



promoting youth involvement and
social engagement

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for ‘conflicted’ young people across Europe.

Collection of short comparative country reports – UNITED KINGDOM

Summary: The full report presents a collection of standardised country reports from the ten partner countries involved in PROMISE. Using the most recent data available from macro-indicators and surveys, each country report provides a national baseline of the attitudes, activities and social involvement of young people. The macro-indicators used to describe the national context are used consistently throughout to allow comparison.

In particular, each country report provides an overview of the general ‘state of the country’s health’; the situation that young people face; how young people feel about their situation; and what, if anything, they are doing to change it.

We employ a concept of social and political engagement developed for PROMISE that includes four dimensions of engagement: civic activism, formal political participation, activism, and everyday engagement.

This report (UK) should be read in conjunction with the Introduction and Appendices document. It was submitted to the EC as part of deliverable D9 (D4.3).

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United Kingdom



Population	65.637.239
Population aged 15-29 years old	19.0%
Population aged 65 years old and above	18.4%
Birth Rate	11.9
International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population	13.2%

1. Standards of living in the United Kingdom¹

The economy of the United Kingdom (UK) is the sixth-largest in the world (measured in GDP). UK came out of economic recession in the last quarter of 2009 but encountered new difficulties after voting to leave the EU in June 2016. In 2016, the gross national income (GNI) was 42100 (Fig. 1.1) and the unemployment rate had fallen to 4.7 by 2017 (Fig. 1.3). The business environment in the UK is generally favourable: regulations are business-friendly (Fig. 1.2), level of corruption is perceived as low (Fig. 1.4) and the government is seen as effective (Fig. 1.5).

Fig. 1.3 Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate), 2017

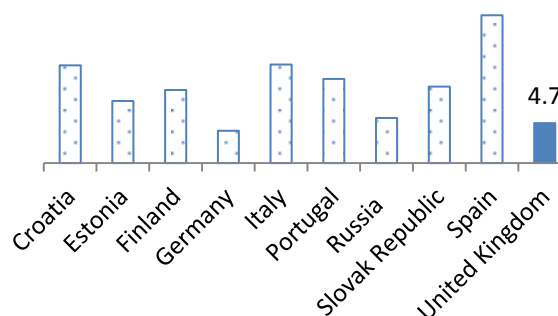


Fig. 1.1 GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$), 2016

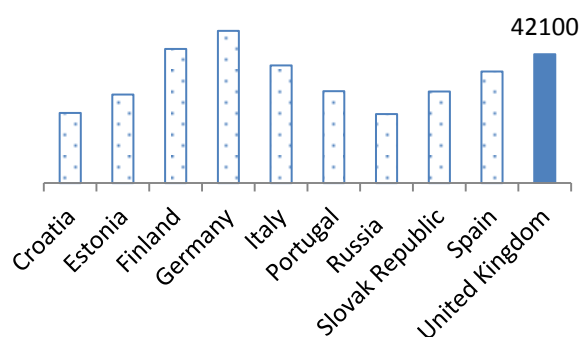


Fig 1.2 Ease of doing business index (1=most business-friendly regulations), 2017

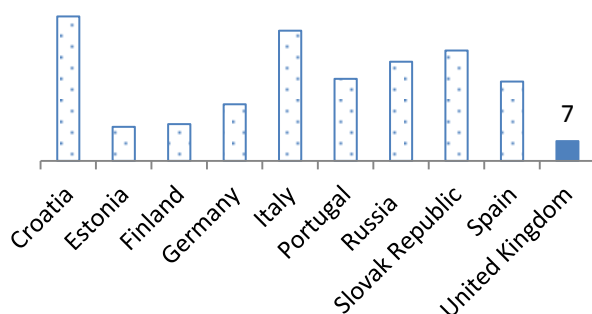


Fig. 1.4 Corruption Perception Index - Transparency International (1 to 100; 1= high corruption perceived), 2016

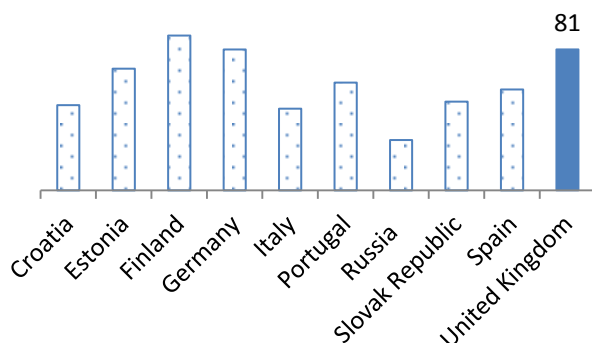
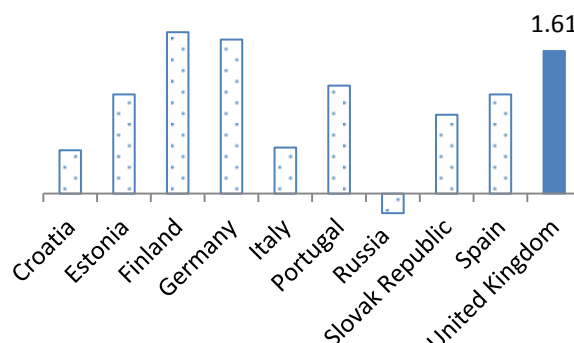


Fig. 1.5 Government Effectiveness: Estimate, 2014 (-2,5 to 2,5 -2,5=very low effectiveness perceived)



¹ Last available data. Sources: World Bank; Transparency International; Freedom House; Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum); Eurostat; OECDStats. See Appendix for detailed references.

Fig. 1.6 Freedom of the press (0=best, 100=worst), 2017

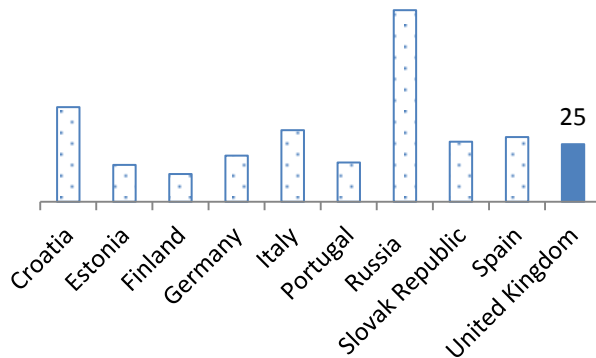
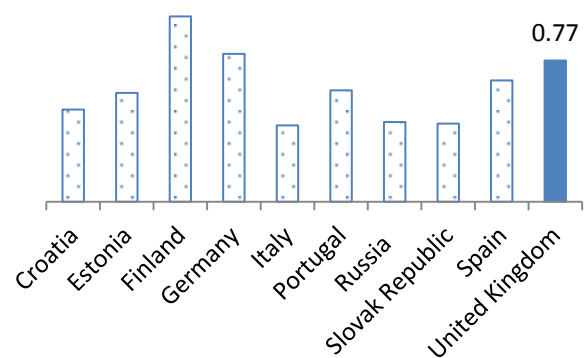


Fig. 1.7 Global Gender Gap Index (0 to 1, 1= gender equality), 2017



Freedom House which continuously evaluates the freedom of the press, categorised UK media as “free” in 2017 scoring 25 points on the ‘Freedom of the press’ assessment scale (Fig. 1.6). The UK ranks high for equality in the Global Gender Gap Index (Fig. 1.7) and the share of people using the internet is the highest (close to 95%) among the PROMISE project countries (Fig. 1.9). Despite considerable tuition fees, the share of people with tertiary education is also high at 42.4% (Fig. 1.8).

