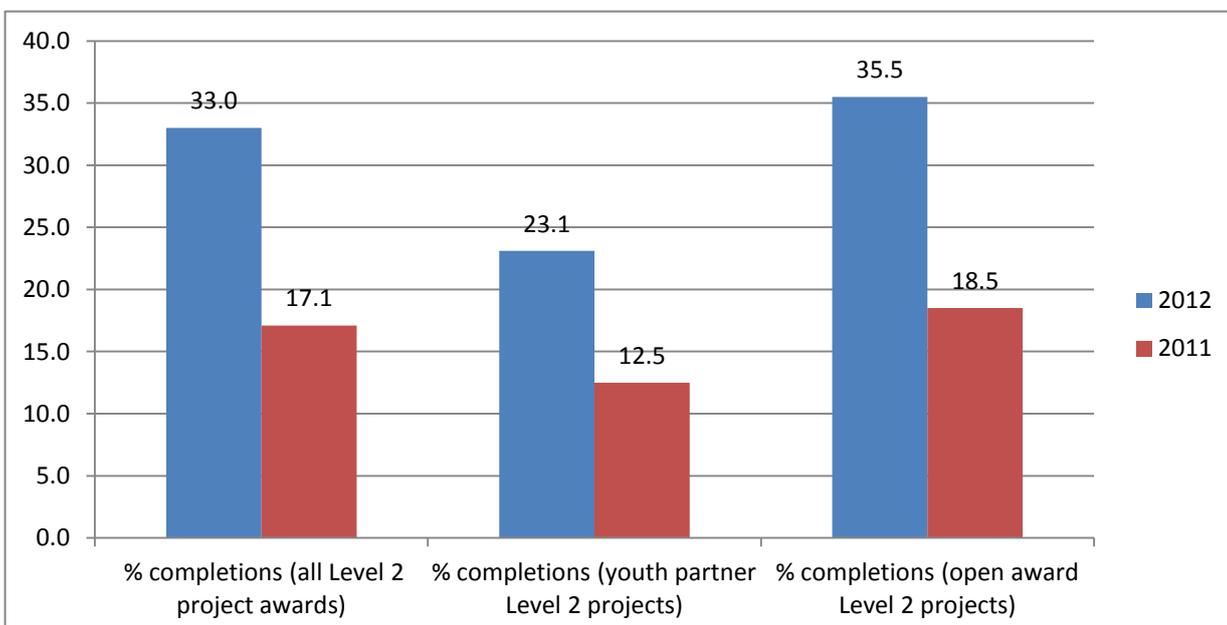
4.2 Characteristics of programme participants

This section provides analysis of programme participation on several biographical and spatial dimensions.

Gender

Figures 4.8(a) and (b) show the patterns of applications and awards by gender. From this table it is clear that the programme attracts males and females in broadly similar numbers and has done so fairly consistently from 2010 – 2012.

There is some indication, however that the proportion of awards to females has risen somewhat in 2012.

Figure 4.8(a) **Programme applications and awards by gender** (column percentages of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
Female	50.6	49.9	48.1	49.4	53.8	55.1
Male	49.4	50.1	51.9	50.6	46.2	44.9
N=	100	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 4.8(b) **Programme applications and awards by gender** (number of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
Female	530	168	1202	677	1498	1218
Male	517	169	1298	694	1285	993
N=	1047	337	2500	1371	2783	2211

The success rates from application to award have increased steadily and significantly since 2010. As Figurer 4.9 shows, however, this has not affected the distribution of young people in the programme by gender.

Figure 4.9 **Success rates of applications to award by gender**
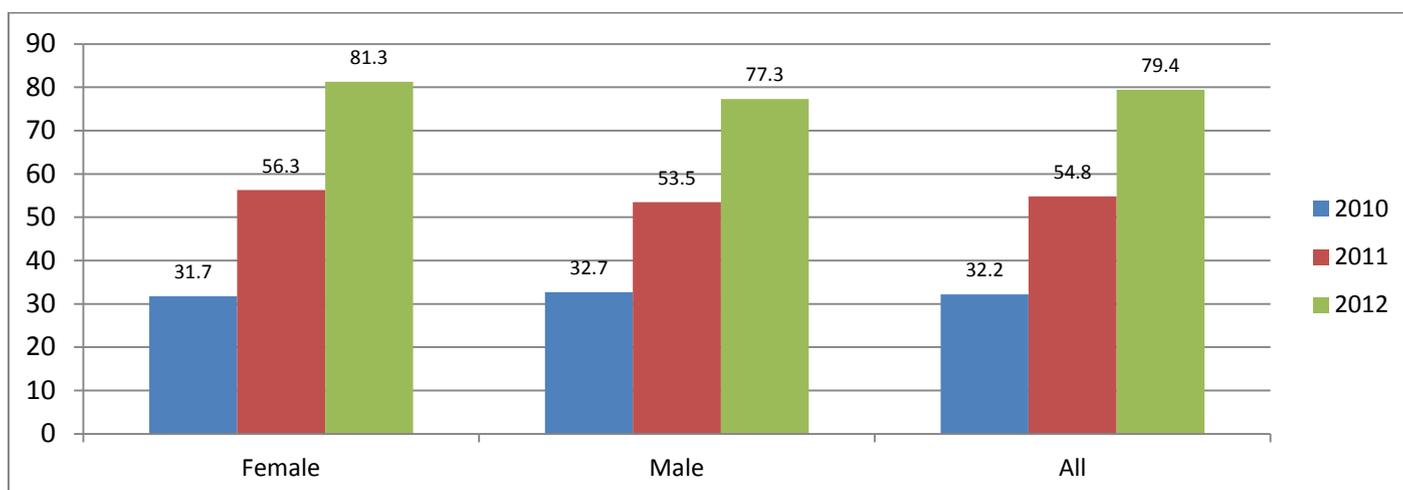
Age

Figures 4.10 (a) and (b) present data on the age of applicants and awardees in the programme. The data show that application levels vary considerably between the years of the programme. Younger applicants, aged under 16, were few in number in 2010 for example (nearly 8% of all applications). This proportion rose to 18% in 2011 but fell back to 12% in 2012.

Figure 4.10(a) **Programme applications and awards by age** (number of participants)

Age	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
13	0	0	84	36	58	36
14	26	5	159	76	135	99
15	54	19	236	126	160	112
16	75	30	254	158	395	339
17	97	28	273	171	457	397
18	80	27	224	125	280	234
19	111	44	181	101	169	137
20	80	31	192	101	223	170
21	85	32	175	82	231	171
22	80	29	172	93	201	152
23	81	27	195	112	171	129
24	86	20	145	72	140	111
25	100	25	146	79	116	91
26	84	18	64	38	38	32
27	8	2	0	0	0	1
Total	1047	337	2500	1370	2774	2211

Figure 4.10(b)   Programme applications and awards by age (column percentages)

Age	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
13	0.0	0.0	3.4	2.6	2.1	1.6
14	2.5	1.5	6.4	5.5	4.9	4.5
15	5.2	5.6	9.4	9.2	5.8	5.1
16	7.2	8.9	10.2	11.5	14.2	15.3
17	9.3	8.3	10.9	12.5	16.5	18.0
18	7.6	8.0	9.0	9.1	10.1	10.6
19	10.6	13.1	7.2	7.4	6.1	6.2
20	7.6	9.2	7.7	7.4	8.0	7.7
21	8.1	9.5	7.0	6.0	8.3	7.7
22	7.6	8.6	6.9	6.8	7.2	6.9
23	7.7	8.0	7.8	8.2	6.2	5.8
24	8.2	5.9	5.8	5.3	5.0	5.0
25	9.6	7.4	5.8	5.8	4.2	4.1
26	8.0	5.3	2.6	2.8	1.4	1.4
27	0.8	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Figure 4.11 presents data on the percentage of successful applications by age. It is difficult to discern clear patterns over time from these data apart from the obvious increase in success from 2010 to 2012. This is accounted for, primarily, by the contribution of youth partner organisations to the programme. It is clear that younger applicants, aged 13-15, are the least successful in winning awards. The 16-19 year old cohort is the most successful, but 20-25 year olds are not far behind.

Figure 4.11   **Percentage of successful applications by age 2010- 2012**
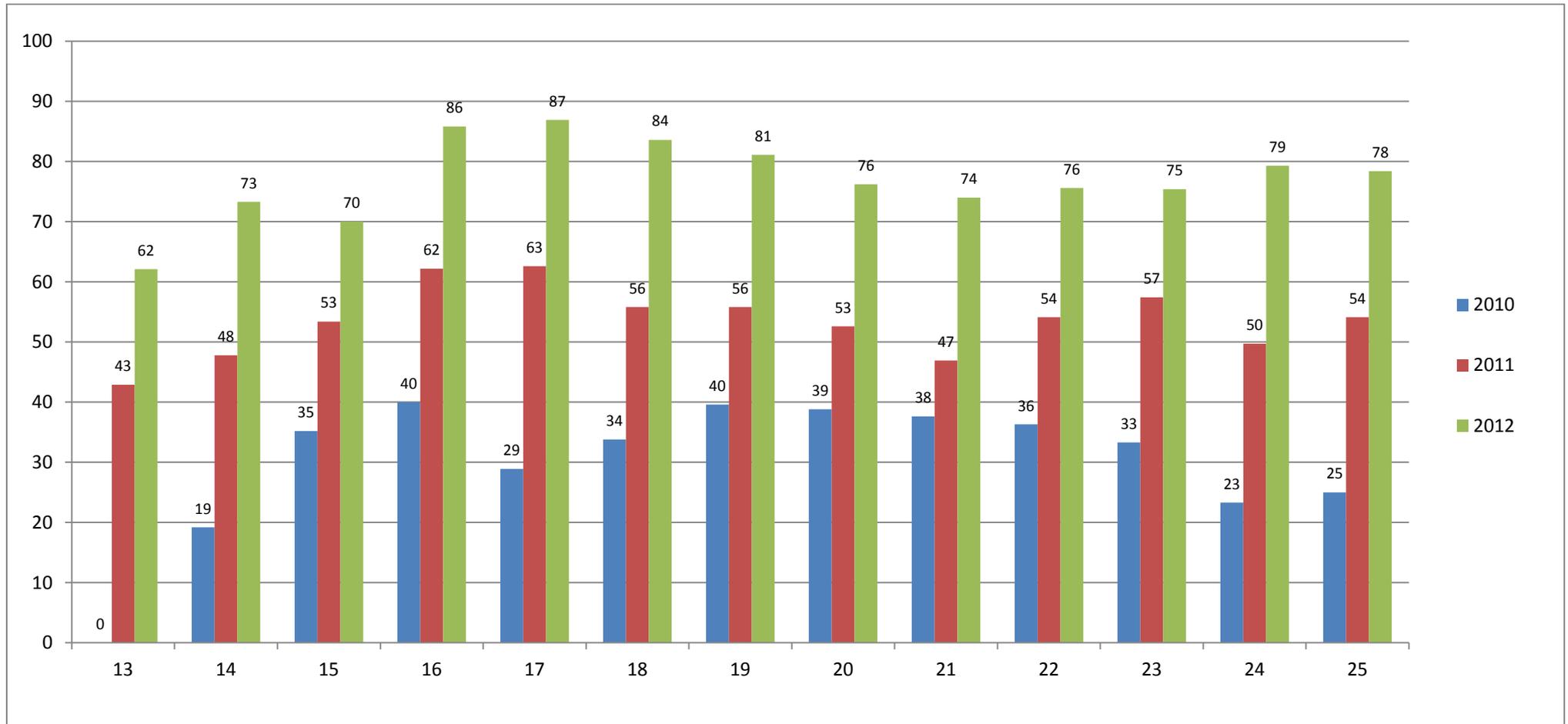
Ethnicity

Think Big has proven itself to be an inclusive programme by ethnicity from the outset. Data presented in Figure 4.12 shows that participation is achieved by all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups apart from Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi participants. The ONS data refer, however, to the whole population and not young people aged 13-25. High representation of BAME young people does, however, mean that white British young people are somewhat under-represented.

Figures 4.13 (a) and (b) show that levels of application and awards amongst different ethnic groups have remained relatively similar from 2010 to 2012.

Figure 4.14 shows that success rates of winning awards are also quite similar – although the small numbers in some categories of ethnicity make comparison less reliable. In all cases, there is a clear indication that the likelihood of winning a Think Big grant has increased considerably since 2010, primarily due to the involvement of an increased number of partner organisations.

Figure 4.12   **Representativeness of Think Big participants by ONS estimates**

	All Think Big programme awards 2010 - 2012	ONS national BAME population estimates 2011 Census[22]	% difference
Asian /Asian British - Bangladeshi	1.4	0.8	0.6
Asian/ Asian British – Indian	3.4	2.5	0.9
Asian/ Asian British - Other	1.6	1.5	0.1
Asian/ Asian British - Pakistani	3.9	2.0	1.9
Black/ Black British - African	5.3	1.8	3.5
Black/ Black British - Caribbean	3.0	1.1	1.9
Black/ Black British – Other	0.6	0.5	0.1
Chinese	0.7	0.7	0.0
Mixed – Other	1.0	0.5	0.5
Mixed - White & Asian	1.1	0.6	0.5
Mixed - White & Black African	0.9	0.3	0.6
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	2.3	0.8	1.5
Other	2.7	1.2	1.5
White - British	65.4	80.5	-15.1
White - Irish	4.2	0.9	3.3
White - Other	2.4	4.5	-2.1
N=	100.0	100.2	

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[22] ONS 2011 Census data can be found at: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/stb-2011-census-key-statistics-for-england-and-wales.html.

Figure 4.13(a)   **Applications and awards by ethnicity** (number of participants)

	Application 2010	Awards 2010	Application 2011	Awards 2011	Application 2012	Awards 2012
Asian /Asian British - Bangladeshi	17	2	42	18	40	33
Asian/ Asian British – Indian	29	12	88	55	78	65
Asian/ Asian British - Other	6	3	41	22	53	38
Asian/ Asian British - Pakistani	29	11	96	66	101	76
Black/ Black British - African	57	17	160	88	151	101
Black/ Black British - Caribbean	50	24	110	45	82	47
Black/ Black British – Other	18	6	28	7	21	12
Chinese	8	3	13	10	18	16
Mixed – Other	9	1	30	15	37	24
Mixed - White & Asian	6	3	15	8	37	32
Mixed - White & Black African	5	0	21	14	26	23
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	42	16	79	40	49	36
Other	22	6	55	29	91	72
White - British	694	214	1535	842	1818	1506
White - Irish	30	12	122	78	110	75
White - Other	25	7	65	34	71	55
N=	1047	337	2500	1371	2783	2211

Figure 4.13(b)   **Applications and awards by ethnicity** (column percentage of participants)

	Application 2010	Awards 2010	Application 2011	Awards 2011	Application 2012	Awards 2012
Asian/ Asian British - Bangladeshi	1.6	0.6	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.5
Asian/ Asian British – Indian	2.8	3.6	3.5	4.0	2.8	2.9
Asian/ Asian British - Other	0.6	0.9	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.7
Asian/ Asian British - Pakistani	2.8	3.3	3.8	4.8	3.6	3.4
Black/ Black British - African	5.4	5.0	6.4	6.4	5.4	4.6
Black/ Black British - Caribbean	4.8	7.1	4.4	3.3	2.9	2.1
Black/ Black British – Other	1.7	1.8	1.1	0.5	0.8	0.5
Chinese	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.7
Mixed - Other	0.9	0.3	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1
Mixed - White and Asian	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.6	1.3	1.4
Mixed - White and Black African	0.5	0.0	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	4.0	4.7	3.2	2.9	1.8	1.6
Other	2.1	1.8	2.2	2.1	3.3	3.3
White - British	66.3	63.5	61.4	61.4	65.3	68.1
White - Irish	2.9	3.6	4.9	5.7	4.0	3.4
White - Other	2.4	2.1	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.14 **Success rates of winning awards by ethnic group 2010 - 2012**
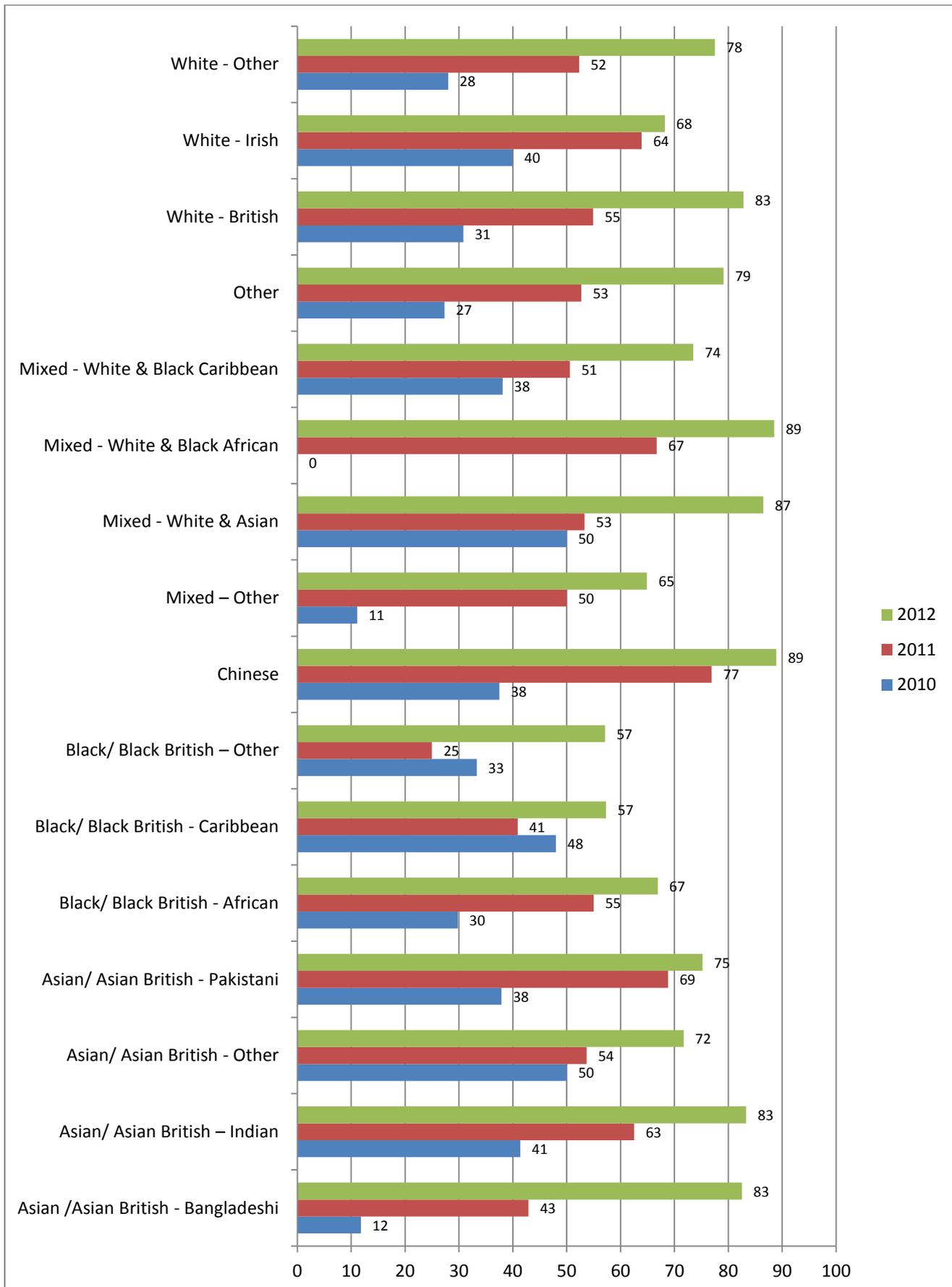
Regions

Think Big is a national programme which intends to draw in participants from every UK nation and English region. Figure 4.15 compares participation in Think Big with the population of UK Nations and English regions.

These data show that Think Big participation is, to some extent, represented inequitably. The level of participation in Scotland is comparably low – only about a third as many participants are involved in Scotland as would be expected. By contrast, participation in Northern Ireland is about 50% higher than expected.

In the English regions, participation is considerably higher than population averages in London, and to a lesser extent in the South East, North West and North East of England. Some areas are significantly under represented: particularly Eastern England, the East Midlands, West Midlands, and Yorkshire & the Humber.

Figure 4.15 **Regional representation of projects by ONS population data**

	All Think big participants 2010-12	% in each nation / English region	UK population 2011 census	% UK population in each region	% difference
East	116	3.0	5,862.40	9.3	-6.3
East Midlands	172	4.4	4,537.40	7.2	-2.8
London	706	18.0	8,204.40	13.0	5.0
North East	291	7.4	2,596.40	4.1	3.3
North West	588	15.0	7,056.00	11.2	3.8
South East	654	16.7	8,652.80	13.7	3.0
South West	285	7.3	5,300.80	8.4	-1.1
West Midlands	235	6.0	5,608.70	8.9	-2.9
Yorkshire & the Humber	238	6.1	5,288.20	8.4	-2.3
England	3,285	83.9	53,107.20	84	-0.1
Northern Ireland	333	8.5	1,806.90	2.9	5.6
Scotland	115	2.9	5,254.80	8.3	-5.4
Wales	184	4.7	3,063.80	4.8	-0.1
	3,917	100.0	63,233,000	100.0	

Figure 4.16(a) and (b) present the number and percentages of applications and awards in each UK Nation and English region. It is clear from this table that applications from London continue to dominate in 2012 – accounting for nearly 20% of all applications. The number of applications from the South East is also rising – now standing at over 16% of all applications.

Applications in Scotland have actually fallen since 2010 by about a half – and this was from a low starting point. In Wales, the number of applications is also falling, although not as fast as in Scotland. In the English regions, some success can be identified in the North East in increasing the number of applications – rising from 4.2% of all applications in 2010 to 8.2 applications. In other regions, the reverse is the case, particularly Eastern England, where applications have fallen to just 2% of all applications.

Figure 4.16(a)   **Application and award data by region** (column percentage of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
East	4.5	6	3.1	3.1	2.3	2.4
East Midlands	5.6	2.4	5.3	3.5	5	5.2
London	20	15.2	23.2	20.1	19.5	17.1
North East	4.2	3	4.8	5.6	8.2	9.2
North West	17.3	20.3	11.4	10.2	16.5	17.2
South East	12.5	14.3	12.6	15	16.9	18.1
South West	5.8	6	6.6	7.8	6.9	7.1
West Midlands	7.4	9.3	7.4	5	6.5	6.2
Yorkshire & Humber	7.9	7.8	6.2	6.6	5.5	5.5
Northern Ireland	3.4	5.4	10.8	13.6	6.5	5.8
Scotland	6.6	6.6	3.1	2.9	2.6	2.4
Wales	4.7	3.9	5.4	6.7	3.6	3.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.16(b)   **Application and award data by region** (numbers of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
East	47	20	78	42	65	54
East Midlands	58	8	132	48	140	116
London	209	51	580	276	544	379
North East	44	10	121	77	227	204
North West	181	68	284	140	458	380
South East	131	48	315	205	469	401
South West	61	20	166	107	192	158
West Midlands	77	31	185	68	182	136
Yorkshire & Humber	83	26	156	90	154	122
Northern Ireland	36	18	270	186	180	129
Scotland	69	22	78	40	73	53
Wales	49	13	135	92	99	79
N=	1045	335	2500	1371	2783	2211

The success rates of winning applications, shown in Figure 4.17, are relatively similar across the Nations and regions of the UK – ranging from 70 – 90% in 2012. There is also a clear indication that the number of successful applications is rising in all areas. This is largely due, as noted above, to the role of youth partner organisations. But some differences are clear.

Early in the programme, some Nations and regions saw few applications being accepted, particularly Wales (27%) , North East England (23%), Eastern England (14%) and London (24%). These early differences seem to have been overcome however.

Figure 4.17 **Success rates in winning awards in UK nations and English regions** (percentages)
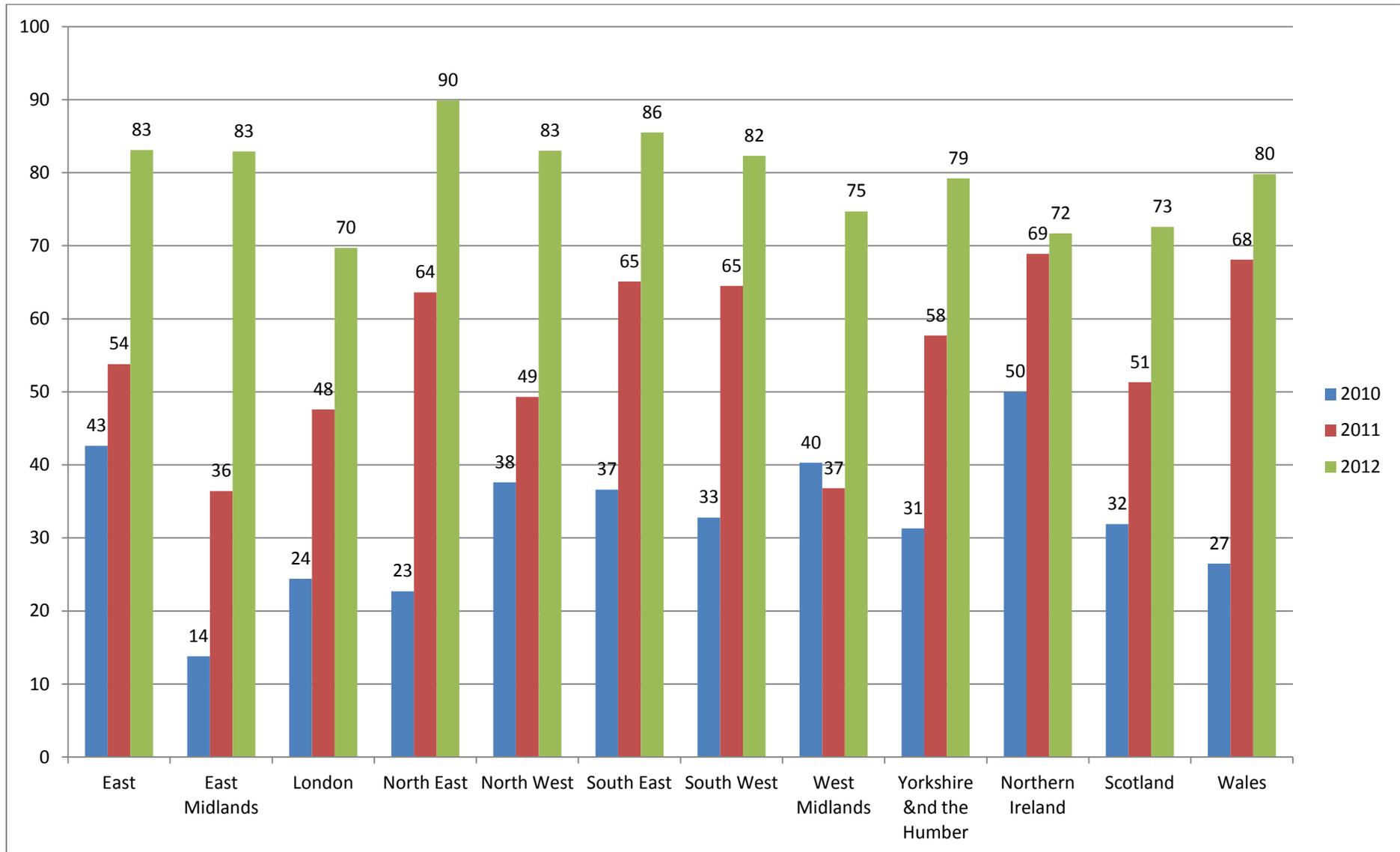
Educational achievement

Participants in Think Big cover a wide age range – therefore analysis of educational achievement needs to be read with this in mind. Younger participants cannot, obviously have achieved some of the qualifications listed because they have not yet reached that educational stage. However, presenting basic educational data does provide some insights into the composition of the programme.

Figure 4.18(a) and (b) present data on applications and awards. The proportion of young people with no qualifications, or fewer than 5 GCSEs has remained relatively stable throughout the programme, at about 35-40%. This is the case with most categories, with the exception of participants with 5 or more GCSEs – the application level of this group has risen from 19% in 2010 to 25% in 2012.

Participants with A levels, many of whom will be at university, diplomas and graduates have remained at about the same level – although the proportion of graduate applicants appears to be falling steadily.

Figure 4.18(a)   **Applications and awards by educational achievement** (number of participants)

`	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
None	241	67	587	331	560	453
GCSE NVQ1	161	62	416	240	434	351
5 GCSE NVQ2	198	66	492	296	680	590
A Level NVQ3	212	76	421	236	547	427
Diploma NVQ4/5	64	22	145	68	129	103
Degree	170	44	349	198	349	284
N=	1046	337	2410	1369	2699	2208

Figure 4.18(b)   **Applications and awards by educational achievement** (column percentage of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
None	23.0	19.9	24.4	24.2	20.7	20.5
GCSE NVQ1	15.4	18.4	17.3	17.5	16.1	15.9
5 GCSE NVQ2	18.9	19.6	20.4	21.6	25.2	26.7
A Level NVQ3	20.3	22.6	17.5	17.2	20.3	19.3
Diploma NQ4/5	6.1	6.5	6.0	5.0	4.8	4.7
Degree	16.3	13.1	14.5	14.5	12.9	12.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As Figure 4.19 shows, success rates do not differ particularly by educational achievement for each of the annual cohorts of applicants – although the success rate has clearly risen steadily year on year.

Figure 4.19 **Success rates in winning awards by educational achievement** (number of participants)
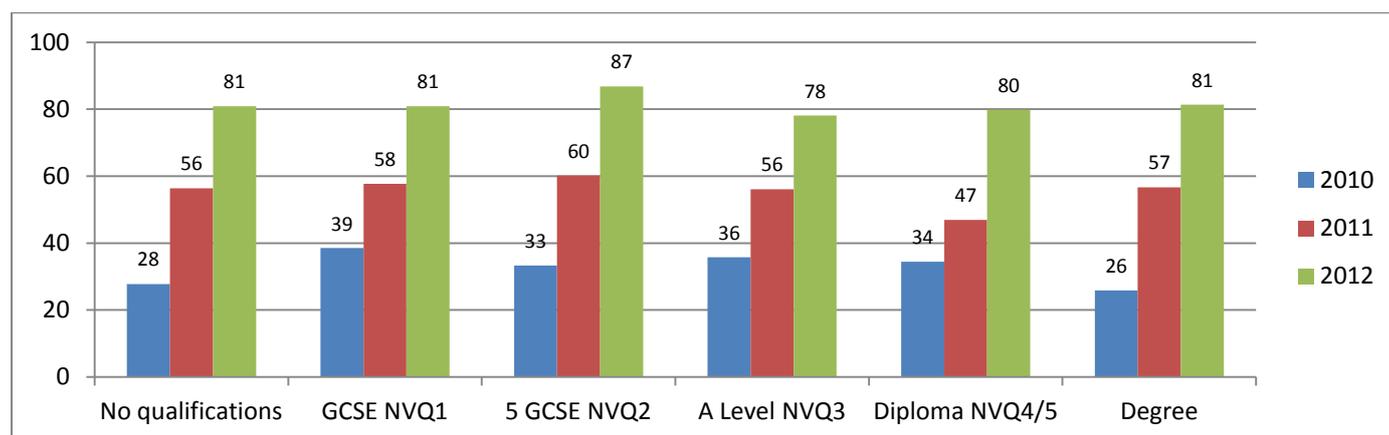
Figure 4.20 shows that the educational achievement of young people who enter the programme varies by age. Amongst 13-15 year olds, as would be expected, very few have achieved educational qualifications because they are too young to have taken them – although nearly 9% have some GCSEs.

For the 16-21 year old cohort, 18% have no qualifications (over half of whom are over the age of 17 and would therefore have had an opportunity to take GCSEs). The majority have more than 5 GCSEs grade A-C or A Levels, suggesting that they are quite a well qualified group of young people.

The 22-27 year old cohort is very well qualified: 44% already have a degree, and it is presumed that many of the young people with diplomas and A Levels are now undergraduates. That said, about 22% of this group have relatively few qualifications – although only 3% have none.

A crude indicator of the programme's population against the general population is presented in Figure 4.21. This shows that participants aged 16+ are rather better qualified than the population average. At the other end of the spectrum, fewer than the population average have degrees – but this is due to the skewed age range. As indicated in Figure 4.20, the likelihood is that many of the participants with Level 3 qualifications are likely to be undergraduates.

Figure 4.20 **Educational achievement by age** (column percentages)

	13-16 years	16-21 years	22-27 years	Whole programme
No qualifications	91.5	18.0	3.1	20.7
Some GCSEs	8.5	21.3	8.9	16.6
5 GCSEs A-C	0.0	34.8	9.6	24.3
A Levels	0.0	20.6	23.3	19.4
Diploma	0.0	2.8	11.1	4.9
Degree	0.0	2.6	44.0	14.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.21 **England and Wales Census and Think Big populations compared** (column percentages)

	England and Wales[23]	Think Big[24]	% difference
No qualifications	25.0	13.3	-11.6
Level 1 qualifications (some GCSEs)	14.6	17.4	2.8
Level 2 qualifications (5 GCSEs grade A-C)	16.8	26.9	10.1
Level 3 qualifications (A Level)	13.6	20.9	7.3
Level 4 qualifications and above (diploma or above)	30.0	21.4	-8.6

Disability

In the whole programme, 212 participants stated that they had a disability when they applied to Think Big. This may well be a significant underestimate however, as many young people may have chosen not to record their disability or may not be registered disabled.

Figure 4.22 provides a categorisation of types of disability recorded. The majority of young people participating in Think Big have disabilities which fall into the broad category of 'learning or intellectual disabilities'.

Figure 4.22 **Types of disability[25]**

Type of disability	% of participants with a disability
People who are blind or partially sighted	4.2
People with learning or intellectual disabilities (e.g. ADD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, etc.)	70.7
People who are deaf or hearing impaired	4.2
People with a physical disability (e.g. Cerebral Palsy, Scoliosis, etc.)	9.6
People with long-term illnesses	7.2
People with mental health or psychological difficulties (e.g. personality disorders, depression, anorexia, etc.)	2.4
People with an acquired brain injury	1.8

The number of applicants to Think Big who record a disability is small – numbering 25 in 2010, 110 in 2011 and 168 in 2012, as shown in Figure 4.22(a) and (b). As shown in Figure 4.24, the success rate of young people who state they have a disability does not adversely affect their success in gaining a Think Big project award.

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[23] Census data for all adults aged over 16 years in England and Wales 2011.

[24] All Think Big project leaders aged over16, whole programme.

[25] Definitions of disability are complex and their usage is often controversial. The World Health Organisation has established an internationally recognised taxonomy of diseases and related health problems. Most young people engaged in Think Big refer to learning and behavioural disorders. A detailed classification and definition of these disorders in children and young people can be found at this web address: http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en#/F90-F98.

Figure 4.23(a) **Applications and awards by disability** (number of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
Not disabled	997	322	2282	1302	2518	2050
Disabled	35	12	110	59	168	147
N=	1032	334	2392	1361	2686	2197

Figure 4.23(b) **Applications and awards by disability** (column percentage of participants)

	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Applications 2011	Awards 2011	Applications 2012	Awards 2012
Not Disabled	96.6	96.4	95.4	95.7	93.7	93.3
Disabled	3.4	3.6	4.6	4.3	6.3	6.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.24 **Success rates of applications by disability** (percentage of participants)
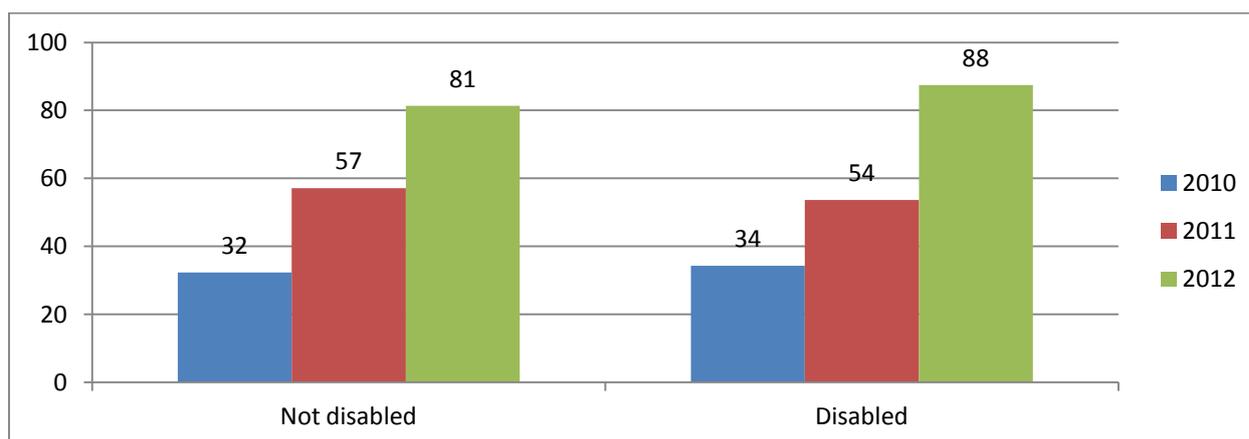
4.3 Reaching young people from less advantaged backgrounds

This section takes the analysis forward by examining the extent to which the programme has been successful in reaching young people from less advantaged backgrounds. It was decided, at the outset, not to ask young people invasive questions about their family backgrounds for both practical and ethical reasons. At a practical level, it was recognised that young people may have insufficient knowledge about, for example, their parents' or carers' income levels, educational qualifications and so on to place them in one of the established indices of social economic status. Furthermore, it was felt that it would take young people too much effort to do this and may dissuade them from applying to the programme. From an ethical point of view, it was decided that it was not appropriate to

demand that personal information of this nature be captured, as it may lead young people to feel that the chances of succeeding in their application may be undermined.

Consequently, it was decided that the main measurement of the programme's achievement in reaching less affluent young people should be through the use of post-code data at the application stage. These post codes could then be used with the Index of Multiple Deprivation which allocates a numerical value to geographical areas depending upon the average level of population data on several dimensions. In England, for example, the domains and values of weight attributed them are: *Income* (22.5%); *Employment* (22.5%); *Health deprivation and disability* (13.5%); *Education, skills and training* (13.5%); *Barriers to housing and services* (9.3%); *Crime* (9.3%); and *Living environment* (9.3%).

The index organises and report data at the level of the Super Output Area (SOA).[26] These are sub-ward level spatial clusters of 1,000 to 4,000 residents or between 400 and 1200 households. In England each SOA is ranked from 1 (the most deprived area) to 32,482 (least deprived area). IMD data is matched with post code listings so that it is possible to identify how successful the programme is in reaching young people from less affluent communities.

Application and award data by IMD

Figures 4.25(a) and (b) show the number of applications by IMD. These data demonstrate that the programme is drawing in applications from across the socio-economic spectrum. The indications are, however, that the number of applications from the four least affluent IMD categories seems to be falling (with the exception of IMD2). While this slight decline is not a significant one – it will be important to continue to monitor progress year on year to ensure that the programme continues to attract applications from less well off young people.

The charts which show the percentage and numbers of awards, however, indicate that the trend in applications is not necessarily followed by the allocation of awards. Figures 4.26(a) and (b) show that between 2011 and 2012, awards have remained fairly stable in most of the IMD categories - apart from IMD5-6 where awards seem be rising consistently.

A better measure of performance is to look at the number and percentage of applications which are translated into awards. This is shown in Figure 4.27. The linear trend lines for 2011 and 2011 show that success rates are spread evenly across the socio-economic categories (with very a slight tendency to a higher success rate for the more affluent young people).[27]

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[26] Details on the composition and usage of SOAs can be found at this ONS web address: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/census/super-output-areas--soas-/index.html

[27] Background statistical analysis does not clarify whether this slight difference is due to the stronger level of educational qualifications of more affluent applicants (so suggesting that they may be more articulate and write better applications). Observational work at the application stage in previous years has shown that applications are assessed fairly so that the background and education of young people do not advantage/disadvantage them in any way.

Figure 4.25(a)   **Application data 2010 – 2012** (percentage of applications)
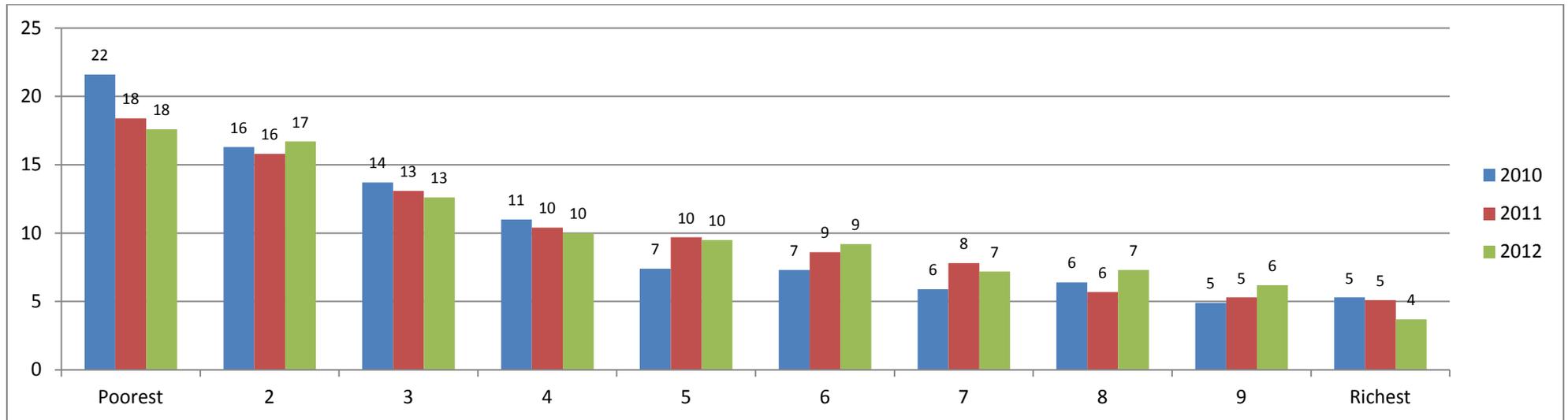
Figure 4.25(b)   **Application data 2010 – 2012** (number of applications)
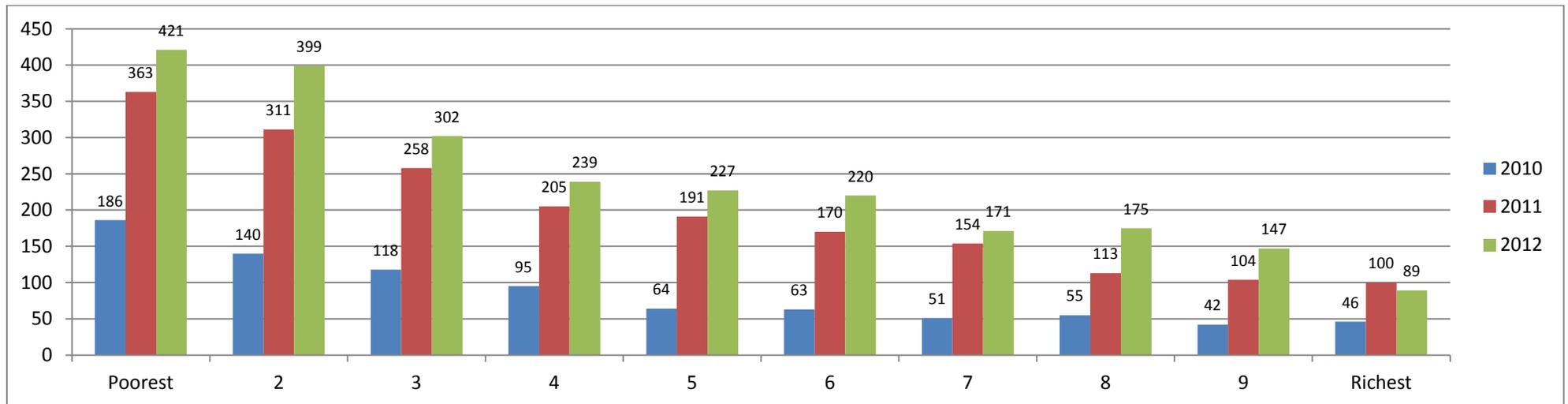
Figure 4.26(a)   **Award data 2010 – 2012 by IMD** (percentage of awards)
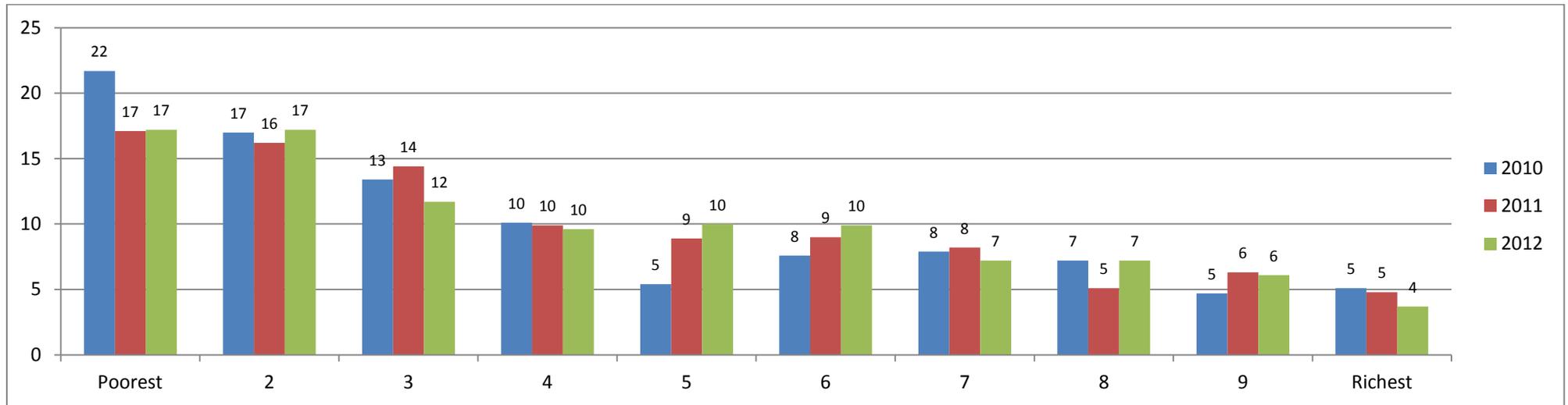
Figure 4.26(b)   **Award data 2010 – 2012 by IMD** (number of awards)
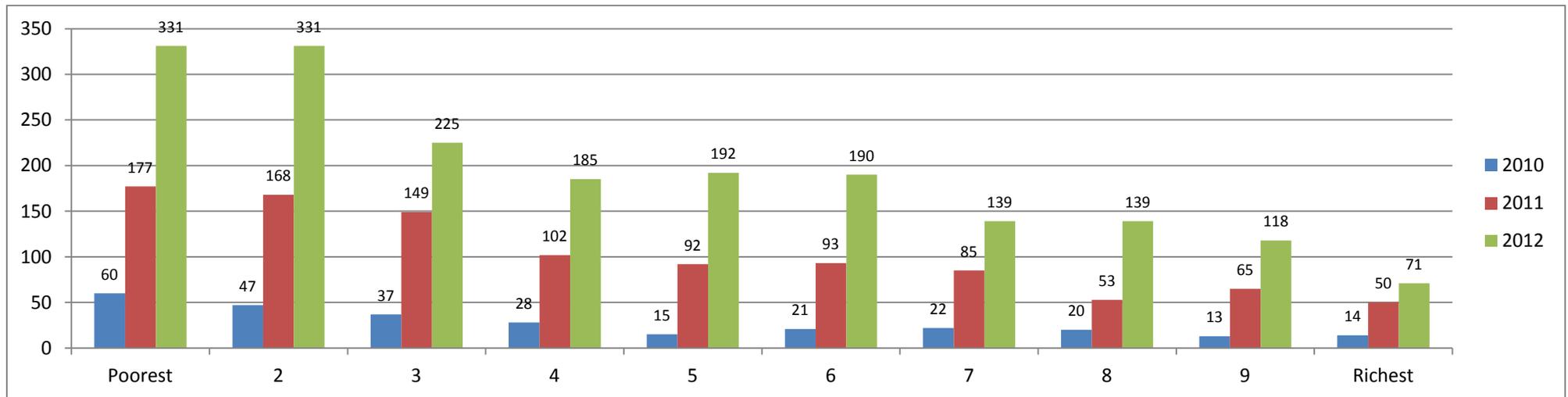
Figure 4.27 **Percentage success rates of applications by IMD 2011 and 2012**
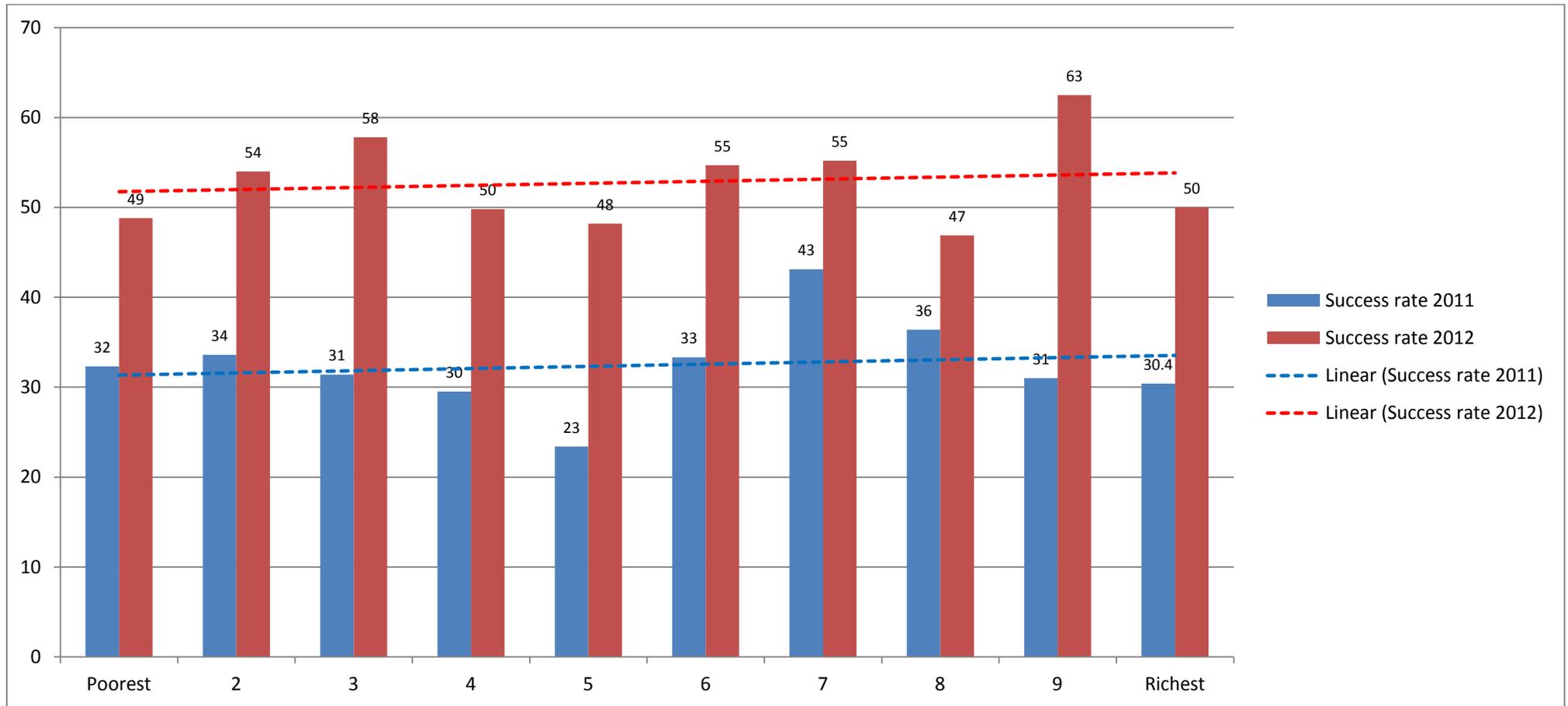
Youth partner organisations

Changes in the composition of the categories of young people in the programme are evident from the above analysis, although they are not dramatic. One factor that may be playing a significant role in changing the composition of young people is the greater involvement of youth partner organisations.

