

vinformed

Barriers preventing passionate young people acting on their concerns

**A report from v, the youth volunteering charity, detailing
the findings of a survey of 1,000 16-25 year olds**

Foreword

v is an independent charity and was launched in May 2006 as a result of the Russell Commission enquiry into what it would take to bring about a step change in the quantity, quality and diversity of youth volunteering. v seeks to inspire a million more young volunteers in England aged 16-25. It has at its heart a Youth Advisory Board, v20, and is led by the cares, interests, passions and beliefs of young people. To succeed in its mission, we need to better understand what motivates young people and galvanises them into action. Hence, we commissioned this survey to provide a better picture of their personal passions and the issues that concern them, both in the world at large and in their own communities.

The results, as you will see, expose the myth that apathy prevents young people taking action. There is much in their lives, on a local and global level, that they care passionately about and on which they would take action, given the right opportunity.

This is the first in a series of planned research reports, aimed at providing practitioners and policy makers with the information and insights they need to better engage young people in volunteering.

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Executive Summary

Young people's global and local concerns

Young people feel passionate about key global concerns including:

- Terrorism
- War
- Poverty
- Famine
- Climate change

Young people are also aware of local issues that impact on their lives including:

- Lack of inspiring activities to get involved in locally
- Negative perceptions of young people
- Crime
- Poor environment
- Drugs

However, the majority of young people do not act on these global or local concerns

What's stopping young people from taking action?

Young people lead busy lives, and time continues to be a barrier to taking action.

However, perhaps more importantly, young people say they:

- don't know how to get involved and take action on issues they care about
- don't think they have anything to offer

Young people's passions

Sport ranks highly amongst young people's interests, with friends and family, music, reading and writing following close behind. Computers, TV and film and travel also rank highly in young people's passions.

Conclusion

These findings raise interesting questions and pose challenges which v is working with the voluntary sector to address.

Methodology

v commissioned Dubit, the youth focussed research agency, to conduct a survey of 1,000 young people aged 16-25. The research sought answers to the following questions:

- What are their main concerns – both local and global?
- What do they perceive are the most important issues for young people?
- What are young people passionate about?
- What are the perceived barriers to taking action/volunteering?

The survey was conducted with respondents spread in terms of age, gender, location, disability and ethnicity to represent the national demographic in England.

Key Findings

What do young people worry about?

We wanted to find out what issues, both locally and globally, young people were concerned about, what action they were already taking to tackle those concerns, and what barriers they felt were stopping them from getting involved.

The purpose of these questions was to measure the possible gap between the issues that concern young people the most and the opportunity for them to take positive action in tackling those issues.

What are their global concerns?

Respondents were asked to comment on a range of topics and indicate the extent to which they were major concerns by giving them a score out of 10, with 1 not a concern and 10 a major concern. The table below shows the proportions of young people who rated each issue as 8 out of 10 or above, plus those who rated it as 6 or 7 out of 10:

