



Social mobility and the charity sector

New insight from young people living
in low-income households

What is known about social mobility in the charity sector?



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While there may be precious little quantitative data on the scale of the issue, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence from people who have experienced the sector — and those intangible barriers — as an employee from a working-class background. ... many begin by pointing to a culture that leaves them feeling excluded.

[Third Sector Magazine](#), 22 April 2022



How socially mobile is the charity sector?

The charity sector is a significant employer, with 163,000 registered organisations employing 827,000 people across the UK.¹

But the level of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) – and specifically, social mobility – does not appear to be well understood.

To try and find out more, the EY Foundation, a social mobility-focused charity, commissioned the Bayes Business School to carry out a review of published research on this subject.

¹ Source: NCVO 'Fast facts about the charity sector'

What the evidence tells us

Key points from the Bayes Business School analysis, concluded:

- ▶ The evidence suggests that the non-profit sector has lower levels of diversity than across the wider UK population.
- ▶ The available evidence shows a significant DEI challenge for the non-profit sector across a range of issues. In particular, there are clear barriers-to-entry facing those young people from ethnic minorities and/or lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- ▶ Diversity is not prioritised as an issue that needs to be addressed and there is no sector-wide push to take ambitious action, particularly on the issue of embedding good DEI practice in attracting and retaining young people as employees.

Do young people from low-income backgrounds want to work in the sector?

The EY Foundation supports young people overcome barriers to employment, so we want to better understand why 16-24 year olds from low-income backgrounds do not appear to be well represented in the sector.

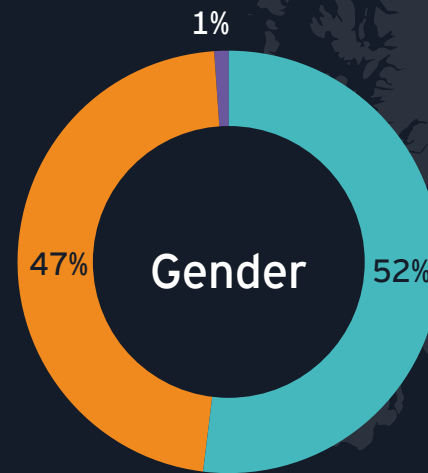
In April 2022, we commissioned Savanta to run a nationwide survey with 1,000 16-24 year old young people who live in homes with an income below £16,000.

Young people in a household with an income of less than £16,190 are eligible for free school meals – a widely used measure to assess whether someone is living in poverty.

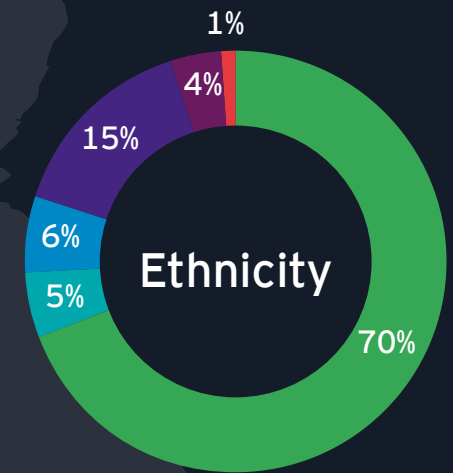


Full survey participant break down:

Survey respondents were representative of the overall population breakdown across all UK regions.



- Male
- Female
- Identify in another way



- White
- Mixed
- Black
- Asian
- Other
- Prefer not to say



Headline survey findings

A positive perception

A majority of young people trust the charity sector, with less than 1 in 5 having a negative view