The Think Big youth partner network performs a critical role in supporting outreach activities, targeting and engaging disadvantaged and hard to reach young people and helping them to develop the self-belief to get going. They also provide a valuable advocacy role, ensuring that the programme responds flexibly to young people with additional support needs.

It may be expected that the involvement of youth partner organisations would lead to more young people from the most deprived communities engaging with the programme. Figures 28(a) and (b) show that youth partner organisations tend to bring more young people into the programme from IMD 2 and above. More open applications come from the least affluent communities (20% in 2012, compared with 16% from youth partners). There is, however, some evidence of improvement in the lowest category compared with 2011 which is promising (up from 11% to 16%).

At the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, it is evident that youth partners are also very active: 26% of awards from youth partners come from IMD 7-10. These are the most affluent socio-economic categories. Background exploration of the data shows that some youth partners are extremely successful at targeting the most deprived young people. However, there may be an argument for working more closely with some youth partners to focus their attention on less affluent young people.

Figure 4.28(a)   **Open and youth organisation awards by IMD** (percentage of awards)

Legend:
- 2011 Open %
- 2011 Partner %
- 2012 Open %
- 2012 Partner %
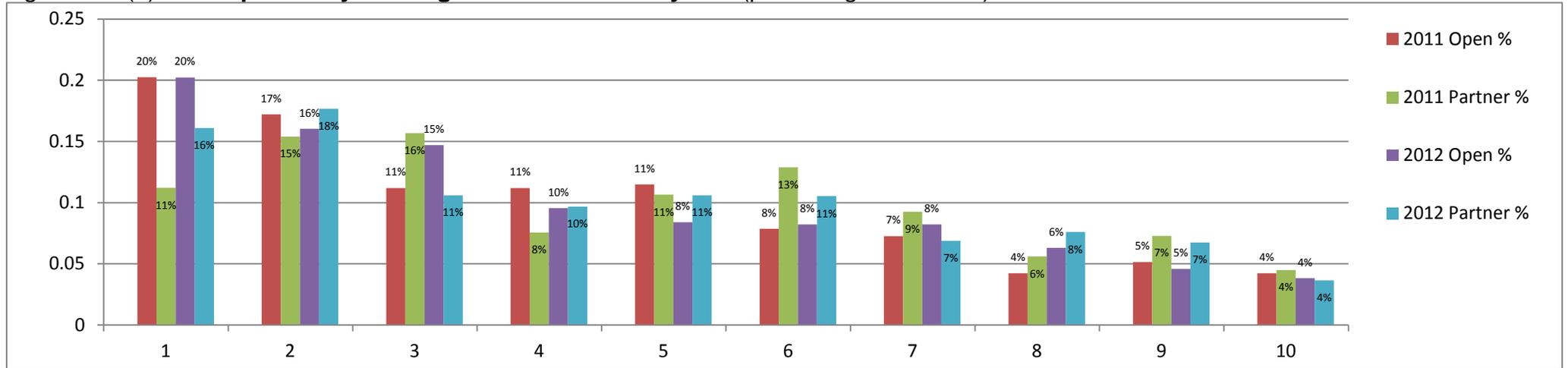
Figure 4.28(b)   **Open and youth organisation awards by IMD** (number of awards)

Legend:
- 2011 Open N=
- 2011 Partner N=
- 2012 Open N=
- 2012 Partner N=
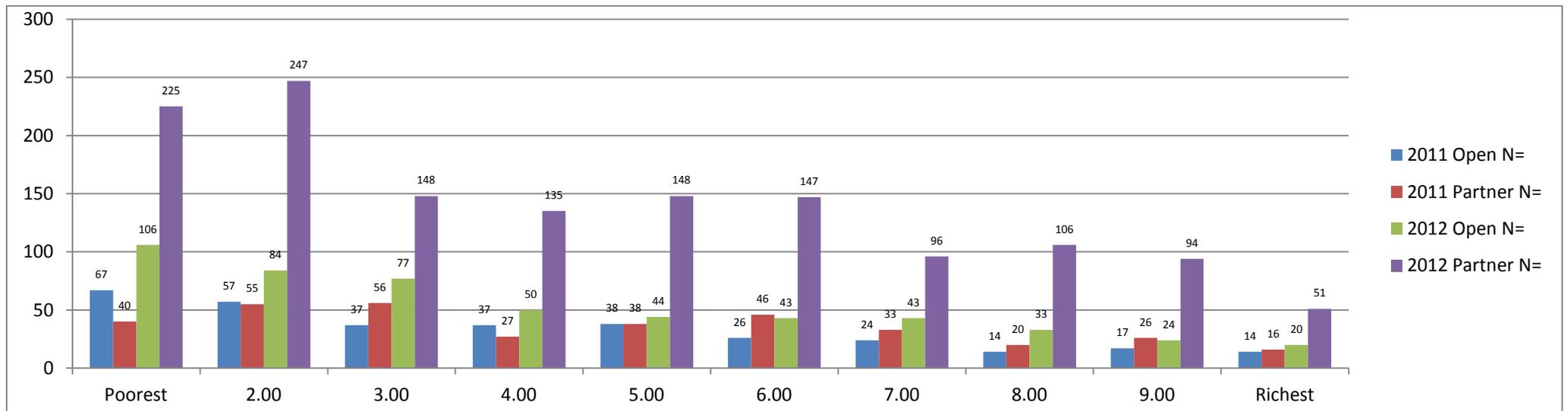
Regional data

Regional data can only be compared in English regions due to differences in the way that IMD areas are categorised in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and also due to the small sample sizes in each of those nations. As Figure 4.29 shows, the percentage of awards in the two least affluent IMD categories has risen from 32% in 2011 to 35% in 2012. There has also been a very slight fall from 11% to 10% in the most affluent categories.

Across the regions, however, the picture is very mixed. The regions which have delivered more than 50% of awards to less affluent young people are highlighted in bold.

In 2011, five English regions achieved the 50% target of young people from less affluent areas, this has risen to six in 2012 with the inclusion of Yorkshire and Humber. It is also notable that there has been significant improvement in the North East region, where 70% of awards now come from the two most deprived IMD categories. In other regions, the picture is less positive with the percentage falling by 10% in the West Midlands, and by about 5% in London and the East Midlands.

Figure 4.29 **Awards in English regions by IMD** (row percentages)

Awards 2011	Least affluent	3-4	5-6	7-8	Most affluent	N=2011
East	0.0	30.8	23.1	15.4	30.8	*26*
East Midlands	**33.3**	**20.8**	8.3	25.0	12.5	*24*
London	**42.9**	**26.7**	18.8	8.4	3.1	*191*
North East	**42.5**	**32.5**	2.5	12.5	10.0	*40*
North West	**50.0**	**16.0**	14.2	14.2	5.7	*106*
South East	8.4	30.1	31.5	13.3	16.8	*143*
South West	19.1	11.8	35.3	17.6	16.2	*68*
West Midlands	**48.5**	**21.2**	12.1	9.1	9.1	*33*
Yorkshire and the Humber	32.1	7.1	26.8	19.6	14.3	*56*
All	31.9	22.8	21.5	13.2	10.6	*689*
`	Least affluent	3-4	5-6	7-8	Most affluent	N=2012
East	16.7	7.4	29.6	25.9	20.4	*54*
East Midlands	**25.9**	**30.2**	14.7	19.0	10.3	*116*
London	**37.8**	**29.5**	21.9	8.1	2.7	*370*
North East	**70.3**	**18.3**	5.0	5.4	1.0	*202*
North West	**51.2**	**19.0**	8.6	14.5	6.7	*373*
South East	8.4	21.8	28.4	21.1	20.3	*394*
South West	9.0	17.4	34.8	21.9	16.8	*155*
West Midlands	**36.6**	**15.7**	23.9	11.9	11.9	*134*
Yorkshire and the Humber	**43.3**	**16.7**	22.5	11.7	5.8	*120*
All	34.5	21.3	19.9	14.5	9.8	*1921*

Assessing success rates by IMD in each region (that is, translating applications to awards) provides a useful indication of programme reach to less advantaged communities. As Figure 4.30 shows, there is considerable variation by region. In Eastern England, North West and West Midlands young people from the most affluent backgrounds have the highest success rates (although the numbers of young people from such backgrounds is small). In the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber, by contrast, the less affluent young people have the highest success rates. In London, the success rate of the most affluent young people is very low (at 42%).

Figure 4.30 **Success rates in translating applications to awards 2012 by IMD**
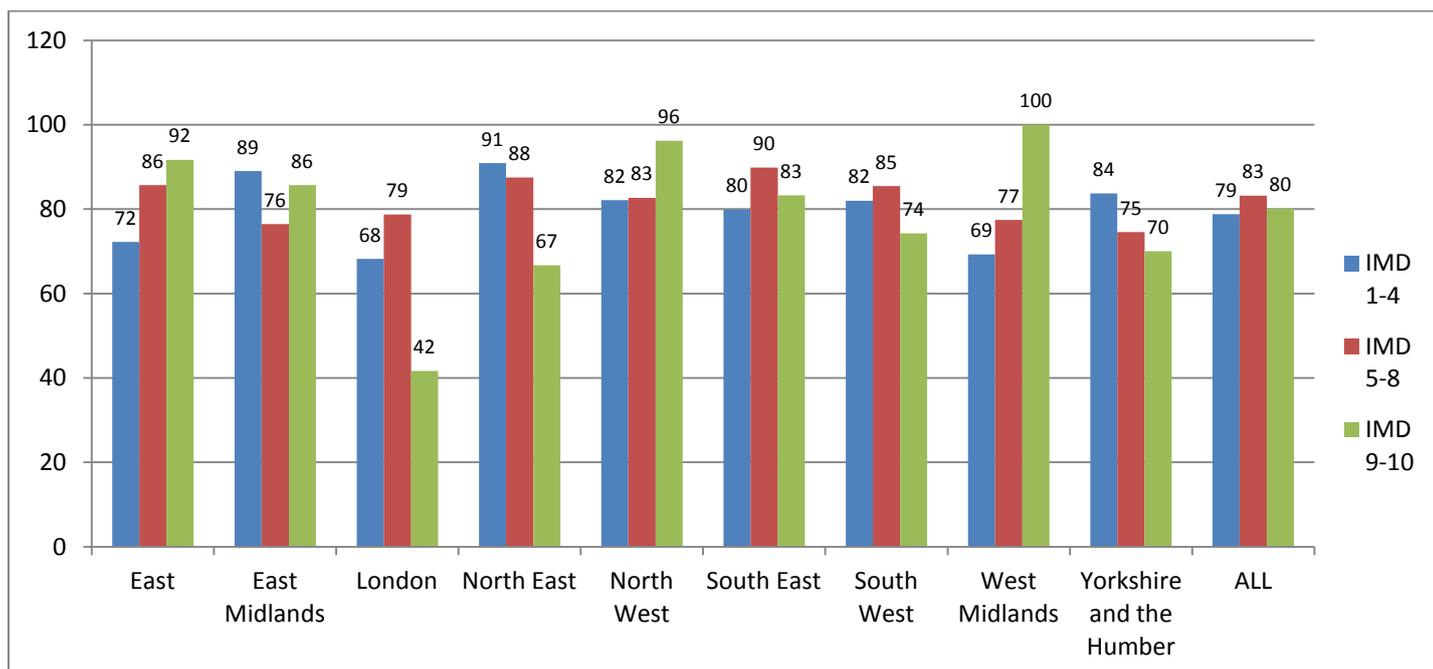
Having explored the basic data on IMD differences by whole programme, partner organisations and regions, it is now useful to look at individual's biographical characteristics.

Gender

Figures 4.31(a) and (b) present data on the number of Think Big awards achieved by gender for 2011 and 2012.[28] These charts demonstrate that that the programme reaches males and females in broadly similar proportions across all IMD categories.

Age

The age profile of the programme by IMD is presented in Figures 4.32(a) and (b). While the number of participants in each IMD varies quite considerably by age, percentages show that there is relatively little difference in the proportion of each age group across the range of IMDs. It is clear, though, that 13-15 year olds are more concentrated in the IMDs 1 and 2, the most deprived poorest categories.

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[28] For most of the categories used in this section there are too few cases in 2010 to undertake the analysis – consequently, data are only presented for 2011 and 2012.

Figure 4.31(a)   **Participation rate by gender and IMD** (percentages or participants)
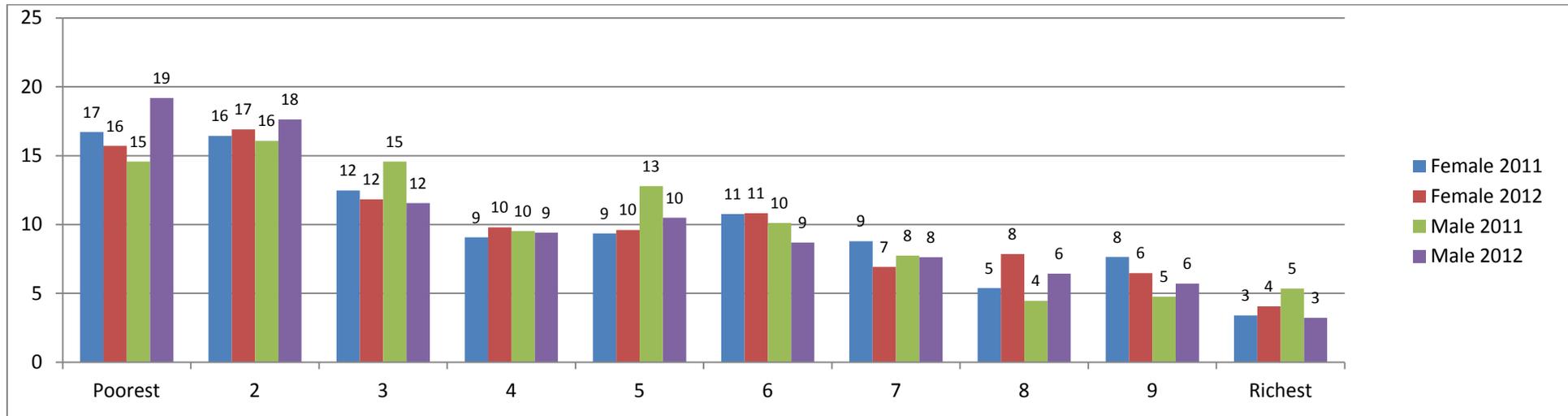
Figure 4.31(b)   **Participation rate by gender and IMD** (number of participants)
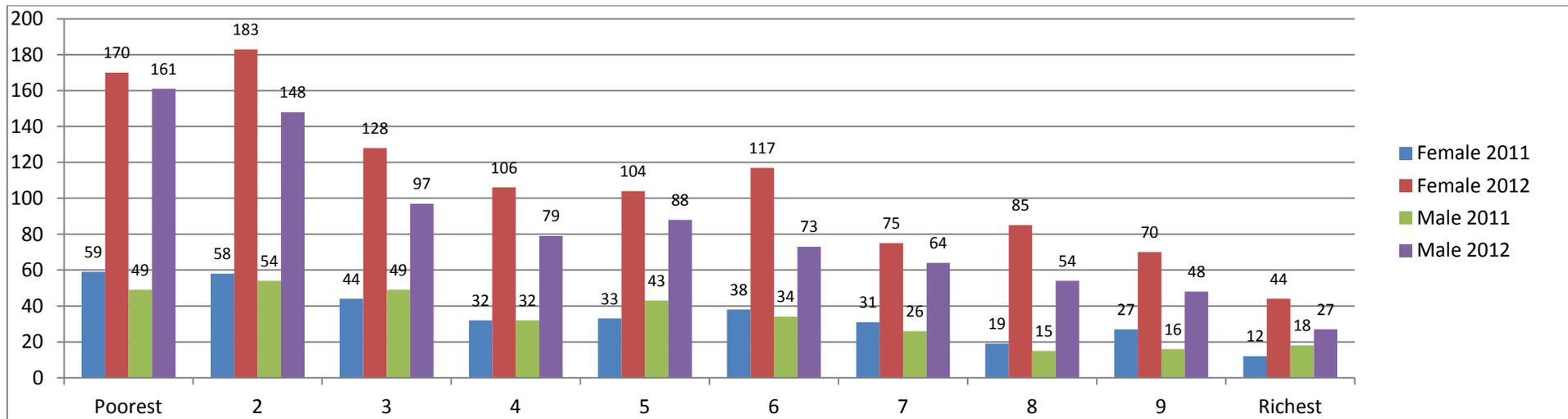
Figure 4.32(a)   **Awards by age 2011 and 2012 (number of projects)**
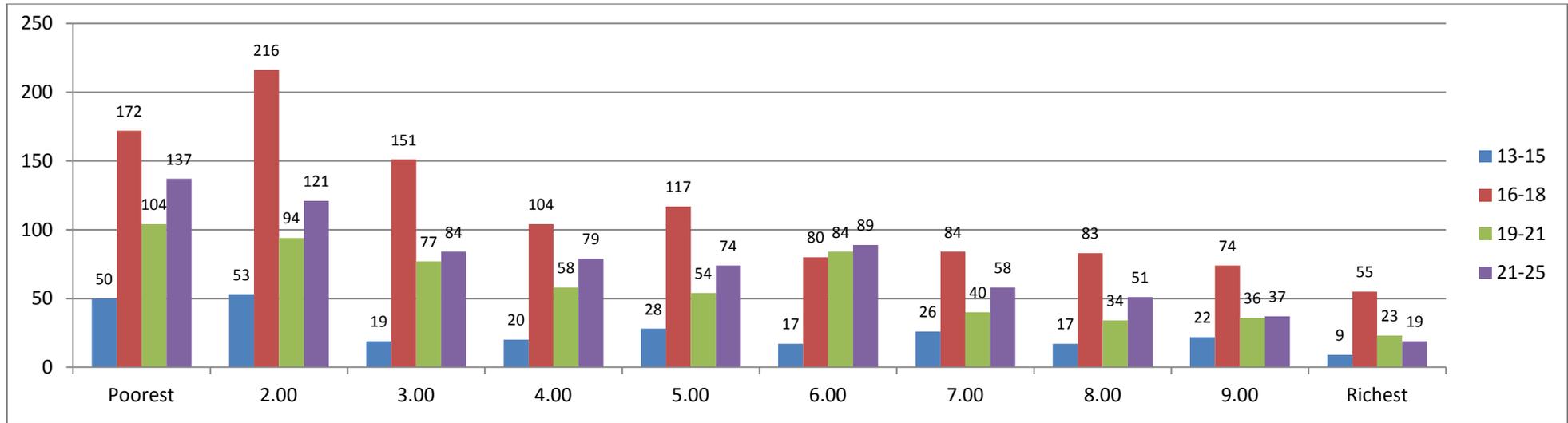
Figure 4.32(b)   **Awards by age 2011 and 2012** (percentages)
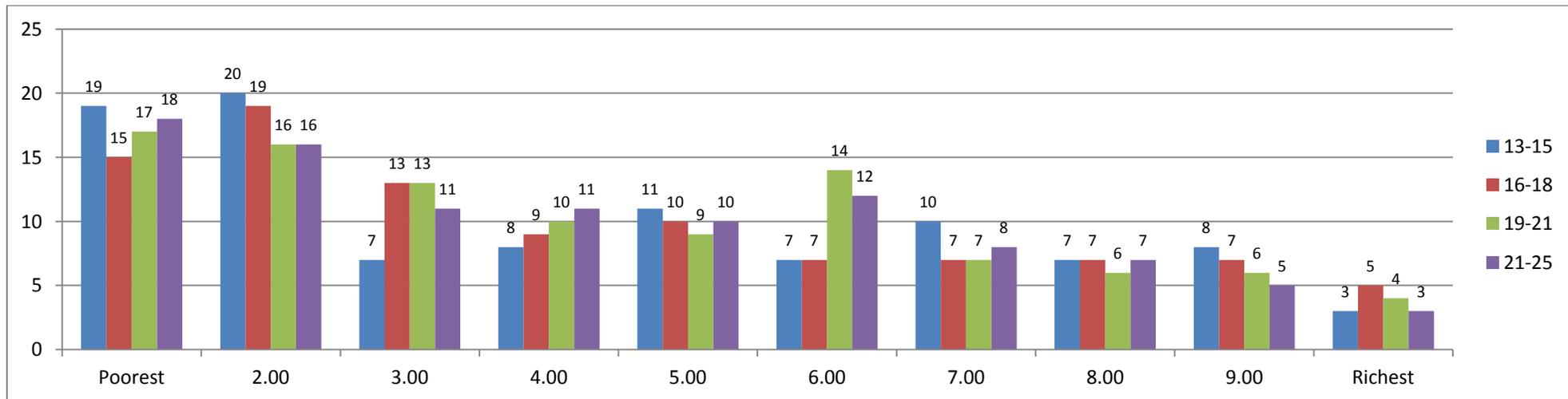
Ethnicity

It is clear from Figures 4.33(a) and (b) that young people from ethnic minorities are more concentrated in the less affluent IMDs. This is partly because the BAME population, in general terms, is less affluent than the white population. So this finding would be expected.

However, it is useful to note the very high proportion of Asian young people in the poorest IMD and the concentration of Black young people in the three lowest categories. This shows that the programme is providing opportunities to some of the least affluent young people. White participants are more evenly spread across the ten IMD categories. It is still important to note that more than 50% of white participants are in the target group of IMD 1-4.

Educational performance

There are too many categories of educational performance to match with the 10 categories of IMD to present visually. Consequently, the IMD categories have been collapsed into three groups. Less affluent or 'poorer' (IMD1-4), Middle (IMD 5-8) and most affluent or 'richer' (IMD 9-10).

Charts 4.34(a) and (b) show that over the last two years, the programme has made awards to more young people with lower levels of qualifications – suggesting that it is focusing more successfully on those with fewer opportunities. While the number of awards to young people with A Levels, diplomas, or degrees continues to grow, therefore, their proportion is smaller than those young people with fewer qualifications.

Figure 4.33(a) **Awards by ethnicity and IMD** (number of awards)
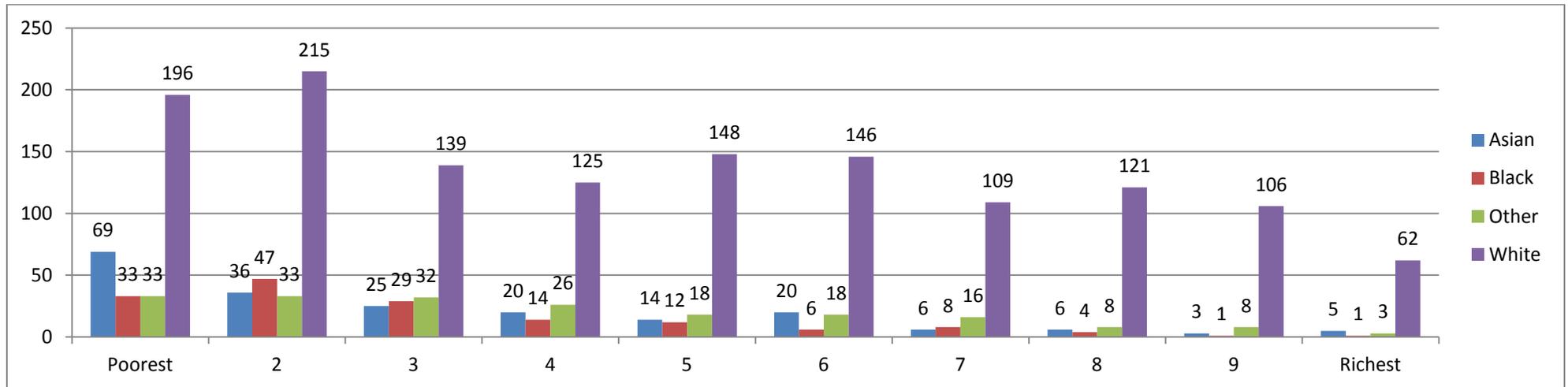
Figure 4.33(b) **Awards by ethnicity and IMD** (percentage of awards)
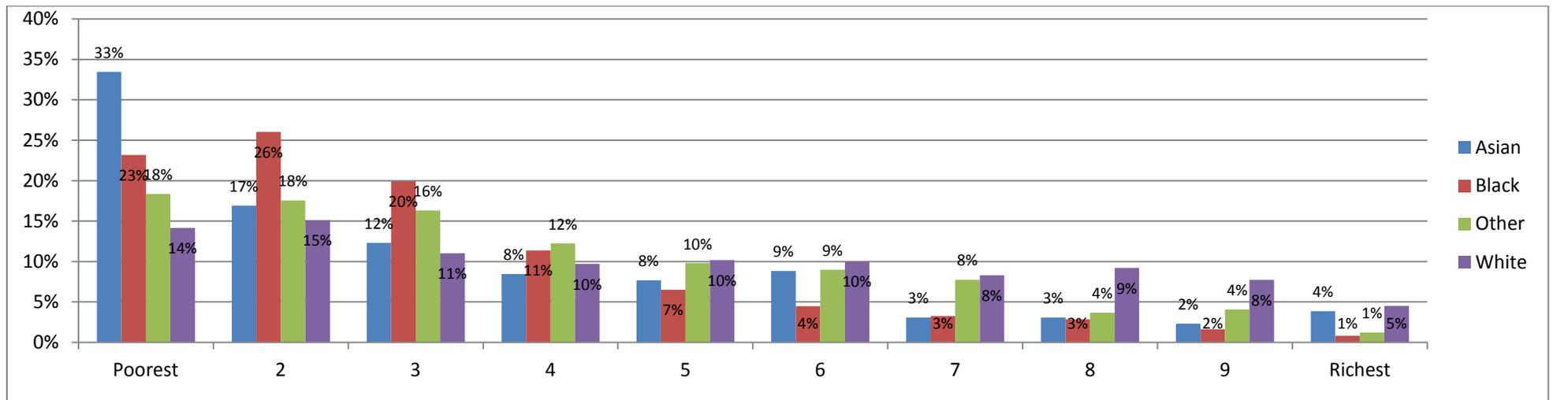
Figure 4.34(a)   **Participation rate by educational performance and IMD** (percentages)
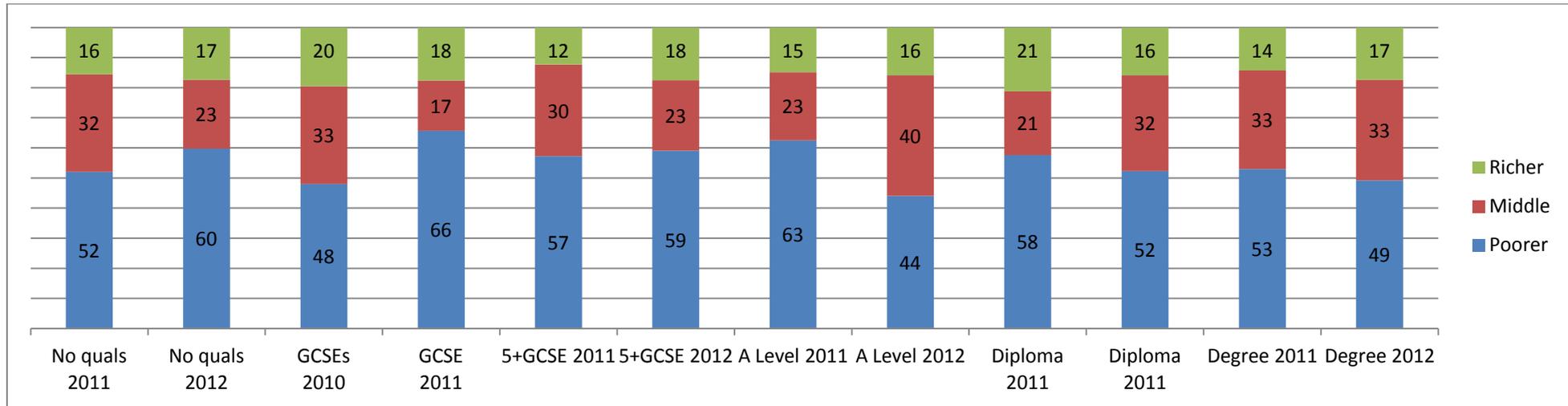
Figure 4.34(b)   **Participation rate by educational performance and IMD** (number of participants)
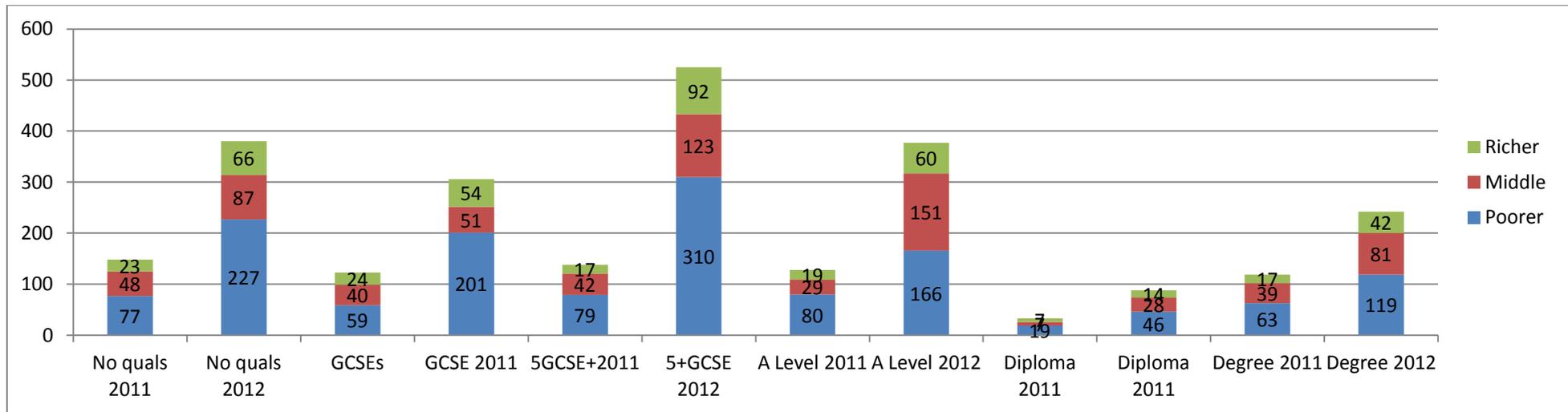
4.3 Think Bigger

Think bigger is a smaller element of the programme involving fewer projects. Consequently, it is not possible to do as much analysis as was the case for Level 1 of the programme. However, it is useful to show how the Think Bigger programme has progressed since 2011 by presenting data on achievements so far in reaching different constituencies of young people.

- As Figure 38 shows, males are more likely to apply to Think Bigger by a margin of 54% males to 46% females. While completion data is not particularly reliable yet, it seems that males are more likely to complete (60% male vs. 40% female completions).

- Think Bigger attracts applicants from across the range of ethnic groups. Figure 39 shows that it is not possible to generalise on the percentages of applicants who are awarded projects yet due to small numbers. On average, about a half of applications led to awards.

- Figure 49 shows that most applications come from London (24%), the North West (16%) and South East (14%) regions of England.

- Applicants to Think Bigger, as Figure 50 shows, tend to be well educated: 50% have achieved A Level (many of whom will be undergraduates), diploma or degree level qualifications.

- Figure 51 indicates that Think Bigger applicants tend to be older: over 60% are aged over 21 years.

Figure 4.38 Applications, awards and completions by gender – whole programme Level 2

	Number of completed applications	Number of awards	Number of completed projects	% successful award	% successful completion	% of all applications	% of all awards	% of all completions
Female	150	80	17	53.3	21.3	45.6	47.3	39.5
Male	179	89	26	49.7	29.2	54.4	52.7	60.5
Whole programme	329	169	43	51.4	25.4	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.39 Applications, awards and completions by ethnicity – whole programme Level 2

	Number of completed applications	Number of awards	Number of completed projects	% successful award	% successful completion	% of all applications	% of all awards	% of all completions
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	2	1	40.0	50.0	1.5	1.2	2.3
Asian or Asian British - Indian	9	4	2	44.4	50.0	2.7	2.4	4.7
Asian or Asian British - Other	3	1	0	33.3	0.0	0.9	0.6	0.0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	14	6	0	42.9	0.0	4.3	3.6	0.0
Black or Black British - African	32	19	4	59.4	21.1	9.7	11.2	9.3
Black or Black British – Caribbean	18	7	4	38.9	57.1	5.5	4.1	9.3
Black or Black British - Other	2	1	0	50.0	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.0
Chinese	1	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Mixed – Other	3	2	1	66.7	50.0	0.9	1.2	2.3
Mixed - White and Asian	3	1	0	33.3	0.0	0.9	0.6	0.0
Mixed - White and Black African	3	2	0	66.7	0.0	0.9	1.2	0.0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	9	7	1	77.8	14.3	2.7	4.1	2.3
Other	10	2	1	20.0	50.0	3.0	1.2	2.3
White – British	197	103	26	52.3	25.2	59.9	60.9	60.5
White – Irish	12	7	2	58.3	28.6	3.6	4.1	4.7
White – Other	8	5	1	62.5	20.0	2.4	3.0	2.3
Whole programme	329	169	43	51.4	25.4	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.40 **Applications, awards and completions by region – whole programme Level 2**

	Number of completed applications	Number of awards	Number of completed projects	% successful award	% successful completion	% of all applications	% of all awards	% of all completions
East	14	5	0	35.7	0.0	4.3	3.0	0.0
East Midlands	8	3	0	37.5	0.0	2.4	1.8	0.0
London	79	42	10	53.2	23.8	24.0	24.9	23.3
North East	11	2	1	18.2	50.0	3.3	1.2	2.3
North West	54	24	7	44.4	29.2	16.4	14.2	16.3
South East	47	24	9	51.1	37.5	14.3	14.2	20.9
South West	16	9	1	56.3	11.1	4.9	5.3	2.3
West Midlands	22	13	4	59.1	30.8	6.7	7.7	9.3
Yorkshire and the Humber	23	12	2	52.2	16.7	7.0	7.1	4.7
Northern Ireland	23	15	4	65.2	26.7	7.0	8.9	9.3
Scotland	15	11	2	73.3	18.2	4.6	6.5	4.7
Wales	17	9	3	52.9	33.3	5.2	5.3	7.0
Whole programme	329	169	43	51.4	25.4	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.41 **Applications, awards and completions by education – whole programme Level 2**

	Number of completed applications	Number of awards	Number of completed projects	% successful award	% successful completion	% of all applications	% of all awards	% of all completions
None	36	15	2	41.7	13.3	11.0	8.9	4.7
GCSE NVQ1	39	20	7	51.3	35.0	11.9	11.9	16.3
5GCSE NVQ2	59	20	5	33.9	25.0	18.0	11.9	11.6
A Level NVQ3	80	44	8	55.0	18.2	24.5	26.2	18.6
Diploma NVQ4/5	26	12	2	46.2	16.7	8.0	7.1	4.7
Degree	87	57	19	65.5	33.3	26.6	33.9	44.2
Whole programme	327	168	43	51.4	25.6	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 4.42 **Age Distribution of Participants at Level 2**

	Number of completed applications	Number of awards	Number of completed projects	% successful award	% successful completion	% of all applications	% of all awards	% of all completions
14	3	2	0	66.7	0.0	0.9	1.2	0.0
15	6	2	0	33.3	0.0	1.8	1.2	0.0
16	20	7	1	35.0	14.3	6.1	4.1	2.3
17	18	9	2	50.0	22.2	5.5	5.3	4.7
18	24	8	1	33.3	12.5	7.3	4.7	2.3
19	24	9	1	37.5	11.1	7.3	5.3	2.3
20	26	12	3	46.2	25.0	7.9	7.1	7.0
21	24	12	3	50.0	25.0	7.3	7.1	7.0
22	29	13	3	44.8	23.1	8.8	7.7	7.0
23	31	20	3	64.5	15.0	9.4	11.8	7.0
24	46	29	7	63.0	24.1	14.0	17.2	16.3
25	30	15	5	50.0	33.3	9.1	8.9	11.6
26	33	18	8	54.5	44.4	10.0	10.7	18.6
27	15	13	6	86.7	46.2	4.6	7.7	14.0
Whole programme	329	169	43	51.4	25.4	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.4 Summary of findings

The Think Big programme has grown significantly since its establishment in March 2010.

- ■ The number Think Big applications to the programme has increased from 1,037 in 2010 to 3,389 in 2012.

- ■ There has been a significant increase in youth partner supported Think Big applications: from 668 in 2011 to 1,588 in 2012. The number of awards has grown from 338 in 2010 to 2,228

- ■ Think Bigger applications have doubled since 2011, rising from 120 to 211. Awards have risen from 70 in 2011 to 170 in 2012.

Think Big is an inclusive programme.

- ■ The programme attracts males and females in broadly similar numbers and has done so consistently from 2010 – 2012.

- ■ The programme attracts applicants from across the 13-25 age range. Younger applicants (age 13-15) are less numerous and are the least successful in winning awards. The 16-19 year old cohort is the most successful, but 20-25 year olds are not far behind.

- ■ Think Big has proven itself to be an inclusive programme by ethnicity from the outset. Higher than population average participation is achieved by all black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups apart from Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi participants.

- ■ Think Big participation by nation is, in some cases, inequitable. The level of participation in Scotland is comparably low – only about a third as many participants are involved in Scotland as would be expected. By contrast, participation in Northern Ireland is about 50% higher than expected.

- ■ In the English regions, participation is considerably higher than population averages in London, and to a lesser extent in the South East, North West and North East of England. Some areas are significantly under represented: particularly Eastern England, the East Midlands, West Midlands, and Yorkshire & the Humber.

- ■ The proportion of young people with no qualifications, or fewer than 5 GCSEs has remained relatively stable throughout the programme, at about 35-40%.

- ■ About 35% of participants have A levels (many of whom will be at university), diplomas or degrees. The proportion of graduates in the programme appears to be falling slightly.

- ■ The number of applicants to Think Big who record a disability is small – numbering 25 in 2010, 110 in 2011 and 168 in 2012. The award success rate for young people who state they have a disability is broadly similar to other applicants.

The Think Big programme aims to target at least 50% of participants from less advantaged backgrounds. Using the four least affluent deciles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation as the benchmark of "less advantaged" young people, the programme is shown to be successful in exceeding its objective.

- ■ 22% of awards are made to young people from the most disadvantaged areas.

- 62% of awards are made to young people from the four least advantaged deciles in the Index of Multiple Deprivation

- Success rates in winning awards is broadly similar across the range of socio-economic groups.

- Young people from ethnic minorities are more concentrated in the less affluent IMDs. There is very high proportion of Asian young people in the poorest IMD and the concentration of Black young people in the three lowest categories. This shows that the programme is providing opportunities to some of the least affluent young people.

It may be expected that the growing involvement of youth partner organisations would lead to more young people from the most deprived communities engaging with the programme.

- There is some evidence of improvement in youth partner sponsored applications in the lowest category of deprivation compared with 2011 which is promising (up from 11% to 16%).

- However, more open applications come from the lowest category in Index of Multiple Deprivation (20% in 2012, compared with 16% from youth partners).

- At the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, it is evident that youth partners are also very active: 26% of awards from youth partners come from IMD 7-10. These are the most affluent socio-economic categories.

Some youth partners are extremely successful at targeting the most deprived young people. However, there may be an argument for working more closely with other youth partners to focus their attention on less affluent young people.

Think Bigger is a smaller element of the programme involving fewer projects. This part of the programme is not yet as inclusive as the main Think Big programme in every respect.

- Males are more likely to apply to Think Bigger by a margin of 54% males to 46% females

- Think Bigger attracts applicants from across the range of ethnic groups.

- Applications to Think Bigger are concentrated in specific English regions: London (24%), the North West (16%) and South East (14%).

- Applicants to Think Bigger tend to be well educated: 50% have achieved A Level (many of whom will be undergraduates), diploma or degree level qualifications.

- Think Bigger applicants tend to be older: over 60% are aged over 21 years, although this may in part reflect the progressive nature of the programme for Level 1 graduates entering Level 2 and also the enhanced level of commitment required to deliver Think Bigger projects.

Chapter five

Programme impact

The purpose of this chapter is to report upon quantitative analysis of programme impact. It is useful, at this point, to restate what Think Big aims to achieve:

■ Think Big can help to make young people feel more hopeful and confident (which may help them tackle problems/opportunities in a positive way).

■ Think Big can help young people to become more resilient (so that they have the emotional capabilities to respond to challenging situations or circumstances and make good choices).

■ Think Big can help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people (by showing that they can make a positive difference to community).

■ Think Big can help young people in the programme develop employability skills which may help them get a job or inspire them to complete or start education and training.[29]

■ Think Big can help young people to recognise that they have enterprising attitudes and capabilities, which may encourage them to join Think Bigger (see Section 6) or a bespoke enterprise development programme.

■ Think Big can help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people's potential.

Before presenting the analysis, it is also useful to state the limits of what Think Big can be expected to achieve. These limits are summarised below.

■ Think Big offers opportunities for young people to have new positive experiences and to enhance existing skills or develop new skills – but it is not an alternative to structured education.

■ Think Big is designed to improve the skills and employability of participants and also positively influence the attitudes of employers towards young people. However, Think Big is not an entry to employment programme, and as such, the programme's goals are more focused on building entrepreneurial and leadership capabilities to enable young people to effect positive social change.

The chapter is divided into a number of sections. The first section discusses the underlying principles behind social impact analysis. The second section explores, in some detail, the impact of the programme on young people's perceptions of change having completed the programme. Following this, a summary analysis is presented using the Young Foundation

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[29] Increasing employability does not increase employment – so claims cannot be made that the number of employed young people will increase as a consequence of Think Big, although young people who enter the programme may have a better chance of becoming employed.

'Clusters of Competency' model. The fourth section presents detailed analysis of project impact using a range of biographical characteristics including relative affluence/deprivation, gender, age, ethnicity, and educational achievement.

The final section presents the 'return on investment' analysis where programme impact is gauged against monetised indicators.

5.1 Scope of the analysis

As a preface to this analysis, it is important to state that this evaluation is based on a wide range of quantitative data. These data can be divided into four broad categories:

■ *Data on programme volumes* – including the numbers of: projects started, young people trained and supported, project leaders, active participants and benefitting participants. Data are also available on routes into the programme by open application and supported by partner organisations (including the extent to which they reach young people from less advantaged communities).[30]

■ *Biographical information on young people in the programme* – including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, employment and education status, educational achievement, and socio economic status as indicated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

■ *Attitudinal data on young people in the programme* – data are collected on: pro-sociality; expectations and experiences of the programme; perceptions of person skills and attributes; and, confidence about the future.

■ *Data on the involvement of employee volunteers*, including information on the impact of the programme on their changed attitudes towards young people.

From analysis of these data, supplemented by qualitative data to enrich the analysis, it is possible to make statements on impact in the following areas:

■ *Social capital*: at the societal level this is the extent to which social ties are strengthened; at the individual level it is the extent to which individuals build networks and knowledge that increases their personal social capital – thereby opening doors of opportunity.

■ *Economic contribution*: we can make assumptions and estimates about the amount of time people invest in projects to give an equivalent financial indication of the 'voluntary' contribution to society. .

■ *Human capital*: this is about young people's changed perceptions about their skills and attributes of individuals and gives an indication about potential in terms of employability or social investment.

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[30] From 2012, evidence will also be gathered on the extent to which partner organisations 'add value' to the programme though additional activities and support.

5.2 Assessing the impact on young people

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and behaviours is discussed in this section. As discussed in the first annual report of Think Big, published in 2011,[31] assessing the impact of a programme on issues such as confidence, pro-sociality and employability is a complex process. This is because self-reportage of attitudes on such issues reflect the feelings of individuals at a particular point in time where their notions of capability may not yet have been fully challenged.

For example, young people may state at the start of the programme that they care a great deal about their community, but might not have actually done anything practical in its support. Consequently, after involvement in Think Big, their feelings about community might not have been shown to change all that much – but in reality – their attitudes could have been fundamentally transformed. To overcome this problem, analysis of quantitative data must be informed by analysis of qualitative data undertaken in 2011 which demonstrated the degree of transformation.

This section of the analysis presents, firstly, basic data on the self assessment of personal skills and attributes, and expectations about the impact of Think Big before young people started their projects. Secondly, programme impact is summarised by using the Young Foundation 'Clusters of Competency' model.

Impact on skills and confidence

Figure 5.1 shows the percentages of young people who 'strongly agree' or 'agree/strongly agree' that they have particular skills or feelings of confidence at the start and end of the programme. This figure uses all data from all young people who completed the questionnaire at the start of the programme (n=2,750) and those who filled in a questionnaire at its end (N=627).

These questions are used to explore a number of factors which contribute to personal resilience and confidence together with specific self assessments of skills and competence.

Four variables tell us a lot about young people's resilience, these are: communication, taking responsibility for a task, sticking to a task until it is finished and making decisions. In the case of *communication* – the factor refers to young people's confidence about letting other people know about what their successes have been – this is as much an indicator of confidence and resilience, therefore, as it is about a practical skill. The other three factors also enable us to develop an understanding of levels of capability and resilience. The variables *taking responsibility for a task, decision making* and *sticking at a task until it is finished* show that they are confident enough to define their objectives and that they have the resilience to see them through.

The ability to participate in *team work* is a useful indicator of several skills and attributes. In an ideal world, this issue would have been explored further through many other questions – but given the limited space available to interrogate young people on their experiences and beliefs it is used as a 'catch all' factor to indicate issues such as *sociality* (but not necessarily pro-sociality) which in turn reflects the extent of their personal flexibility, ability to compromise and willingness to defer their own interests to those of the group. Further

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[31] Chapman, T. et al. (2011) *Stepping Stones: an evaluation of Think Big*, Middlesbrough: Teesside University.

questions examine team work from a different angle – *'I am good at motivating people'* – here the focus is more closely related to *leadership* within teams.

The remaining variables are indicators, primarily, of confidence and locus of control (a key determinant of resilience) and are concerned with *time management* (the ability to get organised)*, independence* (the confidence to do things for themselves) and *self determination* (the avoidance of *boredom*).

The data presented in Figure 5.1 indicate that young people have benefitted substantially from involvement in Think Big in terms of development of skills and confidence: especially so amongst those who record strong agreement with particular factors in their self evaluation scores. In particular, there is good evidence to suggest substantive increases in levels of confidence in *communication, decision making, taking responsibility* for tasks and personal *motivation.*

Expectations and perceptions of impact on confidence and pro-sociality

The second set of questions we asked young people were framed differently at the start and end of the project. At the start they were asked to *anticipate* what they felt the project would achieve for them. At the end we asked them what their level of satisfaction with their actual experiences of achievement. The results are shown in Figure 5.2.

As young people do not fully know at the start what to expect, the comparison is not a particularly useful one – the summary statistic is the much more valuable reference point as reported below with reference to the underlying factors we were exploring when asking each of these questions.

- ■ By asking young people if the project gave them an opportunity to try things they have never tried before, we were exploring if the Think Big programme creates **opportunities for young people to explore new avenues of self development**. The programme appears to be very successful in this respect with 88.0 agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had done so.

- ■ To explore the **extent to which the programme has enhanced tangible skills** we asked 'I have learned new skills I didn't have before'.[32] Expectations of learning skills were very high at the start, at 91%. At the end of the project 86% believed that they had achieved this objective.

- ■ The purpose of the question, 'I now look at the world in a different way', is to find out whether **young people have widened their understanding and views on society** and provide a bedrock upon which to build social capital. Just over 72% of young people expected to have broadened their horizons before doing the project: 77% reported that this had been achieved.

