# NATIONAL YOUTH TRENDS

# YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

## A BEATFREEKS AND BMET REPORT

# ABOUT

In Autumn of 2020, Beatfreeks' National Youth Trends project conducted a piece of UK wide research with 16 - 25 year olds across the UK. This report uses data from participants in the West Midlands, to find out specifically how young people in this region responded to issues. It follows on from a West Midlands specific, data-dig of our longer covid-19 report, Take the Temperature. In this report, we've formulated three principal trends along with BMet College, which we think are particularly pertinent for young people in the region.

These are as follows:

1.      Employment, Work, Careers
2.      Money
3.      Youth voice, Volunteering, Social Responsibility

# INTRO

Back in September of 2020, when we published the **West Midlands: Dig the Data report** about young people in the region, there were three principal facts which framed our findings:

1. **That young people were hit hardest during the pandemic**
- In the region that houses the youngest city in Europe (Birmingham)

2. **That young people worst affected financially and in terms of careers**
- In the region where youth unemployment is above average and where poorer children are twice as likely to end up jobless

3. **That people from BAME backgrounds were disproportionately affected**
- In the region with the highest number of residents from BAME backgrounds outside of London

This report looks to follow up on the impact and effect of these contexts, to intrigue the longer term impact covid-19 has had:

1. **on a generation who already faced perhaps greater career difficulties in the region;**

2. **on communities which were severely affected by the death of George Floyd and the ongoing campaigns which have followed;**

3. **on young people for whom home ownership, aspiration, saving and finances are real, tangible and everyday concerns.**

Over the course 2020, **global content consumption doubled in size**. This reality is drawn into focus if we momentarily think back to 2019, and our perception of social media. The news would often highlight record screen-time increases alongside rising rates of anxiety in young people, would predict the long lasting negative effects, and inevitable grip over 'normal' (physical) life (cue **Black Mirror** intro music). This level of content consumption - which we awed at in 2019 - DOUBLED in size last year, over the course of the pandemic.

The effects are inevitably far reaching, diverse and illusive, but there are few central things we can note, in relation to the above three key themes that this report will focus on.

Principally, that, as a result of sharing and consuming so much content online, young people in 2021 are amongst one of the best informed generations known to date. As our **Institutions of the Future** report highlights - against the backdrop of cancel culture - young people are increasingly expected to have a stance, a say, an opinion, on everything. This is particularly relevant when we come to think about youth voice, volunteering, and social responsibility in the region.

And second, that in addition to expecting each other to have a stance on social issues (whatever that stance is) young people increasingly expect organisations, businesses, institutions to play a role, make comments on, and contribute impact towards social issues. Neutral is no longer a viable default option, both for young people themselves and the organisations they interact with as service users, consumers, employees and citizens.

These two effects of content consumption operate on a global scale, but they are compounded on a regional level when we assess young people's perception of the local. Perhaps one of the challenges which the pandemic has particularly sparked in young people is their wavering faith in the local: 70% of young people in the West Midlands say that it has been longer than a year since they felt proud of where they live.

This could be for a number of reasons: peers or people within the local community not following government guidance, or the questions of equality and representation brought to the surface of mainstream conversation following a year of activism and action (particularly in relation to #BlackLivesMatter), or the bubbling frustration at blocked career paths and financial insecurity which Covid-19 has brought.

This report intends to simultaneously challenge and inspire: provoke organisations in the West Midlands to listen to the ideas voiced by this group of young residents. It provides a starting point for further intrigue, discussion and action. We by no means intend or claim to represent all young people's voices in the region - what we do aim to achieve is proof of the worth in listening to young people, and implementing change based on their needs, ideas and innovations.

Some trends and stats will be clear and will inspire immediate action, some will provoke more thought and discussion about how they relate to working practises, some will need further research and insight. All are worthy - not only for the good of young people in the West Midlands, **but for the sustainability of businesses and organisations** - of time, attention and care.

# #1 EMPLOYMENT, WORK, CAREERS

**After the steady move towards home working, flexi models and remote access over the past decade, 2020 saw working life undergo a huge transformation. More people than ever, and a wider variety of employees than ever before, have now been able to work from home. Working from home has blurred boundaries, increasingly causing people to question their work life balance, the relationship they want to have with their jobs and their work, and the current reality of their careers.**

## Career and Working Priorities

As such, one of principal routes of questioning was around the current positions young people hold.

### Q: 'My current job is...' (pick one)
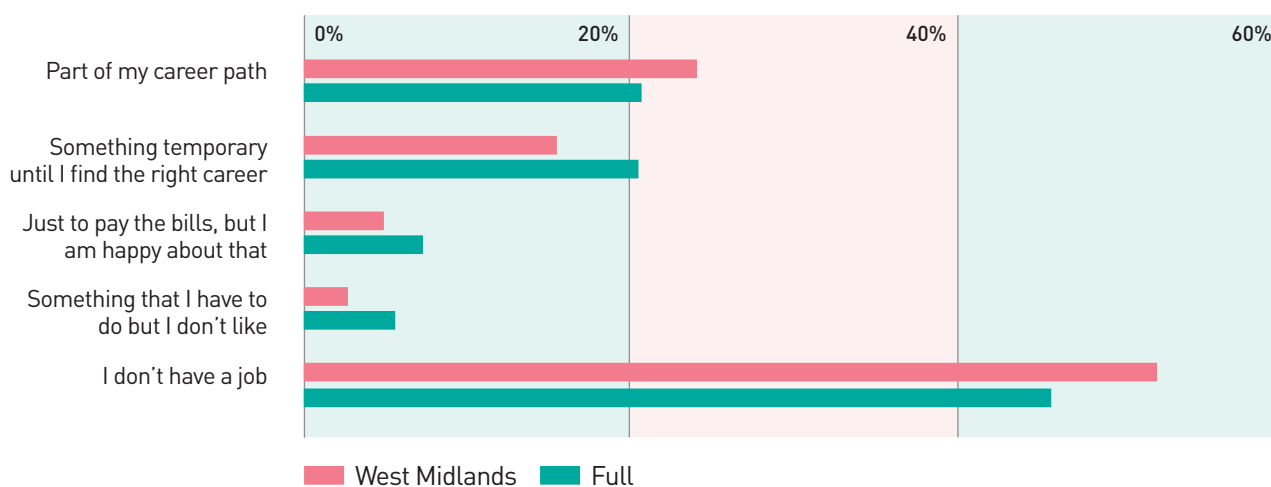


Of the young people who were in work, nationally (as reflected in the 'full' sample throughout this report) young people were equally likely to say that their job is something temporary until they decide what they want to do, as they were to say that it was part of a chosen and conscious career path. 21% of participants answered both ways. This becomes slightly different when we dig into the sample from the West Midlands.

