



Impact beyond volunteering

A realist evaluation of the
complex and long-term
pathways of volunteer impact

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research focus and high-level findings

This paper sets out findings from a major research investigation conducted by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) into the long-term pathways of change and impact that occur as a result of volunteering. International volunteering organisations have increasingly dedicated more resources to measuring and understanding the impact of volunteers in host communities (Burns et al., 2015; ILO, 2011). However, although some volunteer schemes do collect data on volunteer experiences at the conclusion of placements or relatively soon afterwards, little is known about the long-term impact on volunteers and the complex combinations of factors and drivers that lead to change occurring after volunteer placements are completed. This study addresses this gap in knowledge by exploring whether volunteering results in changes in understanding, behaviour and attitudes for the volunteer, and if these changes result in development impacts in the communities in which volunteers live and interact after their placements.

The research was structured around three interrelated research questions that sought to test the theory that pre-placement contextual factors and changes that occur whilst volunteering influence post-placement action and outcomes. The three research questions were:

1. What is the impact of volunteering for development on the understanding, attitudes and behaviours towards inequality and social justice of individual VSO volunteers?
2. After their placement do VSO volunteers do anything differently as a result of changed understanding, attitudes and behaviours towards inequality and social justice?
3. What impact do any changes in practice have and on whom?

Under these overarching research questions, sub-questions investigated differences across types of volunteers and sought to identify enabling factors and barriers to change occurring during and after volunteer placements.

Using a realist evaluation to understand complex pathways of change in terms of configurations of contextual factors, mechanisms and outcomes, findings reveal common themes across volunteers and interesting variations across volunteer type. For example, volunteers undertake a broad range of social, community and political activities before their placements and vary from being very active to not at all. However, there are similarities in motivations, particularly in terms of gaining experience to develop their careers and a desire to make a difference. During their placements, volunteers are likely to increase their awareness across a variety of areas such as poverty, inequality and injustice, development, community challenges and cultural differences, similarities and dynamics. They are also likely to gain new skills and knowledge, something that applies equally to those volunteers that already have professional skills. After their placements, these experiences are likely to lead to increased levels of community, social

and political action and changes in career direction, changes in practices such as placing more emphasis on relationship building and the formal and informal influencing of people in relation to challenging negative behaviours and stereotypes and promoting more positive ones. Whilst subsequent impacts were more difficult to identify, emerging findings suggest impacts at the community level, within existing organisations, and through the establishment of new initiatives.

Findings presented in this paper are based on three stages of interconnected research activity. The first stage involved an interactive web-based discussion platform that received responses from around 600 participants. During the second stage a total of 63 in-depth interviews were carried out with VSO volunteers that had completed their placements. The third stage took the form of a mass survey, informed in design by the analysis of the previous two stages of research and sent out to VSO's wider alumni network with responses from 2,735 respondents.

Following a review of relevant literature and an overview of the research approach, findings are discussed in five sections in this paper. The first (Section 3.1) analyses the mechanisms during volunteer placements that result in shifts in understanding, behaviour and attitudes. The second (3.2) explores the influence of various contextual factors in enabling or hindering change, including pre-placement motivations for volunteering, prior levels of social, community or political action, and issues experienced during placements. Variations are also identified across different types of volunteers. The third (3.3) outlines post-placement outcomes such as changes in career and practice, whilst the fourth (3.4) identifies the key links that volunteers considered to be significant between changes during placements and post-placement outcomes. The final analysis section (3.5) provides an overview of emerging evidence on the impacts resulting from post-placement outcomes. The paper concludes with key findings and a summary of emerging areas of interest for further investigation.



VSO volunteer Patricia Doyle with seven-month-old baby Eldana and her mother at a hospital in Hosanna, Ethiopia.

1.2. Literature review

Within the diverse literature on volunteering, four broad categories of study were identified and reviewed – those that explore the impact and distinct contribution of volunteering on host communities, others that investigate the impact of volunteering on the volunteer, those relating to motivations for volunteering and a fourth, consisting of fewer studies, that seeks to identify links between volunteer experience and subsequent changes.

Taking each in turn, there is a growing body of literature that highlights the added value of volunteering and seeks to better measure its development impact. The joint VSO/Institute of Development Studies (IDS) *Valuing Volunteering* research, for example, used action research to understand the factors that enable volunteering to contribute to sustainable development (Burns et al., 2015), whilst the International Labour Office's (ILO, 2011) *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* provides a guide for countries to evaluate the economic contribution of volunteers. Other bodies of work seeking to measure impact include the development of a model for estimating the economic value of a country's volunteers overseas (Lough, 2016; Lough et al., 2007) and various toolkits such as those produced and promoted by the Institute for Volunteering Research (Smith et al., 2015) and Volunteer Now (2016). Meanwhile, Devereux's (2008) research has enriched debates on how the roles of international volunteers differ from other forms of overseas development assistance, and Lough and Matthews (2013) have sought to assess the more intangible impacts of volunteering, such as changes in wellbeing and intercultural understanding.

Arguably, the body of literature that explores the impacts of volunteering on the volunteer is more substantial, particularly in terms of personal and professional development. For example, the *Assessing Volunteer Experiences toolkit* (IVR, 2006) helps volunteers identify skills and qualifications that will assist them in gaining paid employment. Other studies have sought to measure, primarily through surveys, the immediate impacts on volunteers (Lough, 2009), the types of knowledge and skills acquired through the act of volunteering (Akingbola et al., 2013) and variations across different types of volunteer programmes (Brundey and Glazley, 2006). More generally, numerous specific volunteering schemes incorporate surveys to try to better understand the impact on and experiences of volunteers such as the UK's International Citizen Service (ICS) for young people aged 18-25 years, the evaluation of which found evidence of short-term benefits to volunteers but less on long-term changes in relation to active citizenship (Ecorys, 2013).

A number of research studies take the type of volunteer as the starting point for assessing personal impacts. For example, Wearing (2001) explores experiences associated with volunteer tourism or what is now commonly referred to as 'voluntourism', an approach that typically entails shorter-term volunteer

experiences that combine components of travelling and social or community action. Other studies look at corporate volunteering and measure the impact on employee-volunteers (Hills and Mahmud, 2007) and youth volunteering (Astin et al., 1999). However, with the exception of the latter, little attention is generally given to long-term change pathways or the specific mechanisms that lead to changes once volunteers have completed their placements.

Motivations for volunteering is an area that has received significant academic study, both generally and in relation to specific types of volunteering. Faver (2001), for example, has investigated women's motivations for social activism, whilst Brown (2005) and Mostafanezhad (2013) have respectively sort to better understand the motivations behind 'voluntourism' and the implications on motivations of including the label of 'tourist' alongside volunteering. Taking a cross-country comparative approach, Aydinli et al. (2016) found that both explicit and implicit 'pro-social' motivations contribute to more sustained volunteering experience. Smith et al. (2010), in their analysis of student volunteering across five countries in the global North, reveal the presence of both altruistic and self-orientated motivations along with significant differences between those that do and do not volunteer. From a psychological perspective, Jiranek et al. (2013) suggest that volunteers may be more likely to volunteer when there is the potential to make an impact in terms of social justice.

Some interesting research has attempted to unpick the ways in which volunteering may influence long-term changes. Research by Civicus et al. (2008) suggests that volunteering is often a first step in a person's further involvement in social activism and development, whilst Smith and Yanaculous (2004) highlight the potential impact of international volunteers that return to the developed world and where their experience of life in the global South can provide a 'public face' of development and help to catalyse change. In a similar vein, Lough and McBride (2014) have explored whether returned volunteers believe they can drive global change and found that those who believe in the need for global governance are more likely to feel they can influence change and also maintain an interest in international affairs. Taking a more longitudinal approach, Lough (2014) conducted a three-year survey of over 400 returned international volunteers and found that it can play an important role in building international social capital. The study revealed that volunteers can play significant advocacy roles in the global North when they return, and that the relationships they build during their placements can create cross-border linkages and establish a platform for international cooperation. However, it also suggests that short-term placements are less likely to bring about lasting benefits in comparison to long-term placements.

With regards to the specific processes and mechanisms that lead to changes during placement, Baillie Smith et al., (2013) provide interesting insights through the examination of

volunteering in relation to faith, subjectivity, and citizenship. Through the analysis of volunteer diaries, the authors explore the personal processes of negotiation between faith, thinking on development, and personal experiences of inequality and find that the act of international volunteering creates a space in which people can rehearse and rearticulate their identity. This study in particular suggests complex processes of change and negotiation that volunteers undergo during placement that are worthy of further investigation.

Despite the studies mentioned above, relatively little evidence exists on the long-term impacts of volunteering on the volunteer and how this may contribute towards development impacts within the communities in which volunteers live and interact. This gap in knowledge is all the more significant given the growing attention being given to links between volunteering and subsequent increases in active citizenship (Ecorys, 2013). Another substantial imbalance in the literature is the weight of research directed towards international volunteering – specifically from the global North to global South – or national volunteering landscapes within countries in the global North. In international development, whilst some studies focus on certain volunteer types such as youth or corporate volunteers, there is generally little analysis of volunteers from developing countries – either in the form of national volunteers or the growing numbers that travel to other developing and developed countries to volunteer.

Understanding the dynamics of volunteering in terms of changes – both during and after placements – across a more diverse typology of volunteering is especially timely given the increased emphasis being given to the role of volunteers in future development agendas. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) State of the World's Volunteering Report 2015 *Transforming Governance* (UNV, 2015) emphasises how volunteering can act as a platform and catalyst for social action. Specifically, it highlights the role of volunteerism in mobilising people and civil society organisations and enhancing trust and inclusion in order to achieve sustainable development. This sentiment is echoed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2016) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the UN Secretary General's *Road to Dignity* report stating that:

“As we seek to build capacities and to help the new agenda to take root, volunteerism can be another powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation. Volunteerism can help to expand and mobilize constituencies and to engage people in national planning and implementation for sustainable development goals. And volunteer groups can help to localize the new agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between governments and people for concrete and scalable actions” (2014: para 131).