- ■ By asking, if they 'have new interests and hobbies, we are exploring, in a very broadly-based way, **young people's resilience through their exercise of self-determined personal development.** By the end of the project nearly 75% felt that

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[32] Responses to this question have to be framed against the objectives of the programme – if no skills are being taught (which is obviously very unlikely) then a low score would be expected. In the analysis which follows, we can explore the different skills and competences in quite a lot of detail because these provide important indicators of programme successes. This factor merely reports a generalised evaluative judgement.

they had developed new interests and widened the scope for future personal development.

- The question which explores the impact of the programme in **the development of confidence and resilience** is: 'I now feel more confident about my future'.[33] Almost 80% feel that the project did help them feel more confident about their future.

- When we asked 'I have met people from different backgrounds from mine' this is used as an indicator of the impact of the programme in **widening young people's social horizons and making a contribution to community cohesion by challenging stereotypes**. Nearly 87% of young people agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

- When we ask 'I now care more about my community' this is used as an **indicator of pro-sociality**. The responses are very positive in this respect, with 89% of young people feeling more strongly about their communities.

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[33] Clearly there are many other things going on outside of the programme which affect confidence about the future – that is recognised by another question we asked – 'I am quite worried about my future'. Worrying relates more to factors which are *out of young people's locus of control*. The question about confidence is more about issues which are *within their locus of control*.

Figure 5.1 **Self assessment of confidence in core areas of competence and confidence**

	% participants strongly agree at start (N= ~2,750)	% participants strongly agree at end (N= ~677)	% difference	% participants agree or strongly agree at start (N= ~2,750)	% participants agree or strongly agree at end (N= ~677)	% difference
Good at communicating with people	56.1	64.7	**_115.3_**	87.3	90.0	_103.1_
Good at team-work	48.3	52.1	_107.9_	81.8	82.5	_100.9_
Good at taking responsibility for a task	54.5	61.9	**_113.6_**	88.5	88.2	_99.7_
Good at motivating people	36.5	41.7	**_114.2_**	69.5	73.0	_105.0_
Good at decision-making	39.7	46.6	**_117.4_**	81.3	85.6	_105.3_
Don't get bored pretty easily	27.6	31.0	_112.3_	58.2	60.3	_103.6_
Good at organising my time	37.2	41.6	_111.8_	76.2	79.2	_103.9_
Good at working independently	40.7	44.1	_108.4_	74.8	73.3	_98.0_
Good at sticking at a task until finished	54.1	60.5	_111.8_	85.0	86.3	_101.5_
Quite worried about my future	11.9	16.1	**_135.3_**	29.8	37.0	_103.1_

Figure 5.2   **Self assessment of expectations and experiences of projects on confidence and pro-sociality**

	% participants strongly agree at start (N= ~2,750)	% participants strongly agree at end (N= ~677)	% difference	% participants agree or strongly agree at start (N=~2,750	% participants agree or strongly agree at end (N=~677)	% difference
Will try/have tried things I would never have tried	58.2	58.1	99.8	86.9	87.7	100.9
Will learn/have learned skills didn't know I had	57.9	54.8	94.6	88.5	86.2	97.4
Will help/has helped me look at world different way	37.8	39.9	105.6	73.6	76.7	104.2
Will/has resulted in new interests and hobbies	40.7	41.9	102.9	74.7	74.4	99.6
Will feel/do feel more confident about my future	48.7	46.0	94.5	80.9	79.6	98.4
Will meet/have met people from different backgrounds	59.3	60.4	101.9	86.0	86.6	100.7
Will care/do care more about my community	56.6	61.2	108.1	87.7	89.1	101.6

5.3 Clusters of capabilities

There are several approaches to the evaluation of young people's capabilities, resilience and pro-sociality. A substantive literature review has been undertaken by Young Foundation (see Figure 5.3) and a set of clusters of capabilities have been defined. The Think Big project evaluation questionnaire achieves full coverage of all seven developmental clusters – whilst also adding pro-sociality as an eighth dimension.

Figure 5.3   **Clusters of capabilities from Young Foundation**

Young Foundation evidence base on 7 clusters of capabilities

Communication – Ellis and Whittington have identified two different research strands on 'socially skilled interaction' – developmental, where the concern is with the general development of social skills in children; and remedial, where the focus of attention is on the factors causing a failure to develop an adequate repertoire of social skills.

Confidence and agency – Carol Dweck and Leon Feinstein have shown that enabling young people to recognise that they can make a difference to their own lives, and that effort has a purpose, is important to key outcomes such as career success.

Planning and problem solving – Duckworth and Seligman have highlighted the importance of self-discipline as a vital factor in building academic achievement, significantly better than IQ.

Relationships and leadership – Pamela Qualter has found a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success.

Creativity – research by Ken Robinson, and analysis of Creative Partnerships work in schools among areas of high deprivation, has shown a strong ability to reduce truancy and improve exam results through taking an approach that encourages creativity and enterprise.

Resilience and determination – key studies show important effects from discipline, patience and motivation, including work by James Heckman on the effect of early psychological wellbeing; and analysis by Peter Clough and Keith Earle on the role of 'mental toughness'.

Managing feelings – analysis by Leon Feinstein has shown that conduct disorder at age 10 predicts male adult unemployment particularly well, while there is also substantial evidence on the importance of emotional intelligence in future life chances and success.

Figure 5.4 maps Think Big programme data against these criteria to help identify key programme achievements. In the diagram two ticks are placed in each domain of competency where the data have a more direct bearing, and one tick where the data have a less direct bearing on each factor.

■ *Communication*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 84%. On key indicators, (indicated by two ticks in the above table beneath each domain) Think Big participants report high levels of confidence at the end of their project through: their ability to communicate (90%), to motivate people (73%) and decision making (86%). Their reported confidence in team work (83%) and wider range of social contacts (87%) also indicate an impact on communication skills.

■ *Confidence and agency*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 77%. The key indicators, in order of importance are: decision making (86%), working independently (73%), learning new skills (86%), motivating people (73%), feeling confident about the future (80%) and having new interests and hobbies (75%). Less important indicators included: trying new things, sticking to a task, looking at the world in a different way, worrying about the future and communicating effectively.

■ *Planning and problem solving*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 83%. Primary indicators from Think Big, include: taking responsibility for a task (88%), sticking to a task (86%), and decision making (85%), trying new things (88%), motivating people (73%) and using new skills (73%). Secondary indicators include communication (90%) and team work (83%).

■ *Relationships and leadership*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 83%. There are several primary indicators of building relationships and exercising leadership, which are in order of priority: taking responsibility (88%), decision making (86%), team work (83%), meeting people from different backgrounds (87%), motivating people (73%) and looking at the world in a different way (78%). Secondary indicators include sticking to a task, organising time and communicating and awareness of raised skill levels.

■ *Creativity*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 79%. Indicators include, in order of priority: trying new things (88%), being good at team work (83%), using new skills (86%), new interests and hobbies (75%), and resistance to boredom (60%). Supplementary factors include: decision making, organising time and working independently.

■ *Resilience and determination*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 80%. There are several key Think Big resilience and determination factors operating this domain. The primary indicators, in order of priority are: taking responsibility for a task (88%), getting a task finished (86%), working independently (73%), decision making (86%), trying new things (88%), organising time (79%) and resistance to boredom (60%). Secondary indicators include team work, motivating people and using new skills.

■ *Managing feelings*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 78%. Managing feelings is a complex area to examine, however, there are several possible primary indictors including: including communication (90%), taking responsibility for a task (88%), making decisions (86%), team work (83%) motivating people (73%) The ability to try new things (88%) is likely to be an indicator of managing feelings – as it suggests

movement from zones of insularity. Similarly looking at the world in a different way indicates openness to new ideas. Worrying about the future is excluded as this is more closely related to structural factors such as unemployment and economic uncertainty.

■ *Pro-sociality*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 81%. The Young Foundation categorisation does not include pro-sociality as a separate category. However, this is an important element in the evaluation of Think Big where the building of social capital and challenging social stereotypes are central objectives. Indicators of pro-sociality include; communication (90%), motivating people (73%), team work (83%), caring about the community (89%), meeting people from different backgrounds (87%) and seeing the world in a different way (77%).

Figure 5.5 presents analysis of start of project and end of project data under each of the Young Foundation domains. These data show, particularly in relation to those young people who strongly agree with programme benefits, how the programme has affected their competencies. Improvement is noted in all domains, but is strongest in relation to: *communication, relationships and leadership, resilience and determination* and *managing feelings*.

While these data show strong results for the programme's success once young people have completed projects, the differences between their perceptions of confidence and capability at the start of the project and its end are not substantial.

This may be due to 'over expectation' at the start of the project in relation to some factors and 'over estimation' of competences which have not previously been tested. It is not possible to make a judgement on these issues from headline data such as these for the whole programme. Instead, it is necessary firstly to cross-match data for individuals who completed questionnaires at the start and end of the programme. And secondly, disaggregate the data into discrete categories of biographical characteristics to see where the greatest differences and similarities lie. And following that, make more concrete judgements on programme impact by drawing also on insights gained from intensive qualitative research undertaken on Think Big Level 1 projects experiences in 2011.

Figure 5.4 **Mapping Think Big evaluation criteria against clusters of capabilities**

O₂ Think Big evaluation questions	Agree or strongly agree at start of programme	Agree or strongly agree at end of programme	% difference	Young Foundation Clusters of Capabilities							
				Communication	Confidence and agency	Planning and problem solving	Relationships and leadership	Creativity	Resilience and determination	Managing feelings	O₂ Think Big Pro-sociality questions
Good at communicating with people	87.3	90.0	2.7	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓			✓✓	✓✓
Good at team-work	83.0	82.6	-0.4	✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Good at taking responsibility for a task	90.4	88.4	-2			✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	
Good at motivating people	73.0	72.9	-0.1	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓
Good at decision-making	84.1	85.7	1.6	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Don't get bored pretty easily	58.3	60.1	1.8		✓✓			✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Good at organising my time	76.6	79.4	2.8		✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓		
Good at working independently	75.9	73.3	-2.6		✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓✓		
Good at sticking at a task until finished	86.8	86.2	-0.6		✓	✓✓	✓		✓✓		
Quite worried about my future	36.1	37.0	0.9		✓					✓	
Will try/have tried things I would never have tried	87.9	88.0	0.1		✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Will learn, have learned skills didn't know I had	91.1	86.4	-4.7	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓		
Will help/has helped me look at world different way	74.2	76.8	2.6		✓		✓✓			✓	✓✓
As a result new interests and hobbies	75.8	74.5	-1.3		✓✓			✓✓			✓
Will feel/do feel more confident about my future	83.1	79.6	-3.5		✓✓					✓	
Will meet/have met people from different backgrounds	86.8	86.7	-0.1	✓			✓✓				✓✓
Will care/do care more about my community	89.2	88.9	-0.3								✓✓
Composite scores for 'agree'/'strongly agree' at end of programme[34]				**83.7**	**76.8**	**83.0**	**83.3**	**79.1**	**80.2**	**77.6**	**80.9**

[34] Percentages for each Think Big question were entered into each competency domain. Key factors (two ticks) were weighted x2 and average response is given.

Figure 5.5   **Assessing changed attitudes using Young Foundation Clusters of Capabilities**

O₂ Think Big evaluation questions	Communication	Confidence and agency	Planning and problem solving	Relationships and leadership	Creativity	Resilience and determination	Managing feelings	O2 Pro sociality questions
Average 'agree'/'strongly agree' at start of programme	83.3	77.1	83.4	83.1	79.5	80.4	77.1	80.3
Average 'agree'/'strongly agree' at end of programme	83.7	76.8	83.0	83.3	79.1	80.2	77.6	80.9
% change	+0.4	-0.3	-0.4	+0.2	-0.4	-0.2	+0.5	+0.6
% difference from start of programme (base=100)[35]	100.5	99.6	99.5	100.2	99.5	99.8	100.6	100.7
Average 'strongly agree' at start of programme	49.5	44.3	49.9	49.7	45.7	46.8	43.9	49.7
Average 'strongly agree' at end of programme	52.7	45.8	52.1	52.2	46.9	49.3	47.3	51.4
% change	+3.2	+1.5	+2.2	2.5	+1.2	+2.5	+3.4	+1.7
% difference from start of programme (base=100)	106.5.	103.4	104.4	105.0	102.6	105.3	107.7	103.4

Table header top: **Young Foundation Clusters of Capabilities**

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[35] This figure shows difference from the baseline of 100 by dividing the final score with the initial score and multiplying by 100.

5.4 Differences in programme impact for young people sharing particular biographical characteristics

There is considerably more scope for analysis of the programme in 2012 than was the case in 2011. This is because many more questionnaires were completed at the start and end of Level 1 projects, numbering 667 by December 2012. The increased size of the dataset affords opportunities for analysis on several dimensions, including: relative affluence and deprivation, gender, age, ethnicity and educational achievement. Given that the possibilities for effective cross-tabulation are still limited by the number of cases, most of these variables have been collapsed into two categories (the exception is the Index of Multiple Deprivation variable).[36]

Before that analysis can begin, it is necessary to compare the headline results for all young people participating in the programme (who were obliged to complete the questionnaire at the start of the programme) with the sample of young people who completed their questionnaires at the start and the end of their projects (the cross-matched sample). These comparisons are presented in Figure 5.6.

It is evident from this table that the sample of young people are very similar at the end of the programme. This is to be expected of course because nearly all young people fully completed the first questionnaire. The data for programme start produces larger differences but they are generally within the range of just 0 - 2.5 percent variation.

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[36] To capture as much insight as possible into the strengths of the programme, the cross matched data include all cases from 2011 and 2012. In 2011 there were 187 cases and in 2012 there were 474. Prior to the analysis which is reproduced in this chapter, the samples in 2011 and 2012 were compared to assess whether there were significant differences in responses. However, it was found that response patterns were very similar – providing sufficient confidence to merge the data.

Figure 5.6   **Comparison of whole programme and cross matched sample of participants who completed end questionnaire**

	% of cross-matched sample at start of programme who "agree/strongly agree" (N=~667)	% of all participants at start of programme who "agree/strongly agree" (N=~2750)	% variation	% of cross-matched sample at end of programme who "agree/strongly agree" (N=~667)	% of all participants at end of programme who "agree/strongly agree" (N=~2750)	% variation
I am good at communicating with people	87.3	87.3	0.0	90.0	90.0	0.0
I am good at team-work	83.0	81.8	-1.2	82.6	82.5	-0.1
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	90.4	88.5	-1.9	88.4	88.2	-0.2
I am good at motivating people	73.0	69.5	-3.5	72.9	73.0	0.1
I am good at decision-making	84.1	81.3	-2.8	85.7	85.6	-0.1
I don't tend to get bored easily	58.3	58.2	-0.1	60.1	60.3	0.2
I am good at organising my time	76.6	76.2	-0.4	79.4	79.2	-0.2
I good at working independently	75.9	74.8	-1.1	73.3	73.3	0.0
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	86.8	85.0	-1.8	86.2	86.3	0.1
I am quite worried about my future	36.1	29.8	**_-6.3_**	37.0	37.0	0.0
The project will/has helped me to try things I would never have tried	87.9	86.9	-1.0	88.0	87.7	-0.3
I will/have learned to use skills in the project I didn't know I had	91.1	88.5	-2.6	86.4	86.2	-0.2
The project will/has helped me look at the world in a different way	74.2	73.6	-0.6	76.8	76.7	-0.1
As a result of the project I will have/have new interests and hobbies	75.8	74.7	-1.1	74.5	74.4	-0.1
I will/do feel more confident about my future since doing the project	83.1	80.9	-2.2	79.6	79.6	0.0
It will/has helped me meet people from different backgrounds	86.8	86.0	-0.8	86.7	86.6	-0.1
Doing the project will/has made me care more about my community	89.2	87.7	-1.5	88.9	89.1	0.2

Levels of affluence and relative deprivation

The Think Big programme is an open programme. However, it has set a target that a minimum of 50% of participants are from less affluent backgrounds. This category of young people is broadly defined to include all young people living in areas which are recorded as the four lowest deciles of affluence using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The broad classification of 'less affluent' is used because the programme recognises that many young people from lower income families have limited access to opportunities – even if they are above the poverty thresholds that trigger additional state support to young people and families and/or attract the attention of charities which support more deprived young people.[37]

In the analysis that follows, the sample of cross-matched data is divided into three categories (collapsed from the 10 categories of the IMD).[38] These are:

- IMD 1-4, which represents less affluent young people in the programme;

- IMD 5-8, which represents young people from middle income households; and,

- IMD 9-10 which represents the most affluent young people in the sample.

Two sets of results are presented for young people from more or less affluent backgrounds. The same approach is adopted for subsequent analysis of gender, age, ethnicity and educational performance – so it is useful now to explain how the data have been analysed to produce these results.

■ *Project start and end comparisons*

For this analysis, data are cross-tabulated so that the marginal percentages for each category of response can be compared. The percentages at the start of the programme are marked in blue and those for the end of the programme are marked in green). The percentage change is calculated by subtracting the initial score from the final score. In the figures that follow, data are only presented for those who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' to reduce the size of tables.

I am pretty good at communicating with people (start of project)	I am pretty good at communicating with people (end of project)					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Start %
Strongly agree	316	47	7	2	2	56.7
Agree	89	92	17	2	2	30.6
Neutral	18	22	32	1	0	11.0
Disagree	3	3	0	0	0	0.9
Strongly disagree	3	1	1	0	0	0.8
End %	65.0	25.0	8.6	0.8	0.6	N=660

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[37] See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion and justification of this approach.

[38] It is technically possible to undertake analysis with all of the IMD deciles and this could be done at a later stage in the programme when enough data are available. Analysis of this kind would be useful, for example, to compare the 'most deprived' with other categories. At present, however, with a sample of just 667, the cell sizes in cross-tabulated data would be too small for reliable analysis.

■ *Indicators of continuity and change in attitudes*

The second indicator calculates the number of young people who were 'always positive' in their responses to a particular question. This is the sum of all young people who strongly agreed/agreed at the start and at the end of the project (shown in yellow on the above chart) divided by the total number of young people answering the question and multiplied by 100: 544 / 660 x 100 = **82.4%** were always positive in their attitudes.

I am pretty good at communicating with people (start of project)	I am pretty good at communicating with people (end of project)					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Start %
Strongly agree	316	47	7	2	2	56.7
Agree	89	92	17	2	2	30.6
Neutral	18	22	32	1	0	11.0
Disagree	3	3	0	0	0	0.9
Strongly disagree	3	1	1	0	0	0.8
End %	65.0	25.0	8.6	0.8	0.6	N=660

The third indicator is the percentage of young people who became more positive at the end of the programme. This involved the following process. Firstly, the cases on the diagonal were removed from the analysis (i.e. young people who agreed or strongly agreed at the start of the programme or did not change their opinions from start to end (shown in yellow in the above figure = 487). Then, all the cases where positive changes were recorded were added together (shown in green = 140) and all the cases of young people who became less positive (shown in blue = 33). The number who had become more positive was divided by the sum of the areas shown in green and blue 140 / 177 x 100 = 80.9% had a more positive attitude of those who changed their view.

Figure 5.7 shows young people's assessments of their skills and confidence at the start and end of the programme in relation to 10 factors ranging from *communication skills* to their *worries about the future*. The block of data to the far right of the figure shows the percentage of young people who assess their skills and confidence in a positive way (they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with each of the statements). Against some of the factors under consideration, it is clear that at the start of the programme, socio-economic background does not appear to have much impact (i.e. less than 5% variation in scores). This is particularly clear in terms of managing their time. Against other factors there are quite clear variations.

■ Young people from the most affluent backgrounds rate their skills at the start of the project rather more highly than the less affluent young people. For example, for communication skills, the percentages are (93% for the most affluent against 85% for the least). This general pattern is also evident in relation to *team work, taking responsibility for a task, motivating people, resistance to boredom, working independently,* and *sticking to a task.*

■ When change is considered from start to end of the programme, there is some evidence to suggest that the gap between the most affluent and least affluent narrows to some extent – particularly in relation to *motivating people, resistance to boredom, working independently* and *sticking to a task until it is completed.*

■ More affluent young people become much more worried about their future (rising to 42% compared with 34% of the least affluent young people. They also seem to become more confident about decision making and organising their time compared with the least affluent.

The block of data on the left hand side of the figure refers to those young people who 'strongly agree' that they have the skills and confidence in relation to each of the statements listed. Emphasis of strong agreement produces some interesting differences which need to be noted.

■ Young people from the less affluent areas tend to have rather more confidence in their abilities than the most affluent young people at the start of the programme. For example 60% strongly agree they are good communicators compared with just 44% of the most affluent. This pattern is repeated in relation to several factors, but especially *decision making*.

■ By the end of the project, some very interesting differences emerge. Young people from the least affluent areas become very much more confident in their communication skills – scoring some 25% higher than young people from the most affluent areas. They also become very much more confident about *decision making* and *sticking to a task*.

■ In some areas, the more affluent young people seem to have become much more confident, particularly in relation to team work and taking a responsibility for a task.

Interpretation of these findings is not straight forward. We are dealing here with self-assessments of skills and competences – not with more 'objective' assessments undertaken by informed observers. We certainly cannot be sure that percentages are comparable because young people, regardless of levels of affluence, may start from different positions on self understanding, and as such, their capabilities to accurately rate their competencies in specific areas may be limited.

As shown in Chapter 1, more affluent young people are more likely to have done well at school and be at university for example – so they are in a better position, arguably, to make a judgement on their academic capability in particular, but probably also in relation to other aspects of skill and confidence. For young people who have been stretched to a lesser degree due to fewer opportunities, it may be easier to offer themselves generous interpretations of their skills.

The statistic that is most likely to confirm this assertion is the extent to which young people strongly agree that they are worried about their future. The most affluent young people are much more worried. This may be because more is expected of them by their teachers, friends and families and they expect more from themselves as a consequence. In short, we cannot be sure that we are comparing like with like in attitudinal terms because young people have different social and economic biographies which affects their assessments of self-confidence and hopes for the future.

Figure 5.7 **Assessment of skills and confidence by area of relative affluence or deprivation**

		Strongly agree			Agree or strongly agree		
		IMD1-4	IMD5-8	IMD9-10	IMD1-4	IMD5-8	IMD9-10
I am good at communicating with people	Start of project	59.0	52.6	43.6	84.9	89.0	92.7
	End of project	68.2	63.6	43.6	87.6	91.3	94.5
	% change	9.2	11.0	0.0	2.7	2.3	1.8
I am good at team-work	Start of project	48.0	45.1	47.3	79.4	82.7	92.8
	End of project	49.5	52.6	58.2	76.9	87.9	92.7
	% change	1.5	7.5	10.9	-2.5	5.2	-0.1
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	Start of project	57.2	55.5	50.9	87.4	93.1	96.4
	End of project	61.2	62.4	58.2	84.6	94.8	92.7
	% change	4.0	6.9	7.3	-2.8	1.7	-3.7
I am good at motivating people	Start of project	42.2	34.7	38.2	69.9	74.0	80.0
	End of project	43.7	38.2	34.5	70.2	76.4	74.5
	% change	1.5	3.5	-3.7	0.3	2.4	-5.5
I am good at decision-making	Start of project	44.0	35.5	30.9	84.9	83.8	78.2
	End of project	49.8	47.7	32.7	83.3	91.3	81.8
	% change	5.8	12.2	1.8	-1.6	7.5	3.6
I don't tend to get bored easily	Start of project	28.0	22.5	25.5	56.0	54.9	61.9
	End of project	30.2	26.6	32.7	58.2	61.3	58.2
	% change	2.2	4.1	7.2	2.2	6.4	-3.7
I am good at organising my time	Start of project	40.6	40.5	34.5	75.7	73.4	76.3
	End of project	41.5	46.2	30.9	76.6	82.6	83.6
	% change	0.9	5.7	-3.6	0.9	9.2	7.3
I good at working independently	Start of project	43.8	33.7	45.5	72.2	73.8	91.0
	End of project	42.9	43.6	43.6	69.8	74.4	80.0
	% change	-0.9	9.9	-1.9	-2.4	0.6	-11.0
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	Start of project	56.3	52.6	63.6	84.2	86.7	90.9
	End of project	60.1	65.3	49.1	82.7	92.5	81.8
	% change	3.8	12.7	-14.5	-1.5	5.8	-9.1
I am quite worried about my future	Start of project	10.5	17.4	14.5	33.3	48.8	23.6
	End of project	13.9	18.6	27.3	34.3	39.5	41.8
	% change	3.4	1.2	12.8	1.0	-9.3	18.2

Figure 5.8 **Expectations and evaluation of project impact by area of relative affluence or deprivation**

		Strongly agree only			Agree and strongly agree		
		IMD1-4	IMD5-8	IMD9-10	IMD1-4	IMD5-8	IMD9-10
The project has helped me to try things I would never have tried	Start of project	57.7	57.2	58.2	86.2	89.0	90.9
	End of project	59.2	57.8	49.1	86.2	91.9	87.3
	% change	1.5	0.6	-9.1	0.0	2.9	-3.6
I've learned to use skills in the project I didn't know I had	Start of project	59.1	59.0	60.0	88.3	94.3	100.0
	End of project	52.0	57.2	49.1	83.4	89.6	90.9
	% change	-7.1	-1.8	-10.9	-4.9	-4.7	-9.1
The project has helped me look at the world in a different way	Start of project	39.3	34.3	34.5	72.1	76.2	69.0
	End of project	40.5	34.9	41.8	74.9	79.7	81.8
	% change	1.2	0.6	7.3	2.8	3.5	12.8
As a result of the project I have some new interests and hobbies	Start of project	45.7	38.2	34.5	73.0	77.5	78.1
	End of project	44.5	40.5	30.9	72.4	79.2	63.6
	% change	-1.2	2.3	-3.6	-0.6	1.7	-14.5
I feel more confident about my future since doing the project	Start of project	50.9	49.7	45.5	81.0	85.5	80.0
	End of project	48.8	45.1	36.4	78.2	83.8	76.4
	% change	-2.1	-4.6	-9.1	-2.8	-1.7	-3.6
It has helped me meet people from different backgrounds	Start of project	62.5	61.6	67.3	86.2	87.2	90.9
	End of project	62.5	55.2	60.0	85.9	86.0	89.1
	% change	0.0	-6.4	-7.3	-0.3	-1.2	-1.8
Doing the project has made me care more about my community	Start of project	59.4	58.1	52.7	85.9	90.7	96.3
	End of project	62.8	57.6	54.5	85.9	91.9	92.7
	% change	3.4	-0.5	1.8	0.0	1.2	-3.6

Figure 5.9 **Consistency and change in attitudes by area of relative affluence or deprivation**

	% less affluent always positive	% more affluent always positive	% variation	% less affluent becoming more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% becoming more affluent more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% variation
I am good at communicating with people	80.2	84.2	4.0	82.6	77.4	-5.2
I am good at team-work	68.3	78.5	10.2	61.3	79.3	18.0
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	79.4	88.2	8.8	70.7	80.0	9.3
I am good at motivating people	56.3	61.4	5.1	58.8	60.6	1.8
I am good at decision-making	76.0	74.9	-1.1	70.3	80.0	9.7
I don't tend to get bored easily	42.8	41.2	-1.6	63.0	61.7	-1.3
I am good at organising my time	66.2	64.9	-1.3	67.2	75.8	8.6
I good at working independently	58.0	63.4	5.4	60.9	61.7	0.8
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	75.9	80.3	4.4	65.3	75.7	10.4
I am quite worried about my future	21.3	26.4	5.1	56.4	46.3	-10.1

Figure 5.8 takes the analysis forward by comparing attitudes about what they feel they have achieved from their project work. In this figure, only 'strongly agree' category is included as this produces more clear findings for discussion and interpretation. It is clear from this figure that the least affluent young people in the programme report much higher levels of personal benefit in relation most of the factors:

- 59% of the less affluent young people say the project has helped them try new things compared with 49% of the most affluent.

- 44% of the less affluent say they have new interests and hobbies, compared with 31% of the most affluent.

- 49% of the less affluent feel more confident about their future compared with 36% of the most affluent.

- 63% of the less affluent say that they care more about their communities compared with 55% of the most affluent.

These findings are reassuring. They show that the target group that the Think Big programme aims to help the most, seem to perceive the greatest benefit.

It is not necessarily to dwell on the changes in opinion from start to end of the programme in relation to these factors as they do not refer to individual capabilities or confidence as such – merely perceptions of what they think their experience may be. One finding worthy of note, however, is that the most affluent young people tend to rate the actual impact of doing a Think Big project much more critically than their initial expectations.

The explanation for this is simple. They already have a strong set of skills and have higher levels of confidence before they start and as a consequence, their Think Big projects simply serve to reinforce existing skills and capabilities, rather than necessarily stretching or developing them in the same way as young people from middling or less affluent backgrounds.

But there is one important exception. The most affluent young people report that they are rather more likely than they had expected to see the world in a different way. In other words, they have been exposed to experiences that have challenged their world view through the community based projects they have designed and carried out, increasing empathy and awareness of community issues.

The above analysis refers to comparative data at the start and the end of the programme and this has proven to be a useful measure of programme impact. But the weakness of the analysis, when left on its own, is that no grasp can be gained on the extent to which many young people do not change their attitudes, or if they do, whether they become more or less positive about their experiences or self perceptions of skills and confidence.

Figure 5.9 helps to remedy this situation by presenting the same data in a different way. The first block of data on the left hand side of the table shows how many young people are consistently positive about their skills and confidence. Taking communication skills as an example, it is shown that 80% of young people from less affluent backgrounds consistently agree or strongly agree that they have good communication skills, compared with 84% of more affluent young people.

Figure 5.10 **Educational attainment relative affluence** (aged 19 or over)

	No qual-ifications	GCSEs only NVQ1	5 GCSEs at A-C / NVQ2	A Levels / NVQ3	Diplomas / NVQ 4/5	Degree or higher	N=
Less affluent (IMD 1-4)	5.1	12.4	16.9	31.2	9.3	25.0	933
Middle income (IMD 5-8)	2.9	8.3	8.6	39.2	9.5	31.5	556
Most affluent (IMD 9-10)	1.3	7.8	5.8	42.2	9.1	33.8	154
All aged 19+	4.0	10.6	13.1	34.9	9.4	28.0	1643

What this indicates is that more affluent young people are consistently confident about their skill base. But it does not mean that these percentages tell us anything about the actual communication skills young people have. Indeed, they may be over-rating their skills considerably – depending upon how 'good at communication' is defined. We can't say what benchmarks of success young people use when they make this self assessment from these data. The likelihood is, however, that the more affluent young people will be better educated, have more qualifications and will have been exposed to a wider range of opportunities to build social and human capital. Indeed, as Figure 5.10 shows, 85% of young people living in the most affluent areas have qualifications of A Level of higher compared with 65% of less affluent young people.[39]

Taking these points into account, the data in Figure 5.9 suggests that young people from more affluent areas are generally rather more consistently positive about their skills and confidence levels than their less affluent counterparts. There are some exceptions however. Affluence does not seem to affect resistance to boredom, organising their time and the ability to make decisions.

The second block of data in Figure 5.9 provide measures of the direction of change in confidence and skills for those young people who have changed their self-assessments from the start to the end of their projects and agree or strongly agree that they have become more positive. These data suggest quite strongly that the more affluent young people seem to be more likely to gain confidence than their less affluent counterparts in response to most of the categories.

More affluent young people become much more confident about teamwork than their less affluent counterparts (79% against 61%), taking responsibility (80% against 71%), decision making (80% against 70%), organising time (75% against 67%), and sticking to a task (76% against 65%). These data suggest a high degree of consolidation, and possibly improvement of self confidence amongst the more affluent participation in the programme.

In contrast, for less affluent young people, their Think Big project may be the first opportunity they have had to test their skills and capabilities outside of formal education. Any challenges encountered during their project are likely to trigger a re-evaluation of their skills and provide a more accurate benchmark of their capabilities. And this is reflected in the finding that the less affluent young people are rather more likely to report that they have become more worried about their future.

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[39] The number of young people from the less advantaged areas with higher qualifications is likely to be exaggerated as many undergraduates at university will live in areas with post codes in lower IMD areas, but actually come from more affluent families.

Gender

As shown in Chapter 4, the Think Big programme has been successful in drawing in broadly equal numbers of males and females into the programme. This sub-section explores whether or not they experience the programme in the same way. Figure 5.11 presents data in the same format as Figure 5.6 so it is not necessary to repeat discussion of the analytical methods being used.

As was shown to be the case in Figure 5.7, the composite data on young people who agree or strongly agree does not produce particularly significant differences. The exception is that females, at the end of the programme, are rather less likely to think that they are good at working independently. But it should be noted that they started out feeling more confident than males in this respect – and remained to be more confident at the end of the programme (75% females, 72% males). Similarly, females started out with very strong assessments of their communication skills (at 90% compared with 84% of males). The data show that males tend to catch up in this respect by the end of the programme.

The more discriminating findings can be found amongst young people who strongly agree with each of the factors. The key findings from this table are:

- At the start of the programme an equal number of males and females claim to be good at communicating with people (around 56-57%). While both males and females become more confident at the programme - males rate their skills in this area rather more highly (68% males against 62% females).

- Against many of the categories of skill and confidence, males and females give similar scores at the start of the programme, including: teamwork, taking responsibility, motivating people, and sticking to a task until it is finished. But males seem to assess change in themselves more positively. Only in relation to resistance to boredom is the reverse the case.

- It is worth noting that males tend to give more emphasis to particular confidence traits by the end of the programme (*communication, motivation, taking responsibility* and *decision making*). The extent to which these judgements are gendered is not known – but it does seem that even before the programme begins, males rate their confidence more highly in relation to taking responsibility, and decision making.

Figure 5.12 assess the degree of consistency and change in attitudes by gender. The first block of data at the centre of the figure shows the degree of consistency in opinion. From these data it can be concluded that:

- Females tend to be consistently positive about a particular set of skills, including: *communication* (85%), *taking responsibility for a task* (85%), *team working* (77%) and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (79%).

- Males tend to be consistently positive about a similar set of skills, including: *communication* (80%), *taking responsibility for a task* (81%) and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (79%); but give slightly more emphasis to *decision making* (78%)

- Females have, compared with males, rather more consistent levels of confidence in *communication skills, team work, motivating people,* and *working independently*.

- Females are more likely consistently to worry about their future, although this only applies to 25% of females.

When considering the extent to which males and females become more confident by the end of the programme, some interesting variations emerge:

- Amongst those females who changed their views from start to end of the programme, rather more of them are likely to report improvements in their confidence to do *team work* (73% against 64%).

- In relation to most of the other factors, males tend to report higher levels of rising confidence, and particularly in relation to *communication* (85% against 77% females), *decision making* (81% against 70% females), and to a lesser extent, *sticking to a task until it is finished* (72% against 67%).

- Of those young people who have changed their opinions, males and females are equally likely to have become more worried about their future (54%).

Once more data are collected from young people at the start and end of the programme, it would be possible to extend this analysis by integrating gender with socio-economic backgrounds (as measured by areas of affluence and deprivation). This may help to tease out more clear differences in, for example, the experiences of young men from less affluent backgrounds who were identified in Chapter 2 as being particularly vulnerable to fatalistic attitudes about the future. Unfortunately this is not possible just now due to the limitations of the data set.

Figure 5.11 **Gender differences in self assessment of skills and confidence**

		% females who strongly agree	% males who strongly agree	% females who agree or strongly agree	% males who agree or strongly agree
	Start of project	56.0	57.4	90.2	84.3
I am good at communicating with people	End of project	62.5	67.6	91.1	88.9
	% change	6.5	**10.2**	0.9	4.6
	Start of project	48.4	47.4	85.7	80.0
I am good at team-work	End of project	52.8	51.1	85.7	79.4
	% change	4.5	3.7	0.0	-0.6
	Start of project	56.7	59.1	92.2	88.6
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	End of project	59.1	64.6	89.6	87.1
	% change	2.4	5.5	-2.7	-1.5
	Start of project	39.4	39.7	74.9	71.1
I am good at motivating people	End of project	39.1	44.3	73.4	72.6
	% change	-0.3	**4.6**	-1.5	1.5
	Start of project	36.5	45.5	84.1	84.0
I am good at decision-making	End of project	42.2	51.7	84.1	87.4
	% change	5.7	6.2	0.0	3.4
	Start of project	24.1	31.1	57.1	59.4
I don't tend to get bored easily	End of project	31.5	30.2	57.7	62.8
	% change	**7.4**	-0.9	0.6	3.4
	Start of project	40.9	39.4	76.7	76.6
I am good at organising my time	End of project	42.1	41.8	79.4	79.4
	% change	1.2	2.5	2.7	2.8
	Start of project	44.0	40.6	80.4	71.2
I good at working independently	End of project	43.8	44.6	75.0	71.8
	% change	-0.3	**4.0**	-5.4	0.6
	Start of project	56.9	56.9	86.8	86.8
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	End of project	56.0	66.2	86.5	85.8
	% change	-0.9	**9.2**	-0.3	-0.9
	Start of project	13.7	12.0	40.0	32.1
I am quite worried about my future	End of project	17.9	14.8	39.7	34.3
	% change	4.2	2.8	-0.3	2.2

Figure 5.12 **Consistency and change in self assessment of skills and confidence by gender**

	% females always positive	% males always positive	% variation	% females more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% males more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% variation
I am good at communicating with people	84.8	79.9	-4.9	76.5	84.8	8.3
I am good at team-work	77.9	68.9	-9.0	73.4	63.9	-9.5
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	84.8	81.2	-3.6	70.5	75.5	5.0
I am good at motivating people	61.8	56.0	-5.8	57.4	61.8	4.4
I am good at decision-making	73.7	77.8	4.1	69.6	81.0	11.4
I don't tend to get bored easily	43.2	46.2	3.0	61.2	63.5	2.3
I am good at organising my time	66.0	67.1	1.1	69.0	70.2	1.2
I good at working independently	66.4	57.6	-8.8	59.9	63.2	3.3
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	78.7	78.8	0.1	66.7	71.6	4.9
I am quite worried about my future	25.4	19.8	-5.6	53.8	54.3	0.5

Age

Age differences may affect confidence in a range of ways. It would be expected, for example, that older young people would generally be more consistent in their attitudes over time and that they would have built more confidence in their abilities through experience. This sub section will explore these factors. But as noted above, limitations in the size of the dataset restrict the extent to which differences between discrete age groups can be explored. At this stage of the analysis, it is only possible to compare two categories of age: those aged from 13 to 18 years, and those aged from 19 to 25 years.

Figure 5.13 compares attitudes at the start and the end of the Think Big Level 1 programme. Turning first to the more generally positive feelings about their skills and confidence (those who agree or strongly agree with statements) the following findings can be reported:

■ The older cohort of young people (aged 19-25) is rather more confident at both the start and end of the programme in every respect. The margin of difference is around 10% in each case – although very much higher in relation to independent working by the end of the project (80% of over 19s compared with just 62% of under 19s).

■ The younger cohort (13-18 years) have the most confidence at the start of the programme in their ability to *take responsibility for a task* (85%) and *sticking to a task until it is finished (84%).* Although in both cases, their confidence falls a little by the end of the project – due, presumably, to having tested their confidence in these respects and possibly for the first time.

■ The younger cohort (aged 13-18 years) has the least confidence in resisting boredom (52%) and motivating people (65%). In the latter category, their confidence falls a little by the end of the programme to 62%.

■ The older cohort of young people (aged 19-25) show most confidence at the start of the programme in *taking responsibility for a task* (94%), *communicating with other people* (92%), *sticking to a task until it is finished* (88%), decision making (87%) and *team work* (86%). By the end of the project, their confidence remains broadly the same or rises slightly in each of these categories – apart from taking responsibility which falls by 2%.

The above discussion shows that in general terms, the older cohort of young people aged over 19 years report higher levels of confidence at the start of the programme and also are more likely to suggest that they have benefitted from it in building confidence.

But how do young people from these two cohorts compare if they have strong feelings of confidence in relation to each of these categories? The middle block of data in Figure 13 suggests the following answers:

■ As would be expected, the older cohort of young people aged over 19 years are consistently more confident about their skills and competence. Against every category of competence, the older cohort of young people show a significant rise in confidence, particularly in relation to *sticking to a task until it is finished* (from 60% to 65%), *decision making* (from 44% to 53%), and *communicating with other people* (65% to 74%).

■ The older cohort of young people are less confident about some factors than others: particularly *motivating other people* (48% at the project's end) and *organising time* (46%), but in both of these respects they have gained some more confidence.

■ The younger cohort of young people, aged 13-18 years, are less likely to express strong levels of confidence at the start of the project in a number of categories

including: *working independently* (33%), *motivating people* (31%), *organising time* (34%) and *decision making* (35%). However by the end of the project, their confidence has risen to some extent (by around 2%).

■ The area where this younger cohort of young people is most likely to gain more confidence by the end of the programme is in *communicating with other people* – which rises from 43% to 50%.

To what extent do attitudes remain consistent or change amongst different cohorts of young people at the start and end of projects however? Figure 5.14 presents data on these issues.

■ The older cohort of young people (aged over 19 years) are much more likely to have consistently positive attitudes about their capabilities (by between 10% and 20%). Almost 90% of the older cohort is consistently confident about their *communication* skills compared with just 71% of the younger cohort.

■ The only areas where the older cohort of young people show less consistent levels of confidence is in relation to *motivating people* (66%) and *working independently* (68%).

■ The younger cohort of young people are less consistent in their confidence in relation to *working independently* (52%) and *motivating people* (48%), but are most confident about *sticking to a task until it is finished* (73%) and *communicating with people* (71%).

Of those young people who changed their views on their confidence from start to end of the project, some interesting differences emerge. It should be noted, though, that relatively few participants from the older cohort fell into this category as they were generally consistently confident about most factors.

■ Younger and older cohorts of participants were both likely to have gained in confidence by the end of the programme with the exception of *motivating people* amongst the under 19s who report a slight loss of confidence (only 48% say their confidence improved).

■ The older cohort of young people were rather more likely to report positive changes in their levels of confidence by the end of the programme, particularly in relation to *communication skills* (87% of over 19s compared with 73% of under 19s)*; motivating people* (70% of over 19s compared with just 48% of under 19s); and, *sticking to a task until it is finished* (74% of over 19s compared with 63% of under 19s).

The differences observed in this section are not surprising. It should be expected that the older cohort of young people are more consistently confident about their competencies because they have had time to test them in different situations as they have become older. It is also evident that the older cohort seems to be more able to consolidate their confidence than the younger cohort of young people. These factors need to be borne in mind when interpreting subsequent tables, and particularly in relation to educational achievement.

Figure 5.13 Age differences in self assessment of skills and confidence

		% under 19s who strongly agree	% over 19s who strongly agree	% under 19s who agree or strongly agree	% over 19s who agree or strongly agree
I am good at communicating with people	Start of project	42.9	65.2	79.1	92.3
	End of project	50.0	74.3	81.5	95.3
	% change	7.1	9.1	2.4	3.0
I am good at team-work	Start of project	41.6	52.0	77.3	86.6
	End of project	44.3	56.7	76.1	86.6
	% change	2.7	4.7	-1.2	0.0
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	Start of project	47.1	64.7	84.7	94.1
	End of project	49.8	69.4	82.7	91.9
	% change	2.7	4.7	-2.0	-2.2
I am good at motivating people	Start of project	31.0	44.9	65.9	77.5
	End of project	31.4	48.1	62.0	80.0
	% change	0.4	3.2	-3.9	2.5
I am good at decision-making	Start of project	35.4	44.4	78.3	87.7
	End of project	37.8	52.6	81.1	88.6
	% change	2.4	8.1	2.8	1.0
I don't tend to get bored easily	Start of project	23.0	30.4	52.7	61.7
	End of project	26.6	33.6	52.0	65.4
	% change	3.5	3.2	-0.8	3.7
I am good at organising my time	Start of project	34.5	43.7	71.4	80.0
	End of project	36.1	45.7	71.8	84.2
	% change	1.6	2.0	0.4	4.2
I good at working independently	Start of project	32.9	48.3	69.8	79.7
	End of project	33.3	51.0	62.4	80.4
	% change	0.4	2.7	-7.5	0.7
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	Start of project	52.5	59.7	84.3	88.4
	End of project	53.3	65.8	80.4	89.9
	% change	0.8	6.2	-3.9	1.5
I am quite worried about my future	Start of project	17.3	10.1	40.0	33.7
	End of project	20.0	14.1	40.8	34.7
	% change	2.7	4.0	0.8	1.0

Figure 5.14 **Consistency and change in self assessment of skills and confidence by age**

	% under 19s always positive	% over 19s always positive	% variation	% under19s more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% over 19s more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% variation
I am good at communicating with people	70.9	89.6	18.7	73.1	87.4	14.3
I am good at team-work	66.3	78.2	11.9	65.9	69.7	3.8
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	76.1	87.4	11.3	70.5	75.0	4.5
I am good at motivating people	48.2	65.7	17.5	47.8	67.9	20.1
I am good at decision-making	68.1	80.5	12.4	71.7	77.1	5.4
I don't tend to get bored easily	38.3	48.6	10.3	59.7	64.0T	4.3
I am good at organising my time	57.6	72.1	14.5	65.1	72.8	7.7
I good at working independently	52.2	68.3	16.1	56.2	65.6	9.4
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	72.9	82.4	9.5	62.7	73.9	11.2
I am quite worried about my future	24.7	21.3	-3.4	54.4	53.8	-0.6

Ethnicity

Analysis by ethnicity is much more complicated than by age or gender because different ethnic groups do not necessarily share the same cultural, social and economic experiences or conditions as each other or as the indigenous or immigrant white population. Furthermore, gender and social class also impact in different ways on the attitudes and beliefs of young people from ethnic minority groups.

Bearing these caveats in mind, analysis can proceed with caution. But there are difficulties surrounding the merging of variables in the programme evaluation data which will undoubtedly mask significant differences that exist between and within ethnic minority groupings. Furthermore, because the population of young people from ethnic minorities is very much smaller than the white population (see Chapter 4) cell sizes quickly collapse as soon as distinctions between ethnic minority groups are drawn.

In an attempt to deepen understanding of the differences between broad groups before bivariate analysis proceeds, Figure 5.15 presents data on participants who 'strongly agree' with the whole range of confidence and competence indicators divided into four main groups: Black; Asian; Mixed and other minority ethnic groups; and, white.

The following broad findings about confidence and competency can be summarised as follows:

■ It is evident that Black and Asian participants are, with the exceptions of *resistance to boredom* and *worrying about the future*, generally more confident than mixed and other minority ethnic and white young people.

■ Asian young people are the most confident about their *communication skills* (65%), *taking responsibility for a task* (61%), and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (60%). They are less likely to express strong confidence about *organising their time* and *working independently* (both 46%), *decision making* (45%) and *motivating others* (41%) – but are nevertheless rather more confident than their white counterparts.

■ Black young people are most confident about their *communication skills* (65%), followed by *taking responsibility for a task* (59%), *team work* (55%), and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (54%). They are less likely to express strong confidence about organising *time* (36%), *decision making* (42%) and *motivating people* (47%) or *working independently* (48%). But again, they are rather more confident that most white young people in this respect.

■ Other minority ethnic group and mixed ethnicity young people are generally closer to the white population although they show more confidence in relation to taking *responsibility for a task* (58%), *teamwork* (49%) *decision making* (44%) and *working independently* (44%).

The generally higher levels of confidence amongst BAME young people could be explained in three different ways. Firstly, it may be a feature of different cultural attitudes about expressing self confidence – upon which we have no data to explore the issue. Secondly, it could be related to levels of educational performance. Or finally, it may be connected with socio-economic factors (as observed in the sub-section on relative deprivation – the poorest groups tended to be more likely to estimate their confidence in several factors more highly than other young people from more affluent backgrounds).

Figure 5.15 **Indicators of confidence at start of programme by ethnicity**[40]

	Black / Black British	Asian / Asian British	Mixed / other ethnic minority group	White
Good at communicating with people	65.4	64.5	51.9	54.3
Good at team-work	55.3	56.7	49.0	46.3
Good at taking responsibility for a task	58.8	60.6	58.2	52.7
Good at motivating people	46.9	41.6	39.3	34.3
Good at decision-making	41.9	45.4	45.5	37.9
Don't get bored pretty easily	30.7	28.4	26.6	27.3
Good at organising my time	36.4	45.7	39.5	35.8
Good at working independently	47.8	45.7	44.3	38.8
Good at sticking at a task until finished	53.5	60.4	51.2	53.7
Quite worried about my future	14.0	12.4	16.4	14.4

Figure 5.16 provides some evidence to suggest that it is a mix of the second and third arguments which may be relevant. As these data suggest, amongst Think Big participants aged from 19-25 when higher level educational qualifications (that is, A Level and above) could have been gained there are clear differences when BAME and white young people are compared.

■ Amongst less advantaged participants in Think Big who are aged between 19-25, 73% of BAME participants have higher level educational qualifications compared with only 58% of White participants

■ Amongst more affluent participants in Think Big, the proportions of BAME and White participants with higher level qualifications are broadly similar: between 80 and 82%.

The above arguments are, of course, speculative. It could be that a mix of higher levels of educational achievement amongst the older group of BAME participants helps to explain why confidence levels are higher – but it is not clear cut and requires further analysis when more data become available as the programme progresses.

Figure 5.16 **Educational achievement by ethnicity and relative affluence**

Project participants aged 19-25	BAME IMD 1-4	White MD 1-4	BAME MD 5-10	White IMD 5-10
Lower level of educational achievement	26.9	41.7	19.9	18.4
Higher level of educational achievement	73.1	58.3	80.1	81.6
N=	453	480	176	534

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[40] These categories are collapsed from the ONS classification of ethnic groups which is used to collect data on the Think Big website. The full list is reproduced in the analysis of ethnicity in Chapter 4, Figure 4.12.