Young people from the West Midlands were more likely to say that their current job is part of their career path (23%) and less likely to say that it was something temporary (16%). In addition, they were marginally less likely to say that their current job is something they have to do, but don't like: 3% of young people in the West Midlands vs. 6% in the national sample.

Of all of the participants from the West Midlands, 16% were in full time employment. Of this group, 67% of them were in a job which was part of their career path.

The overriding narrative therefore, is that, of those people who are currently in work, the majority of them are at the very least satisfied with their position. The fact that nearly 7 in 10 of the people in full time employment in the region are in jobs which are part of their career paths, speaks volumes. When young people are moving on from education and into full time work, a good proportion of them are pursuing something with direction, with an aim, position, or goal in mind.

The majority of young people, 53% in the West Midlands and 46% in our national sample, did not have a job - this is largely due to the fact that approximately half of our age range (the 16 - 21 group from a sample of 16 - 25 year olds) are often in full time education. In spite of this, of the young people who said that they didn't currently have a job, 13% were also not in education of any kind.

As seen, a good proportion of young people are either still in education, or in a job which is temporary until they find the right career to pursue. It's therefore paramount to understand what affects young people's career choices. Better honing apprenticeships and entry level positions to these desires, will mean greater uptake on applications, as well as higher satisfaction once in post.

In asking this question young people were asked to identify the sole most important factor - they were only able to give one answer. By far the most popular, with 48% of the vote, was 'doing something I love'. This was 4% higher than the national sample of 44% of young people who answered the same way.

As mentioned, home working, and the wider effects of the pandemic, can be seen to play some role in the popularity of doing something you love. As lines between work and home life blur, the nation has increasingly seen quite how much time we spend at work. The result - young people understand how important doing something you love is.

The interpretation of 'doing something you love' goes beyond simply working in an industry you are passionate about. It encompasses: positive working environments, getting on well with colleagues, seeing the positive impact your contribution makes. Loving what you do can look different for different people, but crucial is satisfaction in work, regardless of where this satisfaction comes from.

## Q: What is the* main thing* that influences your career choices? (pick one)



West Midlands ▬ Full ▬
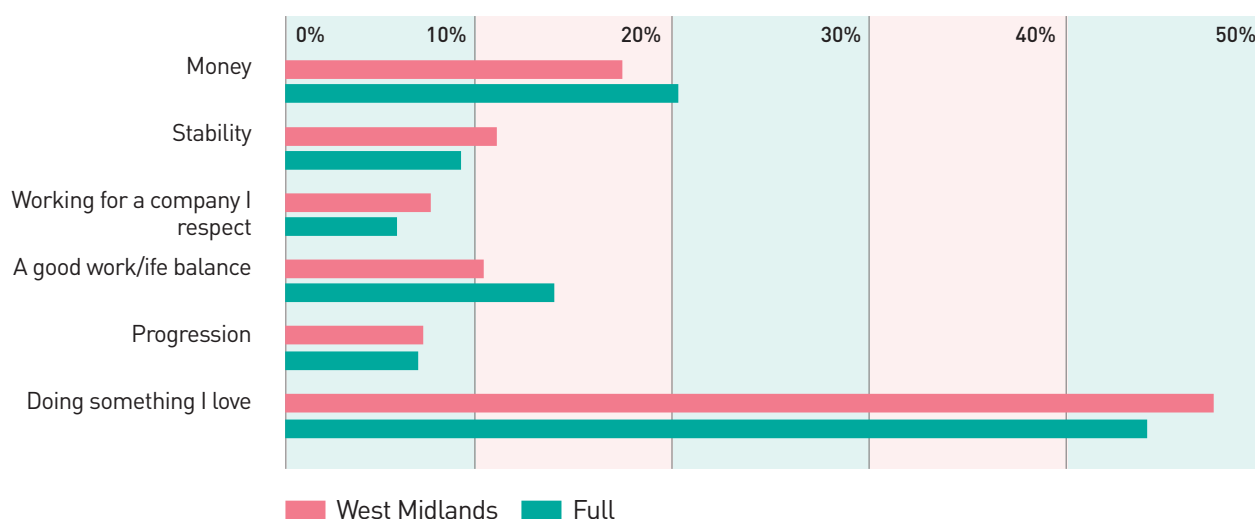
A principal note here is that progression (7%) was the lowest answer young people gave. Again, it can be argued that this falls in line with findings about the greater consciousness towards the role of our work in our lives, engendered by Covid-19. In short, the aspirational, high-attainer attitude is clearly not for all young people in 2021. If anything, contentment, enjoyment and balance are the principal trends in picking a career.

It is crucial to note that the second most popular answer, both from young people in the region (17%) and nationally (20%) was money. First, not all young people are afforded the privilege of their main career motivation being doing something which 'they love'. For many, financial security is paramount. Second, that the preference for money over passion in the role highlights yet again a broad change in our understanding of the role which work can play in our lives. In short, many young people are increasingly moving towards a 'work to live' attitude, over their careers defining their lives.

> **"** Honestly I have no clue what I want to do in the future. I just know that I want a job that lets me kind of you know, I would love to travel around and not be stuck under, not be stuck in one country slash city slash place. **"**
>
> 18 | Male | Birmingham

## Attracting A Young Workforce

Whilst the position of work in your life may be taking a less central role, making the right choice about what career you want, and what role you want work to play in your life, clearly is still taken very seriously. We asked young people what were the top three things they worried about. 'Careers / Education' was the most popular answer from both the national and regional samples. 8 in 10 young people in the West Midlands say they worry about their career and/or their education.

Across the above data sources, we can clearly see that in the West Midlands, we have young people who are perhaps slightly more empowered, than when compared to the national sample, to want to pursue a specific career. In the West Midlands, young people are more likely to be in a job which is part of their career path, and are more likely to want to do something they love. In

national research, one of our principal findings over the past two years is the increasing number of young people who class themselves as creative - 89% nationally. Yet again, young people in the region are marginally more likely to consider themselves creative, with 93% of the sample identifying with the quality.

We believe that a principal cause for this is the rise in content consumption - as people curate and create more online - the idea of being creative becomes more accessible. Along with this increasing understanding of themselves as creative, young people have a desire to put this skill into practice. A clear opportunity arises for organisations in displaying the creative elements of roles, in order to attract those young people for whom 'doing something they love' is a clear career priority.