Fig. 1.8 % of people with tertiary education (25-64 years old), 2016

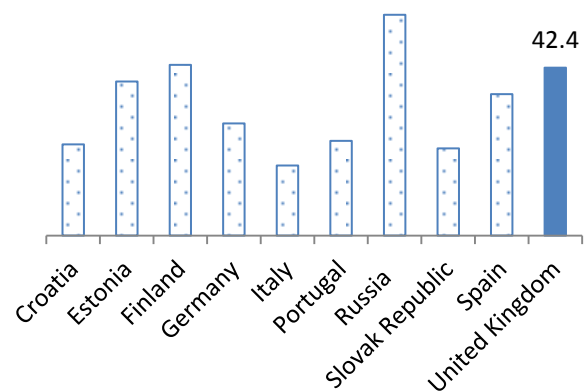
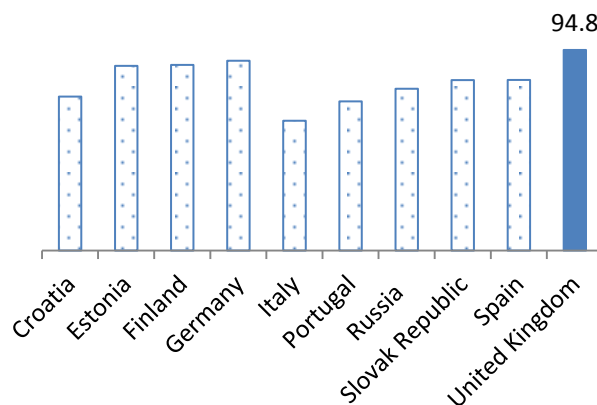


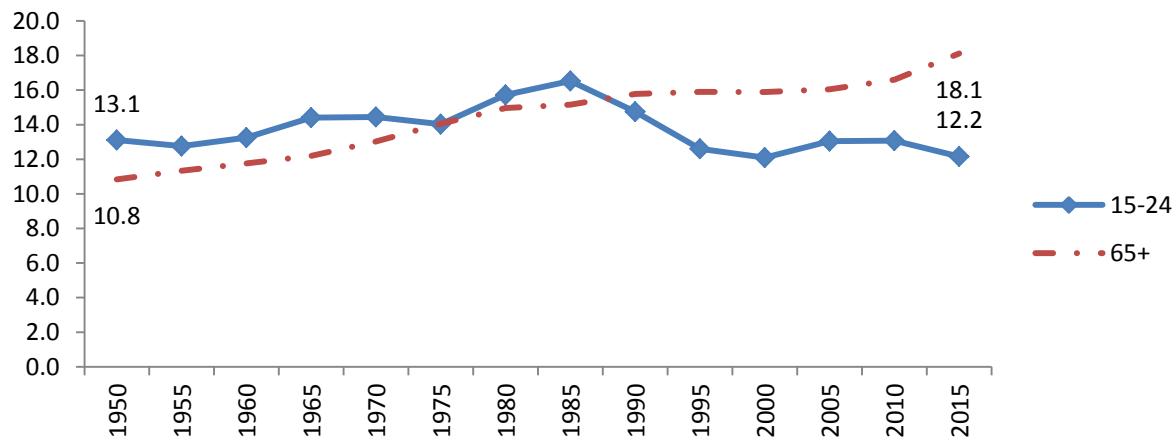
Fig. 1.9 Internet users (per 100 people), 2016



2. Being young in the United Kingdom – The youth's condition in the UK

2.1 Demographic situation

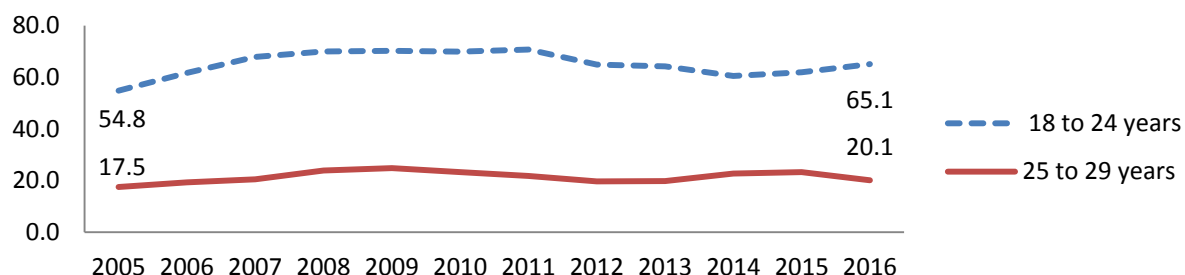
Fig. 2.1 Demographic trends in the United Kingdom, 1950 -2015: proportion of people aged 15-29 years old vs 65 years old and more



The number of young people in the UK has fallen by almost a million since the 1990s to around 8.2 million while the population overall has increased. The UK, like other countries in the EU, is an ageing society and is experiencing the associated social problems of an older population (see Deliverable D3.1). The proportion of over 65-year-olds has increased steadily since 1950 (Fig. 2.1). The proportion of young people (aged between 15 and 24 years) has been influenced by three baby booms: a short baby boom immediately after WW II (peak in 1946), second baby boom during the 1960s (peak in 1964), and a third smaller boom with a peak in 1990.

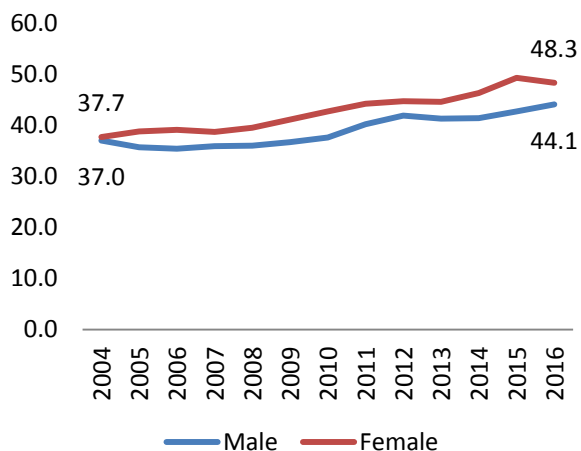
Compared to their parents' generation, young people today stay in education longer and their transition to the labour market is much more prolonged, resulting in longer dependence on their parents and delaying independent adulthood (see Deliverable D3.1). More than half of 18-24-year-olds live with their parents (Fig. 2.2). Among young people aged between 25 and 29 years, one in five still live with their parents.

Fig. 2.2 Percent of young people (18-29 years old) living with parents 2005-2016



2.2 Education & Labour market

Fig. 2.3 Percentage of young people aged 25-29 with tertiary education (2004-2016) by gender



The share of young people with tertiary education in the UK has increased significantly during the last decades despite the introduction of student tuition fees in 1998, and subsequent controversial hikes in the fee cap to £3,000 in 2006 and £9,000 in 2010 (see Deliverable D3.1). The number of women gaining a university degree is slightly higher than that of men (Fig. 2.3). The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased significantly between 1999 and 2016 (Fig. 2.4), but the share of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has remained at a similar level since a steep rise in 2007 (Fig. 2.5).

Fig. 2.4 Early leavers from education and training by gender (1999-2016)

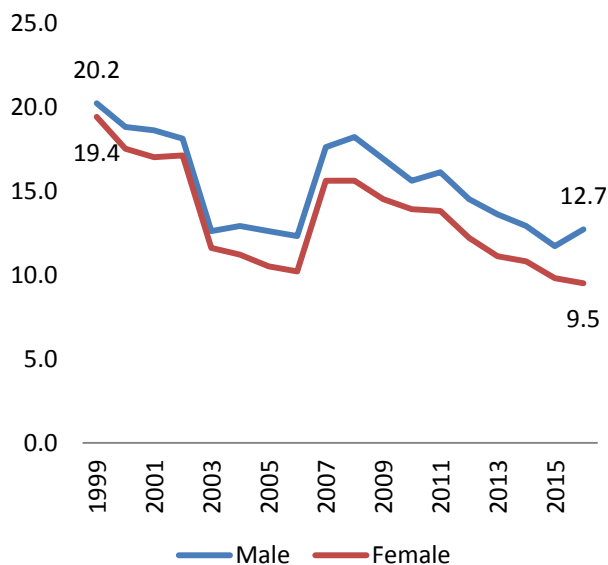
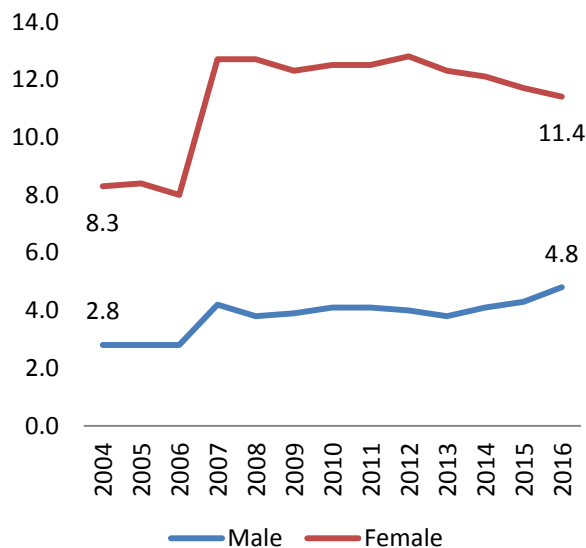
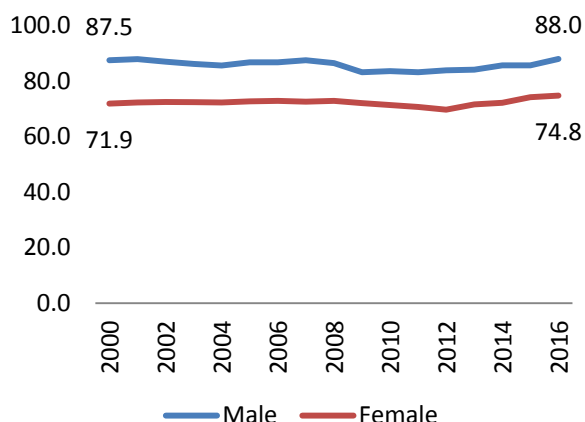