Figure 5.17 **Ethnic differences in self assessment of skills and confidence**

		% BAME who strongly agree	% white who strongly agree	% BAME who agree or strongly agree	% white who agree or strongly agree
	Start of project	59.9	55.3	86.1	87.7
I am good at communicating with people	End of project	75.9	60.6	89.3	90.3
	% change	16.0	5.3	3.2	2.5
	Start of project	47.6	48.1	81.3	83.7
I am good at team-work	End of project	54.0	51.1	79.1	83.9
	% change	6.4	3.0	-2.1	0.2
	Start of project	61.0	56.7	90.4	90.5
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	End of project	69.5	58.8	90.9	87.3
	% change	8.6	2.1	0.5	-3.2
	Start of project	45.5	37.2	72.7	73.2
I am good at motivating people	End of project	52.9	37.2	75.9	71.9
	% change	7.5	0.0	3.2	-1.3
	Start of project	45.5	39.2	85.6	83.5
I am good at decision-making	End of project	57.2	42.8	92.0	83.3
	% change	11.8	3.6	6.4	-0.2
	Start of project	29.4	26.8	60.4	57.4
I don't tend to get bored easily	End of project	32.1	30.4	61.5	59.7
	% change	2.7	3.6	1.1	2.3
	Start of project	42.2	39.3	79.1	75.7
I am good at organising my time	End of project	49.7	38.9	82.4	78.2
	% change	7.5	-0.4	3.2	2.5
	Start of project	45.2	41.2	74.2	76.5
I good at working independently	End of project	48.9	42.3	74.7	72.9
	% change	3.8	1.1	0.5	-3.6
	Start of project	56.7	57.0	84.5	87.7
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	End of project	64.2	59.7	88.2	85.4
	% change	7.5	2.8	3.7	-2.3
	Start of project	11.2	13.6	33.7	37.1
I am quite worried about my future	End of project	18.2	15.7	34.2	38.1
	% change	7.0	2.1	0.5	1.1

Figure 5.18   Consistency and change in self assessment of skills and confidence by ethnicity

	% BAME always positive	% white always positive	% variation	% BAME more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% white more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% variation
I am good at communicating with people	82.4	82.4	0.0	84.6	79.3	-5.3
I am good at team-work	70.6	74.8	4.2	65.7	69.4	3.7
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	85.6	82.0	-3.6	82.5	69.0	-13.5
I am good at motivating people	61.5	57.9	-3.6	62.5	58.7	-3.8
I am good at decision-making	82.4	73.1	-9.3	88.1	70.2	-17.9
I don't tend to get bored easily	44.4	44.7	0.3	60.2	63.1	2.9
I am good at organising my time	70.1	65.1	-5.0	72.9	68.3	-4.6
I good at working independently	61.3	62.4	1.1	63.0	61.0	-2.0
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	79.1	78.6	-0.5	76.7	65.9	-10.8
I am quite worried about my future	21.9	22.9	1.0	53.5	54.2	0.7

Moving on to Figure 5.17, the same pattern of analysis is undertaken for relative affluence and deprivation, gender and age is repeated. The first step is to consider the block of data on the far right of Figure 5.17 which provides percentages of participants who either agreed or strongly agreed with each statement at the start and end of the programme.

- These data indicate that differences in attitudes between BAME and white participants are not particularly marked (generally well below a 5% difference) in nearly all of the categories at both start and end of the programme. The only notable difference is in *decision making* where BAME participants have become rather more confident (92% compared with 83% for white participants).

When considering the differences between BAME and white participants who 'strongly agree' with statements, the situation changes somewhat.

- BAME participants are much more likely to record significant increases in strong levels of confidence at the end of the programme. Strong confidence in *communication* rises from BAME participants from 60% to 76%. The rising confidence levels in *decision making* are also large – from 46% to 55%. Similar changes are also observed in relation to *team work* (6% rise), *taking responsibility for a task* (9%), *organising time* (8%) and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (8%)

- White participants are less emphatic in their assessments of growing confidence. But the data do, nevertheless, show quite consistently rising percentages in most domains, particularly in: *communicating with people* (up 5%), *decision making* (up 4%), *team work* and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (up 3%).

The findings show general improvement in confidence, but especially so for BAME participants. There is clearly a need for more sophisticated analysis, however once the number of end of project questionnaires rises significantly, it should be possible to control for other variables such as relative affluence, educational performance, gender, age and so on.

The headline finding, however, is that young people from ethnic minority groups seem to benefit more from the programme that white participants. This could be taken into account in defining wider social benefit in the return on investment calculations.

Taking the analysis forward, Figure 5.17 assesses the extent of continuity and change in young people's attitudes. Looking at patterns of continuity first, it is evident that:

- Differences between BAME and white participants are not particularly strong in relation to most aspects of measurement: variations are mainly below 5%.

- The biggest exception is in relation to decision making. BAME participants are rather more likely to hold consistently confident views in this respect (82% compared with 73% for white participants).

Of those participants who changed their minds, some interesting anomalies emerge:

- BAME participants are very much more likely, if they have changed their minds, to become more confident about certain capabilities. In relation to *decision making*, 88% of BAME participants have become more confident compared with 70% of white participants. Similarly 82% of BAME participants are more confident about *taking responsibility* compared with 69% of white participants. This pattern is repeated to a lesser extent in *sticking to a task until it is complete* (77% BAME, 66% white).

- In relation to only two criteria does the confidence of white participants appear to grow more: *team work* (60% compared with 66% for BAME participants); and, *resistance to boredom* (63% compared with 60% for BAME participants).

The above discussion on ethnicity suggests that more analysis could be undertaken using multi-variate analysis to determine differences in attitudes, if there were sufficient data available.

One factor which seems to have a significant bearing on differences is educational achievement. The last sub section of this report will consider this issue.

Educational achievement

The Figures in this section consider participants in the programme aged between 19-25 only where cross-matched data are available. It is necessary to control for age, as was done above in Figure 5.16, although cell sizes have become considerably smaller – especially for young people with lower levels of qualification.[41]

Figure 5.19 assesses confidence about capabilities. Of those young people who agreed or strongly agreed with statements (shown in the block of data to the right of the figure) the following findings can be reported.

- ■ Young people with higher educational achievement tend to be rather more confident in most areas of capability at the start and end of the programme percentage differences ranging between 10-15%.

- ■ Higher levels of confidence are evident, as would be expected, at the start of the project for participants with higher levels of achievement, but the confidence of young people with fewer educational achievements appears to grow considerably by the end of the programme in some categories, including: *communication* (up 6%), *team work* (up 6%), *motivating people* (up 7%), *decision making* (up 5%).

- ■ Young people with low levels of qualification report lower levels of ability at the end of the programme for *working independently* (down from 70% to 61%).

- ■ By contrast, young people with higher levels of educational achievement seem to gain more confidence than other young people in relation to *organising their time* (up 5%) and *working independently* (up 4%).

When levels of strong agreement are compared in the block of data at the centre of Figure 5.19, some interesting findings emerge:

- ■ It is clear that both more highly qualified young people and those with lower levels of educational achievement are more likely to report rising confidence in relation to most of the indicators.

- ■ More or less the same stronger levels of confidence grow in relation to the following factors for more or less qualified young people: *communication* (up about 9%), *team work* (up between 4-6%), *taking responsibility for a task* (up 5%), *decision making* (up 8%), *sticking to a task until it is finished* (6-8%).

- ■ The confidence of better qualified young people grows by 7% in relation to *working independently*, but falls by 9% amongst less well education young people.

- ■ Young people aged 19-25 without higher levels of qualifications are much *more worried about their future* (20% compared with 12% of higher achievers).

Figure 5.20 considers the extent of continuity and change in attitudes. The first block of data considers continuity in attitudes. It is a mixed picture which is quite hard to interpret.

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[41] There are only 111 participants aged 19-25 with lower levels of educational achievement where cross-matched data are available. There are 293 participants with higher levels of achievement – producing more reliable results.

- Better qualified young people seem to be consistently positive about their *team work* ability, *taking responsibility for a task, working independently* and *motivating people.*

- Less well qualified young people are consistently positive about *communication, taking responsibility for tasks, sticking to a task* and *decision making*. They are rather more likely to be consistently positive about their *decision making* skills (72% compared with 53% of better qualified young people).

- Less well qualified young people are not consistently positive about *working independently*, and are rather more likely to get *bored easily* than well qualified young people. They are also rather less likely to be consistently positive about *motivating other people*.

When considering those young people who changed their views from start to end of the programme, variations are also pronounced.

- Young people with higher levels of educational achievement appear to be more likely to agree or strongly agree that their confidence has grown upon completion of the programme.

- More of the better qualified young people have become more confident that they can *work independently* (69% compared with 44% of less well qualified), feel they are *better at organising their time* (80% compared with 58% of less well qualified) and *taking responsibility for a task* (80% compared with 67% of less well qualified).

- Less qualified people are more likely to emphasise their skills in *motivating other people* (71% compared with 62% of better qualified young people). They are also likely to have become more *worried about their future* (68% compared with 49%).

Taken together, these findings seem to suggest that young people with few qualifications gain real benefit from the programme, but the extent and areas of benefit tend to be more limited or act merely to consolidate existing capabilities for better qualified young people.

Figure 5.19 **Educational achievement and differences in self assessment of skills and confidence aged 19-25**

		% lower levels of achievement who strongly agree	% higher levels of achievement who strongly agree	% lower levels of achievement who agree or strongly agree	% higher levels of achievement who agree or strongly agree
	Start of project	63.6	65.9	86.4	94.5
I am good at communicating with people	End of project	73.0	74.7	92.8	96.2
	% change	9.3	8.9	6.4	1.7
	Start of project	44.1	54.8	73.9	91.4
I am good at team-work	End of project	50.5	58.9	80.2	89.0
	% change	6.3	4.1	6.3	-2.4
	Start of project	54.1	68.6	86.5	96.9
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	End of project	58.6	73.4	83.8	94.9
	% change	4.5	4.8	-2.7	-2.0
	Start of project	39.6	47.1	65.8	81.9
I am good at motivating people	End of project	41.4	50.9	73.0	82.9
	% change	1.8	3.8	7.2	1.0
	Start of project	39.4	46.4	79.8	90.8
I am good at decision-making	End of project	47.7	54.3	84.7	90.1
	% change	8.3	7.8	4.9	-0.7
	Start of project	25.2	32.1	51.4	65.5
I don't tend to get bored easily	End of project	29.7	35.2	58.6	68.3
	% change	4.5	3.1	7.2	2.7
	Start of project	41.3	44.7	68.8	84.3
I am good at organising my time	End of project	40.5	47.4	70.3	89.4
	% change	-0.7	2.7	1.5	5.1
	Start of project	45.5	49.1	70.0	83.3
I good at working independently	End of project	36.4	56.3	60.9	87.7
	% change	-9.1	7.2	-9.1	4.4
	Start of project	51.4	62.7	83.8	90.1
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	End of project	59.5	68.5	87.4	91.1
	% change	8.1	5.8	3.6	1.0
	Start of project	14.3	9.2	37.8	33.8
I am quite worried about my future	End of project	20.0	11.9	41.8	32.1
	% change	5.7	2.7	4.1	-1.7

Figure 5.20 **Consistency and change in self assessment of skills and confidence by educational achievement**

	% lower levels of educational achievement always positive	% higher levels of educational achievement always positive	% variation	% lower levels of educational achievement more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% higher levels of educational achievement more positive (of those who changed attitude)	% variation
I am good at communicating with people	82.7	72.7	-10.0	82.8	89.4	6.6
I am good at team-work	64.0	83.6	19.6	66.0	68.7	2.7
I am good at taking responsibility for a task	73.9	72.0	-1.9	66.7	80.3	13.6
I am good at motivating people	52.3	71.0	18.7	71.4	62.5	-8.9
I am good at decision-making	71.6	52.6	-19.0	75.0	78.0	3.0
I don't tend to get bored easily	35.1	53.9	18.8	62.3	60.7	-1.6
I am good at organising my time	54.1	45.4	-8.7	58.0	80.4	22.4
I good at working independently	49.1	75.4	26.3	44.2	69.4	25.2
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	76.6	65.1	-11.5	75.7	74.0	-1.6
I am quite worried about my future	27.6	8.9	-18.7	68.3	48.6	-19.7

5.5 Measuring return on investment[42]

Measuring the financial value of social interventions is a complex and controversial issue. Quantitative measures of value, even when associated with money, are always underpinned by value judgements. Rather than assuming that this is an intractable problem that cannot be overcome, it is better to accept the limits of quantitative measurement. Once this step is taken, then it is possible to use such methods, whilst taking care to ensure that the judgements made on the formulation of data are plausible and that reasonable interpretations are drawn from statistical findings.

Why is measurement valued?

The measurement of many factors which are thought to be useful in social scientific research is a complex interpretative process. This runs contrary to popular notions of scientific measurement where it is assumed that the objects of measurement are consistent in some way. Some factors can be measured (or recorded) – such as the age or participants in a project, their gender, ethnicity, educational achievement, and so on. But even in this short list, the units of measurement become more contentious as the list goes on. Educational achievement, for example, may be measured by the propensity of individuals successfully to pass examinations. But as noted in Section 2 of this report, students do not all have the same start in life – so interpretation of the measurement can be flawed unless used with caution.

In social impact evaluation there is much argument about what is socially valuable and what is not. Three types of value, crudely speaking, can be defined:

- *Economic value* – is measured in monetary terms. It is often thought that monetary value is relatively easy to use, but complications can arise when the difference between 'exchange value' and 'use values' are introduced.

- *Social value* – is measured in many ways, but usually is associated with utilitarian philosophical notions of increasing the public good.

- *Environmental value* – is associated with the idea that action is valued because it improves or protects the environment – however that is defined.

There are many approaches to impact assessment which attempt to harness all three aspects. These are sometimes referred to as 'triple bottom line' forms of accounting or sometimes 'blended value accounting'[43]. It is easy to be seduced by the apparent simplicity of this, but all three measures are enormously complex – even the monetary measures.

Return on investment

Successive governments have, for the last twenty years or so, become more concerned to demonstrate the social and economic worth of its interventions. This has led to a rise in the use of cost-benefit analyses and concomitant preoccupations with evident based practice. It

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[42] The following discussion of how value can be measured is an abridged version of a longer analytical piece of work which was included in last year's report on Think Big. See Chapman, et al. (2013) Building young people's resilience in hard times. Durham: St Chad's College, Chapter 4.

[43] There is a very large literature on social measurement on social impact. In the bibliography see, for example: Alexander (2010), Burns and MacKeith (2006), Cabinet Office (2008), Davies (2004), Holden (2004), Lim (2010), Morris (2003), Nicholls (2009), New Economics Foundation (2009a, 2009b), Sinclair and Taylor (2008).

has increasingly been assumed that such an approach to measurement has 'inherent value' which has opened the door to a veritable industry for the development of measurement tools which, in turn, inform approaches to management philosophy and professional practice.[44]

Attaching monetary values to show the benefit of a programme is possible, providing that due caution is taken in ensuring that this does not involve making exaggerated claims. Such exaggeration can come about by 'leaving out' factors which clearly would have reduced the relative impact of the assessment. An example is the process of 'claiming' credit for the impact from a project as if nothing else was going on in young people's lives which positively affected the experiences and opportunities of young people. SROI researchers sometimes refer to this as '***deadweight***'; that is, counting the impact of factors which would have achieved change if nothing had been done at all. Examples might include ignoring the impact of good parenting, of good schooling, existing support to young people which is effective, and so on. It is also important to recognise the impact of ***'displacement'***. Displacement might include, in the context of a project which offers experiential learning for young people, the impact (in terms of opportunities or social confidence) upon those who are not allowed to take part and feel excluded and as a consequence engage in negative actions (see Cabinet Office, 2008:56).

Analysis of the impact of Think Big

To produce financial indicators of the investment value of Think Big it is necessary to work with estimates based on more detailed case studies of individual projects. It was not feasible to get all young people involved in the programme to record their actual time investment. So estimates of average time investment based on in-depth interviews and case studies in 2010 and 2011.

Additionally, 100 case studies of individual projects are currently being assessed as part of the Social Action Fund element of the Think Big programme which is being run by the National Youth Agency in partnership with O2. These case studies are collecting questionnaire data from project leaders *and* active participants. While the whole set of data is not yet available, early indications from on-line questionnaires suggest that the estimates provided below are quite reliable for project leaders. It is likely, however, that the time contribution of active participants may have been *under-estimated* in terms of the number of hours they put in, but *over estimated* in terms of the number of active participants involved.[45] In fact, these factors appear, more or less, to balance each other out.[46] The averages provide a broad indication of time investment – differences between projects can be substantial. To estimate time invested in voluntary action by young people, the following distinctions are made:

■ Time the project leaders spent 'learning their craft' – not counted as voluntary action as such – is estimated as being within the range of 10-20 hours. This is the process of building 'human capital'.

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[44] In some approaches to cost-benefit analysis, for example, evaluators have made claims that $1 of philanthropic investment produced as much as $400 impact. Indeed, it is possible to produce as much value as is 'required' if appropriate variables are selected and significant monetary value is attached to them. Such approaches have been shown by critical observers to be more or less spurious and have, as a consequence, invalidated the energy invested in the exercise.

[45] Estimates on the number of 'active participants' was generated from the It's Your Community project evaluation data in 2010.

[46] This element of research is being funded by the Cabinet Office and will continue until the early summer. Findings from the case study analysis of multipliers will not be available until the late summer.

- Time project leaders spent planning and organising – counted as voluntary action – is estimated in the range of 15-30 hours.

- Time they spent impacting on the lives of others – i.e. time in face-to-face or 'visible' activity which brought benefit – is cautiously estimated at between 3-5 hours per project – although some would achieve a great deal more than this

- The benefit could be by providing a service – such as the homework club (many hours of activity with high impact)

- By providing an experience which challenged and changed attitudes – i.e. an event (but only involved a few hours of activity with high impact)

- 'Active participants' generally put in between 3-5 hours of time in visible activity but rather less in planning – if any at all.

- The hours of benefit that were 'received' by 'benefitting participants' cannot be counted as voluntary action – but can be counted as a gain in terms of social capital (challenging stereotypes/changing behaviour) or human capital (in the case of, say, a homework club where they get to study and benefit in real terms).

- The investment of time by employee volunteers is also added into the equation based on the actual average cost to the company of deploying staff to voluntary work within the working day. Qualitative research suggests that a minority of O2 people invest considerable amounts of their own time to Think Big, an estimate value is factored in at 0.25 added time across the whole programme.[47]

- The 'added value' contributed to the programme by its 51 partner organisations also needs to be factored into the equation. At present, data are too limited on the impact of partner organisations in statistical terms due to limited production of data on pro-sociality. What is known is that partner organisations invest significant time from their own resources in the management and administration of the programme and invest significant time in support, training and mentoring.[48] Some organisations also stage celebration events which cement the importance of young people's contribution in the minds of participants and significant others.

The view has been taken that the best approach is to use the minimum wage as a consistent benchmark. In research on adult voluntary action, average income is the usual measure – however young people do not generally earn the average income.

At this stage, weights on added value are provided based on the simple premise that the more socially disadvantaged young people are likely to gain greater benefit. A simple judgement is made: that the most socially advantaged young people gain 5% added value, at each decile, this is multiplied by 1.5 to indicate progressive benefit. SROI judgements on added value can be arrived at in many different ways and are always contentious. However, there are clear indications from qualitative research on Think Big, reported upon in 2012, which shows that many of the more socially advantaged young people may well have done their project by other means had Think Big not been available to them – drawing upon resources from different funders. For the least advantaged, by contrast (often brought into the programme by youth partner organisations) the impact could be much greater in terms of added value. The sum of the weighted values in Figure 5.21 divided by ten,

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[47] In 2012, an attempt will be made to quantify the added time invested by participants in Think Big using the annual ESV questionnaire to gather this information.

[48] This time allocation is estimated at 2 hours of time per project by paid employees at youth organisations and 6 hours by volunteers (time taken can be significantly more in the case of organisations which have to invest a lot of time – such as is the case with disabled young people and those who are 'hardest to reach, hear and help').

equals 56.67%. And for the present, this is the added value score added to the return on investment calculation presented below.

Figure 5.21 **Progressively weighted added value by index of multiple deprivation**
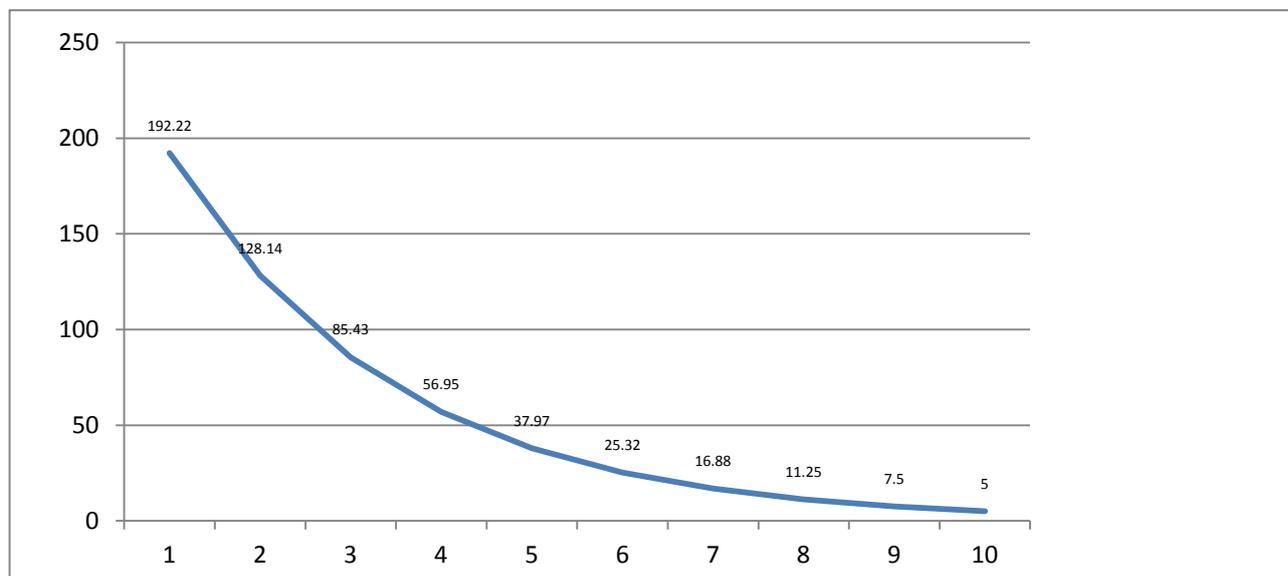
Figure 5.22 **Estimated return on investment of the programme in 2013**

Estimates of time invested by young people[49]	Value of time invested by young people[50]	Value of time invested by EVs[51]	Value of time invested by partner 0rganisations[52]	Total value of investment	Average added value weight of 56.67% for reaching more deprived/ marginalised young people[53]	Total value of investment	% added value against initial investment in the programme[54]
Lower	£4,020,218.63	£544,090.00	£207,108.96	£4,771,417.59	£2,703,962.35	£7,475,379.94	316.2
Medium	£4,526,880.40	£544,090.00	£207,108.96	£5,278,079.36	£2,991,087.57	£8,269,166.93	349.8
Higher	£4,908,473.66	£544,090.00	£207,108.96	£5,659,672.62	£3,207,336.47	£8,867,009.09	375.1

49 Estimated for human capital in range 10-20 hours for project leaders, and 18-35 hours for voluntary action multiplied by 2 leaders; for active participants, estimated at 3 hours per young person for voluntary action;

50 These estimates are based on minimum wages for young people by age (as defined on October 1st 2011): for participants aged 21 and over = £6.08; for 18-20 year olds = £4.98; for 16-17 year olds = £3.68; for younger participants the apprentice rate is used = £2.60.

51 Estimated value of ESV engagement by 1,388 Telefõnica staff is standardised at £20 per hour x 27,331.5 hours = £544,090 using the London Benchmarking Group methodology. NB. In 2012 the system for collection changed and may have resulted in the loss of hours from the calculation so depressing the final sum.

52 Estimated by average income (plus employers' NI and Pension on-costs) at £31,215 per annum. Assuming 125 working days at 8 hours per day = £17.34 per hour. Estimated 2 hours per paid employee and 6 hours of voluntary/employee time in support/training/mentoring= 8 x £17.34 (£138.72 per project). 1493 projects were supported by partner organisations which equals a total monetary value of time invested at £207,108.96.

53 Producing a multiplier to assess the added benefit gained by reaching young people from less affluent backgrounds cannot be monetised in a formulaic way. Similarly, it is not easy to assess benefit against other forms of social marginalisation or exclusion. A rough estimate it therefore taken which assumes that the average additional value to the programme is enhanced by 56.67 - representing the progressive value of reaching more seriously disadvantaged young people.

54 These percentages offset the total estimated value of the project against £2,364,124.09 proportionate running costs of Level 1 the programme in 2012 minus initial set up costs (including development of the Think Big website, initial programme development costs, etc.

5.5 Summary and conclusions

How the programme changed the way young people feel

Key findings from the analysis of the impact of Think Big on young people are provided below.

- The Think Big programme creates *opportunities for young people to explore new avenues of self development*. The programme appears to be very successful in this respect with 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had done so.

- The programme is successful in *enhancing tangible skills*. At the end of the project 86% believed that they had achieved this objective.

- The programme aims to develop *young people's resilience through their exercise of self-determined personal development.* By the end of the project nearly 75% felt that they had developed new interests and widened the scope for future personal development.

- A key objective is to increase young people's sense of *confidence and resilience:* almost 80% feel that the project did help them feel more confident about their future.

- The programme aims to *widen young people's social horizons and encourage them to make a contribution to community cohesion by challenging stereotypes*. Nearly 87% of young people agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

- We asked about the extent to which young people cared about their community as an *indicator of pro-sociality*. The responses are very positive in this respect, with 89% of young people feeling more strongly about their communities by the end of the programme.

There is good evidence to suggest that young people from less affluent communities draw strong benefits from involvement in the programme – particularly in broadening their horizons and raising levels of confidence about the future.

- 59% of the less affluent young people say the project has helped them try new things compared with 49% of the most affluent.

- 44% of the less affluent young people say they have new interests and hobbies, compared with 31% of the most affluent.

- 49% of the less affluent young people feel more confident about their future compared with 36% of the most affluent.

- 63% of the less affluent say that they care more about their communities compared with 55% of the most affluent.

These findings are reassuring. They show that the target group that the Think Big programme aims to help the most, seem to perceive the greatest benefit.

Some gender differences emerge from the evaluation which suggest that males perceive greater levels of benefit in some respects.

- At the start of the programme an equal number of males and females claim to be good at communicating with people (around 56-57%). While both males and females become more confident at the programme - males rate their skills in this area rather more highly (68% males against 62% females).

- Against many of the categories of skill and confidence, males and females give similar scores at the start of the programme, including: teamwork, taking responsibility, motivating people, and sticking to a task until it is finished. But males seem to assess change in themselves more positively. Only in relation to resistance to boredom is the reverse the case.

- Males tend to give more emphasis to particular confidence traits by the end of the programme (*communication, motivation, taking responsibility* and *decision making*). Before the programme began, males rated their confidence more highly in relation to taking responsibility and decision making.

In line with the Youth Census data presented in Chapter 3, therefore, there is perhaps an argument for focusing support on females to encourage them to recognise their abilities or develop their confidence in particular areas of self-development. The evidence is inconclusive in this respect as the available data only record personal perceptions. However, the tendency of more males to apply for the second level of the programme, Think Bigger, may provide some indication of gender differences in levels of confidence.

The number of young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups involved in the Think Big programme is larger than would be expected when compared with population averages. That stated, there are currently too few participants from BAME groups to produce reliable findings. The following conclusions are, therefore, to some extent speculative and at best indicative.

- By the end of the programme, BAME participants are much more likely to record significant increases in confidence in certain skills. Strong confidence in *communication* rises from BAME participants from 60% to 76%. The rising confidence levels in *decision making* are also large – from 46% to 55%. Similar changes are also observed in relation to *team work* (6% rise), *taking responsibility for a task* (9%), *organising time* (8%) and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (8%)

- White participants are less emphatic in their assessments of growing confidence. But the data do, nevertheless, show quite consistently rising percentages in most domains, particularly in: *communicating with people* (up 5%), *decision making* (up 4%), *team work* and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (up 3%).

The headline finding, however, is that young people from ethnic minority groups seem to benefit more from the programme that white participants. The extent to which this is associated with socio-economic background is not sufficiently clear at this stage.

The Think Big programme currently attracts large numbers of young people who have higher level qualifications (of A level and above).

- Young people with higher educational achievement tend to be rather more confident in most areas of capability at the start and end of the programme with percentage differences ranging between 10-15%.

- Higher levels of confidence are evident, as would be expected, at the start of the project for participants with higher levels of achievement, but the confidence of young people with fewer educational achievements appears to grow considerably by the end of the programme in some categories, including: *communication* (up 6%), *team work* (up 6%), *motivating people* (up 7%), *decision making* (up 5%).

- Young people with low levels of qualification report lower levels of ability at the end of the programme for *working independently* (down from 70% to 61%).

■ By contrast, young people with higher levels of educational achievement seem to gain more confidence than other young people in relation to *organising their time* (up 5%) and *working independently* (up 4%).

As an open programme, it is important to include young people with higher levels of qualifications as they may be able to achieve a great deal for their communities as well as make personal gains in terms of self-development.

In subsequent stages of analysis, it may be useful to explore, specifically, the extent to which more highly educated participants from less advantaged groups benefit from the programme to examine how Think Big provides new opportunities for young people in addition to their engagement in formal education settings.

Programme impact on clusters of capability

Using the categorisation of clusters of capability, devised by Young Foundation, the programme is shown to be successful in developing young people across a whole range of attributes by the end of their involvement in the programme.

■ *Communication*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 84%. On key indicators, Think Big participants report high levels of confidence at the end of their project through: their ability to communicate (90%), to motivate people (73%) and decision making (86%). Their reported confidence in team work (83%) and wider range of social contacts (87%) also indicate an impact on communication skills.

■ *Confidence and agency*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 77%. The key indicators, in order of importance are: decision making (86%), working independently (73%), learning new skills (86%), motivating people (73%), feeling confident about the future (80%) and having new interests and hobbies (75%).

■ *Planning and problem solving*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 83%. Primary indicators from Think Big, include: taking responsibility for a task (88%), sticking to a task (86%), and decision making (85%), trying new things (88%), motivating people (73%) and using new skills (73%). Secondary indicators include communication (90%) and team work (83%).

■ *Relationships and leadership*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 83%. There are several primary indicators of building relationships and exercising leadership, which are in order of priority: taking responsibility (88%), decision making (86%), team work (83%), meeting people from different backgrounds (87%), motivating people (73%) and looking at the world in a different way (78%).

■ *Creativity*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 79%. Indicators include, in order of priority: trying new things (88%), being good at team work (83%), using new skills (86%), new interests and hobbies (75%), and resistance to boredom (60%).

- *Resilience and determination*

  The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 80%. There are several key Think Big resilience and determination factors operating this domain. The primary indicators, in order of priority are: taking responsibility for a task (88%), getting a task finished (86%), working independently (73%), decision making (86%), trying new things (88%), organising time (79%) and resistance to boredom (60%).

- *Managing feelings*

  The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 78%. Primary indictors including: including communication (90%), taking responsibility for a task (88%), making decisions (86%), team work (83%) motivating people (73%)

- *Pro-sociality*

  The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 81%. The Young Foundation categorisation does not include pro-sociality as a separate category. However, this is an important element in the evaluation of Think Big where the building of social capital and challenging social stereotypes are central objectives. Indicators of pro-sociality include; communication (90%), motivating people (73%), team work (83%), caring about the community (89%), meeting people from different backgrounds (87%) and seeing the world in a different way (77%).

The return on investment of the programme

The return on investment analysis suggests that a return of between 316.2–375.1% was achieved by the programme (compared with the range 230.2-349.8 in 2011). In other words, for every £1 invested, the return is between £3.16 and £3.75.

Chapter six
Think Bigger

The overall aim of Think Big, as shown in Chapter 2, is to produce opportunities for young people to create projects to tackle issues in their communities which they feel are important. To engage them fully in their work, they are given £300 to use as they feel is appropriate to meet their project's objectives and they are given some support from the Think Big team. For those young people who feel that they can do more, or 'Think Bigger', they can apply to the second level of the programme and be awarded up to £2500 to further expand an existing project or take their learning from the first Think Big project to conceive and deliver a new idea. With a fund of £2,500, there is scope for young people to achieve much more – but they are also encouraged to try to draw in other funds or in-kind support as their project develops – to add value to the initial investment by O2.

Because Think Bigger takes young people to a second level of engagement in project work, it is recognised that they will need considerably more support to achieve their objectives. Consequently, once they have been accepted into the Think Bigger programme, they are invited to join a residential training programme to build their skills and confidence, mix with other people who are on the programme, and to get useful information and advice on how to run a successful project. At the residential, they are assigned a Think Big Helper to support them as their project progresses. All the Helpers are O2 employees, who work across a wide range of departments around the country, and from different service, operational, technical, professional, or managerial levels of the company.

Taken together it is clear that young people get a lot of support. However, there is a clear balance in the support offered to young people on the programme, and they are encouraged to take personal responsibility for driving the success of their projects. The aim is for them to foster a sense of real personal confidence and independence; to be creative thinkers and innovative in practice; to tackle problems as they arise and find ways around them; and, where possible to lever additional resources into the project to make it work better and achieve more. Such resources may include: additional voluntary support from young people they know; pro-bono support from people who have an interest in what they are doing; in-kind resources such as the use of space, facilities, technical kit and consumables; and, if they can persuade people that they have a strong enough case – money to scale up their project.

As this chapter will show, the Think Bigger programme develops young people's confidence and skills successfully and allows them, in a relatively low-risk and well supported environment, to experiment with ideas and practices to achieve their objectives.

The Chapter is divided into a number of sections:

- Enterprising attitudes and aspirations amongst young people
- Preparing young people for the programme at the Think Big residential
- The role of employee volunteers: Think Big "Helpers"
- Taking risks and tackling challenges: enterprising attitudes
- Making a difference: the community impact of Think Bigger
- Personal journeys: the impact of Think Bigger on young people

6.1 Enterprising attitudes and aspirations

Think Bigger is not designed explicitly as an enterprise development programme.[55] Whilst entrepreneurial capabilities are a key element of the Think Bigger ethos, its starting point is as a 'positive about youth' programme which seeks to challenge negative stereotypes about young people, build their confidence and skills and help them make more successful life transitions in difficult economic times. However, it is also clear that Think Bigger is helping to 'turn the lights on' for young people in enterprise terms, and in some cases, it is already enabling Think Big graduates to move onto more formal enterprise programmes or start their own businesses.

Enterprise in the context of this report is not solely about starting a business or starting a social enterprise. Instead enterprise is being used to indicate a range of attitudes and capabilities which can enable young people to be enterprising in their personal, social or business lives.   It's about enabling a young person to discover their potential and to move from a position where they might expect to follow more traditional career or employment pathways, to one where they mark out their own path. It is also a programme which adopts the idea that enterprising attitudes are important in many different contexts: as community leaders, as employees, as volunteers or as social or business entrepreneurs.

The Think Bigger programme is not designed to propel only the brightest and best young people into business or social enterprise. But it is designed to enable young people to build their entrepreneurial capabilities, to experiment in a safe and supported environment, and perhaps most importantly of all, to believe that their ideas and talents count.

Research demonstrates that the gap between the broad aspiration and likelihood of setting up a business is quite substantial – and seen through the lenses of gender and socio-economic background, the ambition gap is even wider for young women and those from less affluent backgrounds. Think Bigger is designed to play a role in transforming this picture, by giving young people tangible opportunities to be taken seriously, to take their ideas to scale and to begin to explore their entrepreneurial skills and capabilities.

The transferable skills that they develop during the course of this experience can in turn help young people to become more successful in their personal lives, in their interactions with the local community and also ultimately in their business lives and professional careers, whether as company employees or running their own start-up businesses.

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[55] There are many established and fledgling enterprise development programmes currently running, often funded through CSR programmes or by central government. Examples include: www.startuploans.co.uk; www.enablingenterprise.org; www.enternships.com; www.riseto.co.uk; http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/enterprise_programme.aspx.

Figure 6.1 Entrepreneurship amongst young people in Europe

Already set up and running a business	6
Yes, would like to set up a business in future	43
No, because it is too risky	14
No, it is too complicated to set up a business	13
No, don't have adequate enterprise skills	7
No, because there is no access to finance	8
Don't kniw / not applicable	10
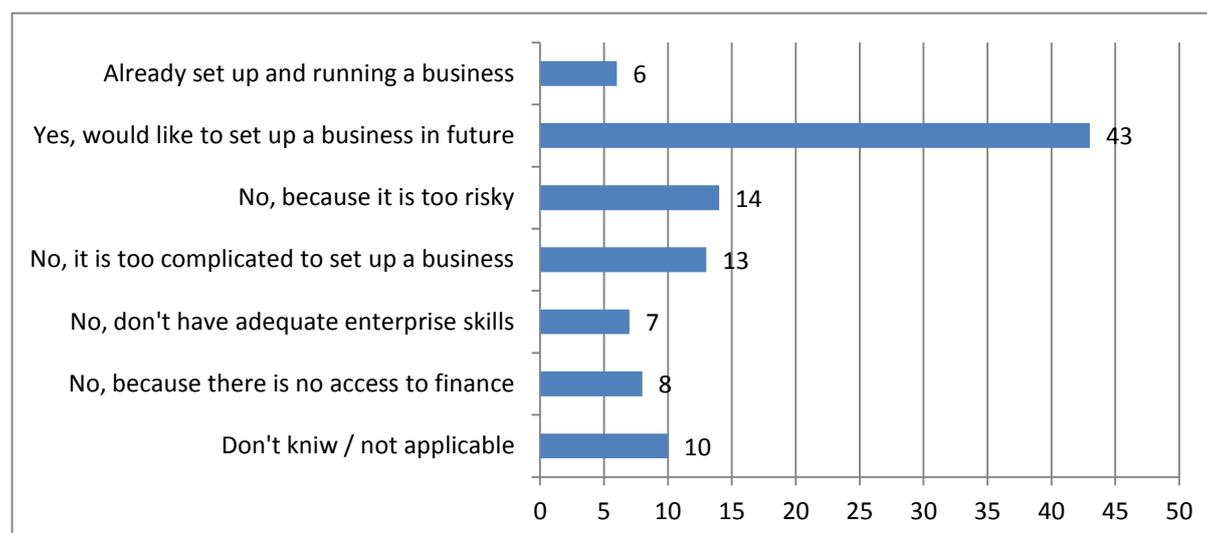
Adapted from: European Union (2011) *Youth on the move: Summary*, Flash Eurobarometer 319b, Brussels: European Union, p. 21.

A more recent global report on entrepreneurship shows that young people's engagement with enterprise closely mirrors EU data. As Figure 6.2 shows, 6% of young people in the UK, aged 16-24, have set up businesses, although there are some national variations in this rate of entrepreneurship. Figure 6.3 shows that levels of entrepreneurship amongst young people vary to some extent by gender: about 10% of young men in the UK have set up businesses compared with just 5% of young women.

Figure 6.2 Total early-stage entrepreneurial activity in the UK home nations by age group 2011

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
England	5.9	9.8	8.8	7.7	5.6
Wales	10.2	10.9	8.4	6.7	5.1
Scotland	7.4	5.9	7.0	6.2	4.6
Northern Ireland	5.3	8.0	8.4	8.1	4.7
UK	6.2	9.4	8.7	7.5	5.5

Source: Levie and Hart, 2011:44

## Figure 6.3 Male and female total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) in the UK home nations 2011

	Male TEA	Female TEA	Ratio of male to female
England	10.4	5.0	48%
Wales	10.2	6.1	60%
Scotland	8.0	4.3	54%
Northern Ireland	10.3	4.3	42%
UK	10.2	5.0	49%

Source: Levie and Hart 2011:43

Getting involved in entrepreneurial activity involves a number of steps. These steps have been illustrated diagrammatically by Bosma et al. (2012). The first step involves the incubation of beliefs and attitudes amongst potential business entrepreneurs. This is the stage within which the Think Big social programme is primarily located – helping young people to recognise that they may have the potential to start up a business or social enterprise. As shown below, it is also the case that some young people move, within the programme, into the 'potential' step where they have clearer ideas of what kind of business they may wish to establish. And indeed, a small number of young people engaged in Think Bigger have taken the third step and have established businesses and social enterprises. Total early-stage entrepreneurial activity or TEA is the sum of the 'nascent entrepreneurship rate' and the 'new business owner-manager rate. 'In the UK in 2011 this figure was 7.6%.[56]

Box 1   **The Entrepreneurial Process: GEM Operational definitions**
(Source: Bosma *et al.* 2012, p.10)
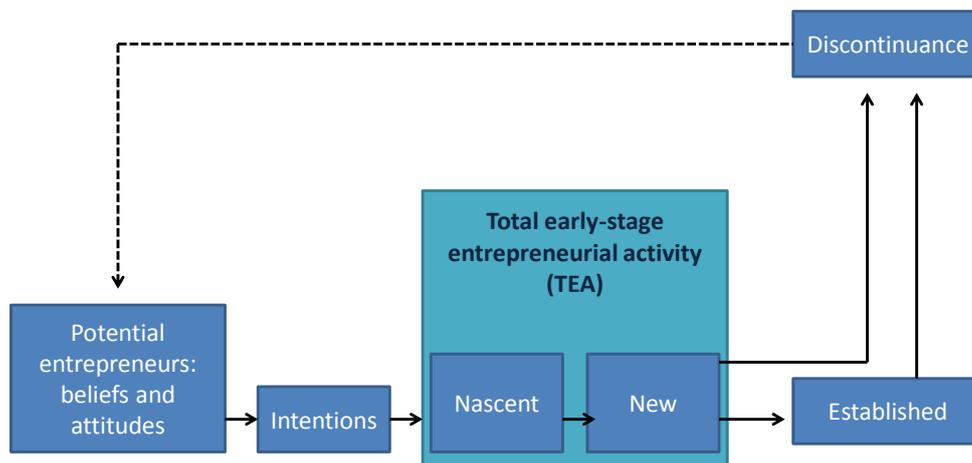
Source: Jonathan Levie and Mark Hart (2011*) Global Entrepreneurship Monitor United Kingdom 2011 Monitoring Report*, Aston University/Strathclyde University Business School.

Evidence from the O2 Youth Census poll echo these broadly based statistics. As Figure 6.4 shows, a strong sense of business acumen are identified amongst about 6% of young people aged 16-24, rising to 9% for 24-34 year olds. As indicated by the GEM data shown in Figure 6.3, clear gender differences are evident: 13% of young men think it is very likely

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[56] Definitions of TEA are defined by GEM as follows 'TEA is calculated in an identical way in each country. A telephone and/or face-to-face survey of a representative sample of the adult population in each country is conducted between May and September. Respondents are asked to respond to three questions that are the basis of the TEA index: 1) "are you, alone or with others, currently trying to start a new business independently of your work?", 2) "are you, alone or with others, currently trying to start a new business as part of your work?", and 3) "are you, alone or with others, currently the owner or manager of a business?" Those who respond positively to these questions are also asked filter questions to ensure they are actively engaged in business creation as owners and managers, how long they have been paying wages to employees, and other questions about cost and time to start up, sources of finance and numbers of jobs created. A distinction is made between two types of entrepreneurs: nascent entrepreneurs (those whose businesses have been paying wages for not more than three months) and new business owner-managers (those whose businesses have been paying wages for more than three months but not more than 42 months). The TEA index is the proportion of nascent entrepreneurs and new business owner/managers (minus any double counting, i.e. those who respond positively to both are counted once) in the working age population.' (2011: 7)

that they will start a business in future compared with just 7% of young women. Similar ratios are also indicated on the likelihood of establishing social enterprises (8% males and 4% females).

Figure 6.4   **Likelihood of engaging in business or social enterprise: Youth Census poll data**

	Males	Females	Ratio of females to males
Importance of running a business for their own future happiness (very important)	9%	7%	78%
Importance of running a social enterprise for their own happiness (very important)	5%	2%	40%
It is very likely that they will start and run their own business	13%	7%	54%
It is very likely that they will start and run a social enterprise in future	8%	4%	50%

Figure 6.5 presents *O₂ Youth Census* poll data on the extent to which young people have engaged with enterprise training of some kind – which may indicate the extent of their interest in setting up a business. Interestingly, these data show that young women are about as likely as young men to have engaged in business training of some kind (14% males and 15% females). But there is evidence to suggest that males, who have not yet engaged with such activity, have a stronger interest in taking part in enterprise training than females (59% males, 41% females).

Some differences also emerge by social economic group, although these variations do not follow clear patterns. It is evident, for example, that young women from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have been involved in enterprise training, but fewer have the intention to engage with such training if they have not yet done so (54% males and 38% females). Across the social economic spectrum, it is apparent that young women are rather more likely not to have thought about the idea of starting up a business.

People who set up businesses generally have some shared background experiences and follow similar pathways. Being brought up in a household where one or both parents run a business is amongst the most important biographical predictors of business acumen. The reason for this is simple: young people witness the benefits that their parent's enjoy, if they are successful, in monetary terms. They see that their parents enjoy independence from the constraints of working for an employer. They also see that people in small business tend to have to work very hard. And perhaps most importantly of all, they become accustomed to the principle that taking risks can produce real dividends.

For young people who have not seen parents or close family members running businesses, it can seem like a much riskier option than it may be. People who live on salaries are not necessarily risk averse. But they do become accustomed to the security of a regular income in exchange for the obligations of employment. Many salaried people do move into business. But again, these pathways are more clearly marked in some professions and trades than in others. Accountants, solicitors, architects, doctors, dentists, surveyors and so on usually start out working for somebody else as an employee. The same is true for builders, plumbers, electricians, and so on. They build their skills whilst in employment, often build up a list of potential clients who have confidence in their ability, and then – ultimately – go it alone.

Other routes into business are more rare. But things change. Currently there is growing awareness of the potential for the development of digital businesses by young people. Young people are particularly well equipped for this kind of activity as, unlike many of the older professions and trades, digital technology shifts at a tremendously fast pace. Many, if not most, digital start-ups are created by well-educated but to a large extent self-taught enthusiasts who are at the cutting edge of their field. What's more, young people seem to believe that there are many options for the development of business ideas in this field and feel strongly that they have the kinds of skills to meet the challenges. The Think Big programme is alert to the potential for young people to progress from Think Bigger to its digital business incubation programme WAYRA or the recently launched WayraUnltd programme for social enterprises.[57]

Figure 6.6 presents data from the Youth Census poll to show the extent of interest in such opportunities. It is clear from these data that young men are rather more likely to have engaged with some form of training which is related to the digital economy (12% males and 8% females), but take up of such opportunities is, nevertheless, quite low. There is, however a strong indication of interest in such opportunities should they become available: 54% of males want to, or would consider such opportunities, compared with 47% of females.

Analysis by socio-economic groups seems to indicate that young men's interest in digital economy training is higher (compared with young women) in the less affluent categories.

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[57] http://uk.wayra.org/en/academia/en-london and http://wayra.org/unltd/ Make some reference to information about WAYRA, campus party etc, but don't let it confuse the text.

Figure 6.5   **Attitudes of young people about entrepreneurship training: *Youth Census* poll 2012**

	Total	Male	Female	SEG A Male	SEG A Female	SEG BC1 Male	SEG BC1 Female	SEG C2D Male	SEG C2D Female	SEG E Male	SEG E Female
I have done this / I am doing it now	14%	14%	15%	16%	19%	12%	15%	18%	10%	9%	14%
I would definitely like to do this	14%	17%	11%	19%	9%	14%	14%	21%	10%	16%	11%
I would consider doing this	31%	32%	30%	31%	32%	33%	26%	28%	37%	38%	27%
I'm not interested in doing this	20%	18%	22%	19%	22%	21%	21%	15%	20%	15%	25%
I have never really thought about doing this before	12%	10%	15%	7%	10%	12%	17%	10%	16%	11%	16%
I would not do this	8%	9%	7%	8%	7%	8%	8%	8%	7%	11%	8%

Question asked in O2 Youth Census poll: Have you ever done or would you ever consider doing any of the following to increase your employability or for other reasons? Participated in a programme designed to develop my entrepreneurial skills e.g. Young Enterprise initiative.

Figure 6.6   **Attitudes of young people about labour market opportunities in the digital economy: *Youth Census* poll 2012**

	Total	Male	Female	SEG A Male	SEG A Female	SEG BC1 Male	SEG BC1 Female	SEG C2D Male	SEG C2D Female	SEG E Male	SEG E Female
I have done this / I am doing it now	10%	12%	8%	11%	11%	7%	7%	18%	7%	12%	5%
I would definitely like to do this	17%	19%	14%	21%	16%	13%	14%	19%	14%	23%	14%
I would consider doing this	34%	35%	33%	30%	34%	44%	34%	31%	33%	36%	32%
I'm not interested in doing this	19%	17%	21%	20%	19%	22%	21%	14%	22%	11%	22%
I have never really thought about doing this before	13%	9%	16%	12%	13%	8%	17%	9%	16%	8%	17%
I would not do this	8%	7%	8%	6%	7%	5%	7%	8%	7%	10%	9%

Question asked in O2 Youth Census poll: Have you ever done or would you ever consider doing any of the following to increase your employability or for other reasons? Participated in a programme or scheme designed to equip me with digital skills e.g. coding, app design, website creation.

6.2 Preparing young people for the programme at the Think Big residential

All young people accepted onto the Think Bigger programme are invited to attend preparatory residential training provided by UK Youth at Avon Tyrrell. This gives young people the time and space to focus their attention solely on their project and a chance to meet their O2 Helper. The residential features 'master classes' run by senior staff at O2 on a range of issues such as, project management; marketing; money management etc. Young people particularly value these workshops, learning skills they were later able to apply to their project.

> 'I learnt the whole money management and project management; I don't have a business background so it's always useful to get that sort of knowledge in terms of managing money for a project.'

> 'From a workshops perspective I thought it was very good, I thought the people that did them were very friendly and open and it was nice to be there.'