"" The thing about TikTok is it's so easy to create a video, it's so easy to create content compared to other platforms, like for example YouTube it takes me a whole week to edit, not exactly like editing every hour of the day, but like a whole week including other stuff, including my other activities, to edit a video and pump that out onto YouTube. Like with TikTok, you just record yourself, you add some text, you make it funny, whatever, and it's out there, and I managed to gain a little following. I think I'm on 14k right now, which is, I'm very surprised by that. ""

18 | Male | Birmingham

> **" LEARNING FRENCH, KEEPING IN CONTACT WITH PEOPLE "**
>
> 20 | Female | Wolverhampton

> **" HOPEFULLY BAKING MORE FREQUENTLY. MY NEW FOUND WORK ETHIC "**
>
> 17 | Non-binary | Wolverhampton

> **" PAINTING, VOLUNTEERING "**
>
> 19 | Male | Wolverhampton

> **" GYM, CREATIVELY PRODUCTIVE "**
>
> 20 | Male | Birmingham

# WHAT HABITS DO YOU THINK YOU WILL KEEP AFTER LOCKDOWN?

Over the course of lockdown, a number of young people were afforded the time and space to do things which they otherwise might not have been able to- engaging in more regular exercise routines, cooking more, picking up hobbies which they didn't have the time for pre-lockdown. Of those who did, we can see a clear desire to want to keep these habits as restrictions begin to lift. These habits can also be seen to link with the rise in self-identification as creatives.

This displays how organisations and businesses can better engage young people as potential apprentices and employees through adapting offers to their priorities in picking careers.

Whilst it is not a principal concern for young people in picking a career path - only 6% nationally and 7% in the region identified it as the main reason behind their choices - respecting a company is of high importance to young people.

As mentioned, 95% of young people in the region think that brands and organisations should play a role in social issues in some way. Whilst an industry's stance on social issues might not be the main way young people pick their career paths, it is crucial for young people when respecting an organisation. Respect for the organisation you work for is yet again paramount in retaining talent and keeping ahead.

# GIVE US YOUR NO.1 FAVOURITE BRAND AND WHY

> **"** Lush cosmetics. I love their ethics and branding. **"**
>
> 23 | Female | Birmingham

> **"** Lydia Millen and her personal brand. She's very genuine and honest which is really refreshing. She has similar morals and values to me and is conscious of world issues and genuinely cares about them. **"**
>
> 19 | Female | Coventry

> **"** Fenty Beauty - it changed the beauty industry. Brands that have been around for many years before Fenty Beauty finally realised there is a community out there that needs make up in a variety complexions and are a huge audience that has been neglected. For many years these brands have provided 10 different shades of beige and 2 shades of brown. Fenty Beauty celebrates diversity and the complexity of different complexion. **"**
>
> 25 | Female | Birmingham

The most popular way young people said that they want brands and organisations to play a role in social issues is by making changes to their own organisations. This could mean anything from truly sustainable supply chains, to decisivlty anti-racist (over equal-ops) hiring practises, to transparent pay bands. Making changes to your own organization's internal practice came above contributing to campaigns and marginally above using resources and money to help others. Therefore, a principal route to attaining young people's respect for your organisation would be clear commitment to, and communication of, your efforts to further positive impact on social issues. This should be with particular reference to making changes to your own organisation's practises.

## Retaining Talent In the Region

In line with our national findings, 54% of young people in the region say that the job they want in the future is available in the place where they live. 27% say that they can't see the job they want in the future in the West Midlands, and a further 19% are unsure of what job they'd like.

In a similar trend to the above on young people's current positions, Gen Zs in the region are marginally more likely to know the job they want in the future. In spite of this, it is crucial we better understand the 27% who can't see their future career here.

For some this may be as simple as wanting to try living somewhere new, for reasons of work / life balance. For others, however, we have to question how we communicate the diversity of opportunity we have within the region. This is particularly pertinent when we look at the age breakdown of the 27% who say that their job isn't in the West Midlands. Most important, one in three of this 27% are between the ages of 16 - 18. This is the precise age group which need convincing to stay if we want to be serious about retaining as much talent as possible.

# #2 MONEY

**Money is the second biggest thing which young people worry about. 56% of young people in the West Midlands say that they worry about money. With this in mind, it's no wonder why 17% also say it's the main thing influencing their career choices.**

Crucial in understanding money worries, is understanding how young people view and commit to saving.