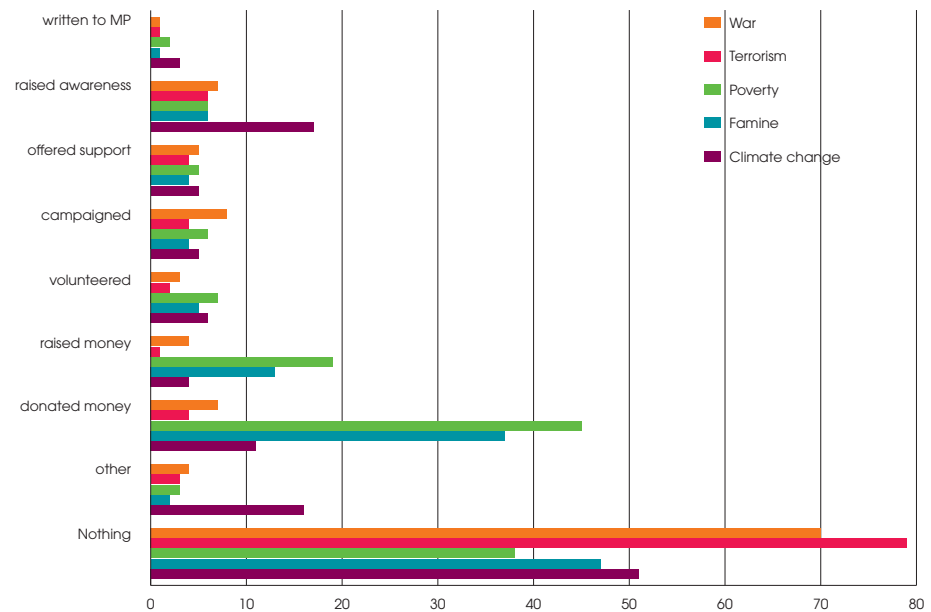
Table 1: top 5 global concerns

Rank	Issue	% of respondents who were very concerned (rated score of 8 or more)	% of respondents who were moderately concerned (score 6-7)
1	Terrorism	63	20
2	War	63	19
3	Poverty	61	19
4	Famine	56	21
5	Climate change	54	21

What are they doing to tackle global concerns?

Respondents were then asked if they had taken any action on these global concerns:

Chart 1: actions taken for top 5 global issues % responses



As the table shows, the two global issues that most concern young people - terrorism and war - are the two they have done least about in terms of taking action. It could be argued that these are issues which young people, and the population in general, have the least control or influence over, while there may be clearer avenues for involvement in the other three areas. This may explain the larger number of young people who have given or raised money to tackle poverty and famine and have increased awareness of climate change. However, the numbers who have taken positive action remain in the minority across all the issues.

One of the challenges for the sector is how to engage more young people in volunteering by relating global concerns, such as famine and war, to the lives of young people, their friends and family.

What are their local concerns?

We also asked respondents about the issues that concern them in the areas they live in, again asking them to rate the importance of these issues out of 10.

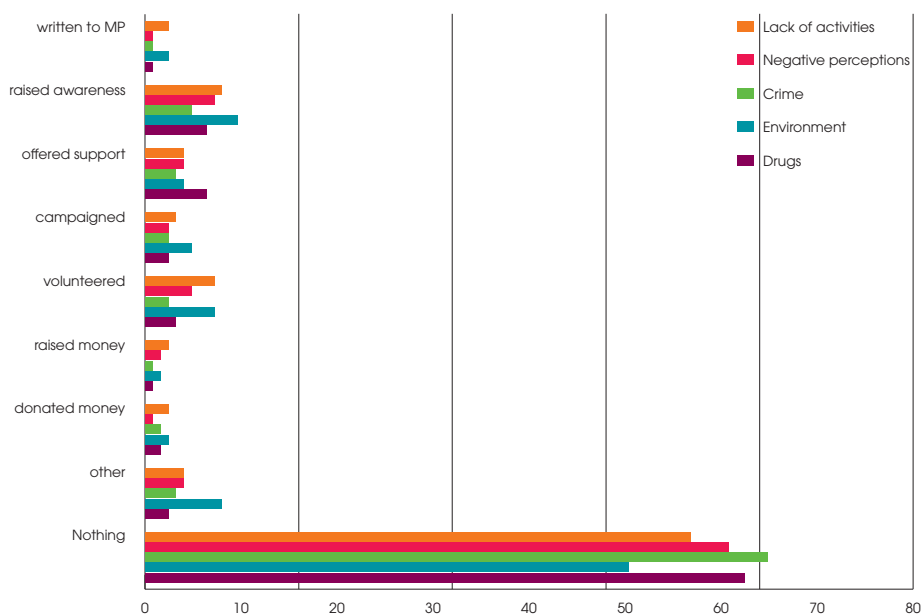
Table 2: top 5 local concerns

Rank	Issue	% of respondents who were very concerned (rated score of 8 or more)	% of respondents who were moderately concerned (score 6-7)
1	Lack of activities/things to get involved in	42	24
2	Negative perceptions of young people	38	26
3	Crime	37	25
4	Environment (litter, unsafe areas, poor housing, pollution etc)	35	25
5	Drugs	34	26

What are they doing to tackle local concerns?