> 'The workshops that we had with the trainers, they gave us a lot of information which I've found really helpful.'

Some were able to learn new skills and gain practical advice and guidance that they wouldn't necessarily have thought about otherwise.

> 'A brilliant experience I learnt some skills I never knew before, especially like risk assessments and CRBs...Before we wouldn't have done a risk assessment but now we know to take the legal measures to do such things so we can avoid any legal complications that could arise.'

> 'Things I found really useful were presentation skills, writing articles and the marketing and publicity side of things, there was stuff that I was kind of like pretty sure about but when you do something and think it's right but then you go and you learn about something else like a new way of doing it, then you're more confident to do it again, so like we've wrote press releases and stuff before without releasing them and then I've come back from the residential and gone maybe I need to emphasise this more and emphasise this less, so it's just learning those sorts of skills.'

> 'I got quite a lot of careers advice I'd say and just little gems, I wouldn't necessarily say one whole workshop changed my life but I got just a few ideas from things people said to me that really igniting some ideas for the project, so it was definitely worth going.'

They learned the importance of team work and to trust other project members by sharing out tasks and responsibility.

> 'The residential in particular showed me the importance of relying on other people for things rather than trying to get everything done perfectly myself.'

As well as learning practical skills from the residential, young people gained a great deal from meeting fellow Think Biggers and hearing about their projects.

> 'Just being together with all the other Think Bigger projects were brilliant - finding out what they were doing because some were completely different to what we're doing. It was really good fun as well, I was worried that it was going to be a bit dry and boring but it wasn't it was really fun and engaging.'

They were able to spend a few days surrounded by like-minded ambitious young people and share ideas on their projects. This inspired them to invest in their own projects and reinforced their positive attitude to make a difference in their community.

> 'It was great to hone in on what other people were doing and get inspired.'

'It was good to hear about other people's projects and what they were doing and get linked up with them, it was just nice to be around lots of young people who've all got ambition.'

'For me it was meeting other like minded young people making a difference in their community and seeing the drive they have and being inspired by that, that for me was the most important thing, the workshops were good as well, but it just showed there are other people like you with the same ambitions and they have that in common with you, so I thought that was fantastic.'

'It was encouraging to see other people my age with similar goals and outlooks on life, I met some really nice people.'

Young people felt the residential created the potential for networks to develop amongst young people, so they could provide greater peer-to-peer support and advice on each other's projects, challenges and achievements.

'Access to a network of other keen and motivated young people with great ideas.'

'The residential was really good actually, I enjoyed it, it's meeting different people and networking again because you get ideas off everybody so you're always giving ideas to other people and gaining ideas from them, so it's building those networks.'

'Networking because I got to meet other Think Big projects as well and learn about what they were doing and the difficulties they've faced so far and what sort of things I could do if I needed help and that sort of thing, building up a support network and having people to talk to in the same situation as me.'

Whilst meeting other young people was a particularly favoured aspect of the residential, others were disappointed when this network of young people did not always continue further down the line, perhaps suggesting that more needs to be done to sustain early networking and relationships throughout the life of the programme.

'I did meet some interesting people on the course but being here like a year later I don't actually talk to them anymore, even though we did for a couple of months, but at the time it was like they were definitely a good network of people... on that level the network didn't really form.'

There is no doubt that all the young people who attended the residential certainly enjoyed it, however some of the more capable young people found the training a little too basic for their needs and would have liked a more advanced form of training.

'I think the training was geared towards people who were just getting started and we were getting started on that particular project, but we've been working on [the project] for a few years, so a lot of the stuff they were talking about we'd already done before that, things like how to do finances and manage a budget that kind of thing.'

'I thought it was good but I didn't personally gain that much, I appreciate that I could have been at any level coming with the same idea, so the fact that I've done stuff in the past I fully understand that residential was built for people that haven't done anything to give them a foundation in every level so it's not completely daunting for them, so I'm not suggesting that you change the training but me personally I don't really think that I got that much out of it.'

'I didn't gain very much to be honest...I think the problem was that Think Big is 13-25 year olds and I'm at the upper end of that so it's hard for them to pitch something for everyone...it was interesting to see what other people are up to.'

'It was hard for O2 to pitch the training because you had a lot of people there and a lot of different ages and I'm not being big headed but I think I was at a higher level as I'd already started my own company and I had some knowledge of things like that so

some of the training I didn't gain an awful lot from. I understand it's hard to pitch it at the right level, there was a 15 year old boy at my residential so obviously it's hard to pitch to all.'

The majority of young people attending the training are either graduates or undergraduates and consequently have, or are in the process of developing a wide range of transferrable skills. This does not necessarily mean that these young people had experience or knowledge of project work as such. Nevertheless, it led many participants to assert that other young people may find the residential more beneficial than they did.

'I think maybe the 13-25 age range is really noticeable when you're at the older end of the scale...maybe they could either split the groups so the ages are more similar or so that the residential is similar projects, that might be more useful so you've got people who are all like working on social enterprises or all working on sports projects or whatever, that could work pretty well...you'd probably be able to share resources better.'

Some young people also found the physical activities difficult suggesting the potential for issues on inclusivity. These activities are important for breaking down barriers and emphasising team work, but they may not suit everyone and an alternative approach may be considered so as not to embarrass or isolate the less inclined young people.

'I'd improve the physical activities like the climbing and things like that and give a wider choice to people who are maybe less active and more inclined to do other things.'

A considerable amount of money is invested in the residential and it is therefore important to ensure all young people are receiving the right level of training according to their needs. For some individuals a two and a half day residential may not be necessary – it may be that they would be better suited to more specialised or advanced sessions that take place over a day or via shorter, more focused learning sessions. They could still meet like-minded young people, be introduced to their Helper and have the time to focus on their project.

The location of the residential was an issue for some young people.

'From a personal perspective I suppose travel was a difficult one but that's one of those things that you can't help that much, if it need to be at Avon Tyrrell then it need to be there, but I'm based in London so it's difficult especially with uni and A Levels and that kind of thing.'

'Because it was in Southampton and I'm based in London, possibly have one more local because that might save everyone some money with travel etc.'

These shorter training sessions could address some of these issues by training being done more regularly and in numerous locations around the UK, this would potentially save costs on travel and allow young people to get on with their projects quicker – increasing volumes. But more importantly, this could make room for younger people (13-16s) or those with additional support needs to engage in residential training, as they may be more likely to benefit from more intensive support.

6.3 Think Big Helpers

The capacity of the Think Big programme to support young people is increased by the involvement of employee volunteers (EVs). In the Think Bigger programme, EVs provide more intensive support for young people in their role as O2 Helpers. Each Think Bigger project is allocated an O2 Helper to provide advice and guidance.

Most young people met with their O2 Helper during residential training. Helpers gave young people a great deal of support throughout their projects and it was important for them to know the support was available to them.

> 'He just inspires me to think about new things and he comes along to some of my events, it works perfectly.'

> 'He's fantastic, he's always willing to help and give advice and it's good it just keeps us on track and reminds us what we're doing at the end of the day, so it's very good to have him.'

> 'He just gives us basic advice and gives a good foundation of things to think about, like sometimes things are common sense but when you're the one that's doing it, like on the programme The Apprentice you look and them and think why are you doing it like that but they don't see because they're doing it, it's like that.'

The Helper's expert knowledge and ability to give advice was particularly valued by young people.

> 'it's just been really helpful because I can go to him and like when we was looking through the budget he was like "do you really need this one" and I was, like, this is the reason we need this tool and he was, like, "oh yeah I can see that now". So, because he understands about bikes and tools and what you're going to need, he was good just to double check things with. He also questioned some of the things on the list and he was right about it because he [could show that] you can get it cheaper than this and we didn't even realise. So it's been really good to have him with us. We're really hoping he's going to help us with our publicity as well so that's what we're going to be talking about when we meet up.'

> 'I'd say my O2 helper was actually really good and he would always ask for reports and feedback and sometimes he'd ask me to do this or that and improve on my reports or be more specific so I think he was really good.'

> 'He broke the cost down and was like "do you really need that, could you not get it cheaper anywhere else?" and it makes you think so you're saving money so you can do the project for longer...we had a really good mentor.'

Meeting their Helper face to face at O2 offices allowed young people to engage with other members of staff and gave them a chance to promote their project and the work they were doing.

> 'My O2 helper was fantastic and I couldn't praise her enough on how she helped me...[keep in touch] at least once a week and quite often twice a week, I went to her office in Leeds and did a presentation to her team so we met up there, it's tailored off a bit now but that's because my milestones are finished.'

> 'I got a really good guy and I used to contact him quite regularly in the beginning stages and he offered us a lot of opportunities for young people to come over to their building in Slough.'

Helpers also showed encouragement and support for young people by actively visiting projects, being present at their events and helping them fundraise.

'They were really helpful when we did the launch day and workshops and they were really useful, even down to doing the video recently they've helped out by coming down and being approachable that way.

'He was really good and responsive and helped with what I was doing as well...he ran a marathon for us so that was good and it was good to have someone to bounce ideas off as well.'

'We've had a few bike donations from people at O2 and we've been fixing them up and selling them on...he's planning on coming down to us to see what we do because he's really into his bikes as well.'

Whilst meeting with Helpers face to face seems to be of great value and is encouraged, it was not always possible for this to happen. Sometimes Helpers were based too far away from young people and other times school and work commitments made it difficult to spare the time to meet up with their Helper. That stated, the majority of young people are still in contact with their Helpers and use email and speak over the phone when they need to.

'So far it's mostly been phone conversations and emails, they checked through the budget and it's just keeping regular contact because he's up in Newcastle so we haven't yet had a face to face.'

'I try and get in touch with them whenever because when I was talking to them I was at school so I couldn't meet them so it was all by email...she helps me do all my money planning and the stuff I can't do as much.'

Sometimes young people could not be matched with the appropriate helper, but when this happened, either a member of the Think Big team or the Helper themselves made the effort to ensure a more suitable mentor was found.

'We haven't spoken for a long time, I think I emailed her a few weeks ago...she's trying to link me up with someone more locally who can help because I wanted to redevelop the site and they were going to try and link me up with a person to do that but I've yet to hear from anyone so far, it's a bit of a waiting game at the moment.'

In other cases young people already had a clear idea of what they wanted to do, or had sufficient support networks around them and therefore needed less support and contact with Helpers.

'We chose not to have one because we thought we didn't need one to be honest, so Becky is sort of our semi helper...one of the reasons was because our project is so community based we decided it better to keep it within the community as much as we can and not spread it out as much...there's people from school and the local council we can get support from if we need it.'

'[It's] not his fault more mine, because I tend to get on and do things and just ask questions about my money...but then there's Libby who's not O2 but the in between people, I talk to her a lot more than my mentor and it's not necessarily his fault, but I haven't ended up interacting with him that much.'

6.4 Taking risks and tackling challenges: enterprising attitudes

Think Big encourages young people to devise projects which tackle issues which they believe are important in their communities. Young people are expected to experiment and take chances; this means that the programme accepts that there is a risk of failure in the achievement of project objectives as initially defined. The programme is designed to support young people in their project journeys, but not to the extent of taking control of the project nor of dampening young people's ambitions. It is accepted at the application and award stage that young people may encounter significant (but not insurmountable)

challenges and barriers to success, and the programme provides an opportunity for young people to develop their personal resilience and problem solving skills to enable the project to proceed.

Time management

Young people often came across challenges whilst completing their projects, but these were necessary for them to learn vital skills that will be beneficial in the future. Time management was a challenge for a lot of young people doing Think Bigger projects. As participants on Think Bigger tend to be older (over 20) they are more likely to have to balance work or university commitments meaning they have to learn to manage their time more effectively.

> 'I started full time work in January. It's my first job out of uni and I've just had no time to do anything as yet and when I got allocated my mentor I was living in Lancaster and now I've moved right down to Bath and my mentor is based in Glasgow so it's not working out too brilliantly at the moment... there's not enough time, well there's no time...so there's a few obstacles at the moment so I'm trying to work through it and get it all cracking again.'

> 'I think some of our time scales are a bit unrealistic to be honest, we said we'd be finished by June and we are almost finished but it hasn't been easy.'

> 'It's been on and off because I work 8 hours a day but when an event is coming up we obviously put in a lot more hours, but sometimes I'm busy with my actual job so I go a few days without looking at it.'

Limited time did not deter participants. Indeed, some became more determined and worked with other project members, sharing responsibility, to ensure their project was a success.

> 'I've got like 4 jobs so what I find myself doing is spending all my time doing [the project] and not the stuff I'm being paid to do, so I have to stop myself from doing it, then there's another guy that only has a few hours doing youth work and he's been doing the majority of it, I probably spend between 5 and 10 hours a week which is probably about the right amount now.' 'I spend about 25 hours a week [on the project] which can be difficult when you have uni commitments and study, but we're a group of guys and we all do it together.'

> 'There are 3 of us who are very heavily involved and at any time one of could say I've had enough but it's a trust thing as we go along, but it's been nearly 3 years now since we started working on [project name] and we're still very keen do it. Our lives are moving in lots of different directions so it's just about how to make time and try and prioritise it which is always a bit difficult but we've got no plans to stop.'

The number of hours invested in the projects varies from just a few hours a week to spending the equivalent amount of time as a full time job. It is clear that whilst some young people found it difficult to manage their time, the fact they continued with their projects shows commitment and investment in both their projects and their local communities.

> 'It's hard to say how much time I've spent on it, but it's like full time work.'

Managing people

Young people are passionate about their projects, they are highly motivated individuals and many found it challenging having to rely on volunteers who found it hard to commit knowing they weren't getting paid to be involved.

'Commitment from cast members. We only secured our large Arts Council funding weeks into our rehearsal process so we found it very difficult to secure commitment from members of the cast because they assumed it was a voluntary role. Once funding had been secured and in place the attitude changed and was more productive.'

'Trying to rally up people and the problem is a lot of people are in a position where they need to work at the moment and they're finding it difficult to get work...especially recently people are less inclined to volunteer because they want paid work and they're fed up of doing all these government courses so I think they worry it's another kind of fad...but then I think we've got the trust of a lot of people now because they realise we'll do what we can to promote them and their work and it's kind of like we're a team and everyone is in the same boat.'

'I think with any voluntary thing, volunteers is a tough one, with the money we've got we pay for volunteer expenses but during summer and exam periods people do tend to shy away from it because they just don't have the time anymore, so that's what the biggest challenge.'

'I've had some experience before with volunteers and it's got to the point where I've thought, I'm just going to do it myself, because I felt it was a job in itself to manage them, because obviously I have to be mindful that people volunteer and don't necessarily have experience.'

As well as volunteers, many projects had to rely on people turning up to workshops or events to ensure the success of their project. It was often disappointing when they discovered the people they were aiming their project at were not as enthusiastic as they were.

'it was really hard to get people together at any one time, you'd have people come in to a meeting in dribs and drabs and it got you thinking oh gosh should I continue with this or not, just because it was hard getting commitment from people, although they'll say "I'm interested in doing it" you really have to chase people to attend meetings and make sure they were meeting with their mentors and sometimes it was a bit of a disappointment for the mentors who were giving up their time to meet with people.'

Overcoming this and using their leadership skills to find other ways to engage and motivate people, often meant thinking creatively and trying new things.

'The main one is trying to get youths from different areas of the local community to come to one location, the main problem with that is because of the gang rivalry in these particular areas they don't want to cross one estate to go into another estate to come to one location, so one thing we tried to do to address that is instead of inviting them to come to one location we have to go to them personally and their local communities etc.'

'We had to put a spin on it and decided to go to all the youth clubs, secondary schools, health services in the community, so we advertised in there and did like a talk and presentation in the schools etc...so it was a lot better the second time we did it.'

These challenges gave young people experience of people management and enhanced their leadership skills: building a foundation upon which they can draw in in future.

Working with other organisations

Many projects became dependent on other organisations for equipment, venues and design work and so on to achieve their objectives. Reliance on other organisations required project leaders to develop a range of skills including pitching, negotiation and diplomacy. And once

pledges of support had been won, project leaders also had to accommodate to changes in plan which resulted from the activities, attitudes and priorities of the organisations with which they worked.

Sometimes, reliance on other organisations could, for example, stall the progress of projects.

> 'I'm waiting for the studio to be built...I was hoping it would have been built by last week but it's not finished yet.'

> 'We're kind of on hold because we haven't got the shop...we can't do much publicity until we've got the shop because then we'd have to change it all and say this is our new address etc, so it's kind of on hold.'

> 'Another challenge would be performance space, sometimes communication between venues and us got a little lost and as a result some spaces we were due to perform in were not suitable for the task. We made sure that these things were dealt with swiftly on the day.'

While project leaders found this disappointing they dealt with the issue and worked to find a solution, even if it meant doing it themselves or having to raise extra funds. This shows their dedication and determination to continue with their projects, even when things stand in their way.

> 'We started in April and planned to have it designed in 4 weeks but the person that was designing the website pulled out and we had to find someone else but it took ages because of financial constraints.'

> 'We're on hold a bit because we were going to use a filming company but that's back fired and went a bit wrong so now we've ordered quite a bit of filming equipment ourselves and when that arrives we'll be starting filming shortly after.'

Some suggested problems are to be expected and it's all part of the learning process. These young people were perhaps the more experienced, having worked on similar projects before.

> 'There were typical event related problems, but who doesn't have little problems along the way, there's was nothing in particular it went quite smoothly'

Promoting projects to beneficiaries

Pitching ideas to organisations to gain support could be challenging. But a more difficult and sometimes frustrating task was to persuade people who may benefit from the project to get involved. Most project leaders had little experience of selling their project to the community and promoting its benefits to get people on board.

> 'It's hard getting the community involved because you don't know which groups to go to and people don't quite understand what it's all about.'

> 'The first week I'm not going to lie we had about three children turn up but luckily by the second week it was word of mouth so that sold us for the first part.'

> 'Promoting it, locally it's hard when there's so much stuff about.'

While promoting their project was initially challenging for some young people, this allowed them to develop their communication and problem solving skills by encouraging them to think in different ways to make their project a success.

> 'I found it hard talking to large [community] organisations. It's hard when you don't have any history so I've been working on building relationships with people by going to networking events.'

'It was such a challenge to get any coverage for our tour. We found that the poster we sent out had little effect and the social media stuff worked a little but not to the extent we would have liked. We tried to get around this by phone calls to local organisations and people we thought would be interested in coming along. We also targeted local schools.'

'We had to put a spin on it and decided to go to all the youth clubs, secondary schools, health services in the community, so we advertised in there and did like a talk and presentation in the schools etc...so it was a lot better the second time we did it.'

Others found that utilising the Think Big and O2 brands helped to promote their project and generate more publicity to engage the community.

'I find having O2 Think Big it's like having a brand and being funded by them almost makes people want to invest more time and want to understand it a bit more, so that challenge has been helped by O2.'

Leaders of Think Bigger projects encounter numerous challenges when things don't go according to plan - but it is expected that project teams attempt, with support, to overcome problems and achieve goals. In this sense, it is clear that young people do not just learn project management skills, communication skills and problem solving skills but also develop confidence in their ability to tackle challenges independently and withstand and overcome disappointments as they progress.

6.5 Making a difference: the community impact of Think Bigger

Think Bigger projects aim to tackle issues of concern to their leaders in the community. An important element of project activity, therefore, is to recognise that they have made an impact on their community of interest or place. When we interviewed young people, some were able to demonstrate direct impact on individuals such as: increasing chances of getting employment; participation in further education; gaining access training opportunities; and, reducing anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood.

It became apparent to us that it was often difficult to draw a distinction between those people who volunteered to assist others with projects and those who could be regarded as direct beneficiaries of the project. More often than not, volunteers on projects gained much from the project and were, essentially, the beneficiaries. In one project which hoped to provide sporting opportunities for young people who had little to do in their local community, for example, the project leader told us that...

'Some of the young volunteers started to realise that, potentially, football or sport can be a positive exit route: keeping *them* away from crime and anti-social behaviour, drugs etc.'

Other project leaders echoed similar outcomes.

'With the volunteers some of them have now got college places that they wouldn't have got on and it's helped them with their CV's, provided them with references, we've got them sports qualifications, so if it wasn't for Think Big, these volunteers wouldn't have the opportunities that they've had.'

In other cases, it was clear that projects directly supported beneficiaries.

'It's got a couple of young people off the streets and helped them to find meaningful things to do with their time...so far we've got three young people in placements, one's doing a childcare course, one's working in retail and one's waiting to start an apprenticeship as well.'

'I set it up first to get people off the streets more so I'm hoping that has helped a bit and then it provides socialising for them to meet new people.'

'It's helped the community come together because without those sessions there would be the people on the street causing trouble with anti social behaviour, drinking and drugs etc, so I feel like O2 have had a big help in the community.'

Think Bigger projects provide social locations within which young people in the community can gain more of a sense of purpose - often by giving them something positive to do with their time and in some cases teaching them new skills.

'It's given them a space to stimulate their creativity and develop their literacy skills and the pen pal course will increase the cultural awareness of life in another country. For the younger adults it's offered that space for them to develop their writing and be in a creative space where they can draw on inspirations from other creatives.'

'I always had good feedback from people, I found people really enjoy the craft element of it...I think the way they use their hands in craft is important in people skills and socially, by handling objects you're physically doing things rather than being in a dormant state, it's import to see the end product and have an actual result after a long process journey.'

Young people were proud of these outcomes as they could physically see the difference they were making in their communities, which often gave them the drive to continue their projects long after their Think Bigger funding had ended.

While some project leaders recognised the direct impact of their work on individuals' behaviour and skills, others acknowledged that their projects were capable of challenging conventional ways of thinking by raising young people's aspirations and building their confidence.

'The 18 young people that volunteered, they're now role models for people to look up to them and they often felt they were the ones being told what to do by teachers, parents or coaches and so it was refreshing and challenging to be on the other side and have 20 smiling faces looking at them and wanting their lead. That straight away changed the way our 18 young people conducted themselves and how they thought about life and certainly they became more mature and independent by the example they were setting, which was quite powerful.'

'I think the fact that it's youth led, especially by someone like myself that's come from [names place] and grown up there I just feel that it gives other young people someone they can relate to and the things that they do just gives them an opportunity to let them know they can make something of themselves and it just exposes them to other young role models which they may lack at home or the local community.'

'The younger generation look up to young leaders doing things and it helps to inspire and motivate them but also by now having young leaders in the community they will inspire change and improvements to their local areas.'

One project leader realised that both hard and soft outcomes were important and that sometimes the initial impact of their project may not be obvious and that it can take time to embed an idea and inspire people to think in new ways and try new things. This led some project leaders to recognise that they needed to gain the trust and confidence of the community before they can create the potential for a longer lasting impact.

'In some ways you see the results physically, you develop relationships with young people and you'll see that the guy has got off drugs or he's focusing his attention on GSCE's now, that kind of thing, in those ways you see it and that's very nice so we'd like to get a career workshop so they can decide what job they want to go into and that kind of thing. In some ways it's more subtle - some people don't look like they're

benefitting immediately but it's more for the long term if they put in commitments and give them something to do, they'll be inspired. And a few of them are thinking of setting up their own thing like this for the future. I'm confident we are helping but sometimes it's not as obvious at first.'

Project leaders often focused on specific outcomes, but as the project progressed they came to realise that their work had the potential to produce other benefits such as bringing members of the community together in a different way. Many project leaders emphasised the importance of increasing community contact between groups who rarely met in the past. And by bringing them together, prejudices were challenged and there was more scope to increase a sense of community cohesion.

> 'It kind of bridges a gap between young people who sometimes live in a world of their own and other members of the community who may have been fearful of engaging with young people, so that's been good bridging that gap as well.'

> I think it's just brought our community together a little bit as well and we're only one small part it's not even the whole borough or anything, but I think definitely it has helped.'

Challenging negative attitudes and inspiring people to think differently about their community was a common theme in project leaders' appraisals of what they had achieved. Not only did this give people in communities more confidence in their ability to tackle local issues, it also led project leaders to reappraise the fundamental issues which they had set out to tackle. In some cases, this centred on the way communities see themselves, and sometimes about how outsiders see them:

> 'I think people will start to realise my local community isn't as bad as they think it is and it will hopefully increase visitor numbers and increase revenue for local businesses and increase the general perception of the area.'

> 'Through letting people have a voice, when the riots happened, ITV came to interview me just because they knew I go and speak to people in the community and let them have their voice and that sort of stuff.'

In some cases, of course, projects led to more tangible transformations, even if only on a limited scale. Such changes could include for example: the establishment of a community shop; provision of activities and events for young people; and, clearing up useable spaces for the community to enjoy. Such projects increased their sense of pride in the communities within which they lives and, as many project leaders (most of whom were graduates or undergraduates) had already enjoyed significant successes of their own in their own lives, they felt that they had been able to give something back to their communities and make a real difference.

> 'Lots of new gardens. And the shop has been going for about three months now and it's ticking over and paying for itself. It's not enough to pay salaries yet but it's on the way I think.'

> 'It's offering bike rides for free for young people and families and also doing the repairs. Like this week we've been bombarded with people asking us to do this and that, so I think in small ways it's benefitting.'

> 'It has only just been launched but already we have received several emails from members of the public congratulating us on coming up with the idea and carrying it through. We hope that by supporting anti-litter role models, we will change attitudes about littering and this will hopefully lead to a reduction in the amount of litter discarded.'

Some projects are not based in a physical locality but are aimed at certain groups of people with specific needs. These can take place across wider communities of interest and provide services to groups that may not be available in their local neighbourhoods.

'I think it's got people excited, which is nice. It's not community specific unless you're talking non-geographical communities, but people that have come [and] it's got them thinking because it is quite different... For some people it's meant they've enjoyed an event in a way they wouldn't have been able to without the sensory space... it's the sort of thing that tends to have a impact that differs from person to person.'

One project leader noted that their project had helped to break down the barriers and engage with the community and that people in community had reciprocated by being positive about their efforts.

'People have congratulated me but I couldn't say whether young people in general are now thought more highly of. I always stick up for young people when they get blamed for litter problems because I actually don't think they are any worse offenders than other age-groups so it is important to me to challenge the stereotype.'

Another project leader also realised that they had been able to present young people in a positive way in their own community, but were keen to stress that society as a whole needs to change its perceptions of young people before there can be any real and lasting impact.

'I think indirectly, when people see more young people getting involved in projects and going and keeping themselves busy and not doing the crime that they've come to expect then it does change that perception indirectly...but I think if we want to change overall perceptions of young people it needs a national cultural shift, it's not something one organisation can do in one area, so I think it's bigger than us but maybe if we all work together it could help.'

At the Think Bigger stage it appears that young people are better able to recognise the impact their project has had on the community. In March 2012 we reported that once young people had completed their Level 1 project, they found it difficult to articulate community impact as many of them had little experience of other projects they could compare with. As Think Bigger projects usually take place over a longer period of time and are more generously resourced, project leaders are better able to look back on their experience and reflect on what they have achieved. This builds their confidence and belief in their own ability to motivate others and make a positive difference.

6.6 Personal journeys: the impact of Think Bigger on young people

In general, young people felt that the training and support they received during their Think Bigger experience enabled them to complete their projects successfully. As mentioned above, many of these young people were already very capable individuals. However the majority felt that Think Bigger had provided them with numerous skills they would not necessarily gain through higher education. These ranged from improved social skills to practical project management skills.

'I gained a lot about budgeting, project management, risk assessments, community planning, marketing of the project, advertising and I didn't study business at university so it was a steep learning curve a lot of the time and O2 provided me with that support and it's been really valuable.'

'Leadership, management skills, organisational skills, things like networking and meeting new people, building my network as well that's something very valuable and with the other skills they can be transferred to anything. I'm responsible for running projects around different areas so that will help to develop my interpersonal skills as well.'

'Personally I think it's been good for my self-development and reaching out to young people as well as presentation, communication, general skills that are needed to be able to engage with not just young people but people of the community.'

'A lot of time and organisational skills and I guess public speaking as well because I've had to actually talk in front of people, to be patient, [and] report writing and little things like that.'

'My job before I was a player and a coach, so I've never had to do this from this side. So development and communication skills with networking etc. since Think Big I've had to do it all by myself... I've never really done stuff like that or publicising.'

Some were able to embark on more specialised training that was more specific and beneficial to their projects.

'Loads of skills, I've been on courses to be a bike-ability instructor which has improved my general riding, I did a crash course in mechanics as well which means I can help out with that when I can and that's been really beneficial.'

Young people recognised they had gained essential skills to help them in their transition to adulthood and these skills also benefitted other project members and volunteers.

'Time management, time management is crucial when you have study commitments as well, you really do have to balance it and it's difficult but also social skills, not just me but I've seen a lot of my volunteers at the beginning when they saw the kids on drugs they'd say let's stay away from this guy whereas now they're like let's help this guy, so I think dealing with troubled young people and time management I've learnt that.'

'I know for everyone involved it increases confidence and the will-power to do something and the confidence that if you want to change something you certainly can do.'

Many young people recognised that Think Bigger may provide them with evidence to demonstrate their transferable skills which may be of interest to employers.

'I feel I've gained a lot of experience from this, I've learnt a lot, I've had some hiccups for example I've had to send the flyers back a million times...so I've learnt patience and tolerance. My time keeping has improved and I'd say I've asserted my leadership skills, it pushed me to realise I could do more than I thought I could.'

'It's something for my CV and allows me to exercise my organisational skills.'

Gaining confidence in their own ability was arguably the most beneficial element of the programme.

'It's kind of built my own confidence as well in terms of being able to set up a project and see it through, so I feel like if I had to do something like this again, I feel more prepared for it.'

'It's given me confidence in my ideas and the motivation to carry them through.'

Having the support and trust from a company like O2 boosted their self esteem which in turn made them believe in themselves.

'For me it's been really good and given me a lot of confidence because to have someone who actually backs your ideas enough to give you some money towards it...it's encouraged me to do something in the community and volunteer.'

Think Bigger also helped to prepare them for other things and find their way in life.

'I suppose my own direction. I've honed in on what I'm passionate about and it is about education and how to improve it because I feel education is the key to a better quality of life through.'

For some it became a part of their identity and provided them with a sense of purpose in life.

'[the project] has become a central part of my identity and it's something that I've slotted in to the other work that I do and it's informed the choices that I'm making about my future, I think it's given me quite a lot of confidence both talking to people about the project, getting to know it really well, working hard on it and then realising that I know what I'm talking about, it's made me feel that I'm doing something useful and that I can encourage other people to do something similar or something they're passionate about. It's a nice thing being able to get other people thinking about what they could do in their community, it makes you want to be ambitious I think.'

'My work is all related, all the different jobs that I do have all got a common thread of disability/access/inclusion and having this has made me feel I can push myself further in other jobs and raise my expectations.' 'It's made me feel more valued and it's kept me sane throughout the pregnancy and given me something to do and focus on but it's also very good because it can fit round everyone's schedule for example some of the people are disabled so they can do it from home so it's a very good way to keep your focus when you need to have something to do and have a purpose.'

In a small minority of cases, young people had gained more interest in and developed the confidence to start up their own business or social enterprise.

'Also skills with the social enterprise and running the business side of things as well, having those meetings and talking about are we sticking to our budget etc. It's just a whole new experience that two years ago I was not even thinking about, starting our own business together, I'd never even have dreamed of that or know where to start.

'It's helped to set up a project which will hopefully be self sustaining and give me a job'

Undoubtedly, participants in Think Bigger are enterprising in the sense that they identify areas of need in their communities, think up ways of tackling them and generate energy in the community to tackle these problems. The extent to which project work builds business skills as such needs, however, to be kept in context. Think Bigger provides small grants to undertake projects which can bring direct benefit to communities and build the confidence, resilience and skills of project leaders (and volunteers who support them). So when we asked project leaders about how they scaled up their project (or had ambitions to do so) by garnering support or money to achieve more – we tended to get responses which focused on how to draw in more 'funding' to do more, rather than to say how they could trade goods or services to generate income to make the project sustainable in the longer run. The following quotations provide typical responses to our questions:

'Yes we received a random bit of funding, random as in we didn't apply for it, somebody contacted us and said they'd like to give us £1,000 which was exciting and it came at a good time in between the funding from O2 when we'd spent the first amount from O2, then we've had a couple of private donations from individuals but nothing else that we've applied for.'

In some cases 'sustainability' was taken to mean the leverage of more grant funding or public giving – but not reliance on business as such.

'Last year we received funds from people like O2 and corporate entities that were willing to support us, so now we have to find a way to be sustainable and the best way to do that would be to become a charity which is the way we're going now.'

'We're always looking for funding and we plan to expand if there's the demand so we want to market it and get it out there as much as is possible, it's started with just 3,000 people and just to maintain that website it costs money, so after Think Big we'll just keep trying to look for funding and expand it and come up with new ideas.'

The O2 funding is just for one year but after that we hope to make it sustainable, we hope to run it long term, so hopefully after this it will take off...we'll have to apply for

other funding, relying on grants is not the way to grow an organisation in the long term, donations and fundraisers that kind of thing and what the local council can provide us with, but in terms of getting off the ground the O2 money has been fantastic, we wouldn't have been able to do it without it.'

In other cases, Think Bigger provided funding to bolster the resources of existing social enterprises.

'It's a company I started last year when I was just finishing university and what came out of that was [the] Academy which is what O2 helped to sponsor part of - that's now in the process of becoming a charity. So by October we should have charitable status and that will be how we'll continue to build the project next year... it was not intended to be a charity but as the project changes and now we've developed it, we've realised that what we're trying to do is definitely charitable and we've adapted it so there's more community involved, especially with the volunteers so that's the part we must continue with.'

In a very small number of projects, some scope for developing a business model was identified by project leaders – as is indicated by the following quotations.

'It's something that's developed, the Level one was towards costs of tools for our garden project and then when I went to Level two I used that for another project which is a social enterprise producing local food...so that paid for things like more tools and set up costs...I'm doing a business plan for the next few years'

'I want to turn it into a social enterprise but at the moment I'm just struggling a bit with how to make it self sufficient...the ultimate aim for it is a magazine in print but I need to get the online following big enough to be able to justify that in the market...it's building up I've got 1,100 on Facebook and about the same on Twitter so it's getting there but just not quick enough yet, we need more exposure.'

A more frequent response to our line of questioning about enterprise were broadly based statements of ambition to establish businesses or social enterprises in future arising from their work on Think Bigger.

'It's an extra thing [to job] but I want to take it forward so it's now a social enterprise, a community interest company...I always wanted to have something like this in place but it's when I started the project that I started to see how realistic it could be, so it's enhanced all my thoughts on starting up a social enterprise.'

'I'd like to eventually run it full time and turn it in to a bit more of a media outlet where we're selling content but in the meantime I guess I'll get more work as a freelance journalist researcher and also I'm looking at doing a post graduate course and then the ideal would be to be paid to do my project.'

'I really want to open up a music venue near me and then start doing it more, so hopefully I can save up and get a music venue...it's something I've thought about since doing Think Big to now make it a long ongoing project.'

6.7 Summary and conclusions

Think Bigger is the second level of the programme which provides investment and support for young people to tackle issues in their communities. The evaluation shows that Think Bigger takes young people to a higher level of engagement in project management and that they receive appropriate levels of support to achieve their objectives.

Developing socially enterprising attitudes and aspirations

The research shows that Think Bigger helps to energise young people to become more enterprising in the practices – even though the majority do not yet show strong interest in conventional business enterprise.

The term 'enterprise' in the context of this study is used to indicate a range of attitudes and capabilities which can enable young people to be enterprising in their personal, social or business lives. It is about enabling a young person to discover their potential and to move from a position where they might expect that somebody else will beat a path to the future to one where they mark out their own path. It is also a programme which adopts the idea that enterprising attitudes are important in many different contexts: as community leaders, as employees, as volunteers or as social or business entrepreneurs.

The Think Bigger programme is designed to support young people in their project journeys, but not to the extent of taking control of the. It is accepted that young people may encounter significant (but not insurmountable) challenges and barriers to success. The programme therefore provides an opportunity for young people to develop their personal resilience and problem solving skills to enable the project to proceed.

> 'I feel I've gained a lot of experience from this, I've learnt a lot, I've had some hiccups for example I've had to send the flyers back a million times...so I've learnt patience and tolerance. My time keeping has improved and I'd say I've asserted my leadership skills, it pushed me to realise I could do more than I thought I could.'

Leaders of Think Bigger projects encountered numerous challenges when things did not go according to plan - but project leaders, with support, overcame problems and achieved their objectives. It is clear that the programme helps young people to develop confidence in their ability to tackle challenges independently and withstand and overcome disappointments as they progress.

> 'I think it's given me quite a lot of confidence both talking to people about the project, getting to know it really well, working hard on it and then realising that I know what I'm talking about. It's made me feel that I'm doing something useful and that I can encourage other people to do something similar or something they're passionate about. It's a nice thing being able to get other people thinking about what they could do in their community, it makes you want to be ambitious I think.'

The evaluation shows that the programme is particularly successful in developing the following skills: time management; managing people; working with other organisations; involving communities and knowing how to articulate and communicate if social impact has been achieved.

In a very small number of projects, some scope for developing a business plan to extend the life of their projects was identified – as is indicated by the following quotations.

> 'It's something that's developed, the Level one was towards costs of tools for our garden project and then when I went to Level two I used that for another project which is a social enterprise producing local food...so that paid for things like more tools and set up costs...I'm doing a business plan for the next few years.'

> 'I want to turn it into a social enterprise but at the moment I'm just struggling a bit with how to make it self sufficient...the ultimate aim for it is a magazine in print but I need to get the online following big enough to be able to justify that in the market...it's building up I've got 1,100 on Facebook and about the same on Twitter so it's getting there but just not quick enough yet, we need more exposure.'

When most project leaders explained how they scaled up their project (or had ambitions to do so) by garnering support or money to achieve more – we tended to get responses which focused on how to draw in 'funding' to do more, rather than to say how they could trade goods or services to generate income to make the project sustainable in the longer run. In

general, 'sustainability' was taken to mean the leverage of more grant funding or public giving – but not reliance on business activity as such.

Community impact

Think Bigger projects tackle issues of concern to their leaders in the community. An important element of project activity, therefore, is to recognise when impact has been achieved. Many were able to demonstrate direct impact on individuals such as: increasing chances of getting employment; participation in further education; gaining access training opportunities; and, reducing anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood.

It is often not possible to draw a distinction between those people who volunteered to assist others with projects and those who could be regarded as direct beneficiaries of the project. More often than not, volunteers on projects gained as much from the project and were, essentially, the beneficiaries.

Project leaders also recognised that the initial impact of their project was less obvious and that it can take time to embed an idea and inspire people to think in new ways and try new things. This led some project leaders to recognise gaining the trust and confidence of the community was an important achievement in itself. Many project leaders recognised that increasing community contact between groups who rarely met in the past helped to challenge prejudices and could increase community cohesion.

> 'It kind of bridges a gap between young people who sometimes live in a world of their own and other members of the community who may have been fearful of engaging with young people.'

Challenging negative attitudes and inspiring people to think differently about their community was a common theme in project leaders' appraisals of what they had achieved. Usually this centred on the way communities see themselves, but sometimes about how outsiders see them:

> 'I think people will start to realise my local community isn't as bad as they think it is and it will hopefully increase visitor numbers and increase revenue for local businesses and increase the general perception of the area.'

Support for young people

The evaluation shows that young people are given appropriate levels of support to develop and deliver their projects from Think Big programme staff, via residential training and from their dedicated O_2 Helpers. Participants on the programme were effusive about the support they gained.

> 'It's been a very positive experience and my helper made half of that herself, it's great what O_2 are trying to do and help people out as it can be quite daunting for a young person with very little support and money, so I'm a huge supporter.'

> 'The people who are at Think Big, the people in the office are brilliant, they're really helpful and answer emails and because we didn't get an O_2 helper straight away they were on the case and looking after us and they're just brilliant. They always send through opportunities to get involved further with stuff and I just want to say they're brilliant and really good at their job and I don't think this programme would be as successful without them.'

> 'It's been a pretty positive experience, I know there's always been somebody on the phone or the other end of an email to answer all my questions, things have run quite smooth in terms of how things have been organised.'

As shown in Chapter 4, the participants in Think Bigger currently tend to be more highly educated and older than on the first level of the programme. As a result, many of the participants are ready to take on bigger challenges and are generally receptive to the kinds of support they receive. There may, however, be some scope to widen the range of participants in the programme to ensure that the second level of the programme becomes more fully inclusive and ensures that young people with fewer existing skills and qualifications can benefit from the higher levels of personal and financial investment available. A more flexible training model may also enable the programme to evolve its support offer, and provide more tailored training and support to meet young people's needs. It is felt that the level of support offered to young people on the Think Bigger programme would ensure that these young people could step up the challenges of the programme and achieve their personal and social objectives.

Chapter seven
Employee volunteers

'What differentiates us is that we're in it for the long term, not just a quick hit. In the current economic climate, where the situation is difficult for young people, we need to give them opportunities, skills and confidence and a voice.'

O$_2$ employee

7.1 Introduction

Voluntary social action is lauded in Western societies because of its positive contribution to building social capital and the maintenance of civil society (Blond, 2010; Norman, 2010; Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000). There is little agreement nationally, let alone internationally, on how to define voluntary social action and less still on how to measure how much of it people do. Defining what counts as volunteering is difficult, with disagreements over, for example, whether or not informal and private caring class as volunteering, and if any remunerated activities (such as employer supported volunteering) can be included.

Civil society is the location within which most formal voluntary action takes place. Formal volunteers contribute to the governance of organisations (as trustees, committee members or directors), they help with fundraising or campaigning, or they get involved with front-line work. Consensus on an exact definition of civil society is elusive, but most commentators agree that civil society is different from the state and necessarily must be separate. As Held notes: '…the "separation" of the state from civil society must be a central feature of any democratic political order' (Held, 1996: 314). It is not surprising, therefore, that governments invest in the promotion of voluntary action in western societies

As an entity, civil society is sustained through the existence of relationships which are built on trust and reciprocity rather than formal or legal constraints. It provides informal mechanisms for conflict resolution, problem solving and co-operation. In sum, civil society provides the arena within which voluntary action flourishes, often to the benefit of society as a whole but also to the benefit of individuals and interest groups which both gain and can inject social capital into civil society through their association. [58]

The distinction between 'civil society' and the 'market' (the location within which private sector business operates) is becoming more blurred as companies invest more time and money on social or environmental causes. Employers have become interested in encouraging their staff to engage with social action and volunteering in recent years. In many cases, again, such interventions are short-lived because they are centred upon discrete CSR projects. Think Big, by contrast, is a long-term cross-national intervention which intends to build employee commitment to voluntary social action over time – providing time, encouragement and opportunities to get involved.

Getting people to volunteer is not a straight forward matter. The empirical evidence upon which it claimed that 'people will give more of their time' is not particularly strong. Citizenship Survey data indicates that levels of formal volunteering at least once a month has been relatively stable for some time as shown in Figure 7.1.

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[58] See: Norman, (2010); Blond, (2010); Office for Civil Society, (2010); Her Majesty's Government, (2011).

Figure 7.1 **Formal and informal volunteering in England (percentages)**

	2001	2003	2005	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
At least once in the last month							
Informal volunteering[1]	34	37	37	35	35	29	29
Formal volunteering[2]	27	28	29	27	26	25	25
Any volunteering[3]	47	50	50	48	47	42	41
At least once in last year							
Informal volunteering	67	63	68	64	62	54	55
Formal volunteering	39	42	44	43	41	40	39
Any volunteering	75	73	76	73	71	66	65

1 Informal volunteering: Giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives.
2 Formal volunteering: Giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment.
3 Participated in either formal or informal volunteering.
Source: Citizenship Survey: 2010-11 (April 2010-March 2011), England, Department for Communities and Local Government,
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1992885.pdf

The likelihood of taking part in voluntary action varies significantly depending on the situation of individuals. As the NCVO recently reported:

"Participation in formal volunteering differs by employment status, age, ethnicity, disability and region. People in employment are more likely to volunteer than those who are economically inactive (42% and 34% respectively). Those living in the South West (49%), South East (49%) and East of England (41%) are more likely to volunteer than those living in the North East (29%) and London (32%). Forty-three per cent of people aged 35 to 49 formally volunteer at least once a year compared to one-third (33%) of those aged 26 to 34. Participation didn't differ by gender with 39% of men formally volunteering once a year compared to 38% of women." [59]

Indeed, they argue that there is a 'civic core' of volunteers in the UK, and while the objective of bringing people in from the fringes of this core is a priority for government, it is quite difficult to achieve.

Research by the Third Sector Research Centre indicates that a relatively small subset of the population – the civic core – is responsible for most of the volunteering; charitable giving and civic participation that takes place. Just over a third (36%) of the adult population provide nearly nine-tenths (87%) of volunteer hours, just over four-fifths (81%) of the amount given to charity, and just over three-quarters (77%) of participation in different civic associations. The contribution of the primary core to volunteering is particularly striking with 9% of the adult population accounting for 51% of all volunteer hours which highlights the significant level of involvement of a committed few. In terms of demographics, people in the civic core are more likely to be middle-aged, have higher education qualifications, actively practise their religion,

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[59] See National Council for Voluntary Organisations Civil Society Almanac 2012: http://data.ncvo-vol.org.uk/.

be in managerial and professional occupations, and have lived in the same neighbourhood for at least 10 years.[60]

The Government wants to encourage volunteering, but it is evident that fiscal constraints may result in reduced investment from the public purse in the encouragement, support and management of volunteering. As a consequence, the government, has put significant emphasis on the role business can play in encouraging volunteering through the development of employer supported volunteering (ESV) schemes.[61]

ESV has become one of the fastest-growing areas of voluntary activity in the UK, throughout Western Europe and North America.[62] Although it is often difficult to quantify its impact, there is evidence to suggest that ESV benefits the business organisation, employees, voluntary organisation and society in general.

Involvement in community schemes has a positive impact on employees' perception of the work organisation. Those involved in ESV are more committed to the organisation. ESV facilitates employee development in that it helps employees develop job-related skills such as team working, leadership, greater social awareness and interpersonal skills.[63] As a result investment in ESV programmes has been described by several commentators as a 'win-win' activity.[64]

Employees also benefit from ESV by enhancing work-related skills through taking on new roles through their volunteering and bringing newly acquired skills back into the workplace.[65] Taking time out from work to volunteer reduces the pressures of the workplace, energising them so that they can better take on the challenges of the job when they return. For career minded staff, volunteering may enhance the CV and open up new career possibilities. For those coming to the end of their careers it can help the transition from work to retirement. Research suggests that employees volunteering through ESV also tend to participate in volunteering outside work time, and people who work with colleagues who volunteer are more likely to volunteer themselves.

Finally, there are benefits to the wider community. Those who participate in ESV have greater opportunities for social mixing, meeting people they might not normally have contact with. This external focus makes them more aware of the challenges facing people in their communities as well as increasing their understanding of social issues. ESV adds sustainable value to the local community. The co-learning which arises between the local region and businesses involved in ESV can increase prosperity in a community.

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[60] NCVO, *Ibid*. 2012. See, for more detail, Mohan and Bulloch, 2012.

[61] I am indebted to Helen Bussell, Teesside University, who worked on the research project in its early stages, for providing a literature review on employer supported volunteering, upon which this summary is based.

[62] For the UK, see Volunteering England, 2005; Western Europe, see: de Gilder *et al.,* 2005; for North America, see: Miller, 1997; Lantos, 2001; Hess *et al,* 2002.

[63] There is a growing literature in this field, see for example, the following useful contributions: Involvement in community schemes has a positive impact on employees' perception of the work organisation Brewis, 2004; de Gilder *et al.,* 2005; Wild, 1993; Miller, 1997, Lovell, 2005, return Geroy *et al.,* 2000; Rose, 2002 and Finney, 1997.

[64] See for example: Steckel *et al.,* 1999; Phillips, 2000; Brewis, 2004; Lovell, 2005; Pidgeon, 1998; Muthuri, et al, 2007; Teague and Peterson, 2011; Saloumi, 2012; Booth, et al. 2009; Lorenzi, et al. 201.

[65] The most frequently cited are transferable skills such as communication: Geroy *et al.,* 2000; Rose, 2002; Brewis, 2004; time management, Rose, 2002: and leadership Brewis, 2004. Developing new skills and building on existing ones increases self-esteem and confidence, Brewis, 2004; Murray, 2005; Geroy *et al..,* 2000.

7.2 Employee volunteers in Think Big

Young people taking part in Think Big have the opportunity to receive support from O$_2$ employees while they are doing their project. O$_2$ employees can support young people's projects in several ways: as online Helpers who are attached to particular projects; by engaging in Team Challenges to support their local communities; by getting involved in a international Telefõnica volunteering day, amongst other things. For many years, O$_2$ has been keen to get their employees involved in local communities. Several programmes preceded Think Big – include its five year programme – *It's Your Community*.

This section considers the involvement of EVs on the three dimensions discussed above to assess its benefits – from the perspective of the people who get involved, in terms of its impact on the community, and, the benefits it brings for O$_2$ as a company. The evidence is drawn primarily from an online survey of 227 current EVs in December 2012 and is bolstered with qualitative evidence from focus groups undertaken in January and February 2012. Additionally, the quantitative evidence can be compared with a survey undertaken in 2011 (N=197).[66]

Characteristics of the sample

The sample of respondents covers the range of company departments fully, although, some areas of activity have stronger response rates (especially sales and service, finance, business operations, and technical operations). Respondents are drawn from across the organisational hierarchy: 36% of the sample are middle or senior manager; 24% junior managers; 11% in technical grade jobs; and the remainder in sales, retail and administrative grade occupations. Duration of employment data shows that: about 12% of respondents have been with the company for less than two years; 23% for 3-5 years; 24% for 6-10 years; and 41% who have been with the company for more than 11 years. The educational qualifications of respondents are widely distributed but the majority are in the higher end of achievement: 48% are graduates; 12% have achieved NVQ4 or equivalent; 18% NVQ3 (A Levels of equivalent); 18% with GCSEs; and, nearly 4% with no academic qualifications. The sample comprises 48% men and 52% women. The age range includes 16% under 30 years of age; 40% from 30-39 years; 37% from 40-49 years; and 17% over 50 years. By ethnicity: 91% are white; 2.6% mixed race; 5% Asian/Asian British; 0.5% Black/Black British.