## Q: If you have savings, how much do you have? (pick one)
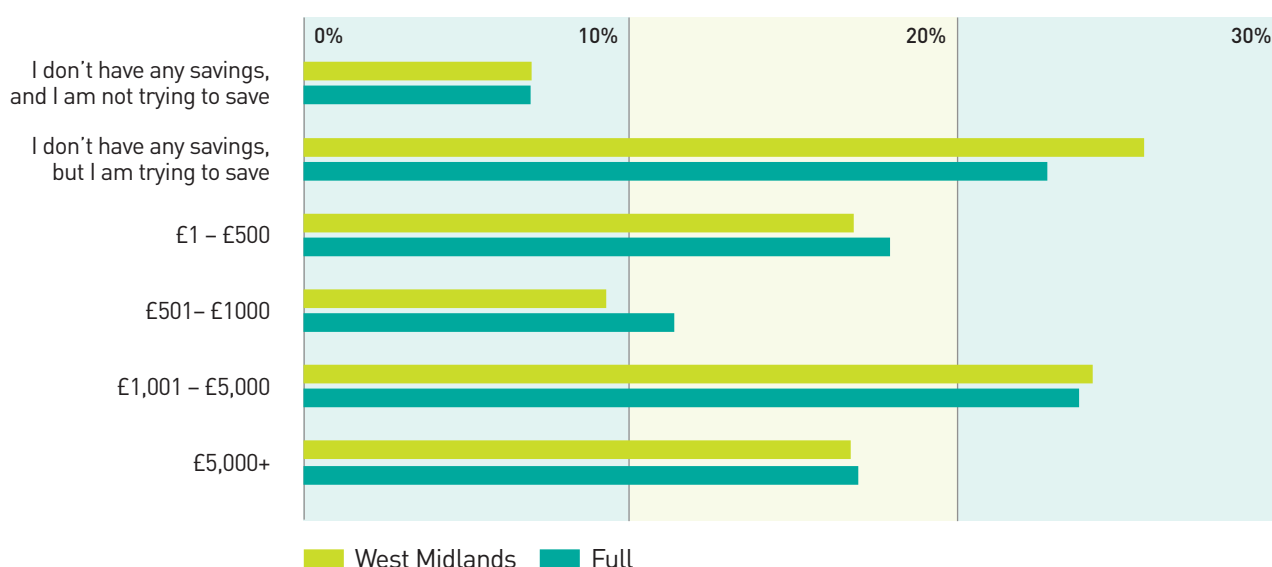


West Midlands    Full

The graph clearly displays that young people understand the importance of saving: only 7% of our West Midlands sample (in line with the national average) actively say that they don't have any savings, and do not try to save either.
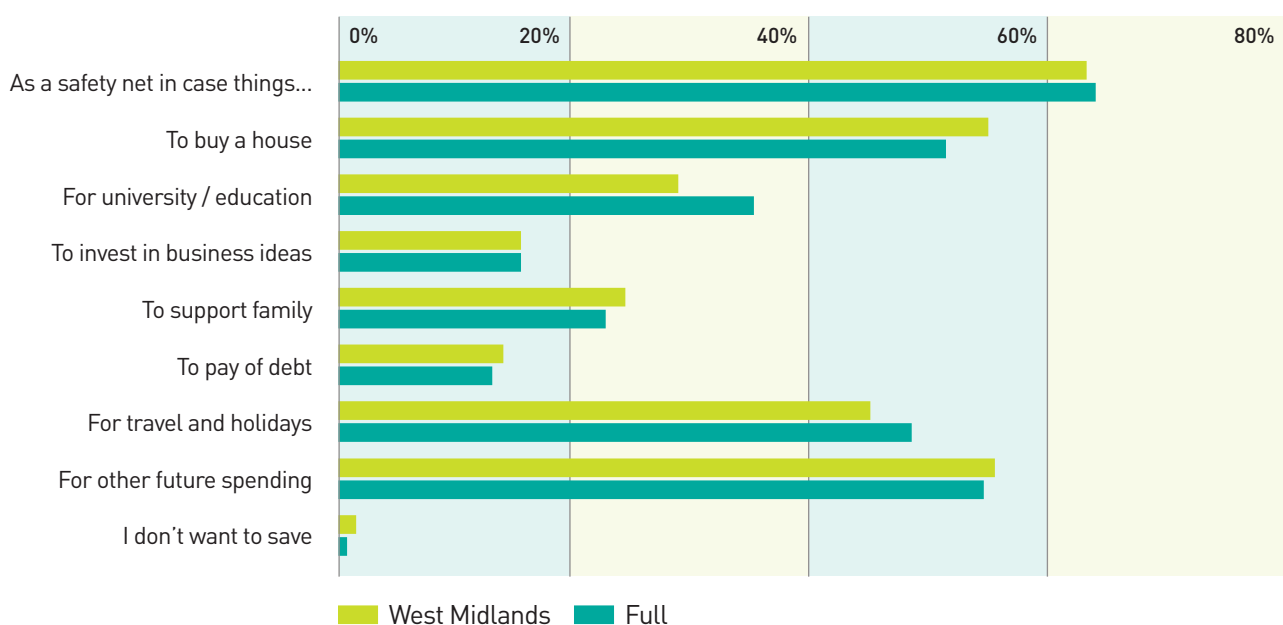
In contrast, 26% of young people in the region do try to save, but don't currently have any savings, and a further 67% do have an amount of money saved. The principal discrepancy between our national sample and that in the West Midlands is that the extremities are pushed a little further in the region. There are marginally less people with savings between £1 - £1000 and very marginally more with savings over £1001. In addition, those without any savings, but who do try and save, is 3% higher than the national average. In the above information we can understand that as a region we are more likely to have young people who are struggling to save smaller amounts of money, than the national average.

Returning to the 7% who don't have savings, and don't try to save, whilst there is a slim possibility that this is due to the fact that there is no necessity to save, more likely is that this group has not had access to an education in financial literacy. Worth note is that this 7% are more likely to be ages 16 - 18 and marginally more likely to identify as male.

> " The Break Platform [is my favourite brand] because it's all about encouraging young people, and women in particular, to understand finances, investing, spending and saving. I think this is really important in today's world as we don't get taught this in school and it's a really positive brand to follow. It is also run by Patricia Bright who is a black female influencer, so I am happy to support it. "
>
> 22 | Female | Birmingham

## Q: What is the* main thing* that influences your career choices? (pick one)



Legend: West Midlands, Full

Categories:
- As a safety net in case things...
- To buy a house
- For university / education
- To invest in business ideas
- To support family
- To pay of debt
- For travel and holidays
- For other future spending
- I don't want to save

The above displays an attitude towards saving which is mirrored in wider trends amongst youth culture over the past two to three years. As referenced in our **2019 Brum Youth Trends** report - Gen Z are often labeled 'Generation Responsible' or 'Generation Sensible' due to the fact that their preferences are often the antithesis of what we traditionally associated with 'youth': spontaneity, self-interest, naiety. In the above graph we can see that young people's saving habits are not motivated by a lavish lifestyle or spontaneous and frivolous spending, but rather by saving for security.

The most popular reason young people save, with 64% of respondents giving it as an answer (both nationally and in the region) is 'for a safety net (in case things go wrong)'. This could either highlight a desire to be completely financially independent - even in the case of crisis - or a necessity to have built a safety net for themselves, where they otherwise have not had access to one. The second most popular reason young people save is to buy a house - again a move which is traditionally associated with gaining greater financial stability.

This is not to say, however, that spending is completely obsolete - 55% of the sample save for future spending. However, crucial to note here is the understanding that in order to spend, you must save. Crucially, it is in line with the understanding that the majority of the group do not spend frivolously, but rather, save in order to be able to spend. Overall, it marks a more cautious approach to money than we may often think.

This trend is pushed further when we dig deeper into the discrepancies between the West Midlands sample and its national equivalent. Young people from the West Midlands were less likely to save for education - 35% nationally compared to 29% in the region - and less likely to for holidays and travel - 48% nationally compared to 45% in the region. In contrast they were more likely than the national average (52%) to want to save for a house (55%) and 1% more likely to want to save to support their family.

# #3 YOUTH VOICE, VOLUNTEERING, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As documented in our **Institutions of the Future** report - social responsibility and consciousness towards issues is increasingly becoming seen as the default position. 97% of young people in the West Midlands say that they care about the issues the world is facing.

This goes further than engaging in the latest viral issue trending across social media, to a deepset desire for a more empathetic world, where individuals look outside of their own experiences to understand other people's struggles.

52% of young people in the region agree that there are often too many social issues to care about, but that in spite of this, they say they still try to do right by all things. On top of this a further 18% claim that there are in fact not too many issues to care about at once.