The increased recognition of volunteering in the global development agenda, whilst widely hailed as a positive step, also raises issues around how its contribution is better measured (Haddock and Devereux, 2015). Crucially, in relation to this study, it also highlights a need to better understand how volunteer experiences can lead to more long-term changes which, in turn, contribute to further development impacts. Furthermore, with the growth of volunteering models such as international, South-South and North-South volunteering (whereby people from countries in the global South volunteer in other countries in the global South and North) and national volunteering schemes in developing countries, there is the added prospect that volunteers may continue to have development impacts in their own communities once they have completed their placements. With more attention being given to the need for global action on global issues, volunteering-for-development organisations are also realising that their networks of alumni may be more inclined, because of their volunteering experience, to lend support to campaigns and undertake further action.



Alimamy Kargbo, a carpenter, trains young boys after school hours in Makeni, Sierra Leone.

2. Approach

2.1. Methodological approach

Utilising a network of approximately 15,000 returned volunteers who undertook placements with VSO, the study adopted a mixed methodological approach drawing on realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The rationale for combining these approaches is rooted in the context that the study is aiming to understand unintended outcomes (behavioural and attitudinal changes of volunteers and their subsequent action after their volunteer placement), and to understand when and how these outcomes occur.

Realist evaluation is an approach which recognises the complex context which surrounds volunteering dynamics. It explicitly seeks to understand the relationship between context, outcomes, and impact by asking “what works, for whom, in what respect, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?” In order to answer these questions, the realist approach aims to identify the underlying generative mechanisms that explain ‘how’ the outcomes were caused and the influence of context. These mechanisms are the underlying social or psychological drivers that influence the reasoning of the actors. Context is important because it influences reasoning, and mechanisms can only work if the circumstances are right. The realist approach is well suited to understanding complex situations because it allows for a deconstruction of the causal web of conditions underlying the outcomes.

Typically, the realist approach tests programme theories through a linked set of hypotheses about the mechanisms that cause an intervention to work or not work in particular contexts, and to lead to specific outcomes. Within this study, the outcomes are not clearly defined at the outset – a factor that informed the decision to combine a realist approach with grounded theory.

Grounded theory starts with reviewing data from which the theory then emerges, which is very different from traditional positivist approaches which test theories. Data are tagged and coded, and when they are reviewed, codes can be grouped into concepts and then into categories. These categories may become the basis for a new theory. This approach is particularly relevant to this study because of the lack of theoretical knowledge and understanding that exists about the reasons for and ways in which volunteers undertake action after their placement. Aspects of this approach have been used to inform the analysis of data at all stages of the study.

2.2. Methods

The study is based on three phases of data collection, each using a distinct research method. This paper presents the findings from all three stages of the study.

The first stage used an interactive web-based discussion platform to facilitate debate on activities undertaken by volunteers after their placements. A total of 841 participants registered a view in response to the statement, *“Since my VSO placement, I have been involved in activities to reduce poverty and injustice”*. In addition, 598 participants made a total of 693 contributing statements. These data were analysed using NVivo and the findings informed the development of the research tools for the next stage of the study.

The second stage involved a total of 63 in-depth semi-structured interviews using a stratified sample of corporate (n9), international North-South (n28), international South-South (n7), national (n3), youth national (5), youth international (n9) and political (2) volunteers. The purpose of these interviews was to explore when and how returned volunteers become involved in community, social, and political action after their placement. There was a particular focus on how placements may have influenced or informed such action and any changes in behaviour which led to it. The sample frame was developed to reflect the diversity of volunteers across a range of attributes including, age, gender, country of origin, country of placement, type of placement (thematic area, role and type of partner placed with), number of placements, length of placement, and the decade in which they volunteered.

The interview schedule was informed by the findings from the first stage of the study and was piloted at the outset. Interviews were carried out by a team of five interviewers, all of whom had knowledge and experience of VSO's volunteering approaches. Data were analysed in NVivo using grounded theory principles to enable the development of an emergent coding framework. Once this analysis was completed, a second stage of analysis was undertaken. This involved tracing a case map for each of the 63 interviews, showing the journey of the volunteer. The aim of this exercise was to identify patterns of context-mechanism-outcome formations. Social action before placement and motivation to volunteer were mapped alongside the personal changes that occurred for individuals during placement, any action that they had been involved with since their placement, and where possible the reported impact of the action. At each stage of the journey contextual factors were also mapped – individual contextual factors, placement context and the context of their current situation and location. Links between each of the stages were illustrated using arrows, with the width of the arrow representing the strength of the link as articulated by the participant. Diagram 1 (see page 8) shows a working illustration of the mapping structure.

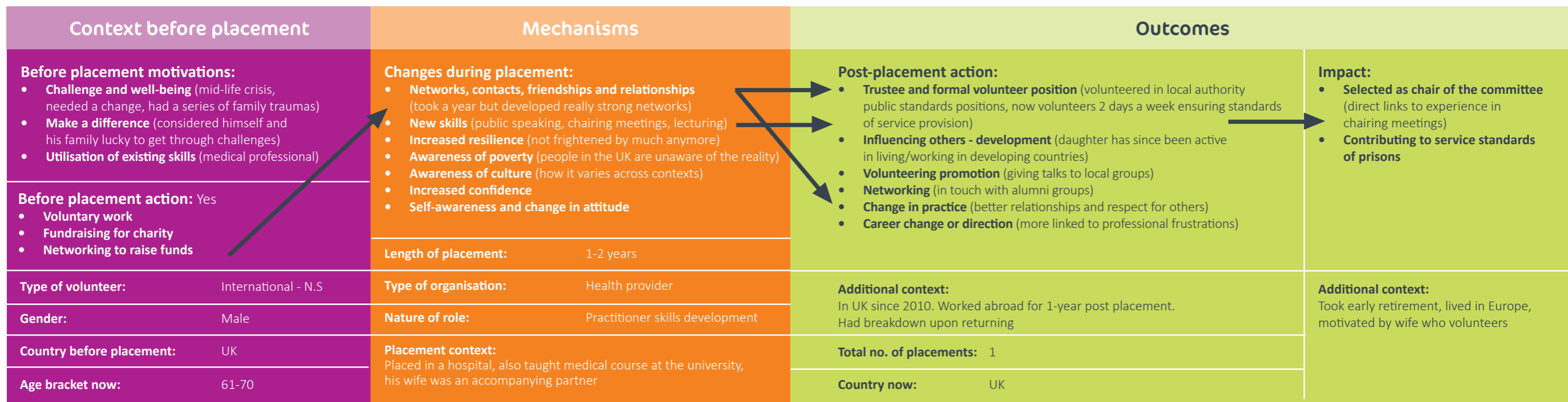


Diagram 1 – Example of Context-Mechanism-Outcome map

The third stage of the research took the form of a wider online survey of volunteers on VSO's returned volunteer database. The survey tool was developed drawing on the themes emerging during the first two stages of the research, and can be found in Appendix A. It was piloted using cognitive testing and adaptations were made informed by the results of this exercise. The aim of the survey was to understand more about the scale of behavioural and attitudinal changes of volunteers as a result of their placement. VSO alumni were sent a link to the survey in an email with a follow-up reminder, and they were asked to forward it to their networks and contacts of other returned volunteers to try and engage those who may not be on the alumni database. It was open for two weeks in September 2016 and received a total of 2,735 valid individual responses.

Of those responding, 57% were female and 42% male; there was a broad spectrum of age ranges and also a wide range of ages at the point that they first volunteered; most (83%) had completed one VSO placement, just over half (53%) were international North to South volunteers with a spread across other categories of volunteer; most (80%) had volunteered for a period of more than six months; 72% were living in Europe before their placement and 63% were now living in Europe with south east Asia and the Horn and East Africa being the next most well represented regions in which respondents were based, both prior to their placement and at the point of completing the survey. Respondents' decade of first placement ranged from recent volunteers through to those who volunteered in the 1960s, with two thirds of respondents undertaking their first placement this century and one third prior to 2000. Around a third of respondents (35%) identified the primary focus of their placement to be education, another third was divided between health (14%) and livelihoods (13%),

and the remainder were spread across a wide range of areas. The majority were placed with government or NGO partners and there was a fairly even spread working across national, regional and local/district levels.

A descriptive analysis of the data was undertaken to show the results of the dataset. Inferential analysis was also undertaken with a particular focus on certain targeted questions informed by findings from earlier stages of the research. The purpose of the use of inferential statistics is to make judgements of the probability that observed differences between groups is a dependable one, or one that might have happened by chance in the study. There were a series of hypotheses emerging from the qualitative work which this analysis aimed to test:

- Volunteering increases levels of social action.
- Volunteering results in a range of changes for the volunteer during their placement.
- The changes that happen during placement impact on the level and type of social action that they undertake post placement.
- The age at which people volunteer for the first time affects the changes that happen for them during placement.
- The length of placement affects the changes that happen during placement.
- The location (by country) of placement affects the changes that happen during placement.
- The changes that happen during placement vary for different volunteer types.
- The type of placement (role, thematic area, type of partner placed with) affects the changes that happen during placement.

- Changes that happen during placement vary, dependent on where the volunteer lives in relation to the communities with which they work.
- The challenges that volunteers experience during their placement affect the changes that happen during placement.
- Motivation to volunteer affects the changes that happen during placement.
- Motivation to volunteer is different for different types of volunteer and also is variable for volunteers of different ages.

In some cases it was necessary to aggregate sub-elements of the datasets for the feasibility of this analysis. The following statistical tests were applied, depending on the nature of the two variables:

- Chi-square for dichotomous and dichotomous or dichotomous and nominal variables
- Mann Whitney for dichotomous and ordinal variables
- Kruskal-Wallis for nominal and ordinal variables
- Spearman's rank for ordinal and ordinal variables.

The statistical testing conducted uses a p-value to indicate the statistical significance of an association between two variables. The significance used is 5% and this is identified by a test statistic with a p-value of 0.05 or less. This provides results which give 95% confidence that there is a genuine statistical difference.

The inferential analysis is also contained within a separate report (available on demand) and both sets of analysis are referenced within this final summary paper; however key charts are referenced in this report and are included in Appendix B.



Local teacher Shila Dhakal donates her spare time to talk to children in Lamjung, Nepal, about school and earthquake preparedness.