Getting involved in Think Big

The first step in this analysis is to explore the reasons why employees chose to become involved in Think Big. Figure 7.1 shows a wide range of reasons why EVs became involved in Think Big in 2012. The factors that influenced people are ranked according the highest level of influence (first column of data in the table). Clearly the biggest influence in 2012 was to make a useful contribution to society which suggests a strong altruistic motivation on the part of most EVs. For many EVs, the opportunity to get involved in Think Big was timely: 55% had wanted to do some volunteering and the programme provided them with a route to do this. Similarly almost half of EVs expressed a desire to get involved with their community as a very strong influence. Almost 35% said that working with young people was a strong influence and a further 24% said this was of some influence.

Personal growth was also an influence for EVs. For example, 41% said that the opportunity to try something new was a strong influence; 38% thought it may give them new skills; 35%

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[66] The 2011 survey was identical to that used in 2012 allowing for complete comparability. The study undertaken in 2010 was a pilot stage study and many questions were not repeated in 2011 and 2012 so there is very limited scope for comparison. The number of respondents was also small in 2011, only 110, which reduces the scope for analysis significantly.

wanted to build their confidence, self esteem and self management and 21% got involved because of encouragement from line managers.. Career advancement, by contrast, did not seem to be as strong an influence. Only 11% said that CV building or improving their career prospects was a strong influence. Very few people got involved because they wanted to get time away from work - indeed, 84% said that this factor was of no real influence.

When the results from 2011 and 2012 are compared, as shown in Figure 7.2, some interesting differences emerge. The evidence suggests that employees were already quite keen to find an opportunity to get involved in volunteering in both cohorts of EVs and that Think Big provided a route to achieve this objective. But the number expressing a strong influence grew from 47% to 55% - suggesting increased pro-sociality. There is also a clear indication that employees had become more eager to try something new – rising from 29% expressing a strong influence to 41% in 2012. The percentage of EVs who were strongly influenced by previous involvement in such programmes is, of course, explicable as this is a long-term programme – but the differences are quite small – rising from 25% to 30%.

The influence of other colleagues being involved in Think Big is clearly growing, as would be expected in a programme which is building momentum. 22% of EVs expressed a strong influence in 2012 compared with fewer than 18% in 2011. There is some evidence to suggest that motivation to become involved was influenced more by managers in 2012 – rising from 15% in 2011 to nearly 22% in 2012. The 2011 report observed that some line managers had not been enthusiastic about their staff getting involved in the Think Big programme, so increased support from line managers is a positive finding in this context, again suggesting accelerated momentum in the programme. The proportion of EVs who were strongly influenced by the fact that they had been involved in Think Big before has grown from 15% to 25%. This suggests that commitment to the programme is growing steadily.

What advantages do EVs feel they gain from involvement in Thing Big? Figure 7.3 presents data from 2012 where factors are prioritised by the greatest level of impact. The results show that over 70% felt that they had a stronger sense of being part of the community; well over half felt that their perceptions of young people had become more positive; and, 63% felt that their awareness of social issues had increased. Nearly 65% of respondents felt that their willingness to try new things had been increased or increased greatly – suggesting the programme helps people widen their experiences and horizons. . These are all indications of increased pro-sociality.

People also recognised the personal benefits they were gaining. Nearly 63% felt that their motivation had increased; nearly 60% reported increased personal confidence and over 60% felt an improvement in self esteem. Similarly, around a half of respondents felt that their ability to communicate with other people, work as team and lead or encourage others had increased significantly. While few stated that the programme increased their work-place skills significantly, nearly 25% felt that the programme had some influence in this respect.

While there is very little evidence to suggest that involvement in Think Big decreased pro-sociality or personal confidence and skills – it is clear that some factors remained largely unchanged for the majority. Just over 73% felt that involvement did not increase their range of friendships outside work; 67% said it had no influence on outside interests and hobbies; or that the programme had increased participation in social situations.

Figure 7.1 **Reasons for getting involved in Think Big (2012)**

	A great deal of influence	Some influence	Not much influence	No influence at all
I wanted to make a useful contribution to society	64.3	25.6	2.2	7.9
I wanted to volunteer and this seemed like a good opportunity to get involved	55.5	30.0	5.7	8.8
I wanted to get more involved with the community	48.0	28.6	8.8	14.5
I wanted to try something new	41.4	26.0	13.2	19.4
I saw it as an opportunity to gain different skills	37.9	27.3	11.5	23.3
I saw it as an opportunity for personal development (e.g. confidence, self-esteem, self management)	35.2	26.0	15.9	22.9
I wanted to work with young people	34.8	24.2	12.3	28.6
I have done something similar before	30.4	31.3	8.8	29.5
I saw it as an opportunity to access training in new areas (e.g. working with young people)	27.3	22.5	12.3	37.9
I wanted to improve or develop existing skills (e.g. from team work to computer literacy)	25.1	25.6	19.4	30.0
I was volunteering with O2/Telefónica before	24.7	24.7	15.4	35.2
I was encouraged to by my line manager	21.6	21.1	15.4	41.9
My work colleagues/friends were getting involved	21.6	30.8	16.7	30.8
I wanted to build networks and social contacts outside work	16.7	17.2	22.0	44.1
I already volunteer elsewhere	15.0	23.3	15.4	46.3
I wanted to improve my career prospects/enhance my CV	11.5	13.2	15.4	59.9
I wanted to increase my access to social events with others	7.5	15.9	24.2	52.4
I thought it would get me time off work	2.2	4.0	10.1	83.7

Figure 7.2   **Influences on getting involved in Think Big**

	A great deal of influence		Some influence		Not much influence		No influence at all	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
I wanted to volunteer and it seemed like a good opportunity to get involved	46.7	55.5	33.8	30.0	5.6	5.7	13.8	8.8
I wanted to try something new	29.7	41.4	32.8	26.6	14.4	8.8	23.1	14.5
I have done something similar before	24.6	30.4	35.9	31.3	9.7	8.8	29.7	29.5
My work colleagues/friends were getting involved	17.9	21.6	31.3	30.8	17.4	16.7	33.3	30.8
I was encouraged by my line manager	14.9	21.6	21.5	21.1	23.6	15.4	40.0	46.3
I was volunteering with O$_2$ Telefónica before	14.9	24.7	24.6	24.7	15.4	15.4	45.1	35.2

[Type text]

Figure 7.3 **Advantages gained from being involved in Think Big**

To what extent have you gained personally from being involved in the programme?	Increased greatly	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Decreased greatly
My willingness to try new things	25.1	39.2	34.8	0.0	0.9
My sense of being part of my community	24.2	46.3	28.6	0.0	0.9
My sense of motivation	21.6	41.9	35.2	0.9	0.4
My positive perceptions of young people	21.6	35.2	41.4	0.4	1.3
Confidence in my own abilities	20.3	38.8	40.1	0.0	0.9
My understanding of social issues	20.3	43.2	35.7	0.0	0.9
My sense of self esteem	19.8	43.2	35.7	0.4	0.9
My ability to communicate with young people	19.8	32.6	46.7	0.0	0.9
My ability to communicate with other people	18.1	30.4	51.1	0.0	0.4
My ability to lead or encourage others	17.2	31.7	50.2	0.4	0.4
My ability to work as part of a team	15.9	28.2	54.6	0.4	0.9
New skills I can use outside work	15.4	33.9	49.3	0.4	0.9
My time management skills	14.1	16.7	67.4	0.9	0.9
My decision-making	13.7	22.5	62.6	0.4	0.9
My participation in social situations	12.3	23.3	62.1	0.9	1.3
My interests and hobbies	11.5	19.8	67.4	0.0	1.3
New skills related to my work	11.0	24.7	62.6	0.4	1.3
My range of friends outside work	8.8	15.4	73.1	1.3	1.3

[Type text]

Impact on working lives

Being involved with Think Big has had a growing impact on EVs feelings about their working lives and relationships with immediate colleagues and the company more generally. As the programme has become more fully embedded in the organisation, there is clear evidence to demonstrate increased impact on employees. Figure 7.4 presents data on perceptions on the impact of involvement on employees against a range of factors.

The first three factors relate to the 'social glue' in the organisation. We asked respondents if they find that Think Big provides them with a talking point between colleagues. In 2011, 21% strongly agreed that it did, but by the end of 2012 nearly 28% thought so. Similarly, the number of people who strongly agreed that the programme provided new ways of relating to colleagues had grown from 13% to 18%. Making new friends at work is also an important indicator of strengthened interpersonal ties within the organisation. The number of respondents strongly agreeing that the programme had helped them achieve this grew from 16% to 19%.

Instrumental benefits of involvement in the programme can also be recognised – although the impact is not particularly strong. In 2010, nearly 10% of people thought the programme had met people who could help them do their job better – and this had grown to 13%. Respondents were more likely to feel that they would gain personal recognition having been involved in the programme. Those strongly agreeing rose from 9% to 12%; and those who agreed/strongly agreed rose from about 32% to 37%. Similarly, there is some indication that a small minority associate involvement in Think Big with prospects for promotion. Those who agreed/strongly agreed rose from just below 5% to 11%.

While instrumental personal benefit from involvement is recognised by some employees, it is clearly not a major driver for them in getting involved – as previous tables demonstrate. But being part of the Think Big programme does make them feel like they are part of a distinctive group and that this makes them feel special. The number reporting strong agreement with this has risen from 15% to 24%; and for those who agree/strongly agree, the figures are even more impressive, rising from 49% to 61%.

When reflecting upon their experiences of Think Big, EVs tend to have positive attitudes about its benefits for them. As Figure 7.5 shows, nearly 87% of participants looked forward to working on Think Big; 76% felt it had introduced them to people from different backgrounds; and, more than 80% felt that they were making a positive contribution to the community. More than 70% agreed that young people appreciated their efforts and additionally, 55% of EVs felt that the programme had positively changed their perceptions of young people.

Lower order benefits relate to out of work activities, such as widening the range of their interests and hobbies, involvement in local groups – but there is quite a strong indication that more people will consider volunteering outside of working hours – nearly 47% say that this is the case. Perhaps surprisingly, nearly a third of people say that they feel less selfish - again, demonstrating the role that Think Big plays in encouraging staff to share their time and talents to benefit young people and the communities where they live and work.

Figure 7.4 **Perceptions of personal impact and benefits of Think Big**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree Strongly disagree	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
It has provided a talking point between myself and colleagues	21.0	27.8	54.9	51.1	19.0	14.1	5.2	7.0
It has provided me with a new way of relating to colleagues	13.3	18.1	36.4	36.6	40.5	35.2	9.8	10.1
I have made new friends at work	15.9	18.9	28.7	41.4	45.1	30.4	10.3	9.3
I have met people at O2/Telefónica who could help me do my job better	9.7	13.2	20.0	23.8	54.4	46.3	15.9	16.8
It has increased my chances of being recognised at work	8.7	12.3	23.6	25.1	49.2	41.4	18.5	21.2
It has increased my chances of being promoted at work	1.0	3.1	3.6	7.9	59.0	48.9	36.4	40.1
It makes me feel special to be part of this distinctive group	15.4	24.2	33.8	36.6	38.5	28.2	12.3	11.0

[Type text]

Figure 7.5   **Benefits of involvement in Think Big**

	Strongly agree:	Agree:	Neither agree nor disagree:	Disagree:	Strongly disagree:
I look forward to working on it	42.3	44.5	9.3	1.8	2.2
It has helped me meet people with different backgrounds from mine	32.6	44.1	17.6	4.4	1.3
I feel I am making a useful contribution to my community through working on it	30.0	50.7	12.8	4.4	2.2
My efforts were appreciated by the young people with whom I worked	29.1	43.2	22.0	3.5	2.2
It has positively changed my perception of young people	18.9	37.9	36.6	4.0	2.6
I now have a greater sense of being part of my community	18.5	42.7	30.8	5.7	2.2
I feel more committed to O2/Telefónica	16.7	25.6	42.3	9.3	6.2
Since taking part in it I am more interested in volunteering outside work hours	13.2	33.5	39.2	9.7	4.4
I now feel less selfish	12.3	19.8	55.1	6.6	6.2
As a result of it I have new interests and hobbies	9.3	15.9	51.5	18.9	4.4
I have become more involved in local groups and activities since being part of it	9.3	14.1	51.1	18.9	6.6

The question that must be raised in a long-term programme such as this, however, is whether reported benefits are increasing as the programme matures? Figure 7.6 addresses this point by comparing attitudes in 2011 and 2012. These data show very consistent improvement in perceptions of the benefits Think Big brings for young people, the wider community and for EVs themselves.

Very importantly, in a programme of this nature, people who are involved are clearly enjoying it because they look forward to taking part. The percentage of EVs who agree or strongly agree that this is the case has risen from 79% to 87% over the last year providing good evidence that the programme is flourishing.

Similarly, EVs felt that they are making a stronger contribution to their community (up from 72% to 80%) and even more strikingly, that the benefits of what they do is appreciated by young people (rising from 57% to 72%).

From a personal perspective, EVs are more likely to have met a wider constituency of people than they would have done had they not been involved in Think Big: rising from 67% to 76%; and that their perceptions of young people have changed for the better: rising from 43% to 57%.

Some attitudes have not changed so much. Participants in Think Big are no more likely to have become involved in their local community groups in 2012 than was the case in 2011. That stated, the percentage of respondents who say they are more likely to consider out of work volunteering has risen substantially from 37% to 47%.

General feelings of commitment to the company has not risen – although it should still be noted that 43% of EVs do feel more committed to O_2 than they did prior to involvement in Think Big. In fact, as the next set of Figures shows, commitment to the company is increased in several ways.

Figure 7.6   **Increased benefits of involvement in Think Big 2011-2012**
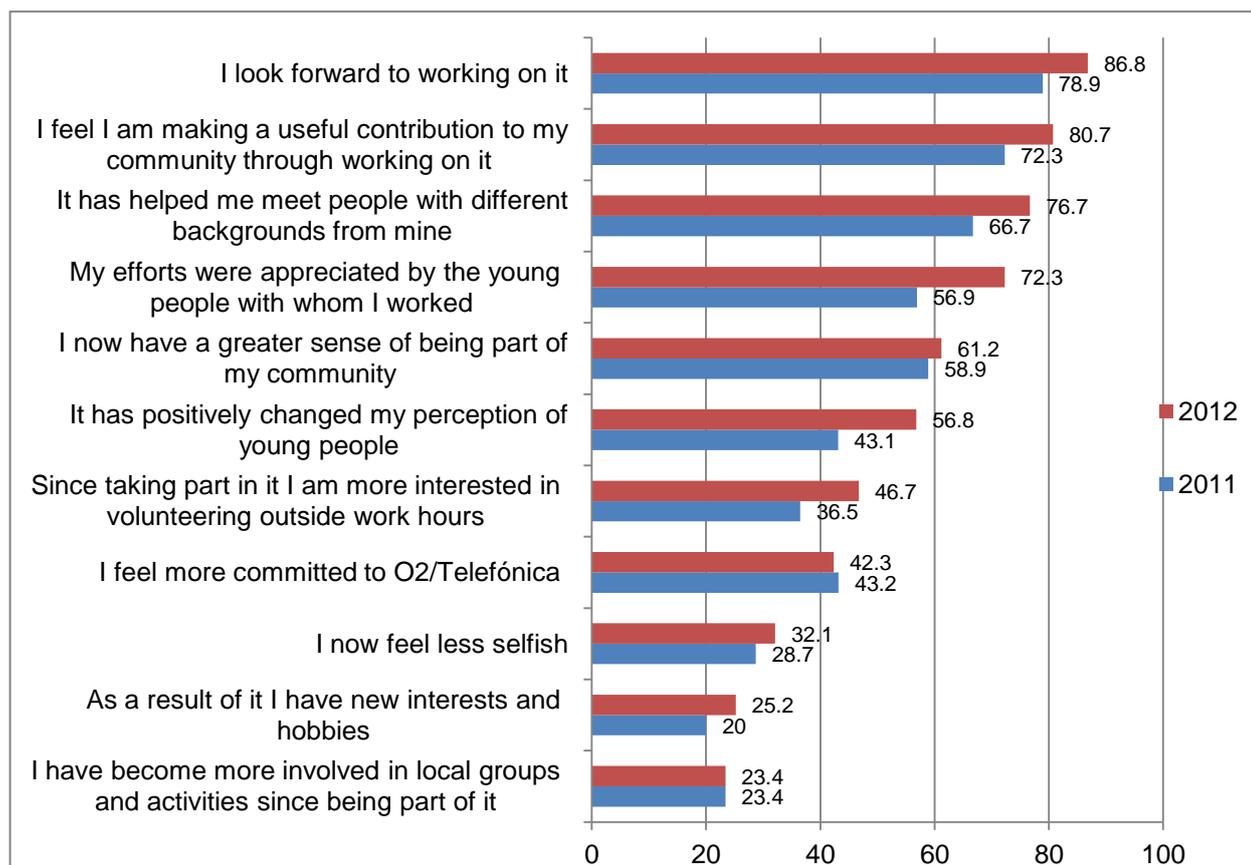
Benefits to the company

The Think Big programme's primary aim is to benefit young people and their communities, as indicated in the introduction to this report. However, as a CSR programme, the company also hopes to gain other benefits by enhancing its reputation with its customers and encouraging the sustained engagement of its employees.

Figure 7.7 shows that EVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company in both of these respects. Over 84% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Think Big shows that O_2 is a good employer with a sense of social purpose: indeed, 43% strongly agree that this is the case. EVs also believe that the work they have done in the community shows that O_2 as a company provides support. Again, 43% strongly agree with this statement and a further 42% agree.

Getting a measure of employee commitment to the company is not always easy to do. Employees are usually a little guarded about over-praising employers in this way. However, the evidence shows that employees are more willing to tell outsiders about the Think Big programme – which by implication – indicates a lack of cynicism about what the CSR

objectives of the programme are: 85% of EVs agree that they are more likely to tell the story of Think Big.

While it is difficult for EVs to know for certain how 'people in general' feel about their company, the indications are that they perceive the benefits of Think Big in communicating positive messages to the public. Indeed 87% agree that they feel Think Big makes people in general more positive about the O$_2$brand.[67]

Employees also feel more positive about the company themselves since working on the Think Big programme: 27% strongly agree that this is the case, and a further 33% agree with the statement.

Figure 7.7 **Benefits of Think Big for the company**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The programme shows O2/Telefónica is a good employer with a sense of social purpose	43.2	41.0	13.2	1.8	0.9
The work I did shows the ways in which O2/Telefónica helps local communities	43.2	43.2	10.6	1.8	1.3
I am more likely to tell others outside O2/Telefónica about the Think Big programme	42.3	43.2	11.9	1.8	0.9
People feel more positive about the O2/Telefónica brand	37.4	49.8	11.0	0.9	0.9
Since working on the programme I feel more positively about O2/Telefónica as an employer	26.9	33.0	33.5	4.8	1.8

When perceptions about the benefits of Think Big to perceptions of company image are compared between 2011 and 2012, differences are not particularly pronounced. For the most part, however, evidence suggests a slightly more positive position (rising from a very positive baseline in 2011). The only area where there has been a fall in confidence relates to EVs personal perceptions about the company as an employer through involvement with Think Big. This has fallen from 65% to 60%. However, this still represents a substantive statement of faith in the company on the part of employees.

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[67] In the UK, comments about brand awareness are directed towards O2 rather than Telefonica which has a more low key presence in advertising, marketing and retailing.

Figure 7.8   **Benefits of Think Big to company image 2011-2012**
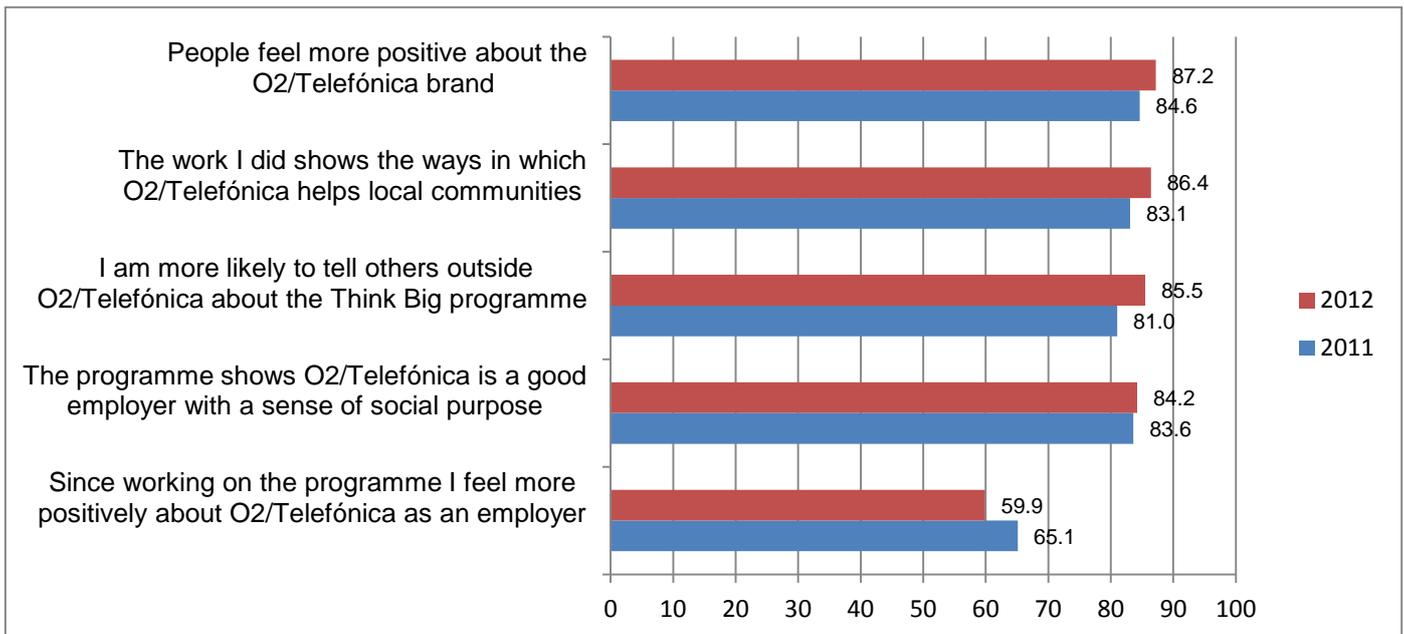
At the end of the first year of Think Big, in 2010, EVs expressed some disappointment that the programme had not fully taken off. They were impatient to become active and in some cases they feared that the programme might lose momentum and that they may lose interest too. Two years on, the evidence strongly suggests that people have got behind the programme and really feel the benefits it produces for them personally, for the company and, of course, for young people and their communities.

When asked in focus groups what reactions employees got from people they knew outside of the organisation, they could clearly state the benefits of the programme.

'I guess it's a distinct part of corporate social responsibility agenda. I guess that Think Big is one project that has a number of distinctive themes, including reusing and recycling, the social and community programme to encourage volunteering. So I think collectively that it's demonstrating that we have a distinct contribution to make to society. I get quite a lot of ribbing about signal quality and that kind of thing, but I get a lot of positive comments too – suggesting that it must be a great company to work for. It's largely because of our brand, it looks very cool, it's recognisable and it appeals particularly to younger people with the Academies, The O2 and so on.'

'It's about getting employees involved. It's quite varied the things they get us involved in, including six places in the London Marathon, that's exclusive to Telefõnica employees… It's good for brand reputation, its good all round, it's what's driving everything these days. I mean if you've got a company of this size not investing the time and effort, then there's something wrong with it.'

A common theme in focus groups was to emphasis the forward looking approach of the company in a relatively new and fast changing area of business.

'I think the fact that O2 is a telecommunications company makes a different, that it's part of the present and the future makes a real difference. It's not an old industry and they see it as going forward. At a local level they see what we're doing too, working with local hospitals and communities. I don't think they are relating it to corporate social responsibility, as such. No, they are relating it to the company giving something back – at the hospital, improving gardens and facilities and stuff like that - that's what people notice. You know, it's about tangible things, not just money going into a coffer and being given out with a grant here and a grant there.'

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Most focus group participants were aware of the CSR programmes of competitor companies (although they were much less well aware of companies' CSR programmes outside of the telecoms field), Interestingly, EVs were often quite critical of other companies' approaches – arguing that they were short-term attention-seeking interventions.

> 'They do [CSR] but they don't have a social action programme for young people like we do. What differentiates us is that we're in it for the long term, not just a quick hit. In the current economic climate, where the situation is difficult for young people, we need to give them opportunities, skills and confidence and a voice.'

Whether this is fair commentary or not is beyond the scope of this study, but the point it reveals is that EVs felt pride in working for their company. Indeed, many argued that O$_2$ Think Big was significantly undersold in public relations terms, as one person said, 'we never really promote our CSR stuff' and felt that the company should do more to promote the good work it was doing.

> *'I think it does bring loyalty and pride in the company. If I was just doing my day job, then I would probably leave earlier, every day, in order to go off and do something else, outside work, to feel more complete.'*

Benefit to young people and their communities

The corporate benefits of CSR interventions are important, especially so if it results in securing further long-term investment in community programmes such as Think Big. But the benefits delivered to young people are a first order priority in the programme and it is evident that employee volunteers believe that this is being achieved.[68]

Figure 7.8 shows that EVs have a great deal of confidence in the programme. More than 85% of employees believe that Think Big provides opportunities for young people which they would not otherwise have: and 40% strongly agree that this is the case. In practical terms, 82% of respondent think that young people have increased their skills base (38% strongly agree that this is the case).

Almost 72% of participants believe that negative stereotypes about young people have been successfully challenged by Think Big; and 77% think that relationships with their communities have improved. Furthermore, over 75% think that the programme has increased young people's trust in others.

As may be expected, fewer EVs believe that the programme effectively saves public money. This is, presumably, because they are aware that CSR programmes such as Think Big are generally additional and complementary to public services rather than replacing them. However, in the current economic climate where youth services are being cut substantially in many areas of the country, it is not surprising to see that many EVs are of the opinion that Think Big is making a positive contribution. Indeed, 33% agree that this is the case and a further 13% strongly agree that this may be so.

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[68] There is strong evidence to demonstrate that the involvement of EVs in Think Big is much appreciated by young people. See, for the main social programme Chapman, et al. (2012) *Building Young People's Resilience in Hard Times: an evaluation of Think Big in the UK,* Durham: St Chad's College, Durham University. For the smaller Think Bigger programme, see Chapter 7 of this report.

Figure 7.8   **Perceptions of impact of Think Big on young people**

	Strongly agree:	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
It provided opportunities for young people that would otherwise not have been available	40.5	45.4	8.8	0.9	0.9	3.5
Young people have developed their skills base	37.9	44.5	11.9	0.4	0.9	4.4
Negative stereotypes about young people have been challenged	30.8	41.4	19.8	2.2	1.3	4.4
Relationships in the community have been strengthened	30.0	47.1	17.6	1.3	0.9	3.1
It helped young people to develop trust in others	29.5	45.8	18.1	1.3	0.4	4.8
It helped save public sector money	13.2	33.0	35.7	11.5	1.8	4.8

When attitudes about the impact of Think Big are compared between 2011 and 2012 the differences are quite remarkable. These differences may indicate two things. Firstly that the impact of the programme is deepening over time as it beds in and improves. And secondly, that the extent of ESV involvement is becoming more embedded too – and participants are better able to comment on impact.

The volume of activity in Think Big has certainly grown, as shown earlier in this report, so it is not surprising to see that EVs feel that a lot of opportunities have been created for young people. Confidence in this respect has risen from 60% to 85%. A belief that young people have improved their skill base has also risen dramatically from 59% to 82%.

There is a very strong belief that young people have improved their relationships with the community and that, as a consequence of the programme, they feel more trusted too. Over 77% of EVs think that community relationships have improved, compared with 57% in 2011; and 75% think that trust has increased, compared with 51% in 2011. It is also clear that respondents in 2012 were much more likely to feel that negative stereotypes had been successfully challenged: 72% agreed that this was the case in 2012 compared with 49% in 2011. Fewer respondents felt that the programme saved the public sector money – but this too rose quite significantly from 34% in 2011 to 46% in 2012.

Changed attitudes about young people helped EVs to think about themselves in different ways and could affect the way they related to colleagues at work:

'I think what was most surprising for me was that... you can't just categorise young people, you know the ones who are on the path to do academic work and have a great future and then these others who you see a hopeless cases, and then the others who you see as borderline delinquents. I've had my eyes opened, you know, they're not a bad lot, they've just had bad breaks. So I think that my views have changed. Changed about colleagues in the workplace too. Interacting with people on the outside has made me see things differently here – I have found that I get less stressed in the workplace [laughs]. If I am getting wound up, I'm better at walking away for a few minutes and not making anything of it.'

Figure 7.9 **Perceptions of impact of Think Big 2011 - 2012**
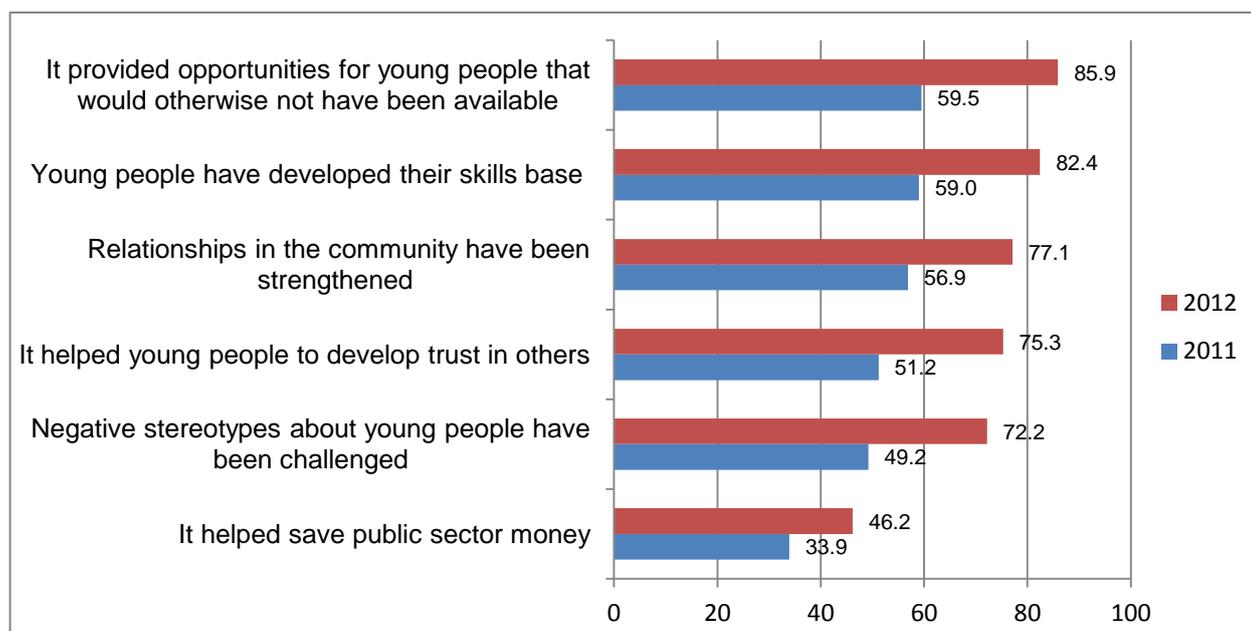
7.3 Committed and non-committed volunteers

The above discussion has explored the perceptions of EVs on the programme in some detail. One element of analysis which has not yet been attempted is to examine differences in attitudes and behaviours of EVs with different biographical characteristics. Background analysis of the data set suggest that age, gender, ethnicity, educational achievement and organisational seniority do not show up particularly clear differences in experience or behaviour. This may be due to the relatively small sample size that is available to us at present and it would be worth exploring these factors further in future once the number of respondents rises above at least 500 a year.

One dimension of individual biographies does, however, produce quite significant differences in attitudes and behaviour, that is, the previous experience of respondents in volunteering. In 2012, 48% of the sample stated that they were regularly engaged with volunteering outside of the company at the time of study (at for example, schools, clubs, charities and other voluntary organisations). In the analysis that follows, these respondents will be referred to as 'committed volunteers'. The remainder of the sample comprises people who have volunteered in the past, but not at the present time (28%); have never volunteered, but are quite interested in the idea (14%); those who have never volunteered before and have no intention to do so in future (9%); and, a small group who didn't know how to answer the question (1%). These respondents will be referred to in the analysis which follows as 'non-committed volunteers'.

The purpose of the analysis which follows is primarily to examine the extent to which non-committed volunteers experiences differ from committed volunteers. The analysis takes forward some issues raised in the introduction to this section about the 'civic core'. That is, the fact that most volunteering is done by a relatively small but committed section of the population.[69] The evidence suggests that committed volunteers are culturally attuned to the social and personal benefits of involvement partly due to particularistic biographical characteristics – but, probably more importantly, because of cultural association with the value of civic action. As the *Giving White Paper* observed, for those who do not currently

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[69] See Mohan, 2012, ibid. See also Reed and Selbee (2001) 'The civic core in Canada: disproportionality in charitable giving, volunteering and civic participation', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 30(3):761-789.

volunteer (because they have lapsed from volunteering or have never become involved[70]), 'nudge'[71] techniques may be utilised to encourage them to get involved. Think Big, as a programme, has adopted this principal by engaging with employees and giving them opportunities to get involved – initially attracting committed volunteers, but with the intention progressively of involving other non-committed volunteer employees. The idea is that if volunteering gets into the culture of the organisation, it will become self-reproducing.

When the study began in 2010, a key objective of the company was to engage people in the programme who were not committed volunteers. It was felt that if only committed volunteers were seen to be involved, this may put other people off from joining the programme. It was not known if this hypothesis was true or not, as there is little evidence elsewhere on the attitudes of lapsed, or non-volunteers.[72] But what we were keen to do was to explore ways of encouraging previous non-volunteers to get involved with the programme as it was felt that they could make a significant contribution and may also benefit personally from the experience too.

The academic and policy based literature on volunteering often speculates on the potential of involving non-volunteers. There is an assumption that there is a pool of potential people to engage – and commentators estimate how big this pool might be. The problem with such analysis is that when people are asked why they don't volunteer they do not necessarily answer honestly. So when they give answers such as 'nobody ever asked me', 'I don't have the time', or 'I don't know what opportunities there are', it is not possible to know whether they use this as an excuse to avoid a more socially discrediting answer such as 'I don't want to volunteer', 'I don't feel comfortable working with the sort of people who do volunteer' and so on.

This may be because the positive associations with the term 'volunteer' may often push non-volunteers into a 'defensive' position – as if they are lacking, by implication, 'pro-social attitudes. This may not be the case – they may do much more socially valuable work in other ways: in their job as a nurse, doctor, teacher, fire fighter, police officer or social worker for example and be exhausted by the effort they put in. Conversely, they may do a great deal of informal voluntary activity in their neighbourhoods and communities which goes unrecorded because they do not identify with this activity as volunteering – or perhaps do not *want* to refer to it as volunteering. The reason why EVs in Think Big are referred to as 'helpers' is to avoid positive or negative connotations attached to the term volunteer so that the programme would be as inclusive as possible.

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[70] Non involvement in volunteering does not necessarily indicate a lack of civic association. Mohan estimates that only about 15% of the population are completely disengaged from volunteering or other associated forms of social action/civic contribution (2012:14)
[71] Nudge techniques are used, crudely put, to encourage people to take action of their own volition rather than to constrain them to do so on the principle that it is can be easier to get someone to continue to do something that they have chosen to do than expect them to do things which they were, initially at least, required to do. See Thaler and Sunstein (2008) *Nudge: improving decisions about health, wealth and happiness*, New HavenL Yale University Press.
[72] These are contentious issues which are rarely discussed in the literature. For a recent discussion, see Chapman and McGuinness, 2013.

Characteristics of committed and non-committed volunteers

The biographical characteristics of committed and non-committed volunteers are not obviously different. The age, ethnicity, educational and gender profiles are not dissimilar. Position in the organisational hierarchy, suggests some differences: senior, middle and junior managers are more likely to be non-committed volunteers (between 56-58%) compared with operational staff (of whom around 60% are committed volunteers). There is an indication that employees in business operations, sales and service are a little more likely to be committed volunteers, but the differences are marginal.

The first stage of the analysis is to get a general impression of the sense of personal wellbeing of committed and non-committed volunteers. To do this, a standardised Eurostat wellbeing measure is used in the survey. Figure 7.10 presents data on the percentage of people who say that the time they can devote to each of the listed activities is 'just about right'. These data present broad indications of life satisfaction.

The data are interesting and informative. The differences between committed and non-committed volunteers are negligible in relation to three factors: contact with family members, social life in general and pursuing their own interests and hobbies. Committed volunteers are much more likely to record a high level of satisfaction with the amount of time they spend in doing their job (59%) compared with fewer than 47% of non-committed volunteers (incidentally, no respondents stated that they spend *too little* time at work). This suggests that committed volunteers have, perhaps, a stronger sense of personal wellbeing, or at least are not as likely to feel disgruntled about the time they spend at work than non-committed volunteers.

It follows, from these observations that committed volunteers are more likely to be satisfied with the time they spend involved in voluntary activity. This, presumably, is because they do so of their own volition. While it may be their choice, however, it is likely that such choices are made within a particular way of thinking about social life. People who regularly volunteer may feel that such activity has becomes a part of their persona and is therefore embedded in their lives as part of what they normally do and 'who they are' as people.

For non-committed volunteers, by contrast, it is hard to tell from this chart why only 30% feel that the level of volunteering they do is about right – does this mean that the other 70% think they are doing too much? Background analysis of the data shows, however, that fewer than 1% think they are doing too much volunteering, and 51% do not think they have time to do as much as they would like. It is not possible to know whether this lack of time is due to work pressures or other aspects of their lives such as travel to work, family responsibilities, and so on. The evidence does not suggest, however, that non-committed volunteers are necessarily less socially oriented.[73]

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[73] It is hard to interpret these data because people may not respond to questions about their reasons for non volunteering, for purposeful or unconscious reasons, in an entirely honest or accurate way. If it is considered to be socially discrediting not to volunteer, then people will be reticent about stating that they do not want to do it for reasons which might be interpreted by others as socially illegitimate, see Chapman and McGuinness, 2013 for a fuller discussion.

Figure 7.10 **Wellbeing scores for committed and non-committed volunteers**
(percentage reporting that the time they spend on tasks is 'about right')
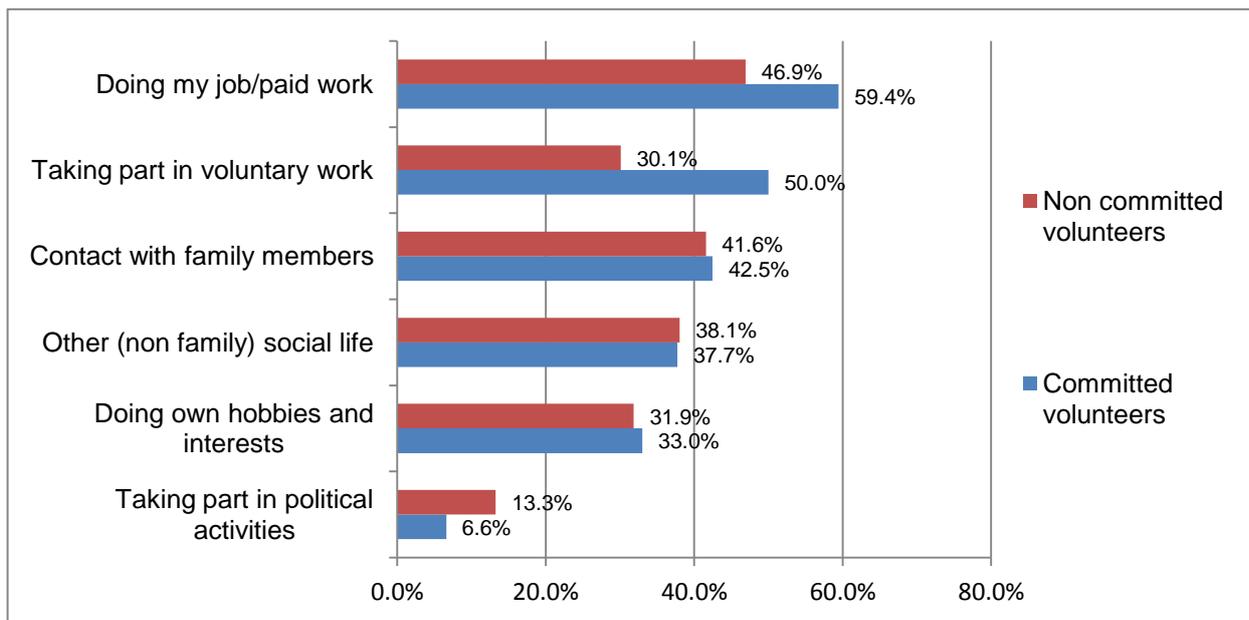
Figure 7.11 shows the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that involvement in the Think Big programme had benefitted them against a range of factors. The results of the analysis are intriguing. With the exception of becoming 'more socially aware', committed volunteers rate their experience much more highly than non-committed volunteers. The difference between the two categories sits fairly consistently at about 15-20%.

These are big differences by any standards and suggest one of two things. Firstly, that committed volunteers have a much better experience (for reasons that can be speculated about later); or, that committed volunteers are more culturally attuned to the benefits of volunteering and therefore report higher levels of satisfaction. For non-committed volunteers, by contrast, their lower scores could be explained by the possibility that they do not have as good an experience (perhaps as a *new* experience, it is harder work and feels less socially comfortable?); or, they do not associate with the positive language associated with this kind of activity and downplay its impact on them). What the data do not indicate, however, is that committed volunteers are happier and non-committed volunteers are more disgruntled – because, as Figure 7.10 indicated, key wellbeing indicators are not dissimilar on three core factors (time with family, friends and pursuing their own interests).

The factors in the chart are prioritised by positive responses from committed volunteers (the blue bars), and it can be observed that the red bars for non-committed volunteers broadly follow the same pattern. But there are some notable differences. Non-committed volunteers are <u>much less likely</u> to say that they have developed their ability to lead and influence others (38% compared with 68% of committed volunteers). It is not possible to know why this is from these data. Perhaps, though, it is because committed volunteers automatically push themselves to the front with organising activities (because they are accustomed to the practice of voluntary activity) while non-committed volunteers feel more reticent about doing this?

Non-committed volunteers are likely to feel that they have had their ideas challenged. For example, they say that they now feel much more positive about young people and feel much more socially aware. While the scores may still be lower than for committed volunteers, the order of priority is different in these respects – suggesting a bigger impact for that group.

Figure 7.11 **Positive impact of involvement in the programme** (percentage who 'agree' or 'strongly agree')
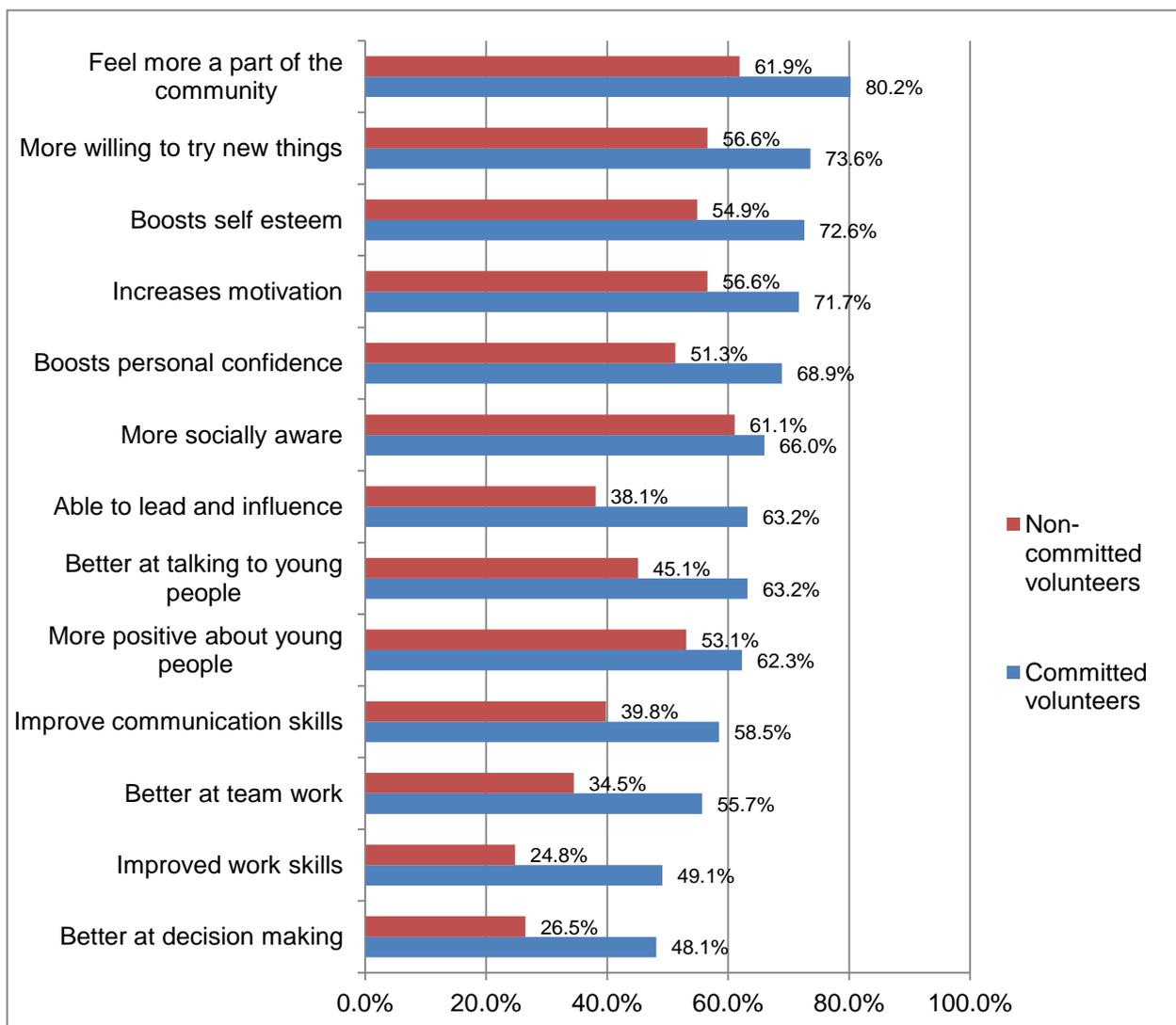
Figure 7.12 presents data on positive associations with programme involvement of committed and non committed volunteers on their experience of the workplace. Again, the results are significant and intriguing. To begin with, it is evident that the general levels of agreement with each statement broadly follows the same priority order. The only exception is a small difference in *finding a new way of relating to colleagues* and *knowing people in O₂ who can help them with their work* which are in reverse order.

What is much more interesting is the big differences in reported agreement with each of the statements (with the exception of *having a talking point between myself and colleagues*). Indeed, on most indicators the difference is, again, between 15 - 20% in favour of committee volunteers. What cannot be gleaned from these data, however, is a clear idea as to why committed volunteers are so much more positive in their appraisal (given that general wellbeing indicators are broadly similar). These issues could only be teased out by doing further qualitative work to find out if their approach to voluntary work is different and the extent to which their association with the culture of voluntary work affects their broader views about work in general. But the next chart does provide some clues as to where underlying differences may be located.

Figure 7.12 **Impact of Think Big on life at work** (percentage who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that there has been a positive impact)
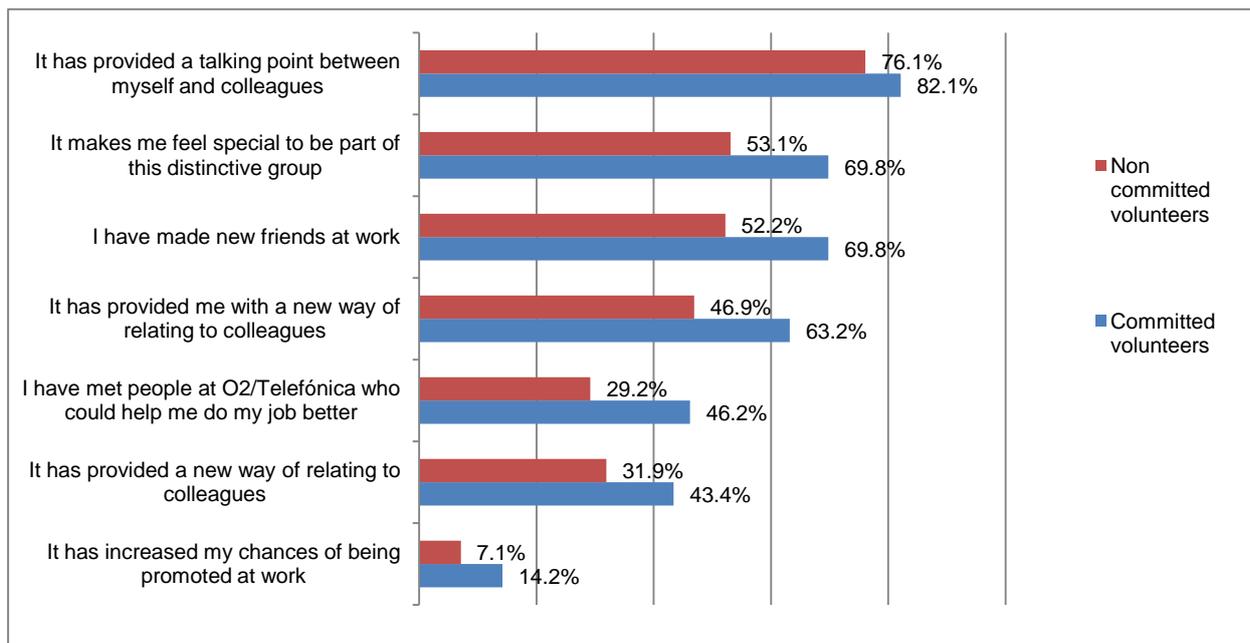
Figure 7.13 reports on the attitudes of committed and not committed volunteers to the company's investment in Think Big and its impact on their own atttudes and public attitudes more generally. What is striking about these data is that the big differences observed in all the other charts are rather less pronounced. While committed volunteers are more positive about each factor, the differences are in a narrower range of between 5-10% rather than 15-20% as observed elsewhere.

