

A Habit of Service:

A young person's journey of social action

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (University of Birmingham), in partnership with the #iwill campaign, conducted a questionnaire with 4,518 16-20 year olds in the UK, and in-depth interviews with seven 16-20 year olds, to understand which factors are associated with young people who have made a habit of service.

For the full report and further details, visit www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/habitofservice.

A young person with a habit of service...

... has participated in **social action activities** such as volunteering, campaigning, and fundraising in the past year, and wants to take part again in future. They are more likely than those without a habit of service to...

- + Believe they have the time, skills, confidence and opportunity to take part
- + Start social action at a young age, from primary school
- + Take part regularly in a wide range of quality social action opportunities
- + Have social action embedded at school, college or university

"My uni is very good for volunteering, so we have something called the college cup ... you get judged on how much volunteering you do ... Which is why I actually liked my uni because volunteering is such a core part of it" (Beth, 18)



"I guess it's just almost become a part – you know I don't really think about it, it's just something that you know, I'm just used to spending that time on it now" (Colin, 20)

- + Identify more closely with moral and civic virtues
- + Have parents and friends who are also involved in the same type of social action, and who support and encourage the young person's social action.

Recommendations to youth social action providers, schools, colleges and universities:

- + Support young people, as early as possible, to believe they have the time, skills, confidence and opportunity to participate in social action, and provide accessible opportunities.
- + Support young people to continue participating through key transition points, such as moving schools, relocating, going to university or starting work.
- + Encourage young people to share their stories of social action, and in particular emphasise the often ordinary start of their journeys, to inspire others to take part.



The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a unique and leading centre for the examination of how character and virtues impact on individuals and society, based at the University of Birmingham.

www.jubileecentre.ac.uk | [@JubileeCentre1](https://twitter.com/JubileeCentre1)

#iwill

The #iwill campaign promotes social action among 10-20 year-olds. So far more than 700 business, education and voluntary sector partners have committed to embedding social action into the lives of young people. Will you join them?

www.iwill.org.uk | [@iwill_campaign](https://twitter.com/iwill_campaign)

A Habit of Service: The Key Statistics

Demographics

Girls were more likely to have made a habit of service than boys, even when data were weighted to account for the higher number of girls taking the questionnaire. Those practising their religion were also more likely to have made a habit of service than those not practising or not religious. There were no statistically significant differences in terms of socioeconomic status.

Experiences & Support

Young People WITH a Habit of Service

(Young people who took part in social action in the last 12 months and say they definitely will or very likely will participate again in next 12 months)

Young People WITHOUT a Habit of Service

(Young people who took part in social action in the last 12 months but are only fairly likely, unlikely, or unsure if they will participate again in next 12 months)

First got involved in social action under the age of 10	22%	10%
Identify most closely with an exemplar of moral virtues	50%	41%
Desire to be like an exemplar of civic virtues	37%	20%
Parents participate in at least one type of social action	72%	59%
Friends participate in at least one type of social action	80%	69%
Has the support and encouragement needed from family to participate in social action	69%	62%
Has the support and encouragement needed from friends to participate in social action	68%	56%
Says social action is important to their family and best friends	49%	35%
Believe they have the time to participate in social action	43%	26%
Believe they have the opportunity to participate in social action	74%	58%
Believe they have the skills to participate in social action	76%	62%
Believe they have the confidence to participate in social action	76%	59%

Embedded

Accessible to all, and well integrated to existing pathways to become a habit for life

Habit: 34% go to a school, college or university which organises social action events for them to get involved in.
Non-habit: 20% go to a school, college or university which organises social action events for them to get involved in.

What does great youth social action look like?

The #iwill campaign has identified a set of **six principles** which define great youth social action

Youth-led

Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision making

Habit: 73% had a chance to lead in their social action.
Non-habit: 58% had a chance to lead in their social action.

Progressive

Sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities

Habit: 77% wanted to find out more about social action opportunities in their local area.
Non-habit: 59% wanted to find out more about social action opportunities in their local area.

Socially Impactful

Has a clear intended benefit to a community, cause or social problem

Habit: 47% recognise the double benefit of youth social action.
Non-habit: 24% recognise the double benefit of youth social action.

Reflective

Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning

Habit: 80% feel more responsible for their actions as a result of their social action.
Non-habit: 70% feel more responsible for their actions as a result of their social action.

Challenging

Stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and enabling

Habit: 26% felt challenged by their social action and 62% enjoyed it.
Non-habit: 17% felt challenged by their social action and 37% enjoyed it.