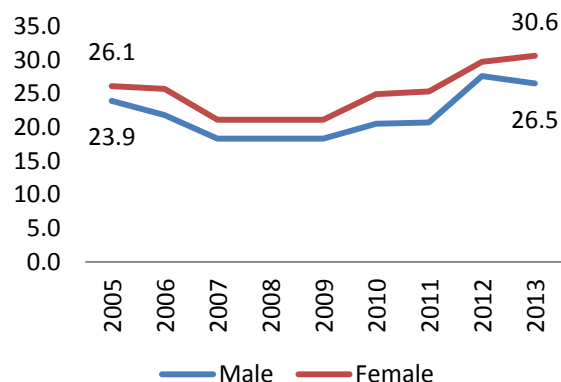
Fig. 2.5 Percentage of NEET aged 15-29 (2004-2016)



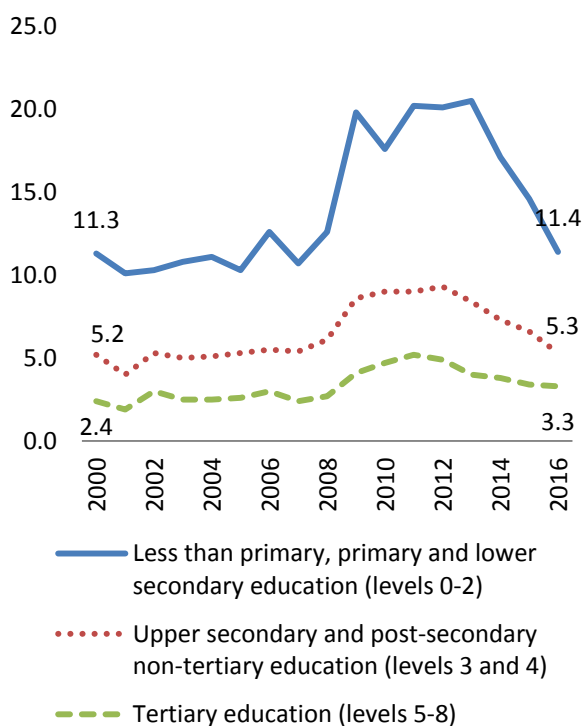
**Fig. 2.6 Youth (25-29 years old)
employment by gender (2000-2016)**



**Fig. 2.7 Young people at-risk-of-
poverty or exclusion rate by gender
(2005-2013)**



**Fig. 2.8 Youth unemployment rate
(25-29 years old) by educational
attainment (2002-2016)**



Youth employment rates remained relatively steady between 2000 and 2016: between 83 and 88% for young men and 70 and 75% for young women (Fig. 2.6). The share of young people at-risk-of-poverty or exclusion decreased between 2005 and 2007, but rose to even higher levels between 2009 and 2013 (Fig. 2.7). During the economic crisis of 2008-2009, youth unemployment levels increased significantly, affecting young people with lower levels of education (levels 0-2) the hardest (Fig 2.8). Despite some fluctuations, the economy of the UK recovered quickly from the crisis. By 2016, the level of youth unemployment also dropped to pre-recession level.

2.3 Health, well-being, and risk of marginalisation

Fig. 2.9 Percentage of young people who perceive their health as good/very good by gender (2005-2015)

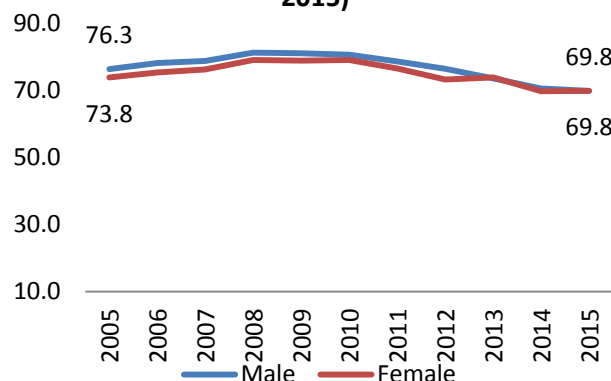


Fig. 2.10 Percentage of youth with current depressive symptoms by gender and age group (2014)

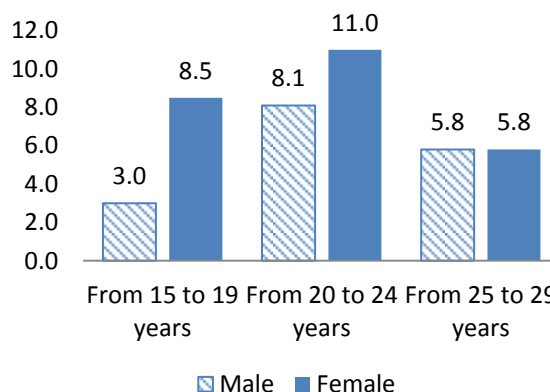
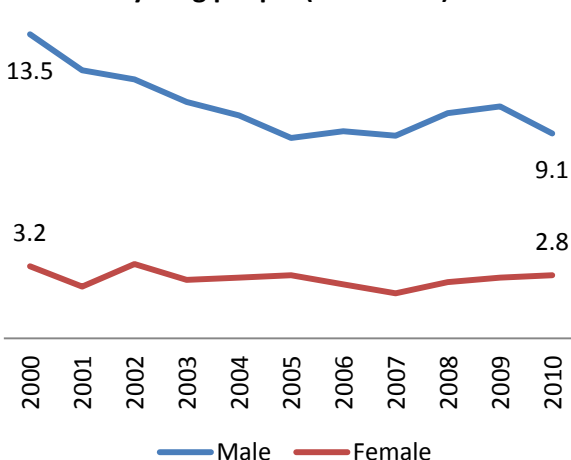


Fig. 2.11 Crude death rate per hundred thousand inhabitants by suicide of young people (2000-2010)



The share of young people in the UK who perceive their health as good or very good, has declined over the last decade: from 76.3 and 73.8 among young men and women respectively to 69.8 for all (Fig. 2.9). Depression affects the lives of many young people in the UK. In 2014, nearly one in every ten young women (aged between 15 and 24 years) reported depressive symptoms (Fig. 2.10).

Crude death rate per one hundred thousand inhabitants by suicide of young people decreased a little between 2000 and 2010, more noticeably among young men: from 13.5 to 9.1% (Fig. 2.11).

2.4 Use of Substances and Crime

In 2015, 12% of young men and half as many young women admitted to using illegal drugs during the last month (Fig. 2.12).

The share of juvenile prisoners decreased significantly between 2008 and 2015, especially among young men: from 40.59 to 10.83 (Fig. 2.13). The share of juvenile prisoners among young women has always been lower than that of young men: the share of female juvenile prisoners per one hundred thousand inhabitants dropped to 0.00 (in England and Wales) in 2014.

Fig. 2.12 Percentage of aged 15-29 who in the last month used any illegal drugs (2015)

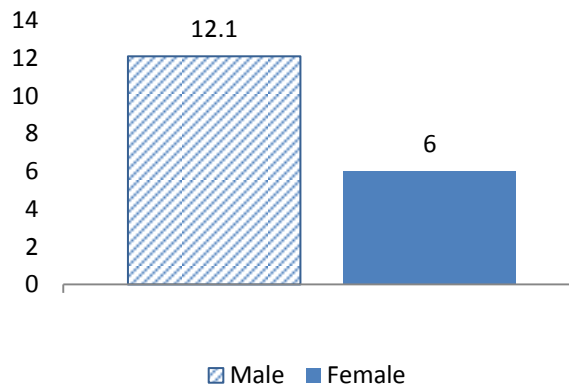
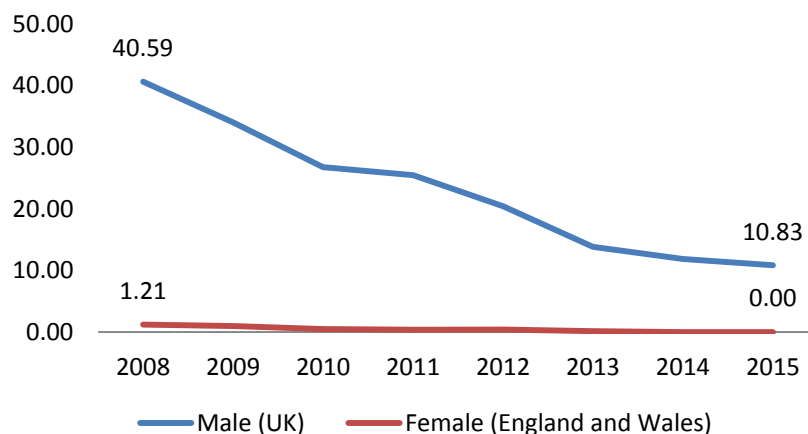