The only exception lays with attitudes about feeling more positive about O_2 as an employer having beein involved with Think Big: 54% of non-committed volunteers agree or strongly agree that they feel more positively compared with 68% of committed volunteers, perhaps suggesting an intractable yet healthy level of cynicism amongst non-committed volunteers, for whom the jury is still out.

Figure 7.13 **Attitudes about the company's investment in Think Big** (percentage who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with statements
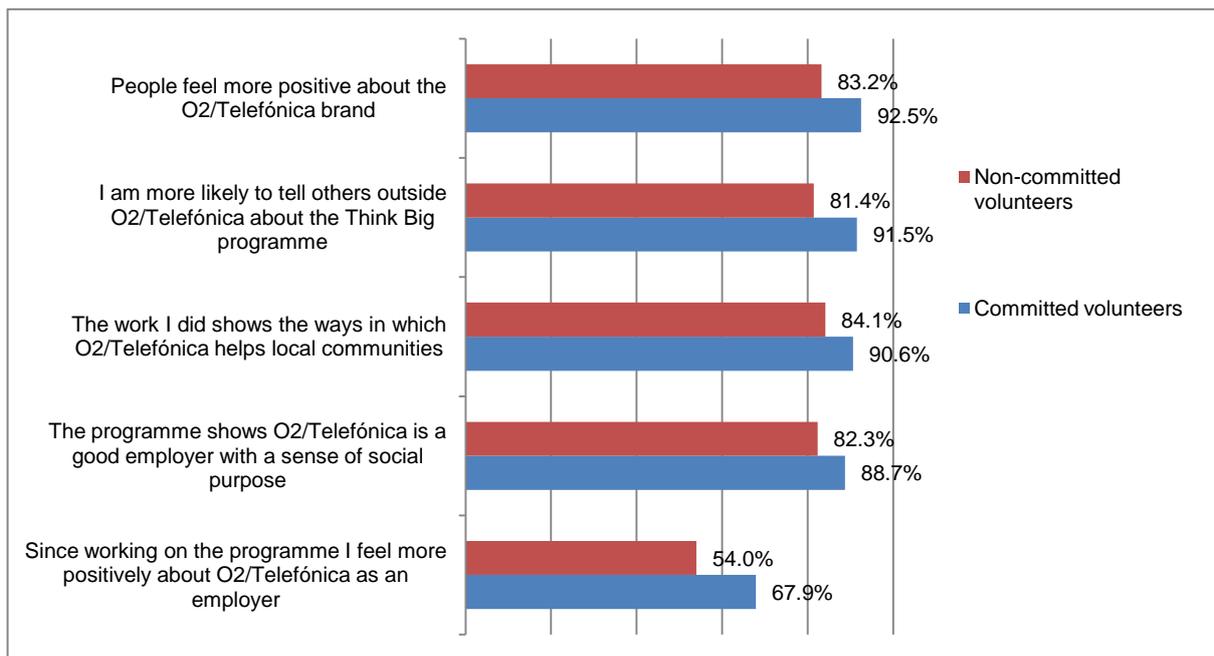
7.5 Summary and conclusions

It was noted at the start of this chapter that there was much evidence to show that getting people to engage in voluntary social action, who have not been involved in such activity before, is not a straight forward matter. It has been shown that the academic literature on the general population shows that likelihood of taking part in voluntary action varies significantly depending on the characteristics and situation of individuals. In this respect, however, the O$_2$Think Big programme seems to be running against the trend. It is a particularly inclusive programme, drawing in employees from all areas of the business and from across the hierarchy. Participation does not seem to have been affected by educational qualification, gender and ethnicity either.

Critics of employee supported volunteering programmes may offer the quick repost that the reason for this is that involvement is not, actually, of employees own volition – it is an expectation – and that not taking part may result in negative consequences. No evidence of compulsion has been identified, however, in this study. And indeed, previous reports have shown that to a large extent the growth of the programme has been employee led rather than management driven. And it is particularly pleasing to see, this year, that encouragement to take part by some line managers is increasing, whereas in previous years, there was some of evidence to suggest a lack of proactive support for the programme.

While it is the case that involvement in the programme is inclusive, there is also evidence to suggest that experiences of the programme differ quite markedly between 'committed volunteers' (that is, people who were already volunteering outside of the organisation) and 'non-committed volunteers' (people who are new to volunteering or have lapsed as volunteers in outside organisations). It has been noted that interpretation of these data is not straight forward.

There is plenty of evidence in the academic literature to show that committed volunteers incorporate such activity as a normal part of their lives. They get a great sense of achievement from this and it contributes strongly to their sense of social worth. Furthermore - it is likely, as they are embedded in the culture of volunteering, that they will subscribe to the discourse of the benefits of volunteering more generally and be able to identify quickly

with questions which associate with issues surrounding the strengthening of civil society and of personal growth.

Newcomers to volunteering, as it has been argued in this and previous reports from the programme, may find the journey a little more uncomfortable. The cultural mores of those who volunteer regularly may seem quite alien to non volunteers.. So it has been argued consistently in the development of the programme that there needs to be room for non-committed volunteers to get involved and do things 'their way', not necessarily the way volunteering has always been done. There is certainly much evidence in the study to show that non-committed volunteers are getting a great deal out of the programme and this must surely bring benefit to the programme as a whole, not just in terms of the volume of social benefit, but also in terms of the benefit volunteers feel in terms of self development.

The programme is growing in terms of engagement with EVs. The rising number of responses to the annual questionnaire is indicative of this (119 in 2010; 197 in 2012 and 227 in 2012). While the number of questionnaire responses could be improved, possibly by shortening the length of the questionnaire in future, there is sufficient evidence in the dataset to show that there is considerable improvement and development taking place which, in turn, demonstrates that the programme is becoming more clearly embedded in organisational culture.

The Think Big programme is a long-term CSR driven social intervention. As a programme, currently planned to run until 2015 (and possibly beyond), there is clearly tremendous scope to have a bigger impact on: giving young people opportunities to develop themselves and make a difference to their communities; on employees themselves in terms of the personal development and pro-sociality; and for the company itself – bringing reputational benefits from customers and the wider business community, and from increased commitment from its employees. The evidence to reinforce these points can be summarised by drawing upon some key statistics from the study.

The advantages of getting involved for EVs

EVs gave positive responses to questions about the impact of the programme on the way they feel about themselves.

- 65% of respondents felt that their willingness to try new things had been increased or increased greatly.
- 70% felt that they had a stronger sense of being part of the community.
- 63% felt that their awareness of social issues had increased.
- 63% felt that their motivation had increased.
- 60% reported increased personal confidence.
- 60% felt an improvement in self esteem.

When reflecting upon their experiences of Think Big, EVs tend to have positive attitudes about its benefits for them.

- 87% of participants looked forward to working on Think Big.
- 76% felt it had introduced them to people from different backgrounds.
- 80% felt that they were making a positive contribution to the community.
- 70% agreed that young people appreciated their efforts.
- 55% felt that the programme had positively changed their perceptions of young people.

There is strong evidence of consistent improvement in perceptions of the benefits Think Big brings for young people, the wider community and for EVs themselves.

- Between 2011 and 2012 80% of EVs felt that they are making a stronger contribution to their community (up from 72%).

- They feel that they are making a bigger impact in 2012: 72% said that what they do is appreciated by young people (rising from 57% in 2011).

- EVs are more likely to have met a wider constituency of people than they would have done had they not been involved in Think Big: rising from 67% in 2010 to 76% in 2012.

- Perceptions that young people have changed for the better has risen from 43% in 2010 to 57% in 2012.

Benefits to the company

The Think Big programme's primary aim is to benefit young people and their communities. However, as a CSR programme, the company also hopes to gain other benefits by improving its reputation with its customers and enhancing the commitment of its employees.

EVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company in both of these respects.

- 84% of respondents agree that Think Big shows that O_2 is a good employer with a sense of social purpose.

- 85% say that the work they have done in the community shows that O_2 as a company provides support.

- 85% of EVs are willing to tell outsiders about the Think Big programme.

- 87% agree that they feel Think Big makes people in general more positive about the O_2 brand.

- 60% of employees also feel more positive about the company themselves since working on the Think Big programme.

Benefit to young people and their communities

The corporate benefits of CSR interventions are important, especially so if it results in securing further long-term investment in community programmes such as Think Big. But the benefits brought to young people are a first order priority in the programme and it is evident that employee volunteers believe that this is being achieved.

- 85% of employees believe that Think Big provides opportunities for young people which they would not otherwise have (up from 60% in 2011).

- In practical terms, 82% of respondents think that working with and supporting young people has increased their skills base (up from 59% in 2011).

- 72% of participants believe that negative stereotypes about young people have been successfully challenged by Think Big (up from 49% in 2011).

- 77% think that relationships with their communities have improved (up from 57% in 2011).

- 75% think that the programme has increased young people's trust in others (up from 51% in 2011).

Chapter eight
Summary and conclusions

Think Big is a youth programme, supported by O2 to provide young people with opportunities to set up projects to make a difference to their own lives and to the wellbeing of their communities. The aim of the programme is ambitious in scope. The programme hopes to engage and inspire young people to make positive choices for themselves and their communities. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can and do play in their communities.

> 'We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better society. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities'.

The purpose of this concluding independent research report is to evaluate how the programme has progressed in its first three years.

Think Big aims to benefit young people who lead projects or actively take part in them by:

- increasing aspirations, hope and confidence;

- providing new experiences, and acquiring new skills;

- improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; and,

- developing the leadership potential of young people.

The project is socially inclusive in its design – but is particularly keen to provide opportunities to young people from less advantaged backgrounds or who lack social or emotional resilience. It is expected that at least 50% of young people on the programme will come from less advantaged backgrounds (the target is higher, standing at 80% for young people who are recruited by partner organisations).

It is expected that all young people can benefit, the project expects to reach young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds; young people with disabilities or limiting illnesses; and, from all regions and nations of the UK. So, progress is being monitored to ensure that all levels of participation are representative.

The programme has been evaluated using the following techniques:

- **Qualitative methodologies** which assess impact through in-depth interview and observation of the young people, practitioners and community stakeholders who are associated with interventions.

- **Quantitative methodologies** which collect evidence on the biographical characteristics and social circumstances of young people and the employment of research instruments to test how attitudes and behaviour have changed across the life-time (and beyond) of the project.

- **Impact assessment measures** (drawing upon either or both qualitative and quantitative evidence) which produce indications of the wider social benefit of the programme to society.

This was a well resourced social evaluation project which is now in its third and final year. The objective of the evaluation was to monitor and analyse programme progress on the indicators and targets set out by O2 outlined above. The research also aimed to demonstrate the impact of the programme in bringing new opportunities to young people and challenging negative stereotypes. The action research element of the evaluation involved close integration into the programme in order to help enhance and deepen the impact of the intervention.

Economic and policy context

An evaluation of a large scale youth programme such as Think Big cannot be undertaken in isolation from its social, economic and political context. The situation for most young people in the UK at present is undoubtedly difficult. Levels of unemployment are high and the prospects for finding work for many young people who have none or few qualifications or work experience is extremely challenging.

It is recognised that young people's attitudes and beliefs are crucially important in shaping their own lives – but it is also known that young people have different starting points in life where some have significant advantage over others in terms of the quality of their educational experience, effective encouragement and support from their families, and an environment within which they have the resources and opportunities to flourish.

Box 1 summarises the factors that affect young people's life chances, ranging from structural factors which they can do little or nothing about – such as the state of the labour market to factors surrounding individual differences such as temperament and talents.

Making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood requires young people to make good decisions about how they want to shape their future and act on these decisions in a positive way. Such decisions are made in the context of the opportunity structures that are available (or perceived to be available) to young people. Making such decisions involves choices which may be inherently risky. Risks might include the possibility (or even the probability in some contexts) of failure and disappointment. Not taking risks, by the same token can also have damaging consequences. There are few prospects available for achieving success for those people who are not prepared to take a chance.

Box 1   **Factors affecting young people's life chances**

Structural factors are largely out of the control of individuals, such as the legal and bureaucratic frameworks which shape the way the education system works, or the structure of the labour market. Structural factors are not static. Social and economic change can rapidly transform the landscape for young people.

Situational factors: the economic, cultural and demographic makeup of the local area can affect expectations and experiences of young people. Local labour markets, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, public safety and neighbourliness, and local infrastructure (such as public transport, sport, leisure and youth recreation facilities) all affect opportunities. Situational factors affect opportunities from within the area and from without when outsiders' attitudes and beliefs affects their judgements on people from the area.

Relational factors refer to the relative strength and weakness of inter-personal ties. Young people can experience relationships in positive and negative ways. Some young people may have supportive parental and sibling relationships and yet suffer poor peer group relationships (through, for example, pressure to engage in risky behaviour or to become the object of ridicule, ostracism or physical bullying). Intimate relationships also affect young people's life choices. Relational factors often produce complex and unpredictable outcomes for young people's life transitions.

Individual differences such as personality, temperament, skills and attributes all impact on individuals' behaviour. While the likelihood of successful life transitions may be estimated statistically in line with some factors, it is not possible to make effective predictions about the impact of deprivation, ill-health, educational underperformance, disability and so on, on an individual's life trajectory.

Key findings

Qualitative analysis of Think Big at level 1 in 2012(?) produced strong indications that the programme can make a significant difference to young people's lives.

■ Trusting and investing in young people pays dividends in terms of their commitment and their productivity and personal benefit.

■ Small steps forward for many young people can represent 'giant leaps' in terms of confidence and resilience.

■ Think Big provides young people the opportunity to tackle issues that they think are important, and/or tackle projects in ways that interests and energises them. Think Big is avoiding the 'we know what's best for young people' approach.

■ Small projects can provide young people with the resilience and confidence to make good choices in future – the 'ephemeral event' gives them a positive set of emotional reserves which they can draw upon when they face difficult decisions on their future path.

■ Young people involved with Think Big are tackling problems in creative ways with limited resources – many young people have to be socially and financially enterprising to succeed in their projects – which may affect their attitudes and aspirations for the future.

■ By witnessing the successes of young people on Think Big, other young people and older adults may challenge taken-for-granted understanding of the limits of what most young people can, will and want to do.

Confidence and agency

Most participants who join the programme are hard working and well balanced young people who are looking for opportunities to develop themselves and tackle problems in their communities. But many are also worried about their future. In times of recession, some young people are more likely to trust in luck/fate and become more suspicious of institutional structures. They are less likely to believe that their own efforts (hard work, application, etc.) will make a difference. If young people feel like this, they are more likely to get 'stuck' between the worlds of childhood (dependence, weak locus of control) and independent adulthood (self-determination, economic independence, and emotional autonomy).

Think Big is shown, in this report, to be ideally positioned to help young people tackle such fatalistic attitudes, by demonstrating that they can have confidence in their own ideas and achieve their objectives. Furthermore, such positive attitudes may influence subsequent action in many different ways – leading to longer-term commitment to voluntary action, education and training, employment or enterprising activity.

Resilience and wellbeing

Emotional resilience is important at every stage in people's lives. It is particularly important for young people because they face many more uncertainties. They must decide 'who they are' and build a sense of identity. They must decide what they want to do in terms of education, employment career and their contribution to civil society. They have to make these choices with many things in mind – such as the opportunity structure they believe is open to them.

Resilience is not the same thing as having 'attitude' – that is, putting on a surface impression of strength. Resilience is underpinned by confidence. Often that confidence, in turn, is reinforced by positive and consistent support from family members and significant others where strong and deep emotional attachment is embedded.

Resilience is not the same as just managing to 'survive' in difficult circumstances (having strong surface 'attitude' is a way of surviving). It is about being able to take control of a situation – even if the situation is difficult – rather than being affected or damaged by it.

Think Big's focus on young people from less advantaged backgrounds helps to compensate for lack of financial, emotional and practical support (compared with more affluent young people) by giving young people the opportunity to show that they can make a positive difference to their own and others' lives. It cannot resolve the issues about limited opportunities – but it might help young people manage their lives more successfully and help them to 'get on' with their lives rather than just 'get by'.

Creativity and enterprising behaviour

Think Big helps young people to discover and develop their creative, entrepreneurial and leadership capabilities – although it is not an enterprise development programme. As the programme has matured, and a small number of Think Big alumni have started their own businesses or social enterprises, more interest has been taken in young people's potential to be creative and marshal the assets they have available to them in order to achieve key objectives. Enterprising behaviour is not restricted to being self employed or starting up a

business or social enterprise. It is an attitude which helps people to achieve objectives in many different contexts, whether that is education and training, being an employee, engaging in active citizenship or running a business.

Think Big offers young people the opportunity to develop creative and enterprising skills in a safe environment, working on 'live' projects and encountering real challenges, which require them to change or adapt their plans and budgets to help their project succeed. In this context, young people are introduced to the idea of taking risks in a context where they have the opportunity to address failure and consider how they learn from these real world situations.

The programme team coaches and supports young people to choose ambitious objectives, and recognise the potential for project risk as part of this process. But more importantly, the programme team and youth partner organisations invest energy in supporting young people to try to ensure that they do succeed – even if their initial objectives change substantially due to circumstances they can't control or because of opportunities that come their way.

The evaluation work we have undertaken explores some of the vital characteristics of the enterprising individual, including: communication; team work; motivating others; working independently; organising time; sticking to a task until it is finished; and, of course, decision making. These are all important factors when exploring young people's personal development and employability.

Programme impact

Programme impact on clusters of capability

Using the categorisation of clusters of capability, devised by Young Foundation, the programme is shown to be successful in developing young people across a whole range of attributes by the end of their involvement in the programme.

■ *Communication*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 84%. On key indicators, Think Big participants report high levels of confidence at the end of their project through: their ability to communicate (90%), to motivate people (73%) and decision making (86%). Their reported confidence in team work (83%) and wider range of social contacts (87%) also indicate an impact on communication skills.

■ *Confidence and agency*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 77%. The key indicators, in order of importance are: decision making (86%), working independently (73%), learning new skills (86%), motivating people (73%), feeling confident about the future (80%) and having new interests and hobbies (75%).

■ *Planning and problem solving*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 83%. Primary indicators from Think Big, include: taking responsibility for a task (88%), sticking to a task (86%), and decision making (85%), trying new things (88%), motivating people (73%) and using new skills (73%). Secondary indicators include communication (90%) and team work (83%).

■ *Relationships and leadership*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 83%. There are several primary indicators of building relationships and exercising leadership, which are in order of

priority: taking responsibility (88%), decision making (86%), team work (83%), meeting people from different backgrounds (87%), motivating people (73%) and looking at the world in a different way (78%).

■ *Creativity*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 79%. Indicators include, in order of priority: trying new things (88%), being good at team work (83%), using new skills (86%), new interests and hobbies (75%), and resistance to boredom (60%).

■ *Resilience and determination*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 80%. There are several key Think Big resilience and determination factors operating this domain. The primary indicators, in order of priority are: taking responsibility for a task (88%), getting a task finished (86%), working independently (73%), decision making (86%), trying new things (88%), organising time (79%) and resistance to boredom (60%).

■ *Managing feelings*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 78%. Primary indictors including: including communication (90%), taking responsibility for a task (88%), making decisions (86%), team work (83%) motivating people (73%)

■ *Pro-sociality*

The composite score for Think Big in this domain is 81%. The Young Foundation categorisation does not include pro-sociality as a separate category. However, this is an important element in the evaluation of Think Big where the building of social capital and challenging social stereotypes are central objectives. Indicators of pro-sociality include; communication (90%), motivating people (73%), team work (83%), caring about the community (89%), meeting people from different backgrounds (87%) and seeing the world in a different way (77%).

How the programme changed the way young people feel

Key findings from the analysis of the impact of Think Big on young people are provided below.

■ The Think Big programme creates *opportunities for young people to explore new avenues of self development*. The programme appears to be very successful in this respect with 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they had done so.

■ The programme is successful in *enhancing tangible skills*. At the end of the project 86% believed that they had achieved this objective.

■ The programme aims to develop *young people's resilience through their exercise of self-determined personal development.* By the end of the project nearly 75% felt that they had developed new interests and widened the scope for future personal development.

■ A key objective is to increase young people's sense of *confidence and resilience:* almost 80% feel that the project did help them feel more confident about their future.

■ The programme aims to *widen young people's social horizons and encourage them to make a contribution to community cohesion by challenging stereotypes*. Nearly 87% of young people agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

■ We asked about the extent to which young people cared about their community as an *indicator of pro-sociality*. The responses are very positive in this respect, with

89% of young people feeling more strongly about their communities by the end of the programme.

How different groups of young people experienced the programme

There is good evidence to suggest that young people from less affluent communities draw strong benefits from involvement in the programme – particularly in broadening their horizons and raising levels of confidence about the future.

- 59% of the less affluent young people say the project has helped them try new things compared with 49% of the most affluent.

- 44% of the less affluent young people say they have new interests and hobbies, compared with 31% of the most affluent.

- 49% of the less affluent young people feel more confident about their future compared with 36% of the most affluent.

- 63% of the less affluent say that they care more about their communities compared with 55% of the most affluent.

These findings are reassuring. They show that the target group that the Think Big programme aims to help the most, seem to perceive the greatest benefit.

Some gender differences emerge from the evaluation which suggest that males perceive greater levels of benefit in some areas.

- At the start of the programme an equal number of males and females claim to be good at communicating with people (around 56-57%). While both males and females become more confident at the programme - males rate their skills in this area rather more highly (68% males against 62% females).

- Against many of the categories of skill and confidence, males and females give similar scores at the start of the programme, including: teamwork, taking responsibility, motivating people, and sticking to a task until it is finished. But males seem to assess change in themselves more positively. Only in relation to resistance to boredom is the reverse the case.

- Males tend to give more emphasis to particular confidence traits by the end of the programme (*communication, motivation, taking responsibility* and *decision making*). Before the programme began, males rated their confidence more highly in relation to taking responsibility and decision making.

There is, perhaps, an argument for focusing support on females to encourage them to recognise their abilities or develop their confidence in particular areas of self-development. The evidence is inconclusive in this respect as the available data only record personal perceptions. However, the tendency of more males to apply for the second level of the programme, Think Bigger, may provide some indication of gender differences in levels of confidence.

The number of young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups involved in the Think Big programme is larger than would be expected when compared with population averages. That stated, there are currently too few participants from BAME groups to produce reliable findings. The following conclusions are, therefore, to some extent speculative and at best indicative.

- By the end of the programme, BAME participants are much more likely to record significant increases in confidence in certain skills. Strong confidence in *communication* rises from BAME participants from 60% to 76%. The rising confidence levels in *decision making* are also large – from 46% to 55%. Similar

changes are also observed in relation to *team work* (up 6%), *taking responsibility for a task* (up 9%), *organising time* (up 8%) and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (up 8%)

- White participants are less emphatic in their assessments of growing confidence. But the data do, nevertheless, show quite consistently rising percentages in most domains, particularly in: *communicating with people* (up 5%), *decision making* (up 4%), *team work* and *sticking to a task until it is finished* (up 3%).

The headline finding, however, is that young people from ethnic minority groups seem to benefit more from the programme that white participants. The extent to which this is associated with socio-economic background is not sufficiently clear at this stage.

The Think Big programme currently attracts large numbers of young people who have higher level qualifications (of A level and above).

- Young people with higher educational achievement tend to be rather more confident in most areas of capability at the start and end of the programme with percentage differences ranging between 10-15%.

- Higher levels of confidence are evident, as would be expected, at the start of the project for participants with higher levels of achievement, but the confidence of young people with fewer educational achievements appears to grow considerably by the end of the programme in some categories, including: *communication* (up 6%), *team work* (up 6%), *motivating people* (up 7%), *decision making* (up 5%).

- Young people with low levels of qualification report lower levels of ability at the end of the programme for *working independently* (down from 70% to 61%).

- By contrast, young people with higher levels of educational achievement seem to gain more confidence than other young people in relation to *organising their time* (up 5%) and *working independently* (up 4%).

As an open programme, it is important to include young people with higher levels of qualifications as they may be able to achieve a great deal for their communities as well as make personal gains in terms of self-development. It is also important that social mixing occurs in the programme and certainly, the evidence shows that most young people have come into contact they would not normally have met and their social horizons have been widened as a consequence.

In subsequent stages of analysis, it may be useful to explore, specifically, the extent to which more highly educated participants from less advantaged groups benefit from the programme to examine how Think Big provides new opportunities for young people in addition to their engagement in formal education settings.

The return on investment of the programme

The return on investment analysis suggests that a return of between 316.2–375.1% was achieved by the programme (compared with the range 230.2-349.8 in 2011). In other words, an investment of £1 in the programme provides a social return of between £3.16 and £3.75.

Think Bigger

Think Bigger is the second level of the programme which provides investment and support for young people to tackle issues in their communities. The evaluation shows that Think Bigger takes young people to a higher level of engagement in project management and that they receive appropriate levels of support to achieve their objectives.

Developing socially enterprising attitudes and aspirations

The research shows that Think Bigger helps to energise young people to become more enterprising in the practices – even though the majority do not yet show strong interest in conventional business enterprise.

The term 'enterprise' in the context of this study is used to indicate a range of attitudes and capabilities which can enable young people to be enterprising in their personal, social or business lives. It is about enabling a young person to discover their potential and to move from a position where they might expect that somebody else will beat a path to the future to one where they mark out their own path. It is also a programme which adopts the idea that enterprising attitudes are important in many different contexts: as community leaders, as employees, as volunteers or as social or business entrepreneurs.

The Think Bigger programme is designed to support young people in their project journeys, but not to the extent of taking control of the. It is accepted that young people may encounter significant (but not insurmountable) challenges and barriers to success. The programme therefore provides an opportunity for young people to develop their personal resilience and problem solving skills to enable the project to proceed.

> 'I feel I've gained a lot of experience from this, I've learnt a lot, I've had some hiccups for example I've had to send the flyers back a million times...so I've learnt patience and tolerance. My time keeping has improved and I'd say I've asserted my leadership skills, it pushed me to realise I could do more than I thought I could.'

Leaders of Think Bigger projects encountered numerous challenges when things did not go according to plan - but project leaders, with support, overcame problems and achieved their objectives. It is clear that the programme helps young people to develop confidence in their ability to tackle challenges independently and withstand and overcome disappointments as they progress.

> 'I think it's given me quite a lot of confidence both talking to people about the project, getting to know it really well, working hard on it and then realising that I know what I'm talking about. It's made me feel that I'm doing something useful and that I can encourage other people to do something similar or something they're passionate about. It's a nice thing being able to get other people thinking about what they could do in their community, it makes you want to be ambitious I think.'

The evaluation shows that the programme is particularly successful in developing the following skills: time management; managing people; working with other organisations; involving communities and knowing how to articulate and communicate if social impact has been achieved.

In a very small number of projects, some scope for developing a business plan to extend the life of their projects was identified – as is indicated by the following quotations.

> 'It's something that's developed, the Level one was towards costs of tools for our garden project and then when I went to Level two I used that for another project which is a social enterprise producing local food...so that paid for things like more tools and set up costs...I'm doing a business plan for the next few years.'

'I want to turn it into a social enterprise but at the moment I'm just struggling a bit with how to make it self sufficient...the ultimate aim for it is a magazine in print but I need to get the online following big enough to be able to justify that in the market...it's building up I've got 1,100 on Facebook and about the same on Twitter so it's getting there but just not quick enough yet, we need more exposure.'

When most project leaders explained how they scaled up their project (or had ambitions to do so) by garnering support or money to achieve more – we tended to get responses which focused on how to draw in 'funding' to do more, rather than to say how they could trade goods or services to generate income to make the project sustainable in the longer run. In general, 'sustainability' was taken to mean the leverage of more grant funding or public giving – but not reliance on business activity as such.

Community impact

Think Bigger projects tackle issues of concern to their leaders in the community. An important element of project activity, therefore, is to recognise when impact has been achieved. Many were able to demonstrate direct impact on individuals such as: increasing chances of getting employment; participation in further education; gaining access training opportunities; and, reducing anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood.

It is often not possible to draw a distinction between those people who volunteered to assist others with projects and those who could be regarded as direct beneficiaries of the project. More often than not, volunteers on projects gained as much from the project and were, essentially, the beneficiaries.

Project leaders also recognised that the initial impact of their project was less obvious and that it can take time to embed an idea and inspire people to think in new ways and try new things. This led some project leaders to recognise gaining the trust and confidence of the community was an important achievement in itself. Many project leaders recognised that increasing community contact between groups who rarely met in the past helped to challenge prejudices and could increase community cohesion.

'It kind of bridges a gap between young people who sometimes live in a world of their own and other members of the community who may have been fearful of engaging with young people.'

Challenging negative attitudes and inspiring people to think differently about their community was a common theme in project leaders' appraisals of what they had achieved. Usually this centred on the way communities see themselves, but sometimes about how outsiders see them:

'I think people will start to realise my local community isn't as bad as they think it is and it will hopefully increase visitor numbers and increase revenue for local businesses and increase the general perception of the area.'

Support for young people

The evaluation shows that young people are given appropriate levels of support to develop and deliver their projects from Think Big programme staff, via residential training and from their dedicated O₂ Helpers. Participants on the programme were effusive about the support they gained.

'It's been a very positive experience and my helper made half of that herself, it's great what O₂ are trying to do and help people out as it can be quite daunting for a young person with very little support and money, so I'm a huge supporter.'

'The people who are at Think Big, the people in the office are brilliant, they're really helpful and answer emails and because we didn't get an O$_2$ helper straight away they were on the case and looking after us and they're just brilliant. They always send through opportunities to get involved further with stuff and I just want to say they're brilliant and really good at their job and I don't think this programme would be as successful without them.'

'It's been a pretty positive experience, I know there's always been somebody on the phone or the other end of an email to answer all my questions, things have run quite smooth in terms of how things have been organised.'

Participants in Think Bigger currently tend to be more highly educated and older than on the first level of the programme. So many of the participants are ready to take on bigger challenges and are generally receptive to the kinds of support they receive. There may, however, be some scope to widen the range of participants in the programme to ensure that the second level of the programme becomes more fully inclusive and ensures that young people with fewer existing skills and qualifications can benefit from the higher levels of personal and financial investment available. It is felt that the level of support offered to young people on the Think Bigger programme would ensure that these young people could step up the challenges of the programme and achieve their personal and social objectives.

Programme review data

The Think Big programme has grown significantly since its establishment in March 2010.

- The number Think Big applications to the programme has increased from 1,037 in 2010 to 3,389 in 2012.

- There has been a significant increase in youth partner supported Think Big applications: from 668 in 2011 to 1,588 in 2012. The number of awards has grown from 338 in 2010 to 2,228

- Think Bigger applications have doubled since 2011, rising from 120 to 211. Awards have risen from 70 in 2011 to 170 in 2012.

Think Big is an inclusive programme.

- The programme attracts males and females in broadly similar numbers and has done so consistently from 2010 – 2012.

- The programme attracts applicants from across the 13-25 age range. Younger applicants (age 13-15) are less numerous and are the least successful in winning awards. The 16-19 year old cohort is the most successful, but 20-25 year olds are not far behind.

- Think Big has proven itself to be an inclusive programme by ethnicity from the outset. Higher than population average participation is achieved by all black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups apart from Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi participants.

- Think Big participation by nation is, in some cases, inequitable. The level of participation in Scotland is comparably low – only about a third as many participants are involved in Scotland as would be expected. By contrast, participation in Northern Ireland is about 50% higher than expected.

- In the English regions, participation is considerably higher than population averages in London, and to a lesser extent in the South East, North West and North East of England. Some areas are significantly under represented: particularly Eastern England, the East Midlands, West Midlands, and Yorkshire & the Humber.

- The proportion of young people with no qualifications, or fewer than 5 GCSEs has remained relatively stable throughout the programme, at about 35-40%.

- About 35% of participants have A levels (many of whom will be at university), diplomas or degrees. The proportion of graduates in the programme appears to be falling slightly.

- The number of applicants to Think Big who record a disability is small – numbering 25 in 2010, 110 in 2011 and 168 in 2012. The award success rate for young people who state they have a disability is broadly similar to other applicants.

The Think Big programme aims to target at least 50% of participants from less advantaged backgrounds. Using the four least affluent deciles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation as the benchmark of "less advantaged" young people, the programme is shown to be successful in exceeding its objective.

- 22% of awards are made to young people from the most disadvantaged areas.

- 62% of awards are made to young people from the four least advantaged deciles in the Index of Multiple Deprivation

- Success rates in winning awards is broadly similar across the range of socio-economic groups.

- Young people from ethnic minorities are more concentrated in the less affluent IMDs. There is very high proportion of Asian young people in the poorest IMD and the concentration of Black young people in the three lowest categories. This shows that the programme is providing opportunities to some of the least affluent young people.

It may be expected that the growing involvement of youth partner organisations would lead to more young people from the most deprived communities engaging with the programme. But this does not seem to be the case.

- More open applications come from the lowest category in Index of Multiple Deprivation (20% in 2012, compared with 16% from youth partners).

- There is some evidence of improvement in youth partner sponsored applications in the lowest category of deprivation compared with 2011 which is promising (up from 11% to 16%).

- At the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, it is evident that youth partners are also very active: 26% of awards from youth partners come from IMD 7-10. These are the most affluent socio-economic categories.

Some youth partners are extremely successful at targeting the most deprived young people. There may be an argument for working more closely with other youth partners to focus their attention on less affluent young people.

Think Bigger is a smaller element of the programme involving fewer projects. This part of the programme is not yet as inclusive as the main Think Big programme in every respect.

- Males are more likely to apply to Think Bigger by a margin of 54% males to 46% females

- Think Bigger attracts applicants from across the range of ethnic groups.

- Applications to Think Bigger are concentrated in specific English regions: London (24%), the North West (16%) and South East (14%).

- Applicants to Think Bigger tend to be well educated: 50% have achieved A Level (many of whom will be undergraduates), diploma or degree level qualifications.

- Think Bigger applicants tend to be older: over 60% are aged over 21 years.

Employee engagement

The programme is growing in terms of engagement with employee volunteers (EVs). The Think Big programme is a long-term CSR driven social intervention. As a programme, currently planned to run until 2015 (and possibly beyond), there is scope to have a bigger impact on: giving young people opportunities to develop themselves and make a difference to their communities; on employees themselves in terms of the personal development and pro-sociality; and for the company itself – bringing reputational benefits from customers and the wider business community, and from increased commitment from its employees.

The evidence to reinforce these points can be summarised by drawing upon some key statistics from an on-line survey of 227 EVs.

The advantages of getting involved for EVs

EVs gave positive responses to questions about the impact of the programme on the way they feel about themselves.

- 65% of respondents felt that their willingness to try new things had been increased or increased greatly.
- 70% felt that they had a stronger sense of being part of the community.
- 63% felt that their awareness of social issues had increased.
- 63% felt that their motivation had increased.
- 60% reported increased personal confidence.
- 60% felt an improvement in self esteem.

When reflecting upon their experiences of Think Big, EVs tend to have positive attitudes about its benefits for them.

- 87% of participants looked forward to working on Think Big.
- 76% felt it had introduced them to people from different backgrounds.
- 80% felt that they were making a positive contribution to the community.
- 70% agreed that young people appreciated their efforts.
- 55% felt that the programme had positively changed their perceptions of young people.

There is strong evidence of consistent improvement in perceptions of the benefits Think Big brings for young people, the wider community and for EVs themselves.

- Between 2011 and 2012 80% of EVs felt that they are making a stronger contribution to their community (up from 72%).
- They feel that they are making a bigger impact in 2012: 72% said that what they do is appreciated by young people (rising from 57% in 2011).
- EVs are more likely to have met a wider constituency of people than they would have done had they not been involved in Think Big: rising from 67% in 2010 to 76% in 2012.
- Perceptions that young people have changed for the better has risen from 43% in 2010 to 57% in 2012.

Benefits to the company

The Think Big programme's primary aim is to benefit young people and their communities. However, as a CSR programme, the company also hopes to gain other benefits by improving its reputation with its customers and enhancing the commitment of its employees.

EVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company in both of these respects.

- 84% of respondents agree that Think Big shows that Telefónica is a good employer with a sense of social purpose.

- 85% say that the work they have done in the community shows that Telefónica as a company provides support.

- 85% of EVs are willing to tell outsiders about the Think Big programme.

- 87% agree that they feel Think Big makes people in general more positive about the O_2/Telefónica brand.

- 60% of employees also feel more positive about the company themselves since working on the Think Big programme.

Benefit to young people and their communities

The corporate benefits of CSR interventions are important, especially so if it results in securing further long-term investment in community programmes such as Think Big. But the benefits brought to young people are a first order priority in the programme and it is evident that employee volunteers believe that this is being achieved.

- 85% of employees believe that Think Big provides opportunities for young people which they would not otherwise have (up from 60% in 2011).

- In practical terms, 82% of respondent think that young people have increased their skills base (up from 59% in 2011).

- 72% of participants believe that negative stereotypes about young people have been successfully challenged by Think Big (up from 49% in 2011).

- 77% think that relationships with their communities have improved (up from 57% in 2011).

- 75% think that the programme has increased young people's trust in others (up from 51% in 2011).

Afterword and recommendations

What is Think Big achieving? Key conclusions from the first three years?

Think Big will have been running for nearly four years at the point when this report is published. In that time, the programme has matured into an effective social intervention that clearly benefits young people from all social backgrounds. Undoubtedly, much of the benefit gained is through the development of new skills as young people tackle the inevitable challenges of running social action projects. The experience of taking part in the programme and the skills gained or enhanced as a consequence may bring real advantage to young people as they apply for jobs, training, and apprenticeships or for higher education courses.

Many young people, this research shows, see that the programme has instrumental benefits of this kind. Helping young people to get a foot on the career ladder or gain access to higher education is a creditable and easily identifiable benefit which the programme can bring, and is particularly important given the current economic climate. However, the programme also helps young people to develop problem-solving skills, building their personal resilience and capability to navigate uncertainty – outcomes which are arguably of more lasting significance to young people and are indicative of the cumulative social value generated by the programme.

A 'youth led' approach to building confidence and resilience

This programme is demonstrably successful in helping young people to:

■ open their eyes to new opportunities that can make a difference to their communities;

■ to generate their own ideas and create practical solutions to problems; and,

■ to tackle issues and change things that are important to them

The programme is 'youth led' in the sense that the programme team are not prescriptive about the structure or focus of the social action project. Instead, it is assumed that young people can work out ideas for themselves and be doubly energised by the freedom the programme gives them to lead and develop projects in their own way. Neither is the programme team prescriptive about levels of achievement by individuals. Whilst the programme aims to build core skills including communication, team work, creativity, project management and leadership skills, it also recognises that young people have different starting points in experiential terms, and for some, relatively limited achievements or 'small steps' can represent 'giant leaps' in developmental or confidence terms.

Taking positive risks in a safe environment

The programme demonstrably provides young people with a safe environment within which to generate and test their ideas, take positive risks and manage problems and disappointments in the process of running their projects. This is important for young people, especially when life chances are more restricted due to economic factors that have severely limited labour market opportunities. When opportunities are limited, research evidence shows, young people are more likely to become fatalistic – to trust in luck – rather than rely on their own abilities. The Think Big programme is effective because it helps young people to become more resilient and feel more in control of their destiny. What really makes a difference for young people, whatever their backgrounds,

is the *trust* invested in them to make good decisions and to be responsible for allocating the money invested in their projects wisely. Think Big is also important in this respect, as it helps to sow the seeds of entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour, giving young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, the opportunity to test and discover their entrepreneurial capabilities.

Encouraging enterprising outlooks and behaviour

In most cases, young people in the programme are exposed to challenges that demand that they become more enterprising in their outlooks. This can involve:

- generating innovative ways of solving problems;

- developing and using their powers of persuasion to draw people in to support them with their projects; and,

- thinking up ways of winning extra resources to increase the impact or scale of their projects.

In some cases, highly motivated young people want to take their ideas further and form businesses and social enterprises so that they can achieve more. Channels for progression in the programme allow that to happen now – and there may be a case to take this further and add additional levels of progression for those young people who have particularly enterprising ideas. But fostering enterprising attitudes should not just be valued for the few young people who want to start businesses – the programme encourages young people in general to be enterprising in many contexts including their communities, in their studies and when they become employees.

Building stronger communities

Think Big as a social programme has wider ambitions than merely to promote the personal interests of individuals. Unlike programmes which concentrate wholly on meritocratic advancement, Think Big is interested in promoting positive interactions amongst diverse groups of young people and the communities within which they live. It aims to widen social horizons, contribute to social cohesion and increase levels of empathy and tolerance. The programme achieves this by involving young people from all backgrounds and with different levels of capability and confidence. Instead of promoting individuals' personal interests, the programme demonstrates how young people, collectively, can make a positive contribution to their communities and to society more widely.

Taking the programme forward: some recommendations

Having researched the Think Big programme for three years, we have watched its development closely and made observations throughout to help focus resource on those areas of activity that can achieve the greatest level of social impact. As a mature, well resourced programme, we are confident that even without significant change in the approach currently adopted, Think Big will continue to have a positive impact on young people's lives and the communities where they live and work.

As always, research and evaluation identifies further opportunities to develop the programme in order to maximise its effectiveness. These recommendations are outlined below.

Training and support

As the programme has developed over time, we have encouraged the programme team to steer away from universal, one-size-fits-all approaches to training. It has been recognised that young people come to the programme with very different levels of capability and confidence. As a consequence we have helped the programme team to modify its approach so that the individual needs of young people are met. This object has now largely been achieved at the first level of the programme which has moved from an expensive and resource hungry universal training model to one which pinpoints the needs of less capable and less confident young people and concentrates resource accordingly. Often this has involved bespoke support from individual partner youth organisations or from the delivery team at Think Big.

There is further scope for the refinement of training strategy at Level 2. Universal residential training for young people who win Think Bigger awards, we feel, is an inappropriately intensive experience for many of the more confident and capable participants. Undoubtedly they enjoy the residential – but more focused and efficiently delivered support would do the job – by holding, for example, day training sessions on essential skills or providing specific training or awareness raising opportunities for more focused areas of activity. For less capable and confident young people, residential training could provide a more valuable way of building self belief and resilience; increasing practical skills and knowledge; and developing leadership potential so that young people can inspire and motivate others to support or take part in their projects. Mixing very capable and confident older young people, with less confident and capable younger people, needs to be managed carefully, in order to ensure that individuals can learn from each other and provide mutual support.

Inclusivity of the programme at Level 1

Analysis of the biographical characteristics of young people in the Think Big programme shows that it is a broadly inclusive and open programme at Level 1 whilst meeting specific targets to include at least 50% of young people from less advantaged backgrounds. But there is some scope to do better. This report shows that young people who make 'open applications' are a more diverse group than those who enter the programme via youth partner organisations. It may be expected that youth partner organisations would be rather more successful in reaching less advantaged young people. But this is often not the case, even though their targets for recruiting less advantaged young people are higher than for the open programme.

Some youth partner organisations are extremely successful in reaching less affluent young people – but a majority tend to recruit young people from middling or more affluent backgrounds and focus primarily on the 15-18 year olds. This findings is counter-intuitive as youth organisations often make strong claims about their ability to help those young people's who have the fewest opportunities. It is recommended therefore that the programme team identify those youth partner organisations which are the *most effective* in recruiting less advantaged young people and determine how they achieve this so that best practices can be adopted more widely by the youth partner network.

As this report shows, some young people are currently under-represented in the programme. Three principal groups have been identified:

- ■ Young white males from deprived communities are under-represented in the programme due, primarily, to the limited number of applications. Work needs to

be done, especially in London and the South East, to raise awareness about the programme for this constituency of young people.

- ■ Younger participants are less well represented in the programme and there are some indications that the proportion of 13-15 year olds is falling slightly. If Think Big is interested in building confidence amongst less affluent communities, those young people who are less likely to be on track to achieving good educational qualifications could, perhaps, be a target group who could be identified by youth partner organisations.

- ■ There are distinct regional disparities in engagement with the programme. Local and national youth partner organisations need to be encouraged to focus attention in areas where few applications or awards are made. This is especially important if Think Bigger is to engage more young people from across the UK, rather than those in London and the South East.

Inclusivity of the programme at Level 2

At Level 2, the application process is open to anyone who successfully completes Level 1. But the biographical characteristics of those who apply and ultimately are awarded Think Bigger projects are somewhat homogeneous. Think Bigger participants are older, predominantly male and have rather higher levels of educational qualifications (often they are undergraduates or already have degrees).

We have shown that the award processes for Think Bigger are generally fair and do not favour this group of young people purposefully. That stated, it is important that award panel members continue to keep in mind that applications for Think Bigger projects do not necessarily need to exhibit evidence of enormous practical complexity or methodological innovation, or be hugely ambitious in terms of scale or objectives to count as valid progression opportunities for young people. Some very good Think Bigger project applications may have the potential to achieve significant social impact while they may look rather un-ambitious or perhaps even dull compared with others.

A challenge for the programme team is to widen the constituency of participants in Think Bigger. It is particularly noticeable from the analysis in this report that few young women apply for Think Bigger. It is not possible to determine precisely why this is the case from the available data, but we feel that it is likely to be related to young men's rather stronger levels of confidence, interest in and commitment to undertake the kinds of enterprising activities which are implicitly demanded at the second level of the programme. To rectify the imbalance, we feel that the programme team and youth partner organisations need to be more actively engaged in encouraging young women at Level 1 who have exhibited real potential to take their projects to the next stage to consider applying for Think Bigger.

When 'talent spotting', the programme team need to be equally open minded about the characteristics of potential candidates as they should be about the topics for project development. And, of course, the same criteria should be applied to young men who may exhibit lower levels of self-confidence or be less well qualified, so that a wider constituency of participants join the programme.

Promoting enterprising potential and activity

Think Big is a social programme, not an enterprise development programme. But there is strong interest in developing young people's enterprising potential – whatever form that may take (such as starting a charity, a business or a social enterprise). Think Bigger, the evidence suggests, could be a good training ground for larger projects

which could develop into substantive businesses or social enterprises. It would not be realistic, apart from in exceptional cases, to expect or demand that participants in Think Bigger should be ready to make a 'giant leap' from a modest social programme project to the establishment of a fully-fledged business or social enterprise.

For those young people who are ready to make that transition, the programme team could usefully signpost them one of the many enterprise programmes which are currently operating in the UK. For those who exhibit strong potentiality but do not yet have the confidence, capability or certainty to take this step - another option presents itself – to devise a third level to Think Big which offers young people the opportunity to undertake better resourced, longer-term and appropriately supported project work where there are some expectations about levering extra resource to supplement the investment by Think Big.

A third level could sit comfortably in the middle ground between a full-blown enterprise programme (such as the digital enterprise programme, Wayra, which is currently being run by O_2 Telefónica) and a more intensive social programme. Rather than being too prescriptive about what the programme should look like, a first step may be to bring together the members of the alumni of Think Bigger to discuss what would motivate them to reach a third level and explore what kinds of support they would need.

It could be the case that new project ideas could emerge from configurations of previous projects – so allowing young people to share the risk and responsibility of taking their projects to the next level. It is clear that the Think Big programme continues to play a valuable role in supporting young people to build the entrepreneurial, leadership and work skills to succeed. With continued support from O_2, sustained investment from the Telefónica Foundation, and the dedication and expertise of youth delivery partners, the programme will continue to make a significant contribution to the youth social action landscape in the UK and across Europe.

Appendix

Further analysis of findings from the O₂ Youth Census

Findings from the O₂ Youth Census

Detailed findings from the analysis are divided into three sections: young people's ambitions for the future; confidence about and expectations for the future; and, pro-sociality and willingness to take part in social action.

Young people's ambitions for the future

In this section, generalised and categorical data are presented on the responses of the whole sample to a range of questions about ambitions for the future. The main categories for dividing the sample are gender and socio-economic background.

Figure 1 presents composite data from responses to a wide range of questions on life ambitions, dividing the whole sample by gender. The sets of responses to the questions are categorised in order of priority for the whole sample. It is clear from Figure 1 that young people prioritise, in broad terms, some issues much more highly than others and that while gender differences are evident (to be discussed in more detail below) the priority order for males and females is broadly similar. At some point in the future, most young people want to own their own home and own a car, have a fulfilling and well paid job and enjoy a good standard of living. Furthermore, the majority want to get married and start a family. These findings suggest strong inter-generational continuity about broad life objectives and are not particularly surprising.

There are some gender differences. Females put more emphasis on owning their own home, enjoying financial security and a good standard of living, having a fulfilling and secure job, getting married and starting a family. Against each of these ambitions, females scores are typically between 5-8% higher than for males. Males' ambitions are less pronounced across the board although there are a few exceptions. Young men put a slightly higher premium on earning a lot of money, for example. There is also some evidence to suggest that young males are more interested in working independently rather than being employed: about a third more young males want to start and run their own business compared with females and almost twice as many want to start up and run a social enterprise. These findings need to be kept in context, however: the idea of starting up a business or social enterprise is very much a minority ambition. Males are twice as likely to want to become a celebrity and be famous – but they are few in number (12% of males compared with 6% of females).

Asking whether young people have a *general* desire to achieve something later in life (Figure 1 referred to simple yes/no answers) tells us little about the relative importance of such priorities to them. Figure 2 presents some data to show *how* important different objectives are to young people: categories are prioritised from the greatest level of importance to the least level of importance. From these data, it becomes apparent that occupational fulfilment and security are generally given the highest priority, which is especially interesting, given the current unemployment picture for young people and the

challenges of a shrinking labour market. These are followed closely by domestic and relationship objectives such as owning a home, being married and having a family. Investment in self development is also a priority – with 31% of young people saying that this is very important to them.