3. Analysis

The following analysis presents findings structured around changes that volunteers experience during their placement, the influence of pre-placement activities and motivations, post-placement outcomes, the relationships between changes and outcomes, and finally, impacts. Findings are also investigated for variations across different types of volunteers. It is recognised that there are numerous ways in which volunteers can be disaggregated according to type, but for the purpose of this analysis, volunteers were categorised according to the type of VSO placement or programme they undertook. As such, research participants fell into one of seven types:

- i. **International North-South volunteers**, where the volunteer is recruited from a country in the global North and placed in a country in the global South;
- ii. **International South-South volunteers**, where the volunteer is recruited from a country in the global South and placed in another country in the global South;
- iii. **Corporate volunteers** that typically take part in a volunteering scheme supported by their corporate employer organisation;
- iv. **National International Citizen Service (ICS) volunteers** who are volunteers from the global South aged 18-25 that team up with UK volunteers to undertake three-month placements in their country (sometimes in their own community but often in another part of the country);
- v. **Youth for Development (Y4D) volunteers** that participated in a one-year volunteer scheme (which is no longer operating) for young people from the UK aged 18-25 years of age. Volunteers were expected to have had some previous work experience;
- vi. **Global Xchange volunteers** from the UK. This scheme preceded the International Citizen Service and involved UK volunteers aged 18-25 years of age undertaking a three-month placement in a country in the global South alongside a national volunteer counterpart, and then also a three-month placement in the UK;
- vii. **Polvol parliamentarian volunteers** who undertake short-term placements to help international partners strengthen their advocacy and campaigns, influence national policies, and support the capacity of elected representatives.

Through applicability criteria, a number of these types also separate volunteers according to other characteristics, such as age with the youth volunteering programmes. Whilst the volunteer type is the main focus of the research questions for this study, there is also some analysis of variations across age, gender, region of placement, the length of placement and the length of time since they volunteered.

In keeping with realist evaluation, the analytical categories of context, mechanisms and outcomes are used throughout to understand the complex configurations of factors that lead to change happening. The diagram on the right illustrates – making use of the qualitative data – the respective profiles of different volunteer types across their journey from pre-placement activity and volunteering motivations (context); changes to their understanding, attitude and behaviour during placement (mechanism); and post-placement changes in terms of behaviour and community and social and political action (outcome).

Beginning with the mechanisms relating to changes during placement, the following sections explore emerging findings on the complex pathways that lead to volunteer impact. In each section, general findings are presented before variations are investigated across different types of volunteer.

3.1. Understanding mechanisms: the impacts on understanding, attitudes and behaviours of volunteers towards inequality and social justice during volunteering placements

The survey identified that many respondents described experiencing changes in awareness during their placement. Respondents were asked to identify areas where they felt they had experienced a change of awareness and then indicate whether the scale of the change was small, medium or large. Table 1 (see page 8) shows the responses, with the first column showing those identifying big changes and the second column showing all levels of change aggregated. An increase in cultural awareness was the most significant change, with 60% experiencing a large change and 85% experiencing some level of change. There were also notable shifts in awareness of development, poverty, equality and injustice, community challenges and needs, and volunteering.

The survey also asked about personal changes that volunteers experienced during their placement and again they were asked to indicate the scale of change. Table 2 (see page 8) shows the responses, with the first column showing those identifying large change and the second column showing all levels of change aggregated. The majority of respondents identified some level of personal change across all the categories listed, with new knowledge and learning, increased adaptability, increased confidence, increased resilience, and increased self-awareness being most frequently cited as large-scale changes for individuals during their placement.

The survey also asked respondents to identify other areas of change. Many described examples that link to the categories listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Context		Mechanisms	Links	Outcomes	
Type	Pre-Placement Action	Motivation			
Global Exchange	Diverse range of action	Gain career experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased adaptability Awareness of poverty etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural and self-awareness link to change in practice Increased confidence and motivation link to career direction Increased cultural and environmental awareness link to consumer patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in practice Career change/direction Consumer patterns Campaigning
Youth for Development	Very active	Gain career experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skills, knowledge and learning Increased resilience Networks, contacts, friendships, relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse links to career change Increased awareness of culture, development, community challenges and self-awareness link to change in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career change/direction (strengthening existing direction) Change in practice
National ICS	Varying degrees - some very, some through university requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain career experience Influenced by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness (spread across different areas) Increased confidence Networks, contacts, friendships, relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse links across mechanisms to outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in practice Career change/direction (experience to get job and clarity on career direction) Set up group
Corporate	Not very active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a difference Utilise existing skills Gain career experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of culture New skills, knowledge and learning Increased confidence Networks, contacts, friendships, relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of culture with people from placement country and corporate colleagues link to change in practice No clear links to career change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in practice (cross-cultural working) Career change/direction (mainly with pre-placement organisation)
International South-South	A wide range from very active to not active	Diverse reasons - no explicit pattern in reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skills, knowledge and learning Networks, contacts, friendships, relationships Awareness of culture Increased confidence Change in attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skills, learning and knowledge link to career change New skills link to change in practice Increased cultural and environmental awareness link to consumer patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career change/direction Change in practice Networking Further international volunteering
International North-South	Spread across 6 categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Faith-based action Through work Previous international volunteering Politically active / campaigning Active - from very to a little Not active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain career experience Adventure and challenge Utilise existing skills Make a difference Influenced by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of culture, development, community needs/ challenges, inequality Self-awareness New skills, knowledge and learning Networks, contacts, friendships, relationships Change in attitude Increased confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skills, learning and knowledge link to career change Increased awareness of development and inequality link to change in practice Range of links to change in practice Living/working with limited resources and awareness of poverty links to consumer patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career change/direction Change in practice Volunteering promotion Further international volunteering Campaigning Influencing others Supporting local charities Trustees and formal volunteering positions Consumer patterns Grassroots community development

Diagram 2 – The volunteer journey from pre-placement to volunteer changes in understanding, attitude and behaviour to post-placement outcomes using a realist evaluation framework

Table 1 – Q17 Awareness increase during placement (n=2,735)

Responses	Large increase	%	Any increase	%
Power dynamics	664	24%	1,831	67%
Poverty	1,262	46%	2,294	84%
Inequality and injustice	1,137	42%	2,168	79%
Environment	578	21%	1,886	69%
Development	1,306	48%	2,259	83%
Culture	1,632	60%	2,334	85%
Community needs	1,069	39%	2,128	78%
Community challenges	1,175	43%	2,094	77%
Volunteering	1,097	40%	2,120	78%

Table 2 – Q18 Changes during placement (n=2,735)

Responses	Large increase	%	Any increase	%
Change in attitude	991	36%	2,261	83%
Increased adaptability	1,298	47%	2,341	86%
Increased confidence	1,191	44%	2,300	84%
Increased resilience	1,166	43%	2,240	82%
Motivation	887	32%	2,053	75%
Widened professional networks and contacts	603	22%	1,942	71%
New knowledge and learning	1,302	48%	2,309	84%
New skills	966	35%	2,237	82%
Increased self-awareness	1,109	41%	2,226	81%

Increased confidence, enhanced creativity, greater flexibility and patience were frequently mentioned. Some talked about an increase or decrease in faith or spirituality and others spoke of an increased awareness of the perspectives of other religions. Not all changes identified were perceived as positive; some talked about a decrease in confidence and one mentioned a decrease in patience, stating that the placement had “used up” all their patience. A number of respondents said that they had become disillusioned with development, and in particular the work of INGOs, during their placement.

Analysis of the interviews and online discussion responses largely supports the data from the survey findings and reveals that many respondents made links between changes in understanding, attitudes and behaviours which occurred during their placement, as well as increased awareness across a spectrum of areas such as poverty, development, culture, poverty, power dynamics, inequality and injustice. As with the survey, an increased awareness of culture was the most frequently cited change of awareness, with nearly two-thirds of interview respondents making at least one reference to this, which included awareness of cultural differences and also similarities across cultures as well as cultural dynamics:

“If I hadn’t done those placements I would still be someone striving for equality, but I wouldn’t have an understanding of other cultures....” (Y4D volunteer)

It was not only international volunteers that talked about increased awareness but also national volunteers who were placed in locations away from their home:

“Before I didn’t have the opportunity to interact with different people from different tribes....learning a new culture and finding out about people from different ethnic groups was a very good experience.” (ICS national volunteer)

Increased awareness of development – in terms of international development processes and impacts – along with an increased awareness of inequality and injustice were both separately referenced by nearly half of the interview respondents. Inequality and injustice encompassed a broad range of issues, including corruption, injustice within organisations, specific references to developing their own thinking on inequality and injustice on a personal level, and discrimination relating to disability, ethnicity, culture, gender and sexuality.

An increase in self-awareness received nearly as many references in the interviews with over half of respondents mentioning its impact on their understanding, attitude and behaviour. Common themes on this issue included increased understanding of how and why preconceptions of the country and culture in which they were placed may have been inaccurate, and realisations around how individual behaviour has an impact on interaction and the development of relationships.

Around a third of respondents mentioned increased awareness of each of the three areas of poverty, community needs, and community challenges. Some described their experience as helping to ground them in realities:

“In the course of my own work in international development pretty much whenever I meet someone else who really seems to have empathy for the people with whom they work in developing countries it turns out that they are [return volunteers] I’ve also met many more people working in international development (including some of those working for the government) who have no such empathy or cross-cultural understanding. I really do think the volunteering experience that VSO provides grounds volunteers in the realities and complexities of the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised people and thus equips us with the skills and attitudes we need to work to reduce poverty and injustice whether it is with such groups ‘back home’ or in continuing work overseas.” (International North-South volunteer)

Fewer, though still a significant number of references were made to awareness of volunteering, power dynamics, and the environment.

New knowledge and learning alongside new skills gained during placement were significant drivers of changes in understanding, attitude and behaviours. A broad range of skills, knowledge and learning was referred to, reflecting not only the diversity of volunteer roles undertaken, but also more broadly how the gaining of new skills and learning is strongly associated with volunteer placements, even when it involves professionally skilled volunteers. Participants articulated how their experiences had built their knowledge skills and learning on the importance of constructing relationships, bringing people together, listening to the people they are working with, and using participatory approaches. Many international participants in particular said that they had anticipated sharing their skills prior to their placement, but the reality was that they learnt much more than they were able to pass on to others. The following Tables 3 and 4 show the types of new skills, knowledge and learning that respondents most commonly referenced.