Fig. 2.13 Juvenile prisoners per hundred thousand inhabitants (2008-2015) by gender



3. What do young people in the United Kingdom think and feel?

3.1 Perception of opportunity/constraints

3.1.1 United Kingdom's situation

Fig. 3.1 Perception of social climate

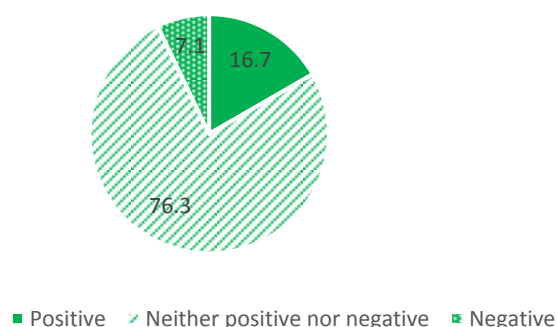
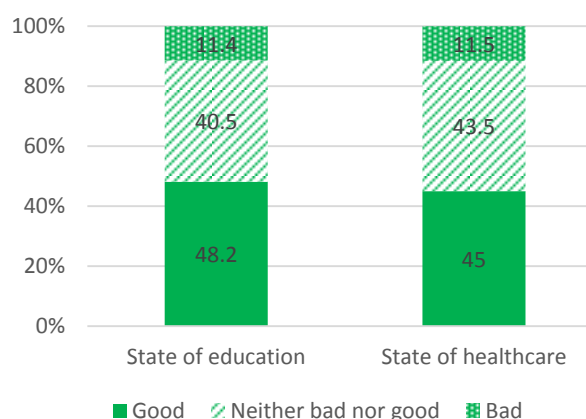


Fig. 3.2 State of services

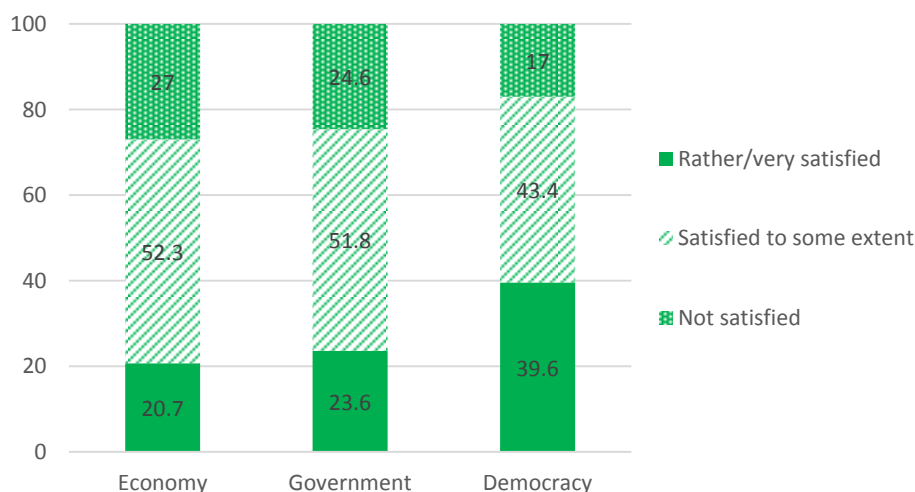


The current mood in the UK amongst young people, whilst diverse, contains a general undertone of discord: they feel that their generation has been hit hard by problems caused by previous generations (see Deliverable D3.1). Young people in the UK perceive the social climate as neither positive nor negative: mostly their opinion lies somewhere in the middle with three questions, on whether most people:

1. are helpful, vs. look out for themselves
2. try to be fair, vs take advantage of you
3. can be trusted, vs you can't be too careful (Fig 3.1)

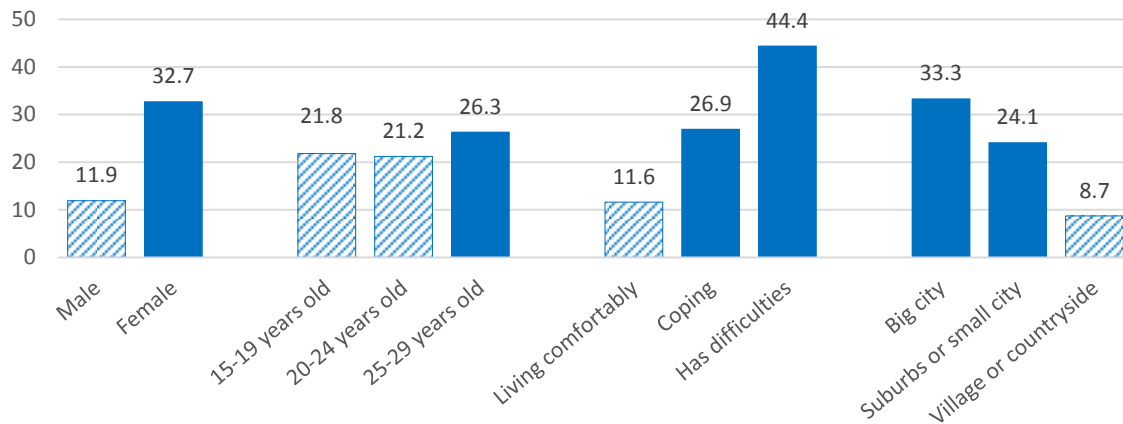
The majority of young people also feel that the state of education and healthcare is either good, or neither bad nor good (Fig. 3.2), and that their satisfaction with the economy, government and democracy is limited to an extent (Fig. 3.4).

Fig. 3.4 Satisfaction with ...



Safety after dark is an issue for a fair share of young people in the UK: one third of young women and young people living in a big city, and nearly half of those who experience poor economic conditions feel unsafe to walk alone in the local area after dark (Fig. 3.3).

Fig. 3.3 Feeling unsafe to walk alone in local area after dark by gender, age, economic condition and place of residence



3.1.2 Personal situation

Fig. 3.4 Satisfaction with life

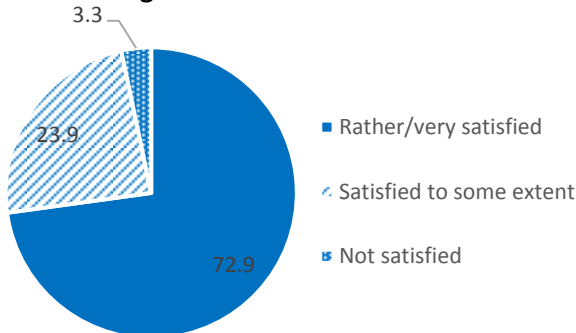
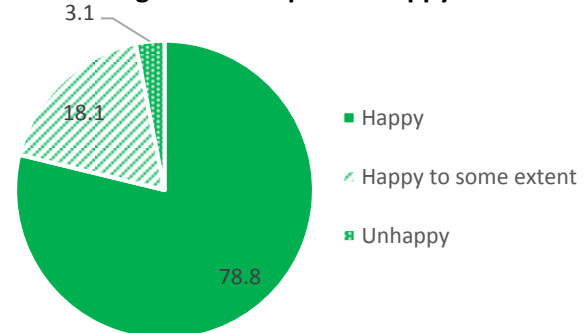
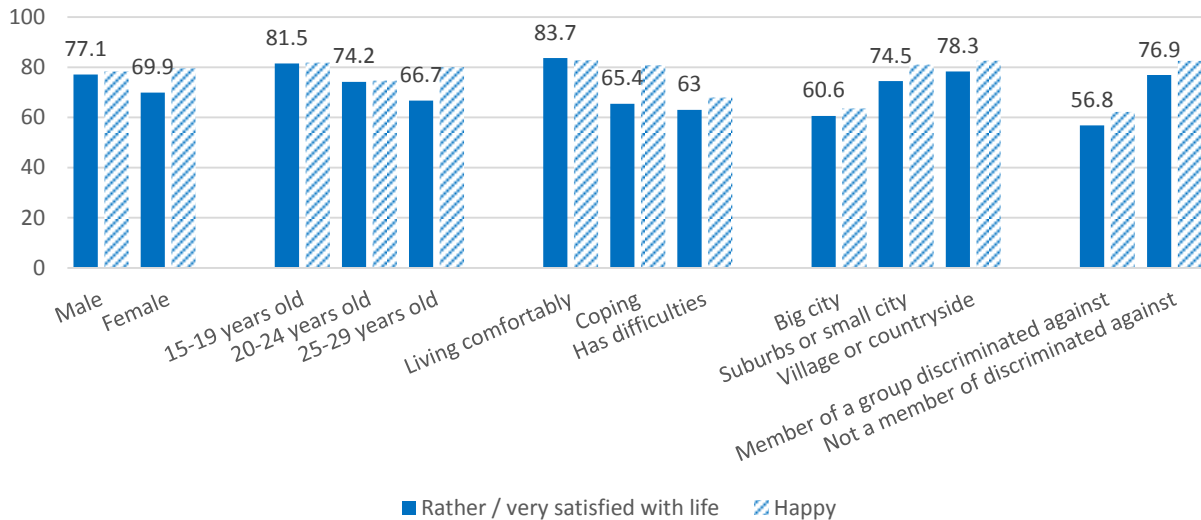