While Figure 1 suggests that starting a business or social enterprise was a priority to some young males in particular (36% and 7% respectively), it is evident from Figure 2 that few put a high priority on this. Only about 8% of young people think that starting a business is very important to them, and about 4% do so for starting up or running a social enterprise. These percentages are rather closer to the actual levels of involvement in such activity as reported above in Chapter 6.

It is also interesting to note that the level of importance attached to pro-social activity is relatively low: only 14% of the sample put a high priority on 'making a positive difference to my community through voluntary activity / charitable work', which offers some interesting insights around the 'community' focus of the Think Big programme, and whether the programme needs to be re-framed in order to engage a wider audience of young people and speak to their priorities. We will return to this issue in the third section of this chapter.

Figure 1   **Which of the following would you like to achieve in future?**

	Female	Male
Own your own home	90%	82%
Enjoy financial security and a good standard of living	87%	81%
Get a job which is fulfilling and worthwhile	85%	71%
Own a car	76%	75%
Get married	78%	67%
Get a secure job	76%	66%
Start a family	76%	67%
Get a highly paid job	62%	57%
Earn a lot of money	58%	62%
Go to university	48%	43%
Live and work abroad	38%	37%
Make a positive difference to my community through voluntary activity / charitable work	41%	31%
Start / run my own business	26%	36%
Go on education / training course which gives me the skills I need to secure a job	28%	23%
Achieve fame / become a celebrity	6%	12%
Start / run my own charity	7%	9%
Start / run my own social enterprise	4%	7%

Figure 2   **Relative importance of life ambitions**

	Not important	Not much importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
Get a job which is fulfilling and worthwhile	1%	3%	9%	33%	54%
Enjoy financial security / good standard of living	1%	2%	9%	36%	52%
Get a secure job	2%	2%	10%	41%	45%
Own your own home	2%	6%	10%	39%	42%
Start a family	6%	7%	16%	30%	41%
Get married	7%	7%	19%	32%	35%
Go to university	9%	9%	24%	27%	31%
Own a car	8%	18%	17%	37%	20%
Get a highly paid job	3%	10%	27%	42%	19%
Earn a lot of money	3%	14%	27%	39%	17%
Go on education / training course which gives me the skills I need to secure a job	8%	12%	33%	33%	14%
Make a positive difference to my community through voluntary activity / charitable work	6%	14%	33%	34%	14%
Live and work abroad	18%	16%	34%	24%	9%
Start / run my own business	23%	21%	29%	20%	8%
Achieve fame/become a celebrity	51%	19%	20%	6%	4%
Start / run my own social enterprise	30%	26%	31%	9%	4%

Think Big is an open programme to provide opportunities for all young people to develop their skills and confidence and to make a positive contribution to their communities. As noted in Chapter 1, it also has a particular ambition to deliver an inclusive programme which supports young people from less advantaged backgrounds. If this is the case, then it is important to identify if life ambitions differ significantly among young people from more or less affluent backgrounds. The next two charts compare the expectations of respondents by gender and socio-economic background.

Figure 3 compares the percentages of young women and girls who think it is either 'important' or 'very important' that they achieve a range of objectives in life. As suggested in Figure 2, the priority range for females is broadly similar to the whole sample. There is a very strong emphasis on secure and fulfilling work and the establishment of a home, stable marital relationship and starting a family.

The socio-economic background of young women does not make a dramatic difference to these priorities, but some interesting variations do emerge. Young women from the most affluent backgrounds put a higher premium on doing fulfilling work than their less affluent counterparts (95% against 86%); getting a highly paid job (64% against 56%); owning a

home (87% against 79%); getting married (77% against 64%); and most particularly, going to university (73% against 54%).

Each of these differences is interesting – suggesting that expectations for the most affluent young women are generally rather higher on key life ambitions. This is to be expected, of course: young people from more affluent backgrounds are generally exposed to more possibilities for life advancement than those from poorer backgrounds – and so they learn to expect more. It is interesting to note that one of the few areas where females from less advantaged backgrounds emphasise higher levels of importance centres upon income: 64% of females from the least affluent background say that getting a highly paid job is of importance to them compared with just 56% of the most affluent females. This, again, is not surprising. If someone has been brought up in a household where finances are continually under pressure – then the ambition is not to repeat this process and higher income is the best way out of it. It does not follow, however, that income expectations will be the same for higher and lower socio-economic groups – as subsequent analysis will demonstrate.

For boys and young men, the priority list on life ambitions is not dissimilar from girls and young women. But males put a higher premium on getting a highly paid job and earning a lot of money and put a slightly lower premium on going to university (which, presumably, could assist in opening the door to these higher ambitions).   Differences in emphasis on the importance attached to each factor by socio-economic group are pronounced in some areas. More affluent young men put more emphasis on owning their own home as an ambition (83% SEG A against 75% SEG E). Similar differences emerge in relation to getting a fulfilling job (83% against 76%); and, earning a lot of money (61% against 53%); There is a general emphasis amongst young men on earning more money than is the case with young women – but the differences are only a few percentage points apart. A well accepted route to achieving higher income is to go to university. But males put a lower level of importance on this than females. Amongst the most affluent (SEG A), 73% of females say that university is important to them compared with only 60% of males. For the least affluent (SEG E), these statistics are 54% and 43% respectively. These issues will be explored further below.

Figure 3   **Relative importance of objectives in life: females**

Objective	SEG E Female	SEG C2D Female	SEG BC1 Female	SEG A Female
Get a job that is fullfilling and worthwhile	86%	92%	92%	95%
Get a secure job	85%	94%	92%	91%
Own your own home	79%	87%	86%	87%
Start a family	69%	75%	76%	74%
Get married	64%	71%	72%	77%
Go to university	54%	56%	70%	73%
Get a highly paid job	56%	62%	57%	64%
Financial security/good standard of living	51%	53%	59%	58%
Earn a lot of money	57%	56%	50%	54%
Go on education / training course which gives me the skills I need to get a secure job	52%	52%	50%	51%
Make a positive difference to my community through voluntary activity / charitable work	47%	46%	58%	52%
Live and work abroad	27%	32%	36%	39%
Start/run my own business	24%	24%	17%	26%
Start/run my own social enterprise	9%	10%	7%	10%
Achieve fame/become a celebrity	6%	6%	6%	10%

Figure 4   **Relative importance of objectives in life: males**

Get a job that is fullfilling and worthwhile: SEG E Male 76%, SEG C2D Male 81%, SEG BC1 Male 88%, SEG A Male 83%

Get a secure job: SEG E Male 79%, SEG C2D Male 79%, SEG BC1 Male 86%, SEG A Male 83%

Own your own home: SEG E Male 75%, SEG C2D Male 72%, SEG BC1 Male 85%, SEG A Male 83%

Start a family: SEG E Male 70%, SEG C2D Male 61%, SEG BC1 Male 69%, SEG A Male 71%

Get married: SEG E Male 66%, SEG C2D Male 54%, SEG BC1 Male 67%, SEG A Male 69%

Get a highly paid job: SEG E Male 53%, SEG C2D Male 67%, SEG BC1 Male 60%, SEG A Male 63%

Earn a lot of money: SEG E Male 50%, SEG C2D Male 61%, SEG BC1 Male 58%, SEG A Male 61%

Go to university: SEG E Male 43%, SEG C2D Male 46%, SEG BC1 Male 59%, SEG A Male 60%

Financial security/good standard of living: SEG E Male 46%, SEG C2D Male 48%, SEG BC1 Male 56%, SEG A Male 44%

Make a positive difference to my community through voluntary activity / charitable work: SEG E Male 47%, SEG C2D Male 38%, SEG BC1 Male 48%, SEG A Male 47%

Go on education / training course which gives me the skills I need to get a secure job: SEG E Male 43%, SEG C2D Male 45%, SEG BC1 Male 38%, SEG A Male 49%

Start/run my own business: SEG E Male 31%, SEG C2D Male 31%, SEG BC1 Male 31%, SEG A Male 36%

Live and work abroad: SEG E Male 29%, SEG C2D Male 34%, SEG BC1 Male 26%, SEG A Male 37%

Start/run my own social enterprise: SEG E Male 16%, SEG C2D Male 13%, SEG BC1 Male 13%, SEG A Male 21%

Achieve fame/become a celebrity: SEG E Male 16%, SEG C2D Male 13%, SEG BC1 Male 9%, SEG A Male 14%

Legend: SEG E Male, SEG C2D Male, SEG BC1 Male, SEG A Male

Expectations about the future

Asking young people to rank life objectives or goals gives a useful indication of their life ambitions. Inevitably, however, such responses can only give very general insights into their *actual* expectations about what they hope to achieve. A better way of gauging this is by using questions about their actual salary expectations within a limited time frame. The next stage of the analysis does this by comparing salary expectations by the time respondents reach the age of 30.

It is clear from the analysis presented in Chapter 2 that young people's opportunities are not just shaped by their aspirations, but also by structural factors – that is, the availability of suitable opportunities. Clearly, opportunity structures vary significantly in different parts of the UK – but does this affect young people's expectations? Figure 5 presents data on salary expectations by region in three bands: salaries below £25,000; between £25,000 and £40,000; and, above £40,000.

These data produce some significant differences. Without doubt, young people in London have the highest income expectations: 49% of young people expect to be earning over £40,000 by the time they are 30. Expectations of earning a salary above £40,000 are also higher in Scotland (39%), South West England (38%) and in the South East England (34%). By contrast, there are comparably lower salary expectations in other areas. In the West Midlands of England 34%, Wales 31% and North East England 29% of young people expect to earn less than £25,000 a year by the time they are 30 (compared with just 14% in London).

It is useful to extend this analysis by comparing these statistics with young people's assessments of what salary level they would actually need by the age of 30 to live a fulfilling life. These data are presented in Figure 6. It is evident from these data that young people have different expectations depending on where they live now. In London, 64% of young people say that they need a salary of more than £40,000 to live a fulfilling life by the age of 30 compared with just 27% in North East England. Indeed, as few as 9% of young people in London feel they could live a fulfilling life on less than £25,000 a year compared with over 20% in North East England, East Midlands of England or Scotland.

A useful next step in the analysis is to compare data by gender and socio-economic group for salary expectations and salary needs at age 30. This analysis is presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8. In Figure 7 it is clear that salary expectations differ very significantly amongst men from different socio-economic backgrounds. While 57% of young men from SEG A expect to be earning over £40,000 when they are 30 years old, only 33% from SEG E believe that this is the case. For young women, the differences between the socio-economic groups are less pronounced: 46% of SEG A females expect to be earning over £40,000 when they are 30, whereas females from the intermediate SEGs is 30% but rises to 36% for the least advantaged young women.

At the other end of the salary spectrum, fewer than 5% of SEG A young males expect to be earning less than £25,000 a year when they reach the of 30, compared with 23% of SEG E males. The least affluent males, in other words, are four times as likely to expect to earn the lowest category of salary. For young females the differences are less pronounced, but nevertheless, young women from less affluent backgrounds expect to achieve much lower salaries – ranging from 32% expecting to earn less than £25,000 at age 30 in SEG E compared with 17% in SEG A. These may or may not be realistic or accurate expectations on the part of respondents. We cannot say. But the point to make is that if young people do not expect to achieve a higher salary, it is likely that they will not strive to do so and may not take the kinds of steps more affluent young people take (and/or are encouraged and sponsored to take) to achieve their ambitions.

An indication of the source of differences in salary expectations arises to some extent from personal evaluations of what kind of salary people think they will need to live fulfilling lives

when they reach the age of 30. Figure 8 presents these data and it is evident that expectations about salary level and the salary needed at age 30 are very similar for males but not for females. This is particularly pronounced for lower salary expectations and income needed to achieve fulfilment. To make the point visually, these data are presented in a separate chart – in Figure 9. It is clear that very few males from SEG A expect to have salaries below £25,000 or to be able to live a fulfilling life on such a salary: (5% and 7% respectively). For females from SEG A the percentages are very different: 18% expect to have a salary of £25,000 but only 9% think it is enough to live a fulfilling life. The mismatch grows considerably for males too in SEG C2D and E – but not to the extent it does for females where 37% expect to earn less than £25,000 but only 25% think they could comfortably live on such a salary.

Figure 5   **Salary expectations by age 30: by UK nation and region**
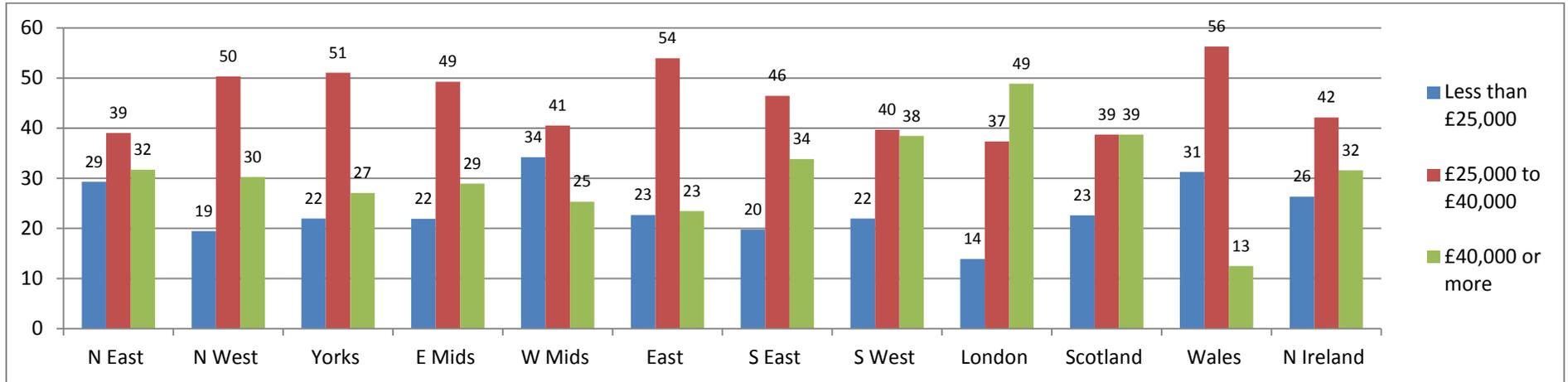

Figure 6   **Salary needed to life a fulfilling life by the age 30: by UK nation and region**
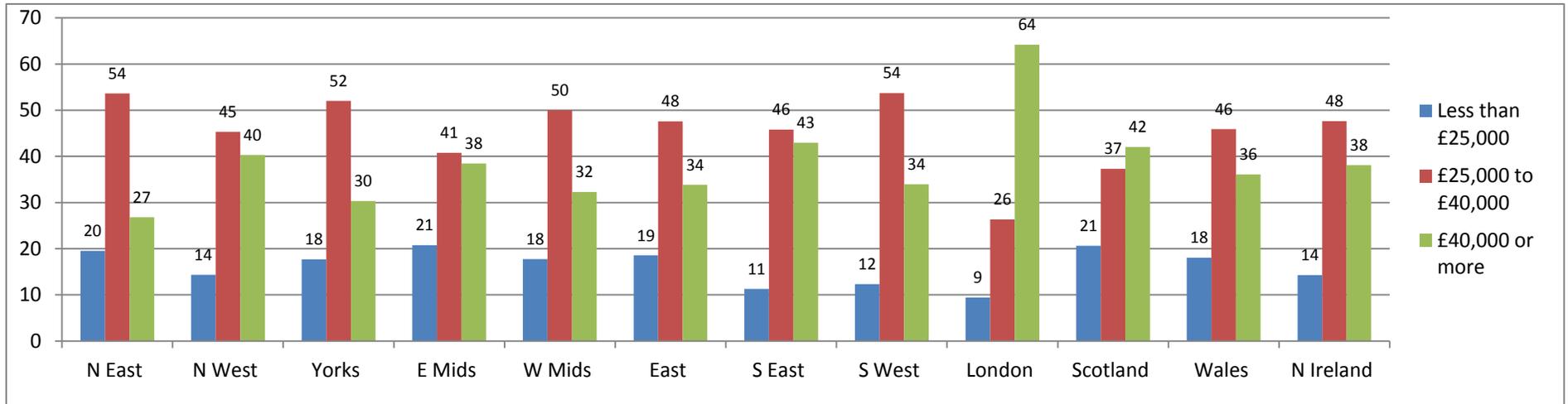
Figure 7   **Salary expectations at age 30 by gender and SEG**
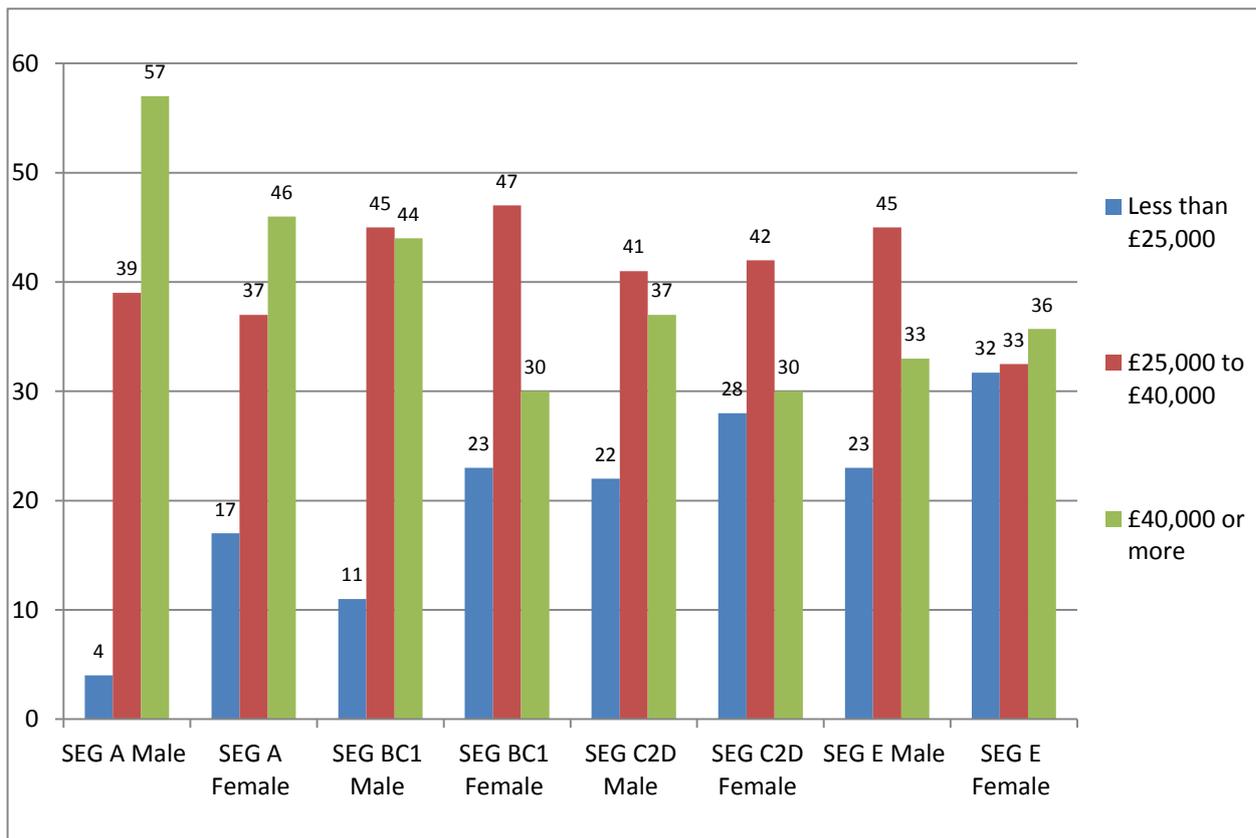
Figure 8   **Salary needed to life a fulfilling life age 30 by gender and SEG**
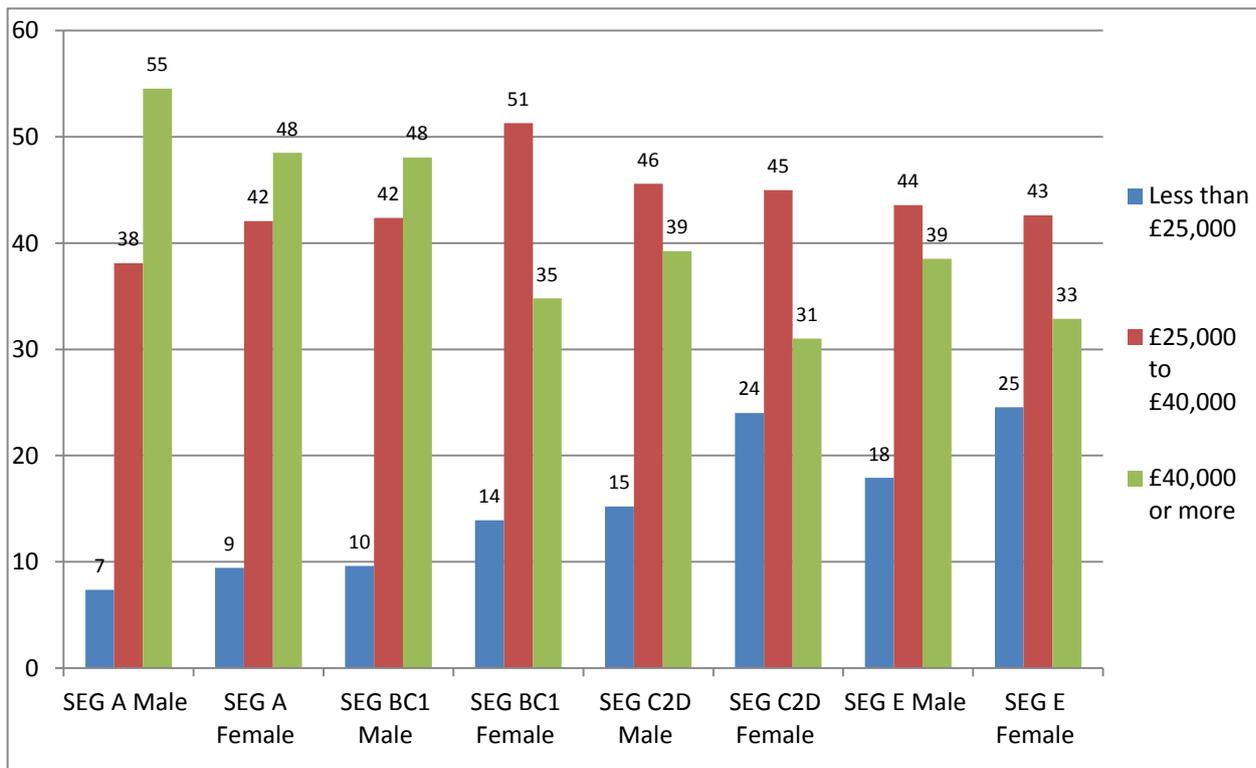
Figure 9   **Salary expectations and needs compared at level of £25,000**

Legend:
- Expect to have a salary of less than £25,000 at age 30 (blue)
- Think they can live a fulfilling life on less than £25,000 at age 30 (red)

Category	Expect salary <£25,000	Live fulfilling life <£25,000
SEG A Male	5	7
SEG A Female	18	9
SEG BC1 Male	11	10
SEG BC1 Female	25	14
SEG C2D Male	23	15
SEG C2D Female	31	24
SEG E Male	26	18
SEG E Female	37.4	25
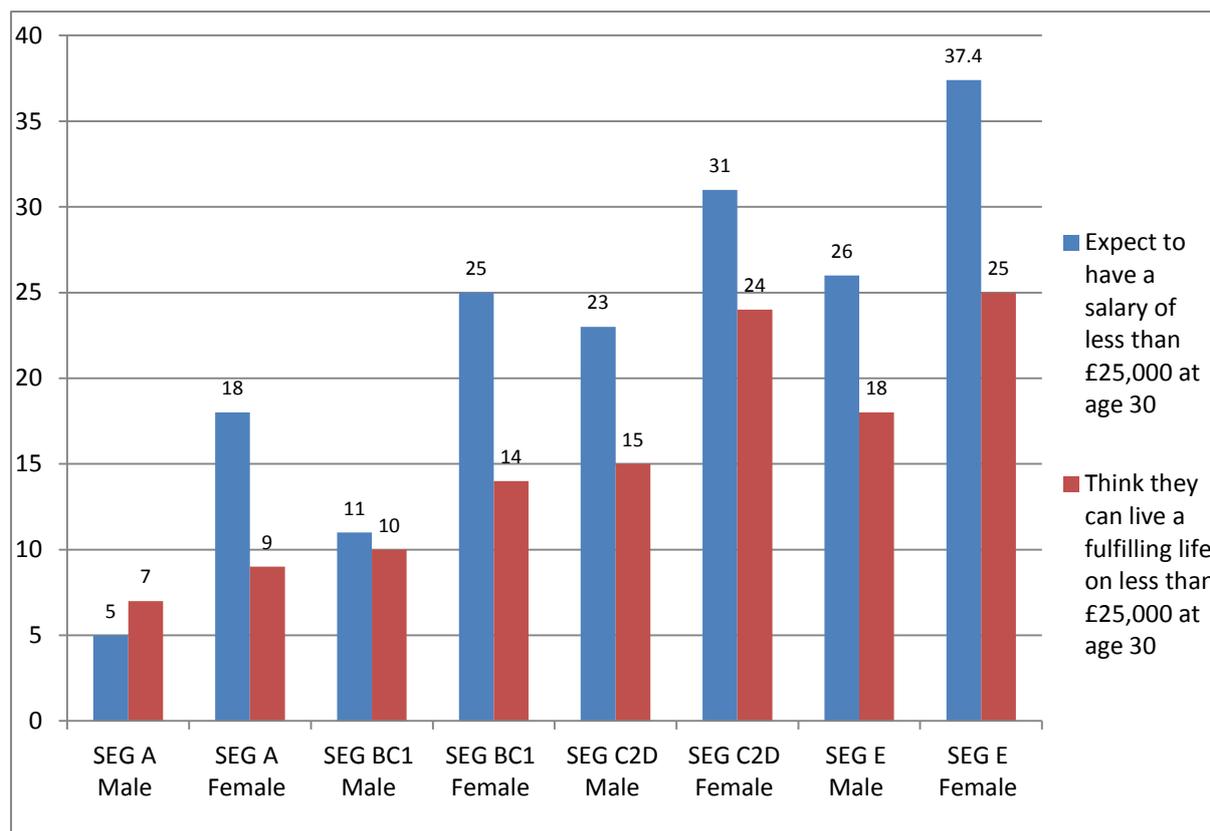
Confidence about the future

The above analysis provides useful indicators of the impact of gender, socio-economic status and regional location on young people's confidence about the future in salary and financial wellbeing terms. These indicators produce richer insights around young people's levels of confidence and aspiration. Nevertheless it is useful to look at these data to see where differences lie, but also to use them to compare with the salary and financial wellbeing indicators already discussed.

Figure 10 presents evidence on levels of confidence by socio-economic background and gender. It is clear from these data that young men are more likely to feel confident than young women from all the social economic backgrounds apart from the least affluent. Furthermore, as would be expected, confidence for both males and females falls as they become less affluent (again with the exception of females from the least affluent SEG). To put this more baldly, 62% of males from SEG A are confident about their future compared with 45% from SEG E. For females, the percentages are 56% and 47% respectively.

Clearly these data have implications for the aims of Think Big. The programme has always emphasised the importance of being an open programme but with a special emphasis on targeting young people from less affluent backgrounds, in order to build their confidence and personal resilience. The evidence presented in the above tables indicates quite strongly that this objective is justified: greater social benefit may be achieved by giving some priority to young people from less affluent backgrounds.

It is clear, however, that it is not just the least affluent young people who need support. There are also strong indications that young people in SEG C2D need to have confidence bolstered too – particularly so, perhaps, in areas of the UK where expectations are, understandably dampened by economic circumstances.

But do young people feel less confident about their future in different parts of the UK? Figure 11 suggests that there are significant variations – but they are hard to interpret. In

Wales, the West and East Midlands of England, confidence seems to be at its lowest at around 46-7%. Contrary to indications in previous analysis, confidence is very high in North East England, despite low salary expectations.

Low levels of confidence are also observed. In London, where salary expectations are the highest, but expectations about a liveable income are also very high, confidence is quite low: 31% of young people do not feel confident about their future. In other areas, even the poorest English regions, relatively few young people lack confidence (for example, only 17% in North East England). These data are hard to interpret, given the relatively small size of the sample in such a wide range of areas, so it is important not to overplay their significance. However, it does suggest that there is a clear association between young people's confidence and expectations and that this is in turn related to realistic judgements about the structure of opportunities available to them where they live.[74]

Figure 10   **Confidence about the future by gender and socio economic background**

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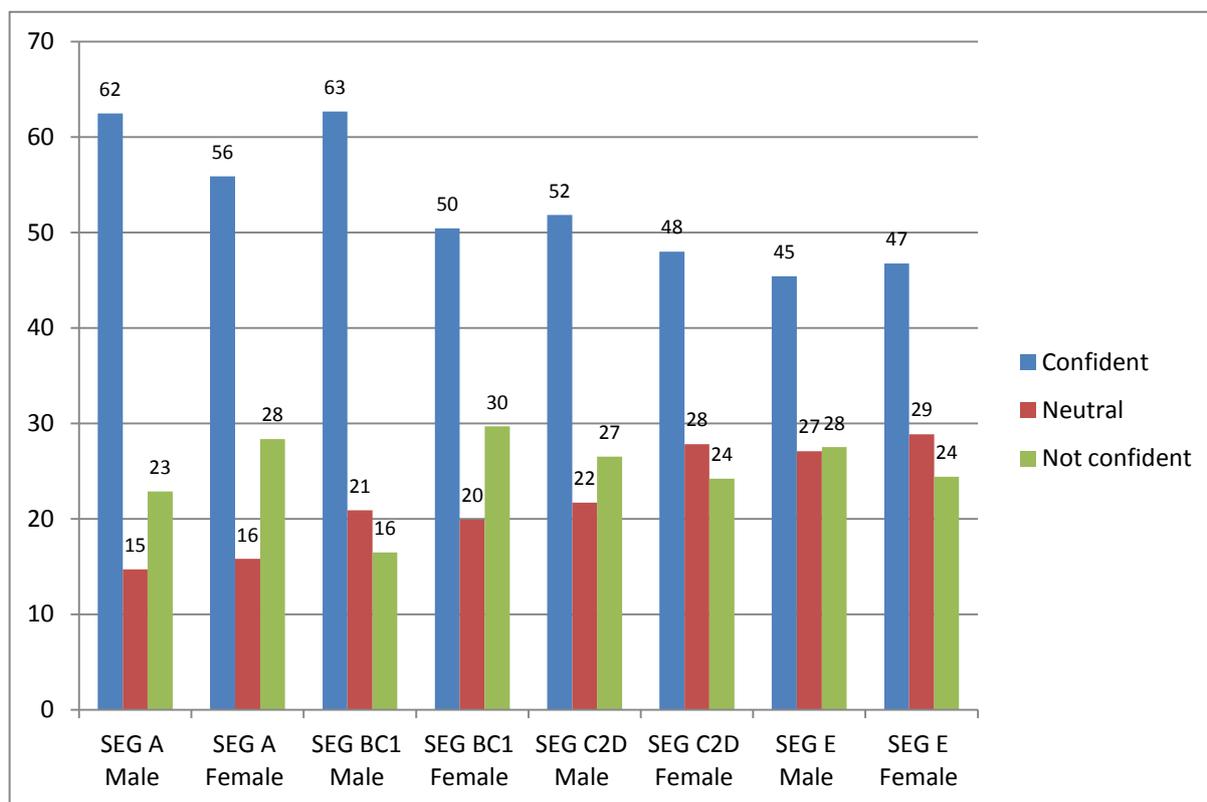
[74] Young people are, of course, geographically mobile – particularly so when they are graduates. But geographical mobility after university is likely to be greater if young people studied away from home. More affluent young people are more likely to do this – which may have an effect both on their confidence and opportunity horizons.

Figure 11   **Confidence about the future by UK nation and region**
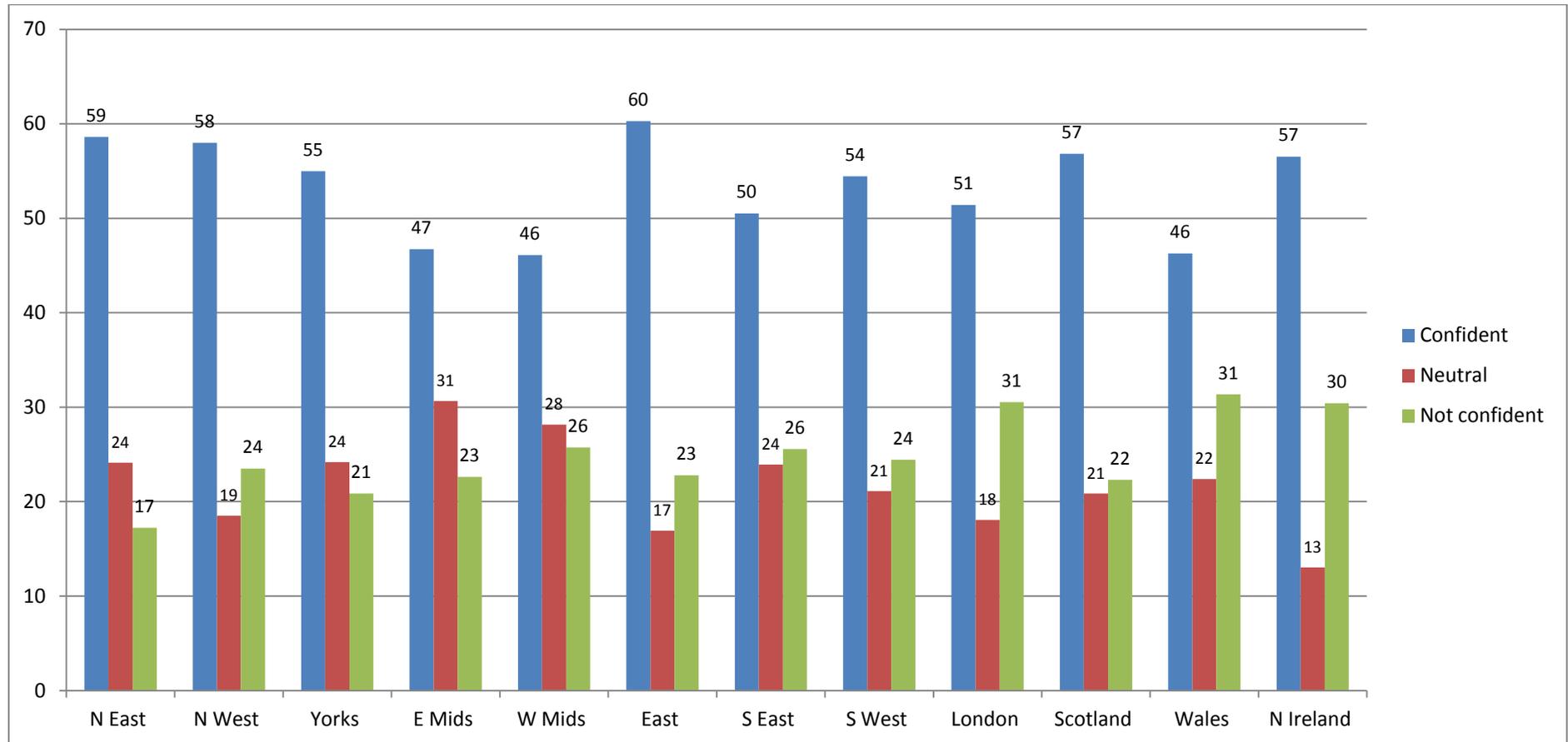
Confidence indicators provide useful measures of wellbeing and resilience. But it is helpful to get more detailed understanding of the reasons why young people may feel confident or lack confidence. Figure 12 deals with this issue by comparing the extent to which young people agree with a series of statements about current labour market and economic conditions. They were asked how they felt about several statements, judging their own opportunities in comparison with those of their parents.[75]

Figure 12 provides data on the attitudes of males. It is clear from these data that some issues worry young men from some backgrounds more than others. Indeed, the data provide quite strong evidence to suggest that males from SEG C2D (that is, families with relatively modest incomes) are by far the most concerned about nearly all of the statements. They feel that: there is too much competition for jobs (50%); hard work isn't enough to get you ahead anymore (37%); there are fewer job opportunities (40%); economic conditions are much tougher (38%); it's so expensive to go to university that they probably won't go (38%); there aren't enough quality jobs these days (32%); and, the quality of education is worse now (22%).

These worries suggest that young males from modest backgrounds tend to be more likely to externalise reasons for their situation – that they seem to be more 'fatalistic' than other young males (that their interpretation external conditions and constraints persuades them to believe that their fate is not under their own control). In political circles, the socio-economic groups to which SEG C2D refer is sometimes called the 'squeezed middle' and often it is asserted that they miss out on the best opportunities in life, but also find that they miss out on some of the benefits and support that the poorest families can receive.

While these data are impressionistic and should not be read literally to suggest that young men from such social backgrounds are more likely to be fatalistic – it does show that they may constitute a particularly needy target group for a national programme such as Think Big.

Figure 13 presents the same data for young females. These data suggest that young women from SEG C2D backgrounds are rather less pessimistic and fatalistic. It is the case that more young females from these backgrounds worry about there being too much competition for jobs (59%), there being fewer job opportunities (46%) and it being too expensive to go to university (34%). But their attitudes about other factors are much more similar to young females from other socio-economic backgrounds. The more important finding from this figure, of course, is that young women are more worried in general than young men in relation to three of the statements.

In terms of competition for jobs, 47% of all females in the sample compared with 39% of males strongly agree that there is much more competition now. 35% of all females strongly agree that economic conditions are tougher now, compared with 27% of males. And, 35% of females strongly agree that there are fewer job opportunities compared with 28% of males. These data refer to young people's perceptions of the opportunity structure, of course, not the actual differences in opportunities they have when compared with their

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[75] Such a measure is obviously difficult to interpret for the sample as a whole because the parents of young people in general are unlikely to have had the same opportunities in life. Consequently, the data have been divided by socio-economic groups so that it is possible to make informed assertions about the impact of their background on their response. In the figures that follow the data refer to the percentage of young people who 'strongly agree' with each statement. Such a response would indicate that young people identify with factors which are *outside* of their locus of control to explain how they feel about their situation. It is not, therefore, a direct indicator of personal confidence or resilience, but rather a measured response on their perceptions of the opportunity structures that are available to them. It is entirely conceivable that a young person who thinks that there is 'far too much competition for jobs these days', for example, also feels that they have a great deal of confidence in their own ability. The problem that can arise is when people use 'categorical fate' to account for their situation (i.e. that they feel that something beyond their control is stopping them from being successful) and are at risk of not trying to do things as a consequence.

parents, but it is not an unfamiliar picture, based on the current unemployment picture for young people.

Figure 12 **Worries about the future: percentage of males who strongly agree**
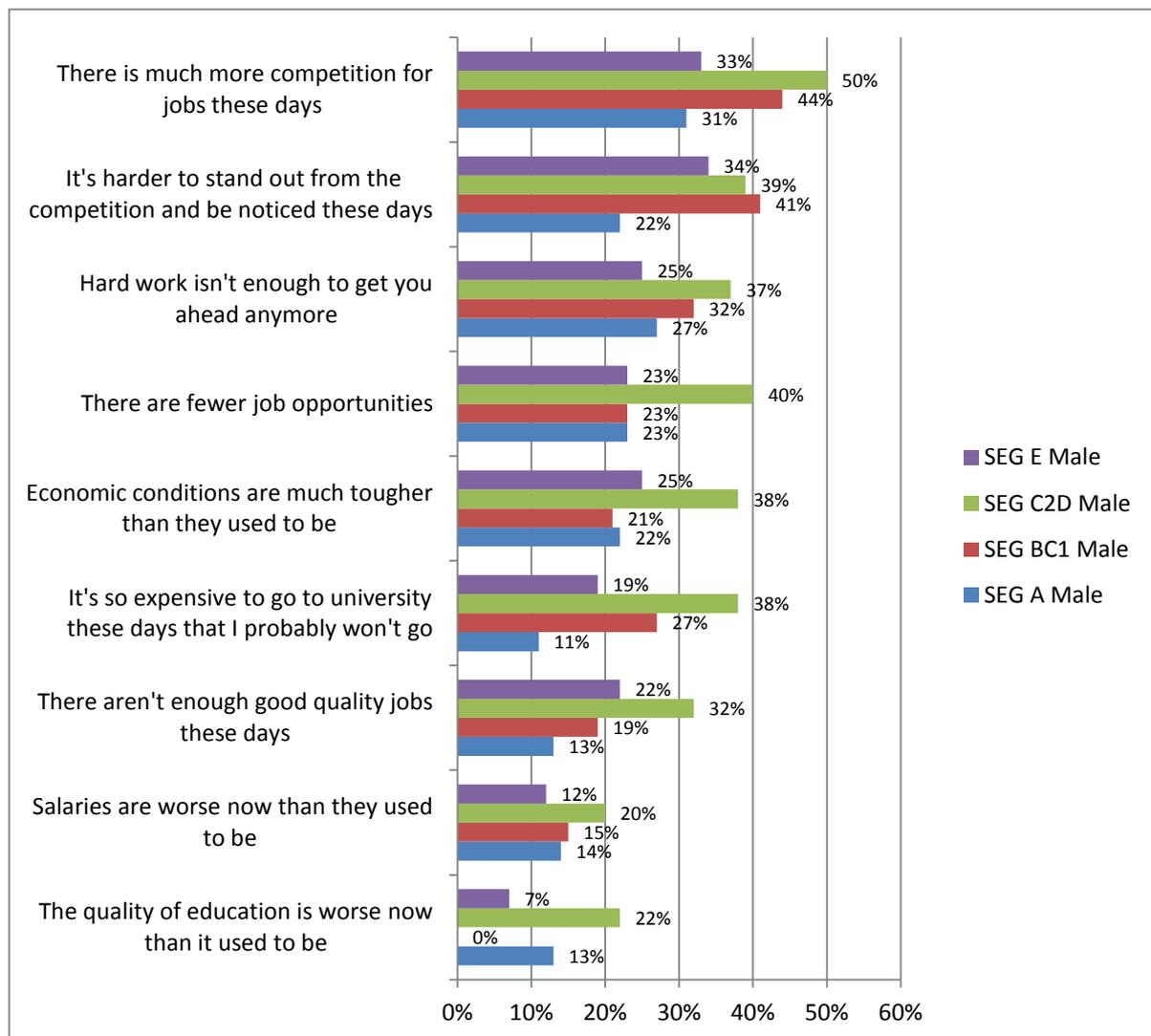
Figure 12   **Worries about the future: percentage of females who strongly agree**

Legend:
- SEG E Female
- SEG C2D Female
- SEG BC1 Female
- SEG A Female

There is much more competition for jobs these days: 44%, 59%, 48%, 42%
Economic conditions are much tougher than they used to be: 35%, 37%, 38%, 39%
There are fewer job opportunities: 40%, 46%, 31%, 31%
It's harder to stand out from the competition and be noticed these days: 30%, 39%, 31%, 30%
Hard work isn't enough to get you ahead anymore: 20%, 27%, 25%, 29%
There aren't enough good quality jobs these days: 25%, 26%, 17%, 21%
It's so expensive to go to university these days that I probably won't go: 24%, 34%, 11%, 14%
Salaries are worse now than they used to be: 20%, 14%, 10%, 13%
The quality of education is worse now than it used to be: 13%, 9%, 13%, 7%

Pro-sociality and volunteering

The final section in this chapter considers young people's attitudes about pro-social behaviour such as volunteering. It is important to look at this because Think Big is a UK-wide social action programme that expects young people to take part in pro-social activity as a condition of approval of project ideas. We need to know if the young people who are involved in the programme are, in this sense, typical of young people who are more likely to volunteer, or of young people in general.

We asked young people a range of questions about voluntary social action which can be split into three broad types:

- Questions about the extent to which they believe, in general terms, whether voluntary action is socially valuable for the wider community and for the development of individuals sense of pro-sociality

- Questions about the extent to which voluntary action is thought to be beneficial, in a general sense, for instrumental reasons to the person who does volunteering (such as building skills, improving their CV and so on)

- Questions about whether they actually want to volunteer themselves (focusing particularly on the potential impact of a major recent volunteering opportunity, the London Olympics and Paralympics, to see if this produced more interest in volunteering).

Figure.14 (for males) and 15 (for females) provide responses to these questions for respondents from each of the four socio-economic background categories used throughout this chapter. In each figure, responses are presented in priority order where the strongest attitudes are presented at the top of the figure, and the weakest at the bottom.

The most obvious finding from Figure 14 is that young males are not particularly enthusiastic about doing volunteering, nor do they have a particularly strong set of feelings on its benefits to them or to society more generally. Fewer than a third of males strongly agree that volunteering builds key skills and only about 20% strongly agree that it will improve job prospects. Similarly only around 12-20% strongly agree that they want to get more involved. The impact of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics appears to be negligible on their personal motivation get involved in volunteering. Socio-economic background does not seem to have an obvious impact on opinions, and while variations are observed, there is no clear pattern emerging.

For young females it is evident from Figure 15 that they are more likely to strongly agree with most of the statements compared with males – usually in the range of between 5-10% above males against every statement apart from the influence of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics where strength of opinion is more similar. Socio economic background seems to have a more clear impact on young females' opinions however, where greater affluence tends to consistently produce a more positive response - although the differences are not large.

It is important to note that volunteering can generate negative reactions from young people – it is often perceived as an activity with few personal benefits. Given the strong focus from all groups on earning potential, 'volunteering' in its most traditional sense, may be seen as a distraction from the key goal of obtaining fulfilling, paid work. Given young people's attitudes towards pro-sociality and volunteering, it is important for the Think Big programme to appropriately balance the social action focus of its programme, with opportunities to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills, in order to more effectively communicate the broader benefits of participation.

Sources: http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/Institute-of-Volunteering-Research/Migrated-Resources/Documents/G/IVR-September-2004-Generation-V-Young-People-speak-out-on-volunteering.pdf and http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/Institute-of-Volunteering-Research/Migrated-Resources/Documents/Y/review_literature.pdf

Figure 14 — Attitudes about voluntary action by social economic background: males

Figure 14   **Attitudes about voluntary action by social economic background: males**

Volunteering helps build key skills (e.g. team working / communication / relationship building)
- SEG A Male: 33%
- SEG BC1 Male: 35%
- SEG C2D Male: 30%
- SEG E Male: 31%

For people who are struggling to find work, volunteering helps them gain valuable experience
- SEG A Male: 27%
- SEG BC1 Male: 20%
- SEG C2D Male: 23%
- SEG E Male: 24%

Volunteering shows that a person has a good character (e.g. energy and ambition)
- SEG A Male: 20%
- SEG BC1 Male: 17%
- SEG C2D Male: 22%
- SEG E Male: 19%

It's important to give something back to the local community through activities such as volunteering
- SEG A Male: 18%
- SEG BC1 Male: 16%
- SEG C2D Male: 21%
- SEG E Male: 20%

Volunteering can help improve job prospects as employers regard it favourably
- SEG A Male: 18%
- SEG BC1 Male: 15%
- SEG C2D Male: 19%
- SEG E Male: 22%

I want to contribute more / play more of a role in my community through activities including volunteering
- SEG A Male: 20%
- SEG BC1 Male: 12%
- SEG C2D Male: 20%
- SEG E Male: 16%

Those people I know who volunteer have gained a lot from it
- SEG A Male: 15%
- SEG BC1 Male: 17%
- SEG C2D Male: 15%
- SEG E Male: 11%

Since the 2012 Olympic Games this summer I personally feel more motivated to volunteer and support good
- SEG A Male: 7%
- SEG BC1 Male: 4%
- SEG C2D Male: 13%
- SEG E Male: 7%

Since the 2012 Olympic Games I am doing more volunteer work than previously
- SEG A Male: 9%
- SEG BC1 Male: 3%
- SEG C2D Male: 9%
- SEG E Male: 4%

Legend:
- SEG A Male
- SEG BC1 Male
- SEG C2D Male
- SEG E Male

Figure 15   **Attitudes about voluntary action by social economic background: females**

Legend:
- SEG A Female
- SEG BC1 Female
- SEG C2D Female
- SEG E Female

Volunteering helps build key skills (e.g. team working / communication / relationship building)
- SEG A: 44%
- SEG BC1: 42%
- SEG C2D: 38%
- SEG E: 41%

For people who are struggling to find work, volunteering helps them gain valuable experience
- SEG A: 36%
- SEG BC1: 34%
- SEG C2D: 32%
- SEG E: 30%

It's important to give something back to the local community through activities such as volunteering
- SEG A: 35%
- SEG BC1: 33%
- SEG C2D: 26%
- SEG E: 27%

Volunteering shows that a person has a good character (e.g. energy and ambition)
- SEG A: 35%
- SEG BC1: 30%
- SEG C2D: 29%
- SEG E: 22%

Volunteering can help improve job prospects as employers regard it favourably
- SEG A: 31%
- SEG BC1: 31%
- SEG C2D: 29%
- SEG E: 23%

Those people I know who volunteer have gained a lot from it
- SEG A: 26%
- SEG BC1: 26%
- SEG C2D: 20%
- SEG E: 18%

I want to contribute more / play more of a role in my community through activities including volunteering
- SEG A: 24%
- SEG BC1: 23%
- SEG C2D: 22%
- SEG E: 16%

Since the 2012 Olympic Games this summer I personally feel more motivated to volunteer and support good
- SEG A: 11%
- SEG BC1: 8%
- SEG C2D: 8%
- SEG E: 7%

Since the 2012 Olympic Games I am doing more volunteer work than previously
- SEG A: 4%
- SEG BC1: 3%
- SEG C2D: 4%
- SEG E: 4%

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