This was a trend mirrored in many qualitative responses to the question 'what is the most pressing social issue we currently face?'. Despite the fact that the most common cause mentioned was Black Lives Matter and issues of representation for People of Colour in the UK - a large number of people could not limit themselves to one answer, listing many causes of equal importance.

Moreover, many flat out denied the question, arguing that you cannot place one cause above another, and it would be impossible, hypocritical even, to talk about one issue whilst ignoring others around it. This came to the surface during **heightened coverage of the situation in Palestine**, where much of the criticism online stated that if you supported BLM, then you can't not support Palestinians.

> **❝** There are so many [social issues to care about] wow, but definitely BLM - it's highlighted to the wider public and those who don't experience the oppression of white supremacy that race doesn't act alone, that it's intertwined with capitalism, gender, ableism, and multiple other intersecting power dynamics **❞**
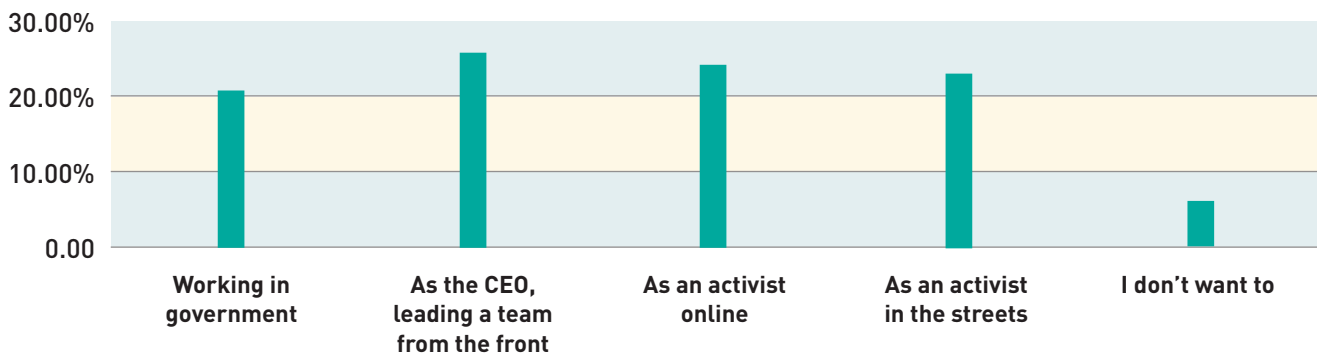>
> 24 | Female| Wolverhampton

> **❝** I think every social issue is as important as one another **❞**
>
> 20 | Female | Birmingham

Young people are increasingly keen to play a positive role in society - and their methods to do so via are perhaps more widespread than we may traditionally understand. The most popular method through which young people want to provoke change in the region is by working as a CEO, leading a team. Again they see the power, the true impact of making changes internally to organisations above all else. Moreover, displaying how roles can have a positive impact in the world, is central to attracting young people to positions.

Least popular in making change is doing so through a position in government. The above is also mirrored by the fact that young people in the region were more likely to feel heard by organisations and businesses than they were by governments and local authorities.



| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Working in government | As the CEO, leading a team from the front | As an activist online | As an activist in the streets | I don't want to |

> **"** A chance to speak out and ACTUALLY be heard, to see a change when awareness is raised concerning an issue **"**
>
> 17 | Female Birmingham

Perhaps part of the reason for this could be that young people understand the pressure put on brands to stay up to date with social issues. 9 in 10 young people in the region say that they pay attention to a brand's ethics when making purchases from them. Nearly 1 in 4 say it's the single most important thing when buying from a brand.

Young people not only increasingly want to see change in the private sector, but want to be the instigating force behind that change. The private sector, businesses acting on social issues, and organisations fighting change which may not directly relate to their service or product, is of paramount importance for young people.

One of the increasingly popular methods of engaging young people in the above is through youth governance boards. Whilst this is an incredibly important way of embedding young people in decision making in organisations - more often than not representation on such boards are often limited to a homogenous groups of young people - that do not reflect the attitudes of all of their peers.

This is largely due to issues of accessibility and understanding of applications and recruitment for such positions. First and foremost, in line with national averages 68% of young people in the region actively said that they don't know what a governance board is.

# OUTRO

We've read over and over about the seismic impact covid-19 is going to have on the globe, but we must focus and hone in on how it is possible to make a positive difference - not only for the benefit of young people and wider society, but also for the sustainability and longevity of our businesses, organisations and institutions. One way we believe this is possible is by acting regionally, and helping on your doorsteps, as so many did in the midst of lockdown.

On the following pages you will find responses from every single one of our participants in the West Midlands, responding to the question: give us three words that will describe how a city will look in 20 years.

The answers - perhaps predictably - are simultaneously inspiring and hopeful on one end, and pessimistic and defeated on the other. We found much similar results when looking at **what young people wanted a future leader to be like**.

Whether trying to prevent the 'crowded, polluted and chaotic' or trying to realise the 'eco-friendly, diverse & evolving' a single way can lead you to both. By listening to the opinions, voices, stories of young people, by adapting services, products, policies to their innovations and ideas, we can begin to shape the world in their vision. Doing so will empower a generation where people can feel proud of where they are from, and how the journey they took to getting there.