Fig. 3.5 Self-reported happiness



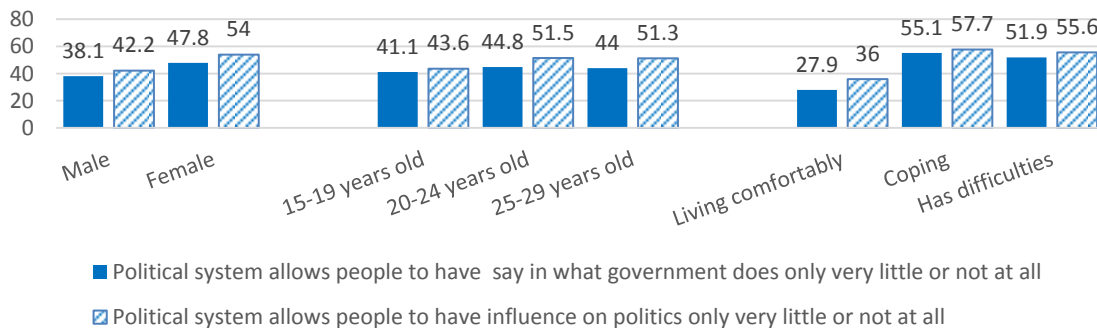
At the personal level, young people in the UK mostly feel satisfied with their lives (Fig. 3.4) and happy (Fig. 3.5). The gap between rich and poor in the UK is widening and this can also be seen in the reports of satisfaction with life and happiness of young people with different economic conditions (Fig. 3.6). The share of young people who are satisfied with their lives and happy is also lower among the older age group (25-29-year-olds), young people living in big cities and those who believe they belong to a group being discriminated against.

Fig. 3.6 Satisfaction with life and happiness by gender, age, economic condition, place of residence and perceived discrimination



3.2 Relation with authority

Fig. 3.7 Opinion on the inclusiveness of the political system by gender, age and economic condition



Nearly half (44%) of young people in the UK believe that the political system is not very inclusive: that the system only allows people to have a say in what the government does ‘only very little or not at all’. And every second young person in the UK (50%) also believes that people have very little or no influence on politics. Young men, 15-19-year-olds and those who are economically well-off believe that the political system is more inclusive than their counterparts (Fig. 3.7).

Also, the young in the UK tend to trust political and law and order institutions only to a certain extent. 21.8% of young people in the UK have high trust in political institutions (the parliament, politicians, political parties and the European Parliament) (Fig. 3.8). Having high trust in law and order institutions is more common (50.5%), particularly among young men and in the younger age groups (15-19 and 20-24 years) (Fig. 3.9).

Fig. 3.8 Trust in political and law&order institutions

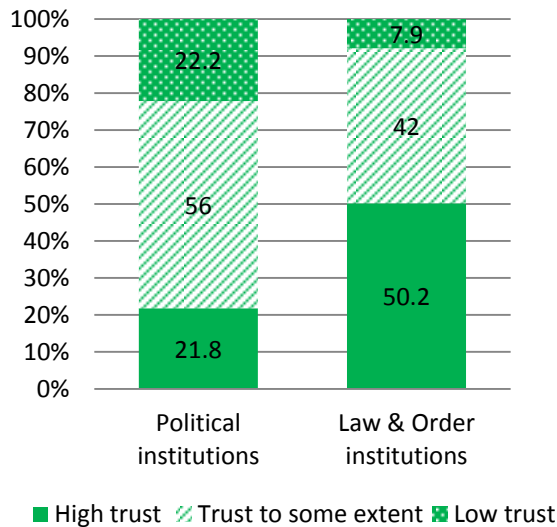
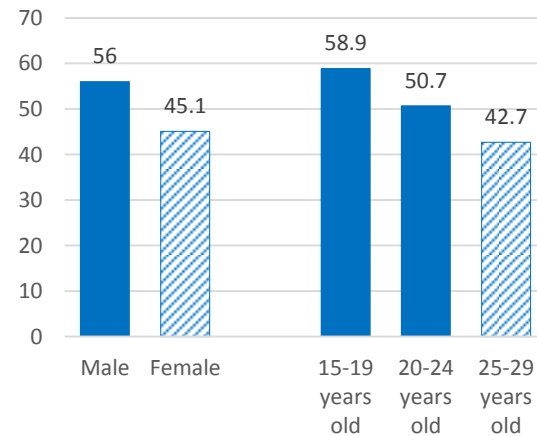


Fig. 3.9 High trust in law&order institutions by gender and age



3.3 Opinion on social issues

Nearly all (95%) young people in the UK believe that the climate is changing (Fig. 3.10). Nearly half (47.5%) also believe that climate change is caused entirely or mainly by human activity (Fig. 3.11). The share of those who believe that the climate change is caused entirely by human activity is highest among young women (9.9%), the oldest age-group (25-29-year-olds, 12.3%) and young people living in big cities (12.1%) (Fig. 3.12).