A change in attitude was a commonly mentioned theme, with respondents typically commenting on changes such as thinking more positively, realising what they took for granted in their pre-placement country, being more thoughtful and conscious of other people’s opinions, having increased patience, calmness and an appreciation for difference and diversity. As one respondent stated, *“I have become more easy going, even when it is stressful. I try to smile more... maybe my attitude became more optimistic” (Corporate volunteer).*

Table 3 – Skills developed

Skills area	Examples
Relational	Networking, listening, observing, patience, building trust, interpersonal skills, tolerance, team working, capacity building, negotiation, partnership building, donor relationship management, diplomacy, cross cultural working
Communication	Public speaking, debating, lobbying, giving advice, facilitation, self-expression, new language
Management	Organisational project management, event management, people management, leadership, programme management, chairing meetings, strategic, report writing, decision making
Analytical	Research, monitoring, logistics, critical thinking
Creative	Participatory approaches, problem solving
Resilience	Adaptability, life skills, openness
Technical	Producing newsletters, teaching, farming, livelihoods, radio presentations, finance, consultancy, proposal writing, fundraising, working with children, working with communities, working with patients, peace building, budgeting, advocacy, campaigning

Table 4 – Knowledge and learning

Knowledge/ learning level	Examples
Country	Culture, religions, stigma, diversity
State/ institutional	Politics policy, how governments operate, structure of UN, how donors work, corruption – challenge preconceived ideas, governance, legal rights, advocacy
Community	Traditions and practices, importance of working at the grass roots level, importance of contextualising actions and programmes, stigma, governance, how to engage communities, participatory approaches, local politics, advocacy, volunteering
Individual	Motivations for change, how people learn, behaviour change, impact of faith, volunteering

In some cases, changes in attitude also occurred alongside other changes. For example, despite being a broader category than increased self-awareness, there were cases where the two overlapped and potentially supported each other. One respondent described how volunteering has *“influenced the way I see the world and how I see myself. I think it’s having a much deeper understanding, a much greater sympathy and understanding of other people” (International North-South volunteer)*. In such cases, an outward facing change in attitude toward issues – or in the aforementioned example, the world – is accompanied by increased inward facing self-awareness. Some respondents referred to a change in attitude in relation to increased awareness in a particular area such as poverty or community needs. With regards to discrimination on the basis of sexuality, a youth volunteer shared how *“...my view on LGBT changed a lot – before, my environment says LGBT no way. I would just run away. Heterosexuality was the only world I knew. We discussed a lot with other volunteers and now I think live and let live” (ICS National volunteer)*.

The development of new networks, contacts, friendships and relationships was a frequently referred to change during the course of volunteer placements, with nearly half of respondents mentioning this. Within this, a common theme was new personal and professional connections with both people from the placement country and other volunteers. Many respondents also noted how their placement experience influenced the way in which they built and developed personal and professional relationships. As one respondent highlighted, *“the friendships and networks gained is one thing that really stands out” (Y4D volunteer)*.

Increased confidence was a significant theme throughout the responses, with just under half making explicit reference to it in the interviews. Responses here are less diverse with respondents clearly identifying a link between how the placement experience and sense of achievement contributed to an increase in their confidence. In one case a respondent described how *“it built my confidence. Gave me the confidence to do stuff – if ever I am having a bad day or if I [am] putting myself down I do think I did all this stuff and just get on with it” (International North-South volunteer)*.

Some observed changes received fewer references in the interviews, but the survey results indicated that they were experienced by many volunteers. Firstly, respondents noted an increased sense of motivation which included comments relating to increased commitment to the work they were undertaking, personal drive and efforts to address issues relating to increases in their awareness – for example, being more motivated to tackle inequality and injustice in response to experiencing it. The survey results showed that 75% of respondents had experienced a change in motivation, and 32% indicated this to be a big change. Secondly, some respondents referred to becoming more adaptable as a result of their placement, specifically in having to work and live in new and sometimes changing settings and contexts where their

expectations were challenged. The results showed that 86% of respondents had experienced an increase in adaptability and 47% indicated this to be a big change. Finally, increased resilience was mentioned, often in relation to other factors such as developing and using new skills in new environments and living with limited resources. The survey results showed that 82% of respondents had experienced an increase in resilience and 43% indicated this to be a big change. In both the survey and the interviews, some volunteers experienced a change in their behaviour in relation to living and/or working with limited resources, which some linked to adaptability and resilience: *“The biggest thing [I learnt] is just about resilience and flexibility, finding solutions when you don’t have a lot of resources” (International North-South volunteer)*.

Variation across different types of volunteer

The survey data were analysed to explore if there were any differences in the changes that were experienced by volunteers across different demographic groups during their placement. This analysis indicated that the type of awareness raised during placement varied very little, irrespective of gender, type of partner placed with, length of placement, type of role, sector of placement, urban or rural location, living in the community that they were working with or away from the community, and initial motivation to volunteer. However, for volunteers placed in Africa and Central America, there appeared to be a higher level of poverty awareness raised. Further interrogation of the data showed a significant change of awareness of poverty for volunteers with placements in Africa compared to Asia (Appendix B, Chart 1).

International South to South and ICS national volunteers generally experienced the greatest awareness changes although ICS national volunteers experienced lower levels of cultural awareness-raising than other volunteer types (Appendix B, Chart 2). International North to South volunteers generally experienced lower levels of change in awareness, apart from changes in cultural awareness which were high (Appendix B, Chart 2). Analysis by decade in which the placement took appeared to show that in recent years, the increase in cultural awareness-raising was lower, but there were growing levels of awareness of development issues, power dynamics, and community challenges. Changes in awareness of both culture (Appendix B, Chart 3) and environment (Appendix B, Chart 4) were greater for those volunteers who were younger at the time of their placement.

Analysing the survey data to explore other changes that took place during placement identified little difference by gender, length or decade of placement, type of role, sector of placement, urban or rural location, whether living in the community that they were working with, or away from it, and the initial motivation to volunteer. International South to South volunteers and ICS national volunteers generally experienced higher levels of change, and international North to South volunteers experienced less change. Corporate volunteers

experienced lower levels of change, but had slightly higher levels of change in attitude (Appendix B, Chart 5) and self-awareness (Appendix B, Chart 6), compared to other types of volunteer. Corporate and international North South volunteers experienced lower levels of motivational change (Appendix B, Chart 7). ICS national volunteers, however, reported slightly higher levels of motivational change than other types of volunteer (Appendix B, Chart 7). Younger volunteers appeared more likely to experience significant increases in confidence, and older volunteers appeared more likely to experience widening networks and contacts. Further interrogation and testing highlighted that younger volunteers were statistically more likely to experience changes in attitude (Appendix B, Chart 8), increased adaptability (Appendix B, Chart 9), increased confidence (Appendix B, Chart 10), increased resilience (Appendix B, Chart 11), widening professional networks (Appendix B, Chart 12), and increased self-awareness (Appendix B, Chart 13). Furthermore, older volunteers were more likely to experience big changes in motivation (Appendix B, Chart 14) and skills (Appendix B, Chart 15).

During the qualitative interviews, the corporate volunteers were more likely to emphasise increased cultural awareness with substantially less reference made to awareness of poverty and development; however this trend is not supported by the survey results. National ICS respondents did identify changes in levels of awareness, but no particular areas predominated. For international South-South volunteers, increased awareness of culture emerged as the major change in awareness, with some mention of poverty and development; however data from the survey show that an increased awareness of community challenges was just as significant. In the interviews, international North-South respondents made specific reference to multiple areas of increased awareness across a wider range than any other type of volunteer. These included increased awareness of culture, development, community needs, challenges and inequality. For some volunteer types, the qualitative interviews provided a more nuanced insight into trends between certain volunteer types. Of all the volunteer types, Y4D volunteers were the only ones where increased awareness in one or more areas did not emerge as one of the most significant reported changes. Across the other types, Global Xchange respondents emphasised increased awareness specifically on poverty and community needs and challenges.

New skills, learning, and knowledge featured heavily across volunteer types in the qualitative interviews, reflecting the findings from the survey. However, for Global Xchange volunteers, it did not emerge as one of the key changes to the extent it did for other forms of volunteering. Instead, increased adaptability and awareness of poverty and community needs/challenges stood out as defining changes for Global Xchange. The emergence of increased adaptability here is relevant as Global Xchange was the only type of volunteer where it was recognised as a major change. One other change that shared some overlap with adaptability was increased resilience, something that was identified as a key theme for the Y4D

volunteer. Although increased resilience and adaptability do not emerge as themes in other volunteer types in the interviews, the survey suggests that they were consistent changes across all types of volunteer.

During the interviews, increased confidence was commonly referenced as a change for national ICS, corporate, and international South-South volunteer types, and was much less frequently mentioned by international North-South volunteers. The survey, however, shows increased confidence as commonly occurring across all volunteer types. Interviews with international North-South volunteers placed in African countries appeared to be more likely to identify increased confidence as a change than those placed in Asian countries, and further interrogation of the survey data supported this, showing that those volunteers placed in Africa were more likely to experience a large change in confidence (Appendix B, Chart 16) and also an increased ability to live within limited resources (Appendix B, Chart 17) than those placed in Asia. Those placed in Asia were more likely to experience a big change in the size of their networks (Appendix B, Chart 18). During the interviews, international North-South was the only type of volunteer where increased self-awareness was identified as a major change in attitude and behaviour, but again the survey revealed that this was a common change across all types of volunteer.

The development of networks, contacts, friendships and relationships was less frequently identified as a significant change for most volunteer types, but a greater emphasis was placed on this as an important change with Global Xchange volunteers. However, analysis of the interview data suggests that the nature of change in this area varies across volunteer type. International South-South and North-South volunteers referred to the development of personal and professional contacts and friendships; Y4D volunteers made similar references, but also specifically emphasised how these linkages often happened with other volunteers in their team. This was echoed by corporate volunteers, who also mainly undertake their placements through VSO in a team with other volunteers. For corporate volunteers, new relationships and networks with their volunteer colleagues emerged as an important change during their placement.

3.2. Understanding context: the influence of pre-placement activities, motivation for volunteering and other factors in enabling change

Establishing links between contextual pre-placement factors such as motivations for volunteering and previous community, social or political action, and changes during placement in relation to understanding, attitude and behaviour proved to be difficult. Whilst interview respondents provided information on all three areas, they rarely expressed an explicit link between them. Nevertheless, there is interesting learning in the analysis of factors that led people to volunteer and the extent of the community, social and political action they undertake before their placements.