Respondents were then asked if they had taken any action to tackle these local concerns:

Chart 2: actions taken for top 5 local issues % responses



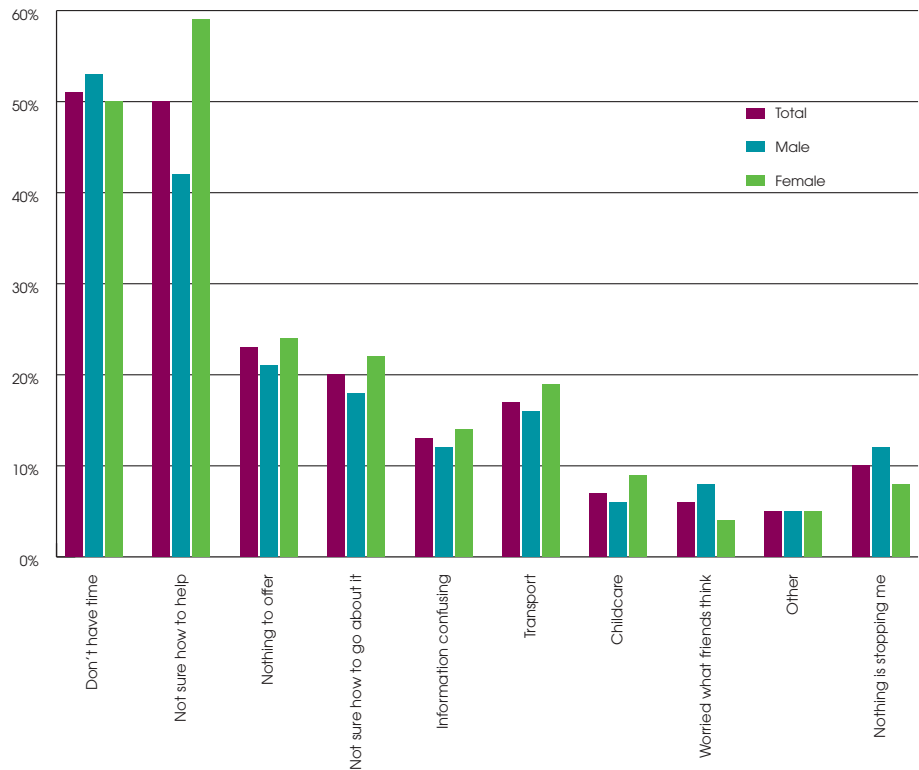
Unlike the global concerns, there was no marked difference in the response of young people getting involved with activities to address local concerns. The majority having done nothing themselves.

Tackling local environmental concerns and addressing the lack of things to do were the issues that inspired the highest levels of positive action, but this was still restricted to a small minority, with 9% volunteering in these areas.

What is stopping them getting involved?

Respondents were asked what, if anything, was stopping them from getting more involved with the things they care about:

Chart 3: perceived barriers by total responses and by gender



As the chart shows, only 10% of young people felt that nothing was stopping them from getting involved, indicating that the vast majority perceive barriers to participation.

A perceived lack of time was the most cited reason for not getting involved, but perhaps the most interesting results were the next two most cited reasons, namely not being sure how to help and believing they have nothing to offer.

This suggests that much more work needs to be done, to raise awareness of the ways young people can get involved, and to make clear the importance and value of their contribution, whatever their skills or experience. Many of the respondents also expressed their uncertainty about where to go for information, both on a local and national level, suggesting more needs to be done to provide clear signposts at both levels.

Passions and actions

As the findings above show, there is a large gap between the local and global issues young people are concerned about and the action they are taking to tackle those issues.

We wanted to find out if there was anything to learn from young people's passions and the positive action they take because of those passions, which can then be applied to closing that gap.

What are young people passionate about?