54% of young people trust and have confidence in charities

28% don't have an opinion

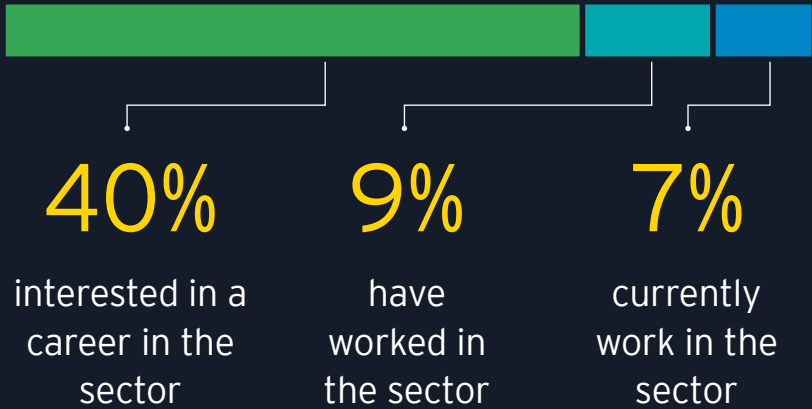
Young people are also aware that the sector offers a range of employment opportunities

70% of young people know they could pursue a career in professional functions such as: human resources, legal services, strategy and governance, finance and communication

Working in the charity sector

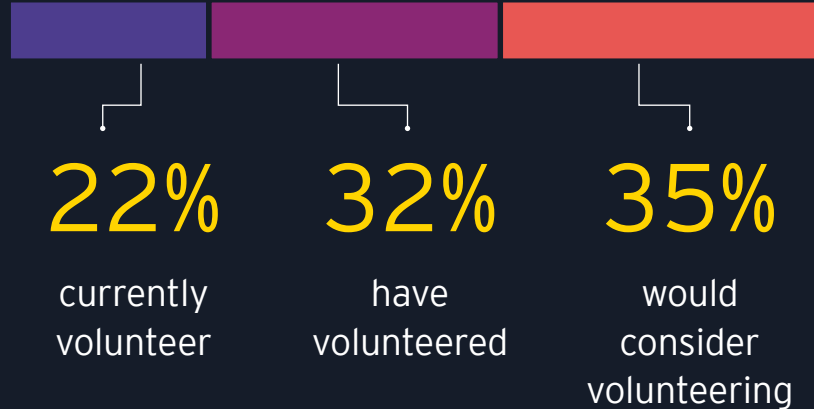
Over half of young people in low income households are interested in working in the charity sector

55% would consider, have done or currently do, work in the charity sector:



There is also a high level of interest in volunteering

89% either volunteer, have done, or have considered it:



Barriers to entering the sector

The most common reasons identified by those who wouldn't consider working in the sector include:²

25% don't know where to search for and apply for jobs

24% think there are poor opportunities to develop a career

23% think there is a poor variety of different job roles in the charity sector

20% believe charities do not pay staff fairly or offer good benefits and flexibility

These factors were flagged as the best way to encourage consideration of a career in the charity sector:²

51% said improved pay, benefits and flexibility

35% wanted to have better understanding of the job opportunities that are available

24% identified the need for clear progression routes

23% wanted better understanding of where to search for and apply for vacancies

² Two options could be selected

What next?

The findings from the desk research indicate that while charities need to improve the level of social mobility, the survey results show that many young people from a low-income background want to work in the sector.

In response, charities must look at how we can make ourselves more accessible to a broader range of young people and address the barriers that have been identified.

The EY Foundation would like to collaborate with organisations who share our commitment to tackling this issue and welcome the opportunity to develop new actions that achieve a meaningful impact across the sector.

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A photograph of three young people sitting in a field of tall grass. On the left is a young woman with glasses and her hair in a bun, wearing a dark jacket. In the middle is a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a plaid shirt. On the right is a young man with short brown hair, wearing a grey polo shirt. They are all looking towards the camera.

The EY Foundation

About the EY Foundation

The EY Foundation is a UK registered charity that works directly with young people, employers and social entrepreneurs to create or support pathways to education, employment or enterprise. EY Foundation operates and is incorporated independently of EY and is governed by a separate trustee board.

The EY Foundation is a charitable company registered in England and Wales and Scotland with registered charity number 1157154 and SC045076. It is also a member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited.

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