## Q: Give us three words which describe how cities will look in 20 years

CROWDED. POLLUTED. CHAOTIC DIVERSE. GREEN AND SAFE INDUSTRIAL. INTERCONNECTED. DIVERSE DIVERSE. TECHNOLOGICAL. QUIETER CROWDED. POLLUTED. COMMERCIAL CROWDED. PRETTY. BUSY ACCEPTING WELCOMING DIVERSE SUSTAINABLE. QUIETER. GREENER DESTROYED. BROKEN. DISSOCIATED? IF THE INDIVIDUALISM OF PEOPLE PERSISTS. HOMELESSNESS WILL STILL BE RIFE. ALONG WITH THIS PANDEMIC AND OF COURSE. RACISM. IF PEOPLE TAKE LESSONS FROM THIS PANDEMIC. SUCH AS THE FACT THAT WE ARE NOT INDIVIDUALS IN A SYSTEM BUT RATHER WE ALL RELY ON ONE ANOTHER CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY. THEN HOPEFULLY THINGS WILL BE IMPROVE FROM NOW. HOWEVER. I THINK THIS WILL TAKE LONGER THAN 20 YEARS...AFTER ALL. IT TOOK 400 YEARS+ TO BUILD THIS OPPRESSIVE SOCIETAL ORGANISATION. BUT TWENTY YEARS TIME IS ENOUGH TIME TO SEE MORE PEOPLE BECOMING AWARE. LEARNING AND UNLEARNING AND INVOKING CHANGE MODERN OR DESERTED BUSY MODERN CLEAN MASKED. TECHNOLOGY. GRAY IMPROVED NEW AND TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE (LESS POLLUTION IN CITY CENTRE) LARGE. GREY. CROWDED SADLY VERY CORPORATE A COMPLETE MESS SUSTAINABLE. EQUAL AND DIVERSE (HOPEFULLY) INNOVATIVE. CROWDED. DEVELOPED POLLUTION. OVERPOPULATED. OLD.WAST LAND .EMPTY MODERN. DIFFERENT. BEAUTIFUL GREEN. BUSINESS-FRIENDLY AND INDEPENDENT SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTS DARK. GRIM. UPSETTING TECHNOLOGIES WILL DEVELOP TIRED. CROWDED. BRIGHT UTOPIAN. TECHNOLOGICAL. FUTURISTIC CROWDED. GENTRIFIED. BUSY BUSIER. FEWER PHYSICAL SHOPS. POORER AS MORE PEOPLE MOVE TO THE COUNTRY TO WORK FROM HOME WITHOUT ANY GREEN. BUSY. POLLUTED SIMILAR. CLEANER. SLEEKER EITHER VERY BUILT UP OR RUN DOWN GENTRIFIED. OVERPOPULATED. HOMOGENOUS DIGITAL CITIES/ ROBOTS-AI POLLUTED. BARREN. HOT CORPORATE CAPITALIST HELLSCAPES FUTURISTIC. ADVANCED AND EXPENSIVE VIBRANT. INNOVATIVE. EXCITING RICH POOR DIVIDE MODERN.BLEAK.FULL ECO-FRIENDLY . DIVERSE & EVOLVING. RUN DOWN. DEAD CHANGE MUST COME CLEAN. RICH. CAR-FREE EXPENSIVE. UNAFFORDABLE. GREY CONNECTED. ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY. BRIGHTER BUSY. CLEANER. TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCED. TECHNOLOGICAL AND CHANGING "DIVERSE COLOURFUL CONNECTED" DIVERSE. GREENER. SIMPLISTIC CAPITALIST. APOCALYPTIC. POVERTY RICH GENTRIFICATION HOMELESS EITHER FLOODED OR DESERTED DUE TO GLOBAL WARMING CLOSER TO SLUMS BECAUSE HOMELESSNESS IS GOING UP BECAUSE THE WORLD DOESN'T CARE. ADVANCED. THRIVING. TRANSFORMED OPEN. GREEN. BUSY ECO - CAR FREE CENTRAL ZONE. HYGIENE. SMALLER HIGH STREETS CONSTANTLY UNDERCONSTRUCTION GENTRIFIED. HOMOGENIZED. UGLY RUINED. SHAMEFUL. UNPLEASING MODERNISED OR BROKEN. LUXURIOUS RICH EXQUISITE RUNDOWN BUSY DIFFERENT DIVERSE. FAIR AND CLEAN MODERN. TECHNOLOGICAL AND BIG GENTRIFIED. OVERCROWDED. MODERN MISERABLE. BITTER. HATEFUL HOPE GROWTH TOGETHER NOT A CLUE BUILT UP. MULTICULTURAL. CONCRETE HIGHER RATES OF CRIME . POVERTY . UNEMPLOYMENT MULTI-CULTURAL. FAST-PACED. WEALTHY HOPELESS WE NEED TO CHANGE PROPAGANDA. CONTROL. BUY BUY BUY! POLLUTED. BUSY ADVANCED. CLEAN. BEAUTIFUL GREENER. ECO-FRIENDLY. MODERN DUST. WASTELAND. POLLUTED LIVELY. BUSY AND REASONABLE POLLUTED POLLUTED. CROWDED. CONFLICT METROPOLITANIZED CRAMPED SLUMS GENTRIFICATION BROKEN. SOULLESS AND BLEAK DEAD FROM CLIMATE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICAL HUGE BLEAK. BUSY. HUGE GREEN. CLEANER (LESS POLLUTION). EXCITING GREEN. BUSY AND FAST-PACED COMMUNITY GREEN OPEN CLEANER. HAPPIER. HEALTHIER THE SAME BUT MORE POLLUTED SCENES FROM WALL-E COME TO MIND COLOURFUL. ARTSY. FRESH POSH. ROBOTIC. DEPRESSING OVERPOPULATED. POLLUTED. UNSAFE OVERCROWDED. UNDERFUNDED. POLLUTED. DIVIDED ADVANCED POPULATED MODERN. HIGH-TECH. CLEAN TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN. MORE CULTURED. DEVELOPED OVERPOPULATED. GREENER. ATTRACTIVE MORE MINORITIES. I HOPE THAT THERE ARE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND CREATIVE REPRESENTATIONS. TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED. CLEANER. DIVERSE FUTURISTIC.MODERN. AT THIS RATE- CROWDED. DANGEROUS BUT HOPEFULLY INSPIRING DIRTY. MODERN. CRAMPED. FULL. POLLUTED. MESSY