

Youth Voice Census 2025 Key Findings



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Youth Voice Census 2025: The Results Are In

In total, this report reflects the perspectives of 8,350 young people, combining survey responses and qualitative insights from focus group discussions.

8 years ago, we created the Youth Voice Census, a space and place for young people to share their experiences from the last 12 months. This year, we are proud to have captured the voices of more than 8,200 young people aged 11-30 from across the UK.

This comprehensive dataset, combined with our in-person Youth Voice Sessions, provides a rare and honest look into their world. This booklet isn't just a collection of numbers; it's a window into the everyday realities of young people in 2025. It details their experiences of local life and safety, their struggles with wellbeing and financial pressure, and their candid views on the opportunities available to them.

Our hope is that this report becomes a tool for every employer, policymaker, and community leader who is serious about understanding and supporting young people. The full report will be available online at youthemployment.org.uk



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The Rise of “meh”. A Generation Stuck Between Extremes

Rising indifference in a world of extremes

The last few years have been relentless in challenge and change. Coupled with economic uncertainty, political division and a digital first world, there is a theme of exhaustion and exasperation from young people.

There is rising indifference to both the big and small systems set out to support them.

40% say they feel neither safe nor unsafe in their local area.



Half rate their life satisfaction and happiness in the middle ranges, rather than high or low.



For jobseekers, “meh” often masks disengagement.

● NEET ● Overall



Only **26% of NEET young people** feel they know what employers want, compared with **49% overall**.

In work, neutrality is rising: 26% feel neutral about responsibilities, 23% feel neutral about work–life balance, and 21% feel neutral about pay.

2 Wellbeing is Stagnating, and Support Works Best For Those Already Closest

Young people’s wellbeing has not collapsed, but nor is it thriving.

Young people live in a higher state of anxiety, even as overall life satisfaction edges up.

- 18% rate their life satisfaction as “8/10” (the most common score).
- Young men are more likely to sit at both extremes: 14% report maximum life satisfaction, but 24% maximum anxiety.

Access to support has improved, but unevenly.

- Access to mental health support has risen to 41% (up from 31% in 2024).

1 in 10 report maximum anxiety, while many more sit at moderate levels.



55% of students report their education was disrupted in the past 12 months. The main drivers for this are:

1. Illness (**66%**)
2. Mental Health (**36%**)

For secondary school pupils, **31% said poor behaviour from peers** was a cause of disruption.

For those in work, fragility is just as visible.



Around half (**49%**) report their work was disrupted in the past 12 months. The most frequent causes:

1. Mental Health (**40%**)
2. Illness (**26%**)
3. Personal Issues (**25%**)

Around **1 in 5** missed 5+ days of work.



3 Career Experiences and Wider Opportunities are Narrowing

Young people are more supported in education but careers opportunities dip

67% say they feel supported when starting school or college.

62% agree they can access good quality education opportunities where they live.

4 in 10 say that they go to teachers for careers or employability help.

Access to career advice is declining.



Work experience is valued but scarce.

74% say they value work experience and it helps them understand work.



However, just **26%** of young people currently in education, from secondary school to University, undertook work experience in the past year.

Wider opportunities are declining too.



A third (33%) shared that they undertook no extracurricular, volunteering or social action opportunities in the last 12 months.

Around a third, 36%, of all students reported having a part-time job while studying

4 Growing Skills, Shrinking Confidence: Young People Doubt They'll Have What Employers Want

Young people are gaining confidence in some skills, and more now feel able to complete practical tasks like writing a CV or preparing for an interview. But these efforts are not translating into confidence about employment.

Soft skills are a relative strength.

Confidence in teamwork (**64%**), creativity (**60%**) and resilience has risen since 2024.



Core and applied skills remain weaker.

- Fewer than half (**47%**) feel confident in public speaking or leadership.
- Literacy and numeracy confidence **lags by around 10 ppts** for those eligible for free school meals and those with additional needs.

4 in 10 young people don't feel they have the qualifications to get a job.



Just 25% believe employers are supportive of hiring young people, down from 31% in 2024.

Only **49%** feel they know what employers are looking for, falling to just **26%** among NEET young people.