Motivations for volunteering

The most commonly referenced motivation for volunteering in the interviews was to gain experience for career development – approximately half of interview respondents cited this as a reason. Associated with this, some also said how they hoped the placement would help to inform their career direction. When combined, over two-thirds mentioned career development or direction as a motivation for volunteering. The second most frequently given reason, with just under half of interview respondents referring to it, was a desire to make a difference or have an impact.

Three significant motivating factors that featured in responses from the interviewees were the utilisation of existing skills, to have an adventure, and being influenced by others to volunteer – from family to friends to mentors and colleagues. Fewer,

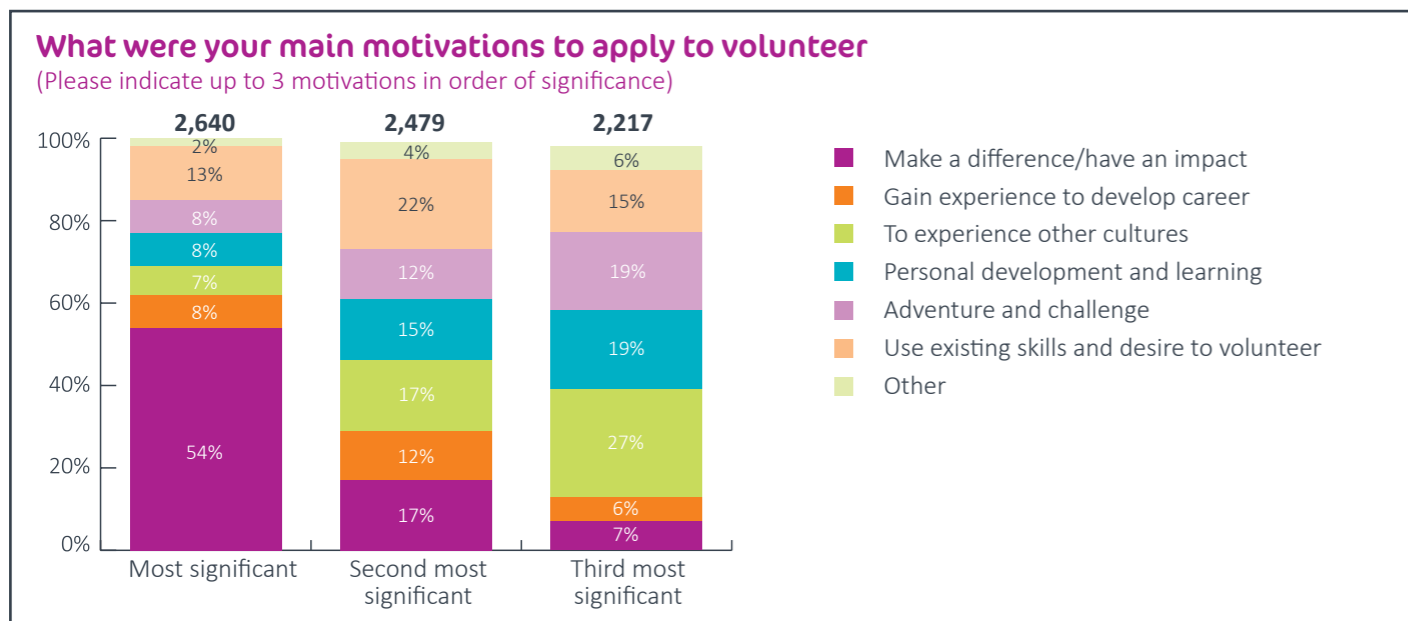
though still significant numbers, also referred to wanting an experience of cultural immersion as part of their placements, having a general desire to volunteer, wanting a challenge and/or to challenge themselves, and being motivated by learning. A strong reason in those that mentioned personal wellbeing was related to dissatisfaction with personal lifestyles or professional employment. As one respondent stated in relation to their wellbeing, “...maybe it was my time, my time to do something for me, entirely for me for the first time in my life really” (International North-South volunteer).

It is worth noting that the way in which participants articulate motivation may be influenced by their personal perspective. Although many did talk about career development as a significant motivating factor, some may have felt disinclined to focus on it although it does not necessarily mean it was not important for them.

The survey respondents, however, showed quite a different trend, with 54.2% citing making a difference or having impact as their most significant motivation to volunteer; 13.2% saying it was a desire to use existing skills in a volunteering capacity; and 8.2% identifying gaining experience to develop a career as their most significant motivation. A total of 7.5% of survey respondents said their main motivation was personal development and learning; 7.4% said it was to experience other cultures; and for 7.3% it was for an adventure or challenge. Figure 1 below shows the responses indicating the most significant motivations, and also the second and third most significant motivations.

Analysis of the motivation to volunteer against a question to test levels of action post placement showed a statistically significant association between the primary motivation for the

Figure 1 – Volunteer motivations



placement and the change in action post placement. Those who had primary motivations to make a difference before undertaking their placement were more likely to be engaged with community, social or political action post placement. (Appendix B, Chart 19)

Pre-placement community, social and political action

Analysis of the interview data revealed that volunteers were involved in a diverse range of pre-placement action, both in terms of the scope of activities and the depth of engagement with them. Broadly it was possible to identify six categories in relation to the range and level of pre-placement community, social and political action:

- i. Active through faith-based activities and/or organisations.
- ii. Involvement through work/work-based activities such as social work, being employed by a charity/NGO, or a requirement as part of a university or school course.
- iii. Previous international volunteering experience.
- iv. Politically active and/or involvement in campaigning such as writing letters to politicians or attending marches and demonstrations.
- v. Other actions incorporating a wide spread of activities and ranging from being very active to a little active.
- vi. Not active in community, social or political action.

Type and extent of pre-placement action varied greatly across the respondents, although some trends were observable within volunteer types. This is discussed further below.

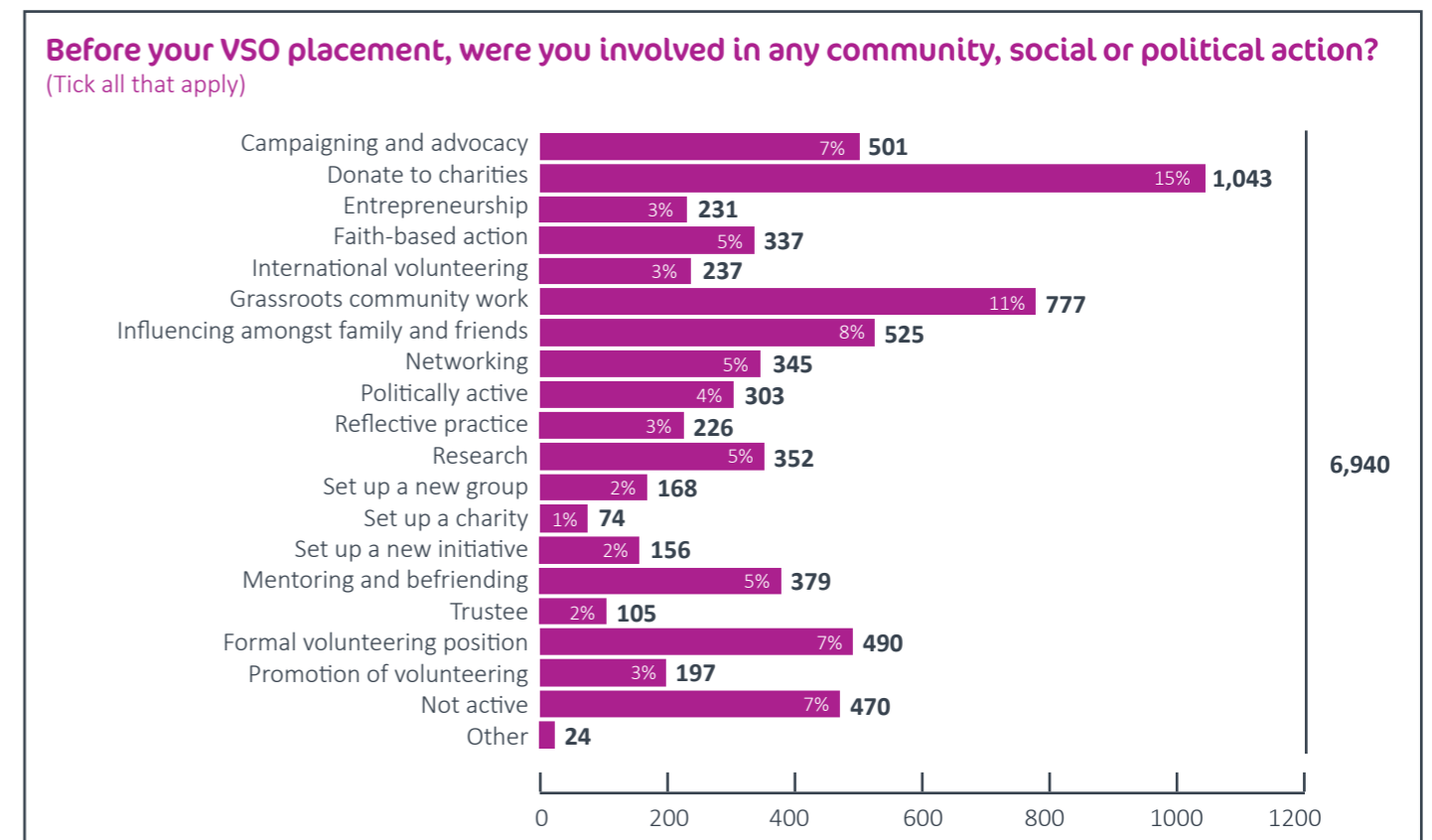
Survey responses to the question on pre-placement community, social and political action are shown in Figure 2. Donating to charities was the most common form of action (15%), followed by grassroots community work (11%), influencing friends and family (8%), campaigning and advocacy (7%), and formal volunteering positions (7%). A total of 7% of respondents said that they were not involved in any such activities before their placement.

Other influencing factors

Interviews and online discussion forum responses revealed that the challenges and barriers that volunteers experience whilst on their placements can have a particular impact on changes in relation to their understanding, attitudes and behaviour. Interview respondents also noted things that surprised them on their placements which, in challenging their expectations, had noticeable impacts upon them.