Fig. 3.10 Opinion on the occurrence of climate change

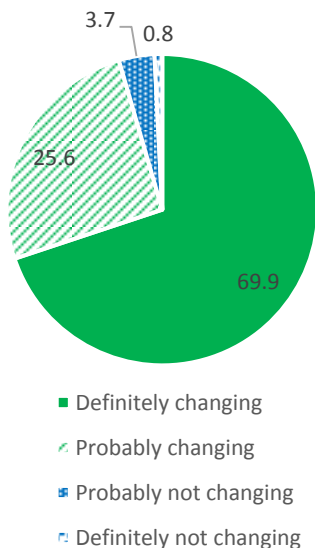


Fig 3.11 Opinion on the factors causing climate change

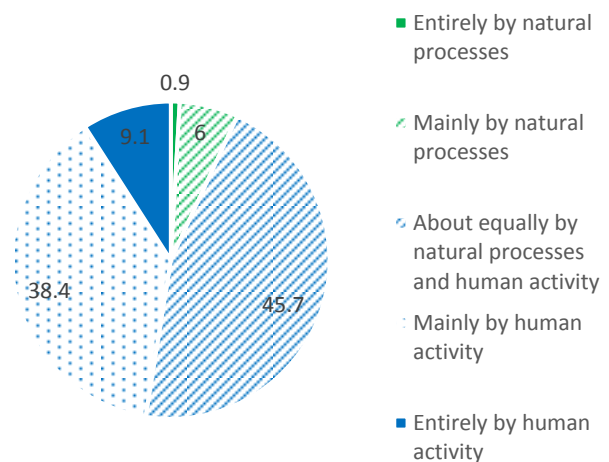
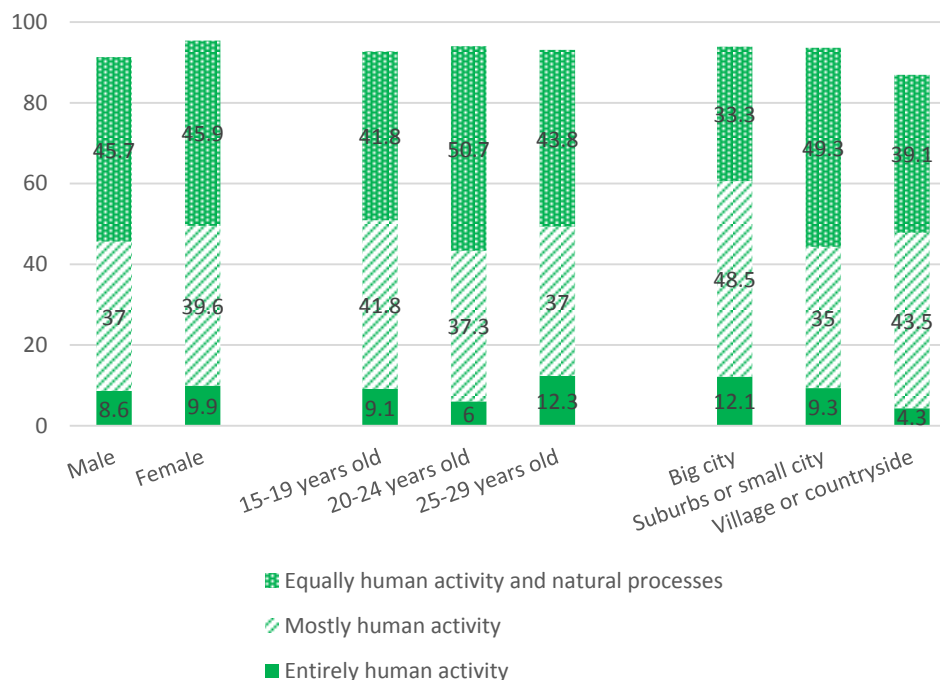
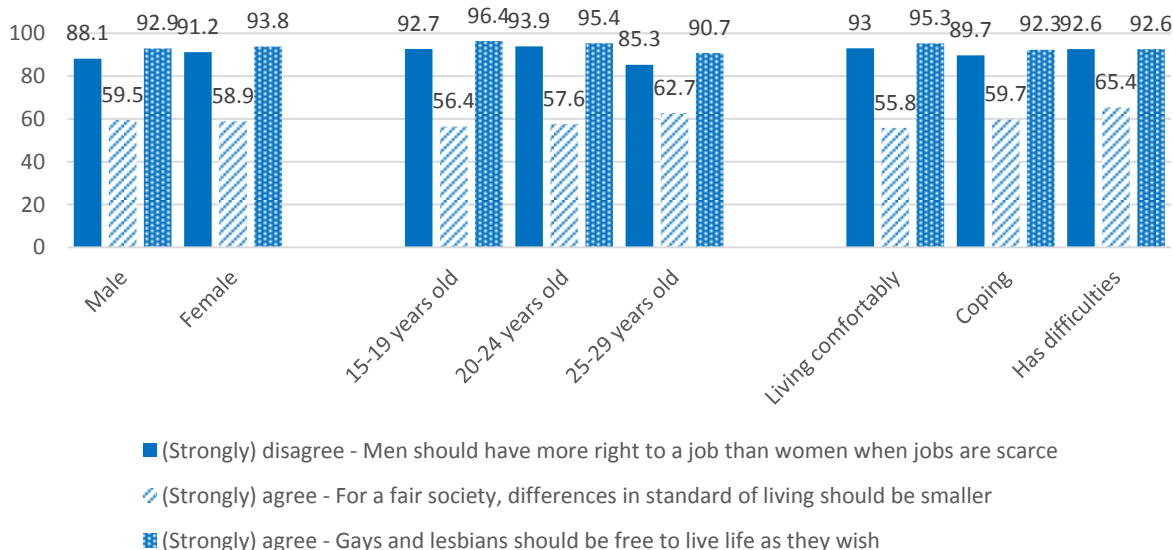


Fig. 3.12 Opinion on causes of climate change by gender, age and place of residence



In the UK, the vast majority of young people (approx. 90%) agree with the statement that gays and lesbians should be free to live their lives as they wish, and disagree with the statement that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women (Fig. 3.13). Despite the fact that the gap between the rich and poor in the UK is widening (see Deliverable D3.1), the statement that ‘for a fair society differences in the standard of living should be smaller’, received less support, just under 60% of young people.

Fig. 3.13 Opinion on equality and social inclusion by gender, age and economic condition



Opinions on the benefits of migration are diverse as nearly half of young people in the UK feel that immigrants enrich the cultural life of the country, make the UK a better place to live and are generally good for its economy, while the other half do not feel that immigrants and immigration benefit the country (Fig. 3.14).

Fig. 3.14 Opinion on immigrants and migration by gender, age and place of residence

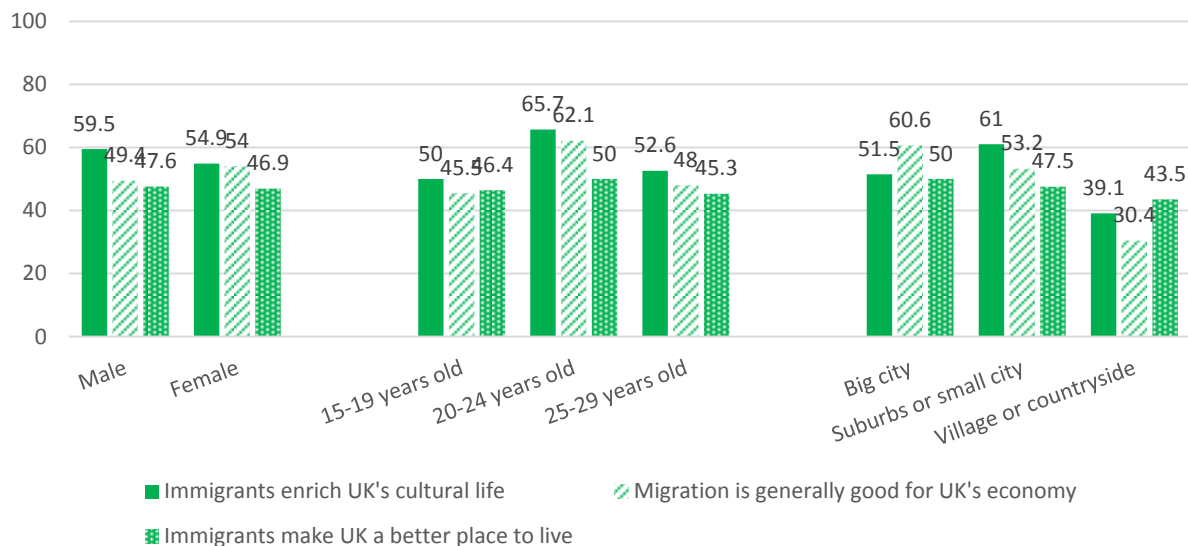
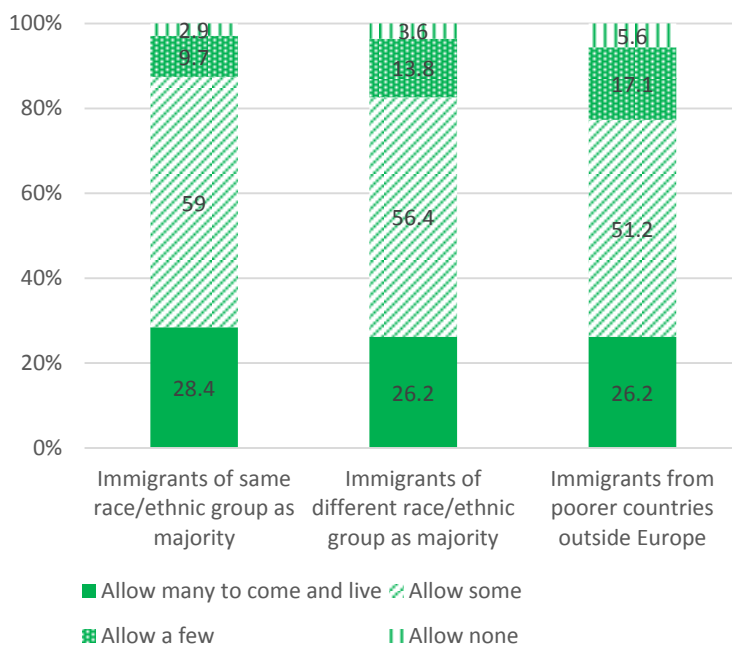
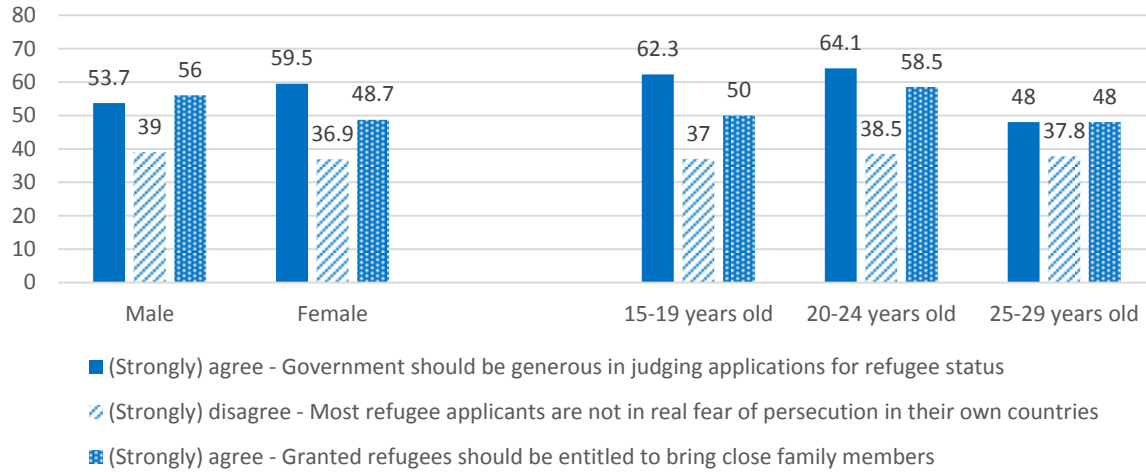


Fig. 3.15 Opinion on migration



The UK is said to be a ‘melting-pot’ of different ethnicities and religions with nearly 20% of young people from ethnic minority groups (see Deliverable D3.1). More than a quarter of young people in the UK would allow many new immigrants to come and live in their country (Fig. 3.15). More than half of young people in the UK also believe that the government should be generous in judging applications for refugee status; and that granted refugees should be entitled to bring close family members to the country. (Fig. 3.16). However, less than 38% of young people believe that most refugee applicants are in real fear of persecution in their countries.