The biggest barriers:

1. Lack of work experience (**47%**)
2. Travel/location (**45%**)
3. Not having the right skills (**35%**)

Disparities cut through: young women, FSM students, and those with additional needs score lower across nearly every skill. NEET young people record the lowest confidence overall.

5 The Future of Work Feels Conflicted

At work, stress and insecurity are rising.

42% say stress has increased in their job in the past year.

47% say their workload has increased.

Blurred boundaries add to pressure.

49% say they've been contacted outside of work hours at least some of the time.

Confidence to challenge employers is low:



63% don't feel able to ask for a **pay rise**



60% don't feel able to ask for a **promotion**

Young people know what they want from the future.

- **60%** say fair pay is their top demand (rising to **70% among 26–30s**).
- **71%** want flexible hours; 59% want autonomy over how they work.
- Only **36%** prioritise home-working; most prefer a balanced hybrid approach.

Career ambitions are clear:

Many aspire to creative, digital, health and public service roles, but worry these pathways are either oversubscribed, underfunded or poorly explained.

NEET young people are the least confident overall: **fewer than 1 in 3** feel confident they could find good local work.

Recommendations

Young people tell us they feel stuck in the middle, neither thriving nor failing, with fragile wellbeing, narrowing experiences and uncertainty about what employers want. The 2025 Youth Voice Census confirms this reality: wellbeing is under strain, careers advice and work experience are slipping, and confidence in employers is at a low.

We are setting out five clear actions to put Youth Opportunity at the heart of government's missions and commitment to full employment.

1. Secure a Young Person's Entitlement (11–18)

A national entitlement, delivered locally, ensures every young person develops the foundations for life and work.

Guarantee core skills, broad pathways, enrichment and careers. It also guarantees employers a consistent, work-ready talent pool across the country.

2. Support Employers to Deliver for Young People

Recognise that employers differ in capacity: some may offer one opportunity, others many.

From inspiration in schools to work experience, internships, apprenticeships, entry roles or good part-time jobs. Make it easy, high-quality and well-matched to young people's needs.

3. Close the Support Gap: No Young Person Falling Through the Net

Too many young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, fall through the cracks.

A digital-first, locally present and tailored approach ensures early identification, consistent support, and clear progression routes. Employers also benefit from better visibility of young people who might otherwise be invisible.

5. Lead a National Culture Shift: A Campaign of Opportunity

A Campaign of Opportunity would restore confidence, inspire ambition, and signal government's commitment to young people's futures. For employers, it is a call to arms: supporting young people is not charity, it is investment in productivity and national growth.

4. Guarantee Consistency Everywhere: A National Systems Approach

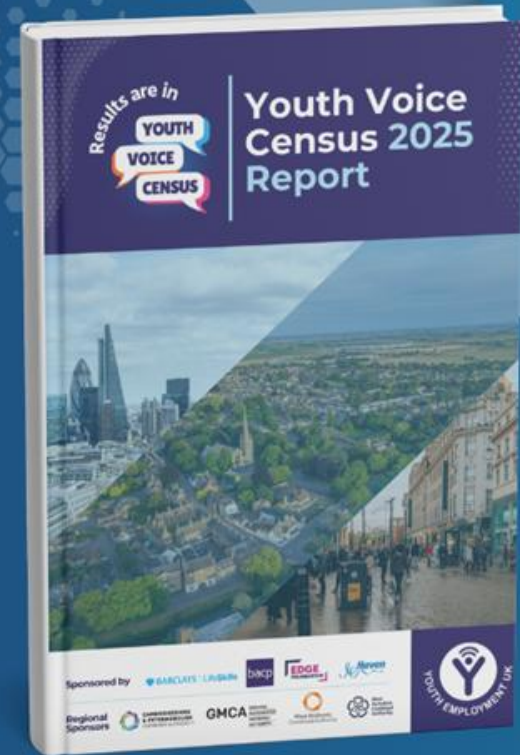
Trailblazers are proving what works, but without wider rollout, the Youth Guarantee risks becoming a postcode lottery.

A national funding and delivery framework would sustain Trailblazers and enable all regions to act now, using existing budgets coherently.



Download the full report Out now

youthemployment.org.uk/youth-voice-census/results



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