In terms of barriers and challenges, it is important to first note that in many cases they did not lead to negative changes and outcomes. Some respondents did refer to increased cynicism and scepticism on issues such as development and corruption. Simultaneously however, this was linked to increased awareness in these areas and for some, also led to higher levels of motivation and greater clarity on how they could bring about change.

Figure 2 – Pre-placement community, social and political action



“Specifically I wouldn’t change it, I mean it was ups and downs of course and you look back, what ten years ago I think with ‘oh it was all wonderful’; I remember it wasn’t always wonderful but I’m really glad I did it and no regrets at all” (International North-South volunteer).

Frequently mentioned challenges and barriers relate to organisations and people with which volunteers mostly interacted. Two in particular were the VSO county office in the volunteers’ placement country, and the relationship with the partner organisation hosting them. VSO country offices came in for a mix of praise and criticism with the challenges relating to levels of support provided to volunteers. In some cases this created frustrations with the placement experience and in others it affected volunteer views on how the development industry and development organisations operate. With regards to volunteer hosting partner organisations, responses highlight cases of some volunteers feeling that the partner organisation was not appropriate for the development project being undertaken, and a number felt the relationship between volunteer and partner organisation broke down. In spite of this, some explicitly stated how this led to them becoming more optimistic.

In some of the team volunteering approaches such as the Global Xchange model – where volunteers undertook placements in groups with other volunteers – group dynamics emerged as a source of challenges. Differing power dynamics and communication styles were referenced as causes of this. However, responses also suggest that finding ways around these issues can be an important part of the volunteering experience. A range of other issues were mentioned, ranging from personal challenges such as dealing with loneliness, and a sense of being overwhelmed by the scale of community needs such as poor infrastructure, civil unrest and corruption. Interestingly,

Table 5 – Q21 personal challenges during their placement (n=2,735)

Responses	Challenge	%	Significant challenge	%
Loneliness	1,681	61%	452	17%
Feeling overwhelmed	1,492	55%	498	18%
Loss of confidence	916	33%	152	6%
Reduced motivation	954	35%	200	6%
Frustration	2,074	76%	1,006	37%
Reduction in networks and contacts	921	34%	195	7%
Feeling stressed	1,416	52%	374	14%

a number of respondents noted how their placement role evolved or changed from its original design, but this was not as frequently highlighted as a negative challenge.

In terms of surprises and unexpected factors during placements that influenced changes, responses varied considerably and were often specific to individual volunteers. However common themes included shock at the realities of poverty and inequality, the actions of politicians and attitudes towards them, surprise that things were not as bad as expected, and, in some cases, surprise by their own actions and reactions. For example, one national ICS volunteer said that he was surprised at how he began for the first time to talk about sexuality. Aspects of inequality that surprised volunteers ranged from local perspectives on gender, hierarchy, religion and tribal divisions. Exposure to these inequalities often elicited a strong emotional reaction in volunteers who described feeling anger and frustration. Interestingly, some of the UK-based Global Xchange volunteers were more shocked by the poverty that they encountered on their UK placement than their overseas placement. One person described that she was shocked by the way in which people in her country of placement placed very little expectation on politicians and accepted the status quo. This highlighted to her the importance of good governance, which in turn influenced her career aspirations.

Barriers, challenges, and dealing with the unexpected emerged clearly as factors that influence volunteers during their placements. How they deal with and interpret them is likely to be linked to changes in understanding, attitude and behaviour.

The survey asked participants to identify any personal challenges that they had experienced during their placement. The results are shown in Table 5 below, with frustration being the most significant challenge and loneliness, feeling overwhelmed and feeling stressed all being experienced by over half of all of volunteers at some level, and being a significant challenge for considerable numbers.

Further analysis found a statistically significant association between some considerable personal challenges during placement and the change in action post placement. Those who experienced frustration (Appendix B, Chart 20) or reduced motivation (Appendix B, Chart 21) as a significant challenge during their placement were less likely to be involved with action post placement, whilst those who felt overwhelmed (Appendix B, Chart 22) during their placement were more likely to be involved in action post placement.

Participants we asked to identify more structural challenges that they experienced during their placement and the results are shown in Table 6 on the right, with two-thirds identifying challenges with their partner organisation and over a quarter considering this to be a major challenge. Poor infrastructure, corruption, and the VSO country office also were cited as challenges for around half of the respondents.

Further analysis found that those who identified experiencing a significant challenge with their partner/host organisation (Appendix B, Chart 23) or the VSO country office (Appendix B, Chart 24) were less likely to be involved with community, political, or social action post placement.

Variations across different types of volunteer

For those taking part in the interviews, gaining experience for career development was a significant motivation across all volunteer types. However, there are significant variations. Within the international South-South volunteer type, there was a diverse spread of motivations to the point where there was no clear order between the most influential factors. In contrast, international North-South volunteers clustered around six core motivations – gaining experience; wanting adventure; wanting a challenge; utilising existing skills; making a difference; and being influenced by others. Of these, gaining experience for career development was the most prevalent, but when wanting an adventure or a challenge were combined, they took on equal status with gaining experience. In particular, the adventure component of volunteering seemed to have special significance – international North-South volunteers were the only type where adventure and challenge featured as key motivating reasons for volunteering. Utilising existing skills, making a difference, and being influenced by others all shared a similar number of references and appear to be significant reasons for some international North-South volunteers.

For the youth-focused schemes of Global Xchange and Y4D, gaining experience for career development was the major recurring theme and something that was mentioned at least once by every interview respondent. Similarly, national ICS volunteers stressed the importance of this, but they also emphasised the influence of others on their decision to volunteer. Friends who had previously taken part in the ICS scheme, as well as mentors or respected people, were referenced as the source of this influence.

The corporate volunteer type exhibited no prevalence for a specific motivation with references spread relatively even across three reasons. Making a difference or having an impact was frequently referred to and appeared to be more of a driving factor for corporate volunteers than other types of volunteer. Similarly, utilising existing skills was a central reason and seemingly more commonly referred to than by other volunteer types. One reason for this might be due to the professional skilled status of corporate volunteers; however, it still featured more strongly for them than international volunteers (North-South and South-South), who are required to have minimum standards in terms of professional skills and experience. Finally, corporate volunteers also referred to gaining experience to develop their careers, though this was frequently directed towards furthering their career within their corporate employer organisation.

Analysis of the survey results showed a statistically significant association between the most significant motivation identified by respondents and volunteer type. For example corporate volunteers were more likely to say that their main motivation for volunteering was to make a difference and ICS national volunteers were more likely to say that they were motivated by the opportunity for personal development and learning (Appendix B, Chart 25). There was also a statistically significant association between the strongest motivation to volunteer and the age of the volunteer. Volunteers who were older at the start of the placement were more likely to say that their most significant motivation was to make a difference, utilise existing skills, and their desire to volunteer, whereas those who were younger at the start of the placement were more likely to identify personal development and learning or gaining experience of other cultures as their most significant motivation (Appendix B, Chart 26).

In terms of differences across volunteer type for pre-placement community, social and political action, the interviews highlighted such a diverse variation between volunteers that it was only possible to identify very broad trends. For international South-South volunteers and Global Xchange youth volunteers, action occurred in a range of areas and varied from being very active to not active at all. National ICS youth volunteers were similar, with the exception that some pre-placement action was associated with school activities or part of university studies/training courses. In contrast, Y4D volunteers were all very active in their pre-placement activities, but this is likely to be due to the specific recruitment requirement that only those demonstrating an engagement with activities that share values with volunteering would be considered for the scheme.

Table 6 – Other challenges during placement (n=2,735)

Responses	Challenge	%	Significant challenge	%
The VSO country office	1,300	48%	377	14%
Host / partner organisation	1,795	66%	733	27%
Other volunteers	1,188	43%	258	9%
Neighbours / members of the local community	964	35%	167	6%
Poor infrastructure	1,561	57%	639	23%
Civil unrest	994	36%	247	9%
Corruption	1,406	51%	518	19%

Analysis of the interviews revealed corporate volunteers to be the least active in undertaking pre-placement community, social or political action. Nevertheless, there were those who exhibited some activity and stand-out cases with lots of action. International North-South volunteers were especially diverse in their pre-placement action. Linking back to the six broad categories of action previously identified across all respondents, international North-South volunteers had cases that fitted into each. There were cases of faith-based action, involvement through paid employment, previous international volunteering, people who were politically active and involved in campaigning, as well as a mix of other activities with some people extremely active, some less so and some none at all.

As with other types of volunteering, it would appear that there are diverse pathways towards people deciding to volunteer. Analysis of the survey results shows that international North to South volunteers and ICS UK volunteers were more likely to donate to charities prior to their VSO placement than other types of volunteer. International South to South volunteers were more likely to be involved in grassroots community work, networking and research before their placement.

3.3. Understanding outcomes: post-placement changes

Analysis of the qualitative data shows a very wide range of post-placement outcomes from personal changes in behaviour to interaction with others, as well as the nature and depth of community, social and political action undertaken. In terms of the frequency of references across all the qualitative data, five broad levels can be identified. The first level includes the three most commonly mentioned outcomes of an impact – career change or direction; influencing others (including advocacy and fundraising); and a change in practice, with the latter referring to ways in which respondents may have done things differently after their placements with typical examples including references to how they engage with people, build relationships and consider arguments and points of view. Sections 3.4 and 3.5 interrogate the responses under these outcomes in more detail.

The second level includes four commonly referred to outcomes for volunteers. The first is networking, with respondents highlighting continued links with people from their country of placement, connections and friendships with those that volunteered with them, and new links with volunteer alumni networks in their post-placement country. Some of these connections were observed to be sustained for long periods (in some cases for decades) after volunteers completed their placements. Secondly, many volunteers became advocates for volunteering, with a significant number saying how they have promoted the act of volunteering to family and friends as well as in a more official capacity, such as by giving talks. The third and fourth outcomes with a similar number of references within the qualitative data relate to post-placement community, social

and political action. Many volunteers engage in campaigning post-placement with some highlighting links to campaigning on issues related to their increased awareness gained during their placements. Grassroots community work also features strongly with volunteers referencing specific community action they have undertaken since volunteering.