Fig. 3.16 Opinion on refugees by gender and age



4. Engagement and social change (What do young people do?)

4.1 Civic engagement

Fundamental changes in the economy, weakening of family and community relationships and the rapid development of technology in the 1990s have impacted the socialisation of young people to such an extent that young people's lives are increasingly characterised by a combination of risk and uncertainty. Consequently, young people's primary concern has become to insure their immediate future against a variety of perceived risks, whilst maintaining independence as a long-term goal, thus providing little incentives to participate in formal political and civic organisations. (see Deliverable D3.1) More than one third of young people (38.3%) in the UK feel that they take part in social activities less than their peers (Fig. 4.1) and around 40% believe they take part in social activities the same as their peers. Also, a majority of young people in the UK do not have experience with working in the civil society: less than 5% of young people reported to have taken part in voluntary work in a civil society organisation or association during the last year (Fig. 4.2).

Fig. 4.1 Taking part in social activities

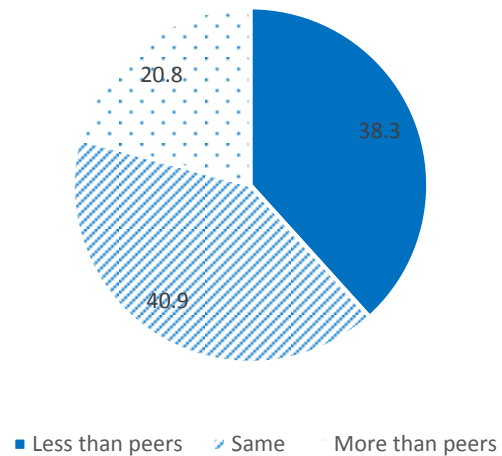
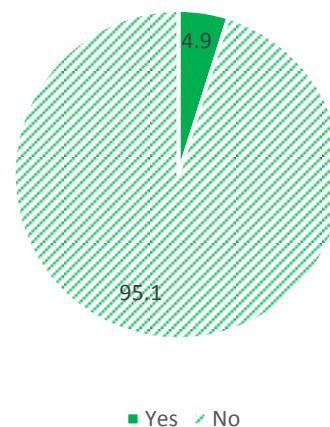


Fig. 4.2 Working in a civil society organisation or association in the last 12 months



4.2 Formal political participation

Fig. 4.3 Voting in last national election

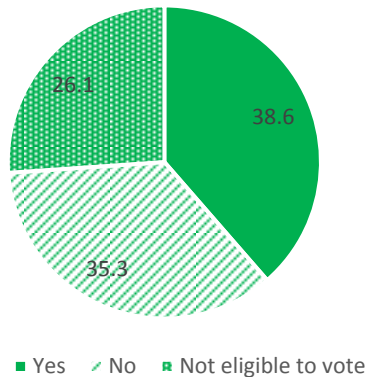
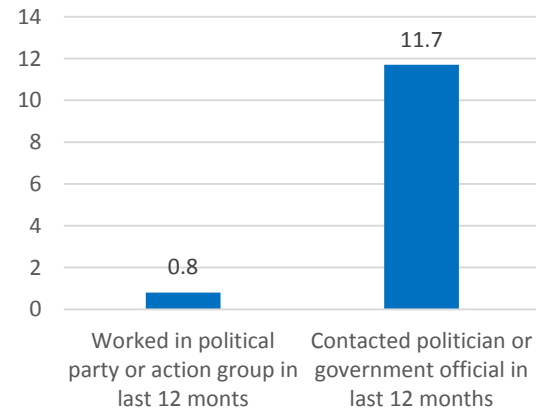


Fig. 4.4 Formal political participation

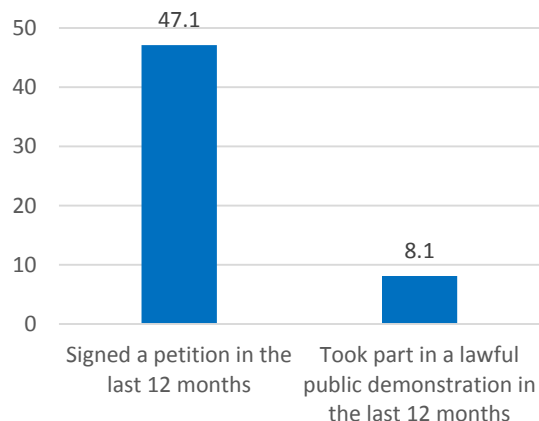


Recent studies argue that, in the UK today, young people are more interested in participative, localised and immediate issues, while the exclusion of young people in traditional forms of (institutionalised) political participation persists (see Deliverable D3.1). Only a little more than one third of young people voted in the last national elections (Fig. 4.3). Less than 1% of young people have worked in a political party or action group and nearly 12% had contacted a politician or government official in the last year (Fig. 4.4).

In 2014 and 2016, young people in the UK attempted to make themselves heard in party politics through referendums: in Scotland regarding independence, and in the UK over membership of the European Union. The majority of young people voted for an independent Scotland and to remain in the EU, however, while their voices were heard they did not outnumber the voices of older generations voting for Scotland to remain part of the UK, and for the UK to exit the European Union (see Deliverable D3.1).

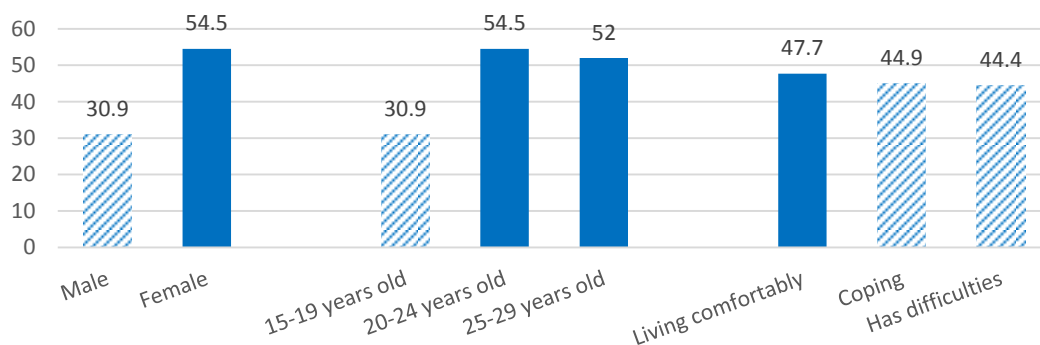
4.3 Activism

Fig. 4.5 Activism



Nearly half of young people in the UK had signed a petition during the last year and 8.1% of the young had taken part in a lawful public demonstration (Fig. 4.5). The share of those who had signed a petition during the last year was higher among women, young people in two older age groups (20-24 and 25-29-years old) and those whose economic conditions allow them to live comfortably (Fig. 4.6).

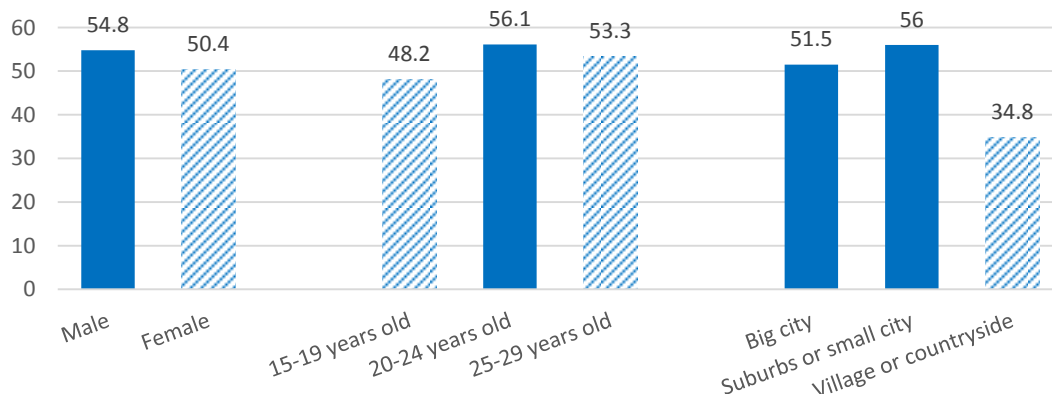
Fig. 4.6 Signing a petition in the last 12 months by gender, age and economic condition



4.4 Everyday engagement

About half (52.5%) of young people in the UK are quite or very interested in politics (Fig. 4.7). The share of those who are interested in politics, is a little higher among young men and in the middle age group (20-24 years). However, in rural areas, the share of those who are interested in politics, is considerably lower at 34.8%.