BUSY. VIBRANT. DIVERSE DIRTIER. TALLER. SMOG EMPTY CLEAN MODERN UNDERWATER. CARLESS. CROWDED POLLUTED UNHAPPY GLOOM SAFER. GREENER. DIVERSE DIVERSE. HAPPY AND WEALTHY MESSY. CROWDED. COLOURLESS THE SAME PROBABLY GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE QUIET. DIFFERENT. TECHNOLOGY PEACEFUL. CONTENT. JUSTICE (HOPEFULLY) (HOPEFULLY) DIVERSE. MODERN. DENSE INDUSTRIALISED DIVERSE. CREATIVE. POLLUTED DIVERSE. WELCOMING. HELPFUL DIRTY. RUN-DOWN. OLD MODERN. BUSTLING. SUSTAINABLE DRY WET COLD RUNDOWN. TRASHED. UNKEPT POLLUTED. DARK AND DULL DIVERSE. CULTURAL. MODERN MODERN. SAFE. CLEAN GENTRIFIED. BUSIER. DIVIDED DIVERSE. GREEN. SAFE SKYSCRAPERS. TRANSPORT HEAVY AND URBAN QUIETER. HAPPIER. GREENER OVERCROWDED. DIVERSE. COMMERCIALISED CROWDED. POLLUTED. EXPENSIVE SUSTAINABLE. GREENER. CHEAPER HAPPY INTEGRATED LIVELY REGENERATED TOWER BLOCKS GREY. SAD. DEPRIVED URBAN. ARTIFICIAL OVER POPULATED. MESSY. GOVERNMENT RAN DICTATORSHIP LIVELY. BUSY. GREY POLLUTED. RICH. EMPTY BIG AND CORPORATE BUSTLING. OVERPOPULATED. GREY DIVIDED. POLLUTED. OVER POPULATED GENTRIFIED. DIVIDED. SUB-CULTURE UNINHABITABLE. DESTRUCTED. WASTELAND SMOKEY. BLURRY. OIT OF FOCUS ONLY ELECTRIC CARS "WHAT I WANT: INCLUSIVE. ACCESSIBLE. EMPOWERED WHAT I THINK: ACTING TOO LATE" LARGER. GREEN. INNOVATIVE. OVERPOPULATED. POLLUTED. ARTIFICIAL POLLUTED. ACTIVE. REBELLIOUS OVERCROWDED. MODERNISED. DIRTY PROBABLY THE SAME UNITED. REPRESENTATIVE. CARED FOR GREEN. YOUNG. INNOVATIVE POLLUTED DEAD OVERPOPULATED TOO MUCH MONEY . OVERCROWDED. POLLUTED. DIRTY AGRICULTURAL. RENOVATED. SUSTAINABLE "INNOVATION DYSTOPIA OVERCONSUMPTION" GREEN. MODERN. ECO-FRIENDLY GREY. HOMELESS. GREEDY GREEN. CULTURAL. RESOURCEFUL OVER POPULATED. POLLUTION. DIRTY OVER POPULATED. POLLUTED. BUILT UP AUSTERE BUT SIMILAR OVERPOPULATED. POLLUTED. MANIC THE SAME SAME.WORSER DIVERSE. FLOURISHING AND UNITED ROBOTIC. OVERCROWDED AND DIRTY HOPEFULLY CLEAN. GREEN AND RESPECTFUL TO EVERYONE SUSTAINABLE. DIVERSE. HEALTHY 100% CRIME INFUSED SIMILAR (TO EACH OTHER). TOWERING. MODERN PACKED MORE HOMELESS HIGH TECH OR VERY GRIMY CLINICAL. CORPORATE. AND SPARSE THE SAME BUT WITH MORE GLASS AND LESS CONCRETE DENSE. ORGANIZED. ORWELLIAN SUPERFICIAL PRETENTIOUS FAKE TECHNOLOGICAL. DIVERSE. CONSIDERATE MODERN. ADVANCED. SUPER-DIVERSE SKYSCRAPERS. APARTMENT BLOCK AFTER APARTMENT BLOCK. URBAN. ELECTRONIC.COOL SMART. INNOVATIVE. ADVERTS THEY WILL CHANGE DEAD DEPRESSING DYSTOPIAN DEPRIVED LEFT BEHIND OVERPOPULATED. EXPENSIVE. DAUNTING OPPORTUNITIES INCLUSIVE ACCESSIBLE CROWDED. POLLUTED. RUNDOWN CLEAN. DIFFERENT. SUSTAINABLE OVERPOPULATED. PEDESTRIANISED. HIGH-RISE BUSY. ENVIRONMENTAL. INCLUSIVE ROBOTIC. POLLUTED. GREY CLUTTERED DIVERSE. UNITED. FREE POLISHED. BUSY. BEAUTIFUL DESOLATE. DIRTY. UNSAFE GREEN. MODERN. QUIETER DESOLATE. BROKEN. SHAMBLES FULL OF RUBBISH POVERTY. FILTHY. SURVEILLANCE SAME BUT BIGGER CORRUPT CORRUPT CORRUPT SAFE ACCEPTING CLEAN OVERCROWDED. TRENDY. POLLUTED DEVELOPED. (HOPEFULLY) CLEANER. ADVANCED GREEN. BUSTLING. VIBRANT OVERPOPULATED. DESOLATE. POVERTY OVERCROWDED. METROPOLIS'. INEQUALITIES DIVERSE. HIGHER SOCIO-ECONOMICAL GAP. GREENER ADVANCED POPULATED ENFORCED GREENER. WALKABLE. COMMUTER-BASED SAME BUT DIFFERENT BUY MORE SHIT ECONOMIC CLEANER SAFER BUSY. TECHNOLOGICAL. WITHOUT-VIBE UTOPIA. BRIGHT. ADVANCED. CLOSED DYSTOPIAN. GREY. LIFELESS OVERCROWDED. DULL DEPRESSING NON EXISTENT HOPEFULLY HOPEFUL. DIVERSE. BEAUTIFUL BIGGER. CLEANER. BUSIER MODERN. BUSY. TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED OVERCROWDED. OVER POPULATED. AWFUL TO LIVE IN. "MODERN" TECH FUTURISTIC CROWDED IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY I DON'T KNOW MASIVE POLLUTION FREE CLEAN. BRIGHT. NICE MULTICULTURAL. ETHICAL. EQUAL PROBABLY VERY CORRUPT BUSY. DIRTY. FUN HYPER-LOCALISED. CONNECTED. DIVERSE SKYSCRAPERS. ROBOTIC. LESS GREEN FUTURISTIC ACCEPTING UNDERSTANDING WELCOMING CROWDED. OVERPOPULATED. FUTURISTIC DERELICT. QUITE. UNNEEDED PEDESTRIAN. OPEN. GREEN NO GREEN SPACES POOR. STRUGGLING. BROKEN CLEANER. INCLUSIVE. VIBRANT. ACCEPTING. SAFE. GROWING TWENTY YEARS OLDER DIVERSE MULTIFACETED METROPOLIS UNKNOWN. SPECIFIC AND UNPREDICTABLE HOW I HOPE THEY WILL LOOK? GREEN. COMMUNITY. OPPORTUNITIES