The third level is composed of five outcomes that received fewer, though still significant, numbers of references – typically mentioned by around a fifth to a quarter of interview respondents. One of these outcomes was further international volunteering, sometimes through VSO and sometimes with other organisations. Acts of additional international volunteering varied from those that occurred straight after the first placement and others that were undertaken some years later. Supporting local charities was a notable post-placement outcome as was being politically active, which varied from standing for election to actively engaging with political processes. Consumer patterns were slightly less pervasive and typically related to outcomes such as making more ethical choices, being more considerate in how money was spent, and viewing choices in relation to wider arguments around sustainability. A number of respondents referred to taking proactive action to establish groups, new NGOs and/or charities.

The nature of the groups, NGOs and charities that volunteers went on to establish post placement varied greatly. Analysis shows that in some instances volunteers have gone on to establish formal NGOs, businesses and networks whilst others formed less formal groups and networks. Some volunteers described aspirations for setting up NGOs and some were actively in the registration process. Others established organisations many years ago and they are still very active working within communities at a grassroots level. The types of areas covered by these organisations range from working with women and girls on non-communicable diseases, gender awareness-raising including child marriage and gender based violence. and working with children with disabilities.

Among the less formal networks and groups, many had been established by youth volunteers. In some cases, these groups targeted ICS alumni to support ongoing debate and action, but in other instances they were trying to target a much wider audience to raise awareness and encourage others to engage in social action. One volunteer had set up a group which responded to a humanitarian crisis by organising an airdrop. Another volunteer described establishing a group to build links and partnerships between their home community in the UK and the Muslim community of Gunjur in The Gambia in response to the Brandt report – this group has now been running for 33 years.

Certain volunteers described establishing businesses which have been influenced by their volunteering experience. Examples include a business to increase environmental awareness in the Philippines, an ethical jam business in the UK (which has not been sustained), and a surf club which trains young people who have dropped out of school in hospitality skills.

The fourth level of outcomes features outcomes that were referred to by fewer numbers of respondents. Within these, returning to the country of placement received mention a noticeable number of times and it should be noted that this number may be slightly lower due to the inclusion of national ICS volunteers that undertook placements in their own country. Some respondents made reference to becoming trustees of organisations and taking up formal volunteering positions (such as official volunteering positions with charities or as part of state-run services). Supporting individuals either with monetary resources or advice both in their volunteer placement country and subsequent countries of residence featured as an outcome, as did providing additional and ongoing support to the partner organisation that hosted them during their placements. Other outcomes included going on to studying international development or issues relating to their placements and donating to charitable causes.

Finally, a number of outcomes received a small number of references. These included an impact on family relationships, such as meeting life partners through volunteer alumni, the influence on child rearing and greater consideration to family dynamics as a result of increased cultural awareness. Specific references to reflective practice were made although this also overlapped with general changes in practice as well as engaging in entrepreneurship and faith-based activities.

In terms of the thematic areas that respondents went on to work and volunteer in post placement, a diverse range was reported. However, the specific sectors of education, health and HIV/AIDS, livelihoods, youth and gender appear to be more prevalent than others which are perhaps not surprising given that these are the key thematic areas in which VSO has traditionally worked. Beyond this, volunteers reported going on to work and volunteer in fields such as humanitarian and disaster relief, fundraising, disability, environment and sustainability, participation and governance, inclusion, poverty, sanitation, social justice, social care, housing, and working with vulnerable groups, asylum seekers and refugees.

The survey contained four questions designed to explore post-placement action. The first question asked respondents to compare their level of community, social or political action before and after their placement in order to identify changes. Figure 3 on the right shows that over half of respondents (55%) said that they were more involved with community, social or political action post placement. Only 5% said that they were less active after their placement, and just under a quarter (22%) said that they were just as active but had become involved with different things.

Respondents were then asked where there had been a change in the level of their community, social or political action before and after their placement to what extent their VSO placement influenced this change. Figure 4 shows that 40% felt that their VSO placement had influenced the change to a significant extent and 32% said that that it had influenced the change to some extent.