Fig. 4.7 Interest in politics: share of quite or very interested by gender, age and place of residence



The majority of young people in the UK are concerned about climate change. The share of those who are very or extremely worried is higher among young women, younger age groups (15-19-year-olds) and young people living in big cities (Fig. 4.8). Nearly 40% of young people in the UK feel personal responsibility to reduce climate change and nearly half (47.5%) would buy the most energy efficient home appliance (Fig. 4.9). 59.1% are confident that they could use less energy than now, and two out of three young people often or always do things to reduce energy use.

Fig. 4.8 Concern about climate change by gender, age and place of residence

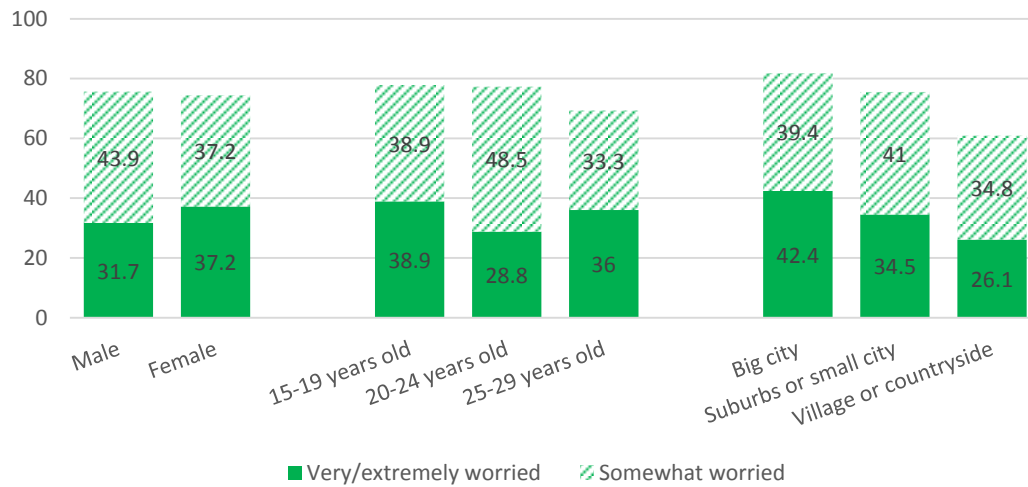


Fig. 4.9 Taking action against climate change: share of people who ...

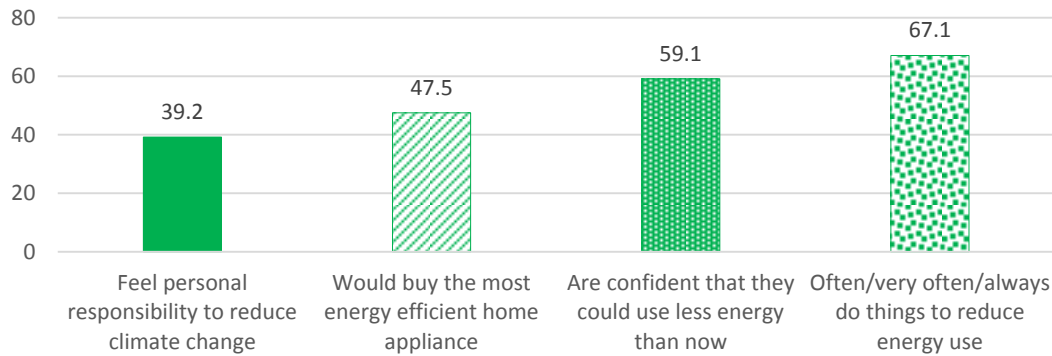
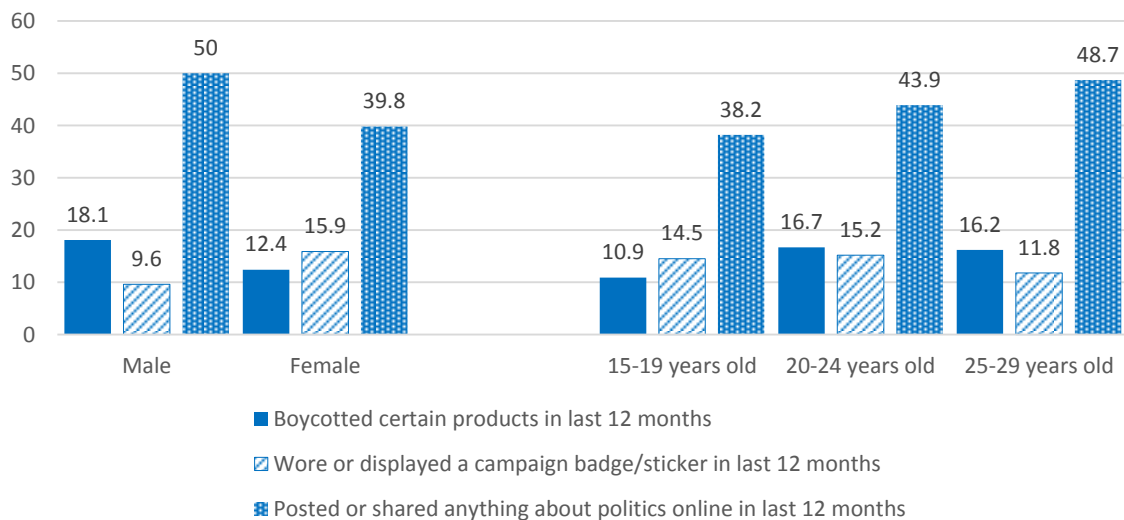


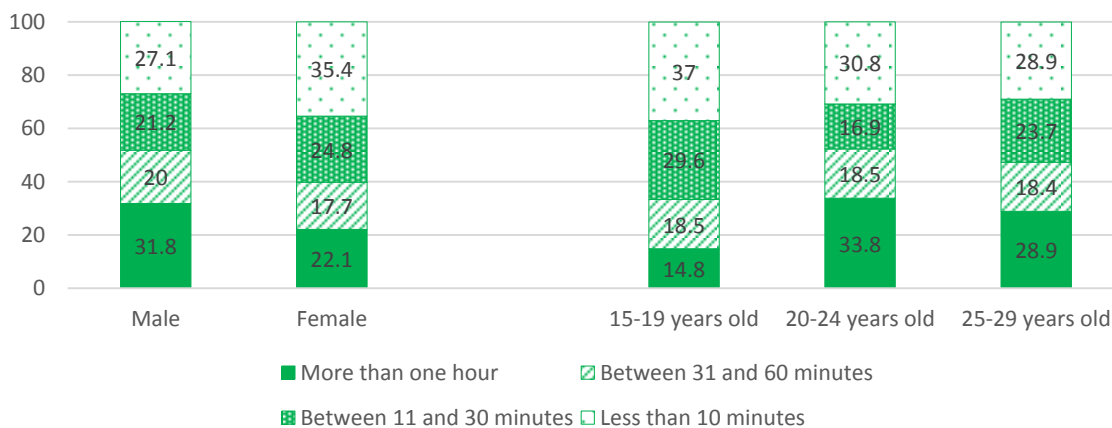
Fig. 4.10 Consumer participation and life-style by gender and age



Only about 15% of young people had boycotted certain products or worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker while nearly half (44.1%) of the young in the UK had posted or shared something about politics online (Fig. 4.10). The share of those who had boycotted certain products or posted or shared something political online was higher among young men than women but lower for those who had worn a campaign badge or sticker. When comparing different age groups, the share of those who posted or shared political content online was higher among older age groups (20-24 and 25-29 years).

Time spent in a day to follow news about politics and current affairs, varies to a great extent among the young people in the UK. While nearly one third (31.9) spend less than 10 minutes on it, a little over a quarter (26.4%) spend more than one hour each day following news about politics and current affairs (Fig. 4.11). The share of those who spend more than one hour a day following news is highest among young men and people in the middle and oldest age group (20-24 and 25-29-year-olds).

**Fig. 4.11 Time spent in a day to follow news about politics and current affairs
by gender and age**



Project Identity

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