# METHODOLOGY

For this report we took the dataset collected as part of our National Youth Trends Research conducted in September and October of 2020 and used all responses from young people who listed their postcodes as within the West Midlands. There were a total of 260 participants from the West Midlands and data presented above is drawn from their answers.

The geographical area was defined by any postcode which was included in the following Local Authority areas:

- Birmingham
- Dudley
- Warwickshire
- Worcestershire
- Shropshire

- Walsall
- Sandwell
- Solihull
- Staffordshire
- Telford & Wrekin

- Wolverhampton
- Coventry
- Herefordshire
- Stoke

## Research design

This research was conceived in response to the ongoing need to platform young people's voices, in order to make institutions more relevant. We did not set out to look into a particular topic, area or issue, but rather wanted to talk to young people about a broad range of things, so that how they responded could direct what we would later focus on. In this instance – that focus dictated a release on: social media use, social action, brand ethics, workplace environment, social responsibility.

In order to form a pre co-creation starting point, we drew on our previous research, our day-to-day conversations with young people and nearly a decade of experience working in the sector to come up with a long list of topics, questions and thoughts young people are passionate about. We then added to this long list by canvassing opinions from young people on what would be important to ask, and talking to institutions about what they wanted to know about Gen Z.

We then co-created the final iteration of the research framework with our National Youth Trends Advisory Group – a group of young people from across the UK. They suggested amendments, helped us figure out possible answers and wordings for the questions and flagged issues which were missing from our longlist. Following several iterations, the final research framework – in the form of a list of survey questions and answers – was signed off by the group.

We then went on to work with them on the platforms and channels we would use to collect data from young people and how this would work. The advisory group are paid a bursary of £150 for their year long involvement consulting on National Youth Trends.

# Data collection

Data collection for had three strands:

◤ National Youth Trends 2020 Survey
◤ September Diaries
◤ Drop Your Thoughts

The principal strands used for this report were the Survey and the September diaries.

### Survey

The principal method through which we collected data was through a survey open to anyone aged 16 – 25 (inclusive) who was living in the UK between the 17th August and 12th October.

The 70 question long survey was conducted and distributed online. It collected young people's answers, demographic data and one question where they could leave contact information (email address or social media handle) to opt-in to being contacted by Beatfreeks for further opportunities.

This sample was self-selecting. We distributed links to complete the survey in two principal ways:

◤ Sharing it with other organisations that work with young people so that they can distribute it amongst their networks
◤ Targeted promoted posts on Instagram and twitter
◤ During the process of data collection, we analysed demographic data collected (geographical spread, gender and ethnicity breakdown etc) to then further target groups which we have not yet reached. We mapped participant demographic data onto UK census data to ensure representation among groups.

This strand implements informed consent. The opening page of the survey informs participants as to what the project is, and how the data will be used in terms and detail appropriate to our age range. For the one question requiring personal data, the question description includes a link to our data policy (again written in terms appropriate to the group) which details how the data will be stored. The question also explains how the data will be used, should they want to provide it. Participants have the option to withdraw from the research at any point by leaving the survey incomplete and exiting the webpage.

To advertise completion of the survey, an incentive was offered to young people who took part. By submitting the survey, participants were entered into a competition to win one of ten £100 vouchers, for an online retailer of their choice. In order to be eligible for the voucher the young people had to leave contact information, so we could be in touch with them should they win.

**September Diaries**

Our second research strand is called the September Diaries. For this, we worked with 18 young people across the UK to submit 8 diary entries each over the month of September in 2020.

Participants for the September Diaries were picked from self-selecting applicants. We advertised applications in our first two weeks of survey data collection through our two principal ways of circulating information about the survey (above). Once applications had closed we selected the group of 18 young people based on attaining a group with representative demographics (age, geography, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, gender). Participants received a bursary of £100 for their time. This was payable following data collection.

Following confirmation of successful applicants, participants read an in-depth participant consent form and contract. This included more details about the project, information on the process of data collection, safeguarding information, their right to withdraw from the research and a series of consents relating to diaries. More details can be found in the contract.

Participants could consent to:

◣ Submitting data to the project (required)
◣ Having their first name and basic demographic information attached to their diary for public use (optional)
◣ Using images submitted as part of the diaries for public use (optional)

Participants are informed of their right to withdraw any of the above consents, at any point during the process prior to publication. To achieve an appropriate level of safeguarding for the young people, diaries were submitted via private Whatsapp messages with Beatfreeks. At several established points in the process, our DSL checked in with the young people posting links and resources around maintaining mental wellbeing, and to check if the diary process is affecting them.

**Drop Your Thoughts**

In order to ensure that we made data collection for the project as accessible and open as possible, we also offered the ability for young people to send us pictures, audio recordings, articles, drawings, poems, anything they wish to, via a secure online form. This data was collected along with the above consents (outlined in the September Diaries section), and participants were also informed at several points as to the nature of the project and the use of their data.

# Data analysis

Our survey had four type of question, which were collected and analysed as follows:

## Scale

Participants were given a statement and then asked to position themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 according to how far they agreed. Points 1, 3 and 5 were marked with answers, so that it was clear if the midpoint represents a positive, neutral or negative stance.

**Open Ended**

Some questions were qualitative to allow for self-directed answers. These were then coded where relevant into common themes.

**Multiple Choice**

Participants were encouraged to pick one answer from a list we had provided.

**Multiple Response**

Participants were encouraged to pick up to three answers, or as many as applied, from a list we had provided.

For our Qualitative Data collection (September Diaries / Drop your thoughts):
Insights have then been used to add nuance to quantitative data, and provoke further analysis. The eight prompts which participants responded to in the September Diaries loosely mapped on to the research framework established for the Survey by out NYT Advisory Group. Questions were intentionally left open in nature, and participants were encouraged to explore whatever angle of the questions they felt to be most interesting.

This data underwent narrative analysis – the findings from which was put towards our trend formulation. Verbatim quotes from the project were also used in the report.

# ABOUT
# BEATFREEKS

**Beatfreeks is an engagement and insight agency with a growing community of young creatives.**

**We work with brands, government and funders who see value in sharing power with young people.**

**Our model is simple: the more young people exercise their influence through their creativity, the more relevantinstitutions become and the more they can shape the world together.**

National Youth Trends is a project co-created with young people to collect their stories, data and ideas. Beatfreeks platforms these insights to brands, businesses and government so that institutions can innovate, become more relevant to young people and be better prepared for the future.

Make a difference –
help a young person's
career prospects

# BE *FUTURE* PRESENT

## Get involved in the BMet Future/Present initiative.

### In good company

GBPSA Chair and Head of Talent, Careers and Development at BNP Paribas Personal Finance Vicky Waters said:

"It is important companies support young people to bridge the gap between education and work to give them confidence and skills to make them work ready."

Professional Services Academy, supporting partners: Al Rayan Bank, BNP Paribas Personal Finance, Deloitte, KPMG, Lloyds, Gateley, GBSLEP.

You could make the world of difference to our students' future careers by sharing your skills and knowledge and more importantly your time with them. It may be providing advice or support, offering work experience, or delivering a virtual presentation.

Be the person you needed when starting out and give the spark that ignites a rewarding career – be part of future/present.

Call the BMet business development team on 0121 446 4545 to find out how to get involved.

Email: ask@bmet.ac.uk

BMet