We asked respondents to tell us up to five things they personally feel passionate about, and to then select the one they would most likely act on. The table below outlines the most common passions, in order of those most likely to motivate:

Table 3: top 10 passions – all respondents

Passions	% of respondents for which this is a key passion
Sport	16
Friends	14
Music	12
Family	6
Reading and writing	6
Computers/computer games	4
Singing	3
Animals	2
Travel	2
TV and films	2

The results also showed differences between men and women when it came to these key passions:

Table 4: top 3 passions – by gender

Male passions	% of respondents for which this is a key passion
Sport	24
Friends	14
Music	14

Female passions	% of respondents for which this is a key passion
Friends	15
Music	10
Family	9

These findings pose key questions for organisations delivering volunteering opportunities for young people. For example, as sport, friends and music are key passions for young people, should we be developing more volunteering opportunities which tap into these areas? How do we take account of the differences between men and women and create volunteering opportunities to suit? As family, friends and relationships are the greatest passion for half of young people, should we be developing more volunteering opportunities which tap into these areas?

What action are they taking as a result of these passions?

We then asked respondents to tell us the things they got involved with as a result of these passions:

Table 5: action taken by young people

Action taken	% total	% Male	% Female
Share information with others	62	62	63
Help people	51	47	54
Create things	47	45	48
Join clubs/groups	45	47	43
Teach others	39	42	36
Write things	33	30	36

The results show that, when it comes to their own personal passions, many young people are taking positive action, in direct contrast to their response to the local and global issues that concern them most.

Practically all the main passions highlighted by young people are very positive aspects of their lives such as family, friends and music, rather than what would be defined as concerns or issues. It is these positive things they feel passionate about that are most likely to really get them going and spur them into action.

Conclusion

The findings show a stark contrast between the lack of involvement young people exhibit in response to the local and global issues that concern them most, and the ease with which they take positive action in relation to their personal passions.

If we are to inspire many more young people to volunteer, we need to bring young people's concerns and their personal passions closer together. We need to develop positive opportunities for young people which tap into the issues they are concerned about while providing an opportunity to enjoy their personal passions.

This throws up some key challenges for all organisations involved in youth volunteering:

- How do we create innovative approaches to youth volunteering?
- How do we package volunteering in a way that engages the passions of young people?

How v is addressing these challenges

In practical terms, v is already working on these challenges in the following ways:

- Encouraging the development of innovative youth volunteering opportunities through its Grant and Match Funds
- Giving young people a genuine voice in how these opportunities are developed, through its v20 youth advisory board and v-inspired youth panel.
- Developing youth-led funding schemes such as vcashpoint, which put money directly into the hands of young people so that they can act on their local concerns
- v has created the www.vinspired.com portal to act as a one stop shop for information on volunteering. This addresses the “how to help” and “not sure how to go about it” concerns identified in the survey.
- v has launched an awareness raising campaign targeting young people through radio, print and online media

Case study – Oxjam

This is an early example of how marrying young people’s passions with volunteering opportunities has been effective in 2006, leading to a bigger event planned in 2007. Oxjam uniquely allowed young people to take positive action about something of global concern through one of their key passions – music.

Oxjam is a public fundraising initiative that supports local musicians and enthusiastic young volunteers to organise music events whilst raising money for Oxfam.

Oxjam harnesses the passion of local volunteers, aspiring musicians and music promoters from across the country to take action against poverty. More than 1,000 events were organised in October 2006.

Oxjam supported volunteers who wanted to run their own festivals and events with training, toolkits and technical resources. They organised their own gigs, recruited local musicians, sourced venues and controlled entry charges on the door with the proceeds going to Oxfam.

Match Fund Partners MTV and Galaxy gave in kind support worth over £285,000 in the form of broadcast and production time. v provided funding to the value of these relationships.

Oxjam tapped into a new generation of volunteers by uniting their passion for music with a cause they cared about. Through the partnership with v, MTV and Galaxy, 450 part time volunteering opportunities were created and 10,000 short term volunteering opportunities for the under 25s.

Find out more about volunteering opportunities at www.vinspired.com

To find out more about v, visit www.wearev.com