Figure 3 – Action post placement compared to action pre placement

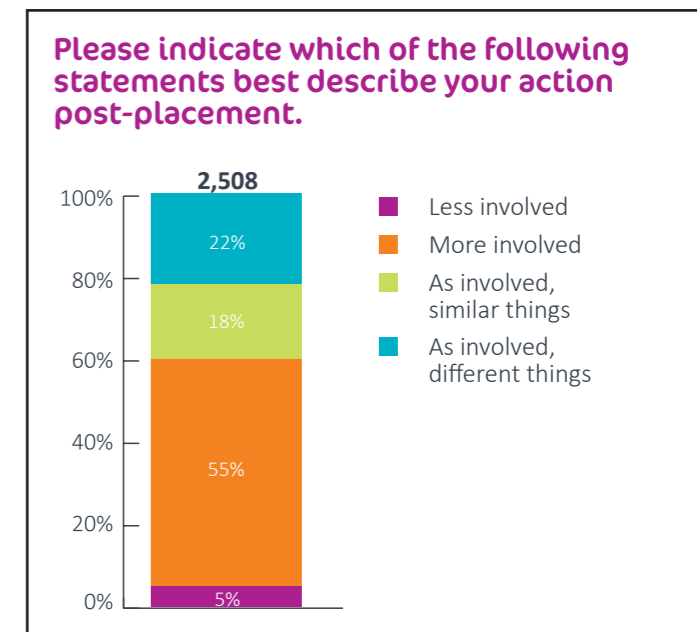


Figure 4 – Influence of placement

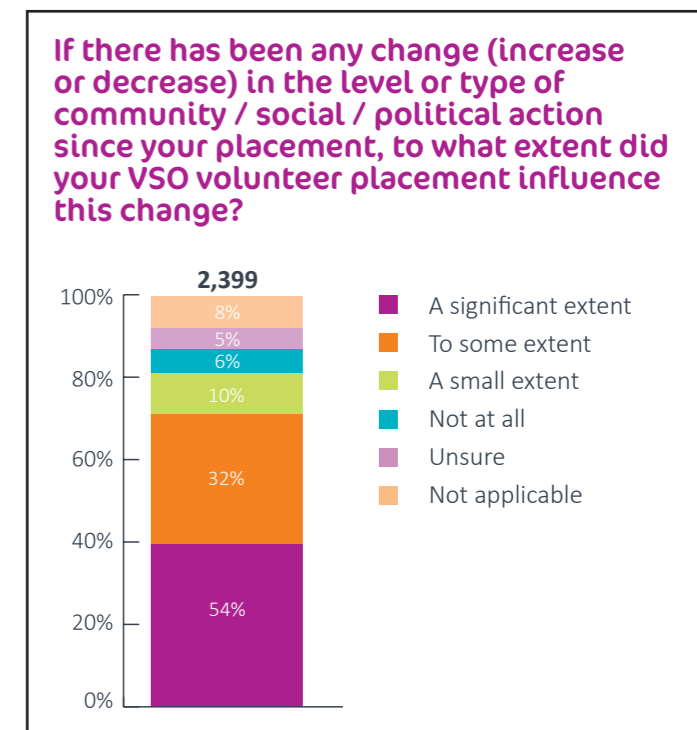


Figure 5 – Post placement community, social and political action

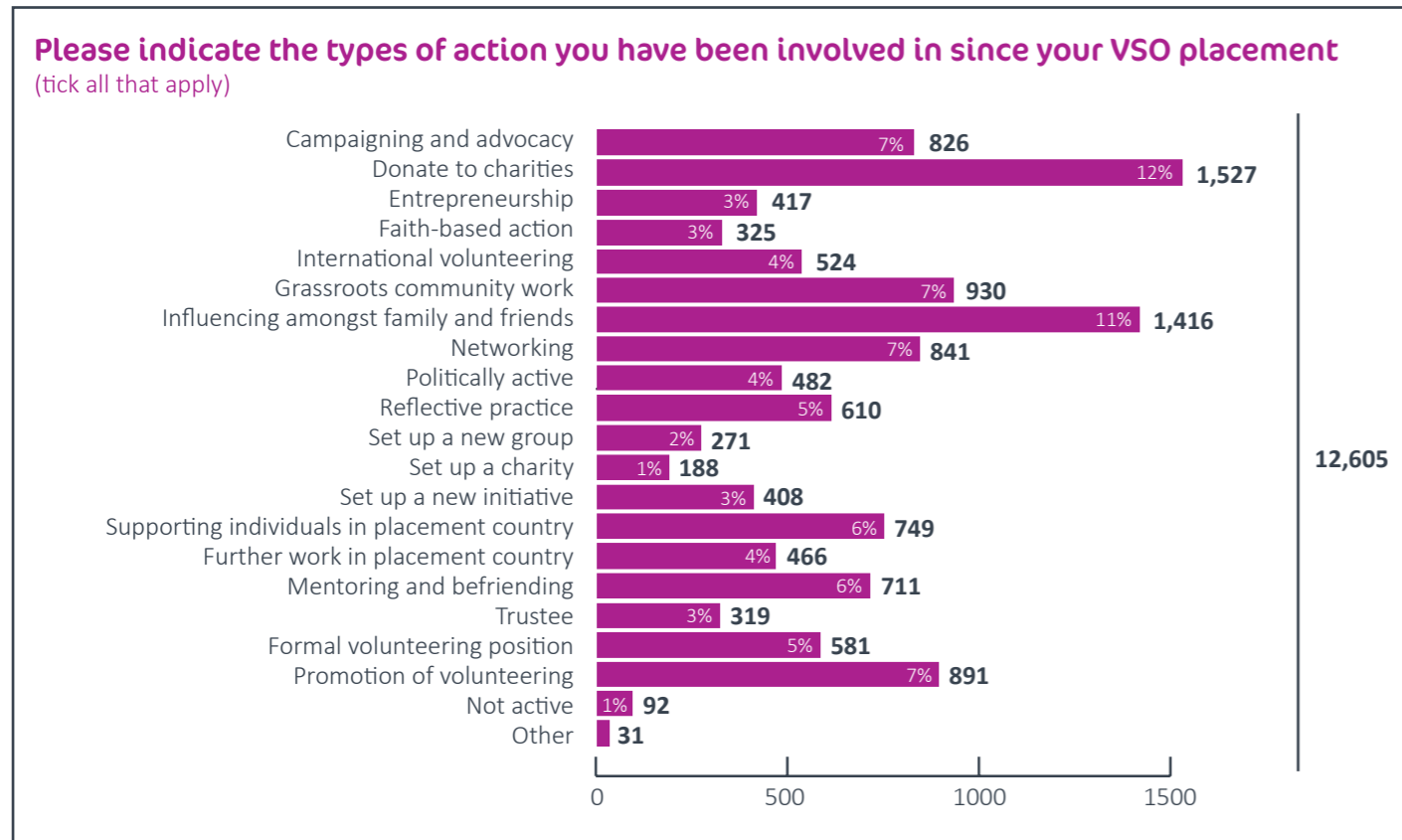
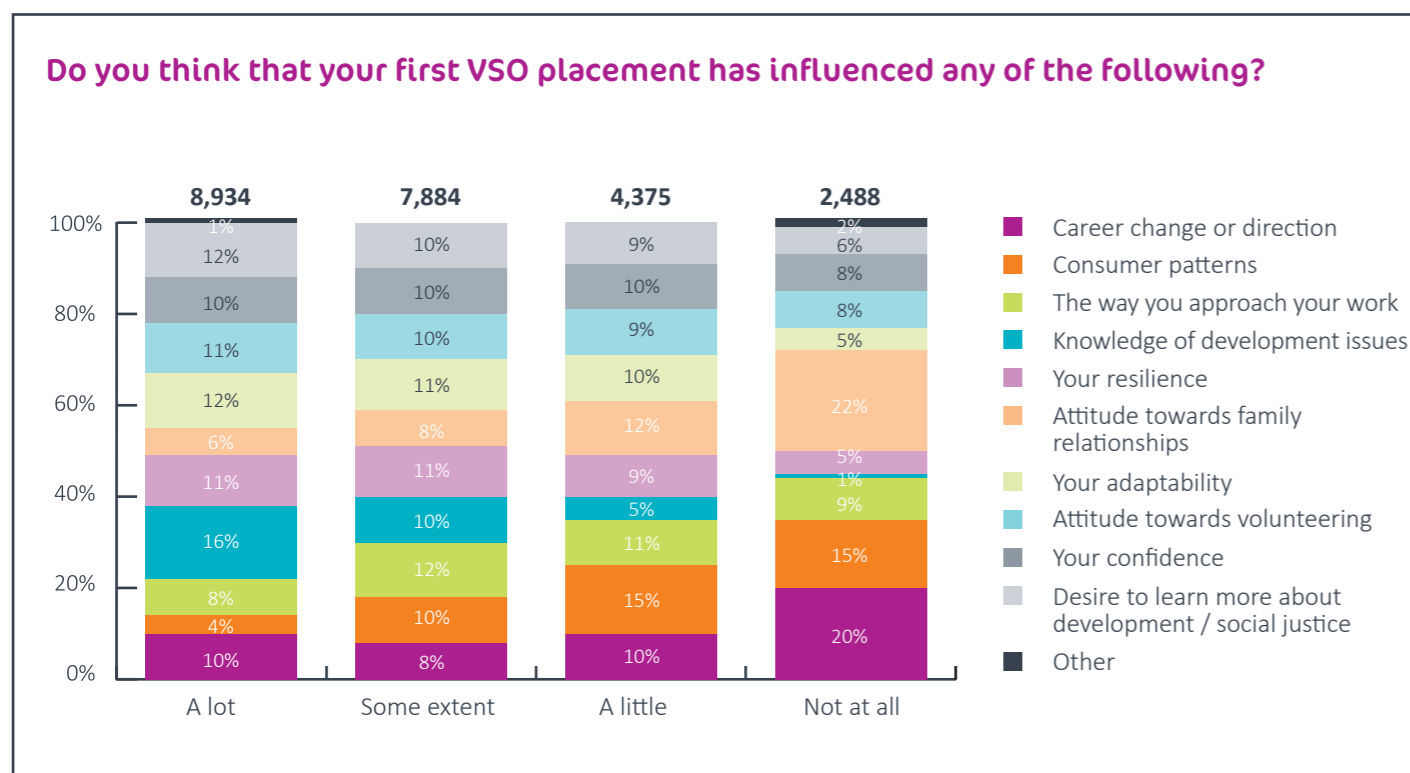


Figure 6 – Pre placement community, social and political action



The survey then asked respondents to identify the community, social and political action that they had been involved with since their placement. Figure 5 on the left shows a similar distribution of activities as pre placement, but with almost twice as many activities being reported. The greatest difference apart from significantly higher numbers of activity is an increasing emphasis on the promotion of volunteering post placement compared to pre placement.

The survey also asked respondents if they felt their VSO placement had influenced other things in their life. Figure 6 shows a range of areas, with knowledge of development issues, desire to learn more about development and social justice, adaptability, resilience, attitude towards volunteering, confidence and career change or direction all being frequently cited.

The following sections analyse the three most cited outcomes during the qualitative interviews of: career change/direction; influencing others; and changes in practice, before the variations are explored across volunteer type.

Impact upon career change and direction

Impact upon career direction was the most frequently coded outcome for post-placement action amongst interview and online discussion platform respondents. Analysis shows that, of those that reported an impact on their career, the twin factors of increased experience and heightened personal drive or motivation were key drivers in facilitating the change. Taken together, increased professional experience combined with personal interest and motivation, were found to impact upon career direction in a number of different ways.

i. A substantial change from a different career to one with international development and/or humanitarian work

Many respondents cited the experience that their placements gave them as laying the foundations and creating opportunities for a career change into the international development sector. Terms such as ‘springboard’, ‘launch-pad’, getting a ‘head-start’ and ‘foundation’ were used to describe the impact of volunteer placements on enabling a future career in international development. As one respondent stated, *“actually I had enjoyed my experience with international development and jumped at the opportunity to continue my career in it. It transformed my career. There are no other words for it”*.

Noticeably, many respondents emphasised the impact of their placements on a move into international development, irrespective of how long ago they volunteered. For example, a respondent to the youth online discussion platform stated how *“I now work for an international NGO, working directly on reducing poverty and injustice. This is as a direct result of my VSO placement, which changed my whole career path”*. In contrast, a respondent who volunteered over a decade ago, described how:

“It provided the foundation for what I’m doing now, for 10 years after the placement I’m still doing the similar kind of

work. I think really from a selfish point of view, VSO gave me a chance of having a career of working overseas in development that I wouldn’t have been able to access in any other way”.

Many respondents used terms that echoed these sentiments. In one case, a respondent specifically stated how they knew they only got an interview for their first post-placement job because of their volunteer experience. Experience was often accompanied by views that the placement had ignited a passion for or led to a realisation that they wanted a future career in international development. Career change into international development therefore appears to be triggered by the twin drivers of increased experience and personal interest in the sector, with the latter being in part the result of increased awareness gained through volunteer placements. Within this, respondents noted that experience gained during their placements gave them the confidence to change their career direction, and in some cases, enthusiasm for working in international development. Participants also reported increased cultural sensitivity gained during their placement as supporting a career move into the sector. Some participants said that their placement had broadened the scope of what they did or shifted their approach or focus, for example to working in a more participatory way or being more community-orientated, and in some cases this was linked to career changes into the sector. These changes did not appear to be context specific as they were reported widely across different volunteering types and other contexts.

ii. A greater commitment to international development as a pre-existing career path

For a number of respondents, the changes in understanding, attitude and behaviour over the course of their placements served to strengthen their commitment and clarify their desire for a career in international development. As one respondent stated, *“I was always destined for this career path. But the VSO experience definitely made me want to do it and believe in it more”*. A participant in the online discussion platform described volunteering with VSO as a ‘stepping stone’ into international development as it provided the necessary experience to gain access to opportunities for paid employment in the sector. Another respondent stressed how volunteering presented an avenue into international volunteering with even internships being too competitive an entry point into the sector. Whilst for some, volunteering increased their motivation and commitment, for others it also gave them the experience to be better at their jobs. One international volunteer highlights this point:

“It also, not necessarily changed the direction of what I was going to do because what I do now is actually quite similar to what I did before I went away but it’s definitely had like a major impact on the kind of trajectory of my career. Like I think that the impact of doing VSO has meant that I have much more to say, much more depth of experience”.

A mixture of increased experience (including increased awareness) and increased motivation are drivers for volunteers continuing, and more actively pursuing, careers in international development.

iii. A career change to the sector worked on during placement

In some cases respondents reported undertaking volunteer placements in sectors in which they had no or little previous experience. Some of these cases involved applying particular skills such as fundraising, campaigning, or monitoring and evaluation to new sectors such as gender, social inclusion, or health and HIV/AIDS.

In a number of cases, this triggered a subsequent post-placement career change to the new sectors that volunteers were involved in during their placements. In some other cases, exposure to more grassroots community development processes appears to have broadened volunteers' interest beyond very technically focused areas. As a result, a number report moving into more general fields linked to community development.

iv. More responsibility and/or promotion upon returning to pre-placement role

Numerous respondents noted how, upon returning to the same or similar roles after placement, they were more effective in undertaking their duties. Crucially, some noted how their managers noticed changes in their confidence and competencies – as a result some highlighted how they had been given more responsibilities such as being involved in management decisions. Respondents typically put this down to a range of factors but notably new skills, knowledge and learning, an increased awareness of culture that precipitated better approaches to developing working relationships and increased confidence. Corporate volunteers particularly emphasised how their placement experiences had contributed towards them progressing within their organisations through promotions and increased responsibility. Interestingly, corporate volunteers generally remarked how the volunteer experience had strengthened their job satisfaction and sense of pride in their organisation.

“I am more proud of being an IBMer, now more than ever before. They’re doing this for all the right reasons. It’s about human capital. It makes me proud and makes me want to stay in a place like this. From that perspective I have more job satisfaction and a willingness to stay long-term” (Corporate volunteer).

v. Exposure to potential employer organisations during placement

Two strands can be seen as falling under this category. Firstly, a small number of volunteers highlighted how, during their placements, they gained exposure to and knowledge of specific organisations that they then went on to work for. Often this was driven by increased awareness and respect for these organisations, which led volunteers to seek paid employment with them.

Secondly, through networking and gaining new contacts during their placements, a number of volunteers found employment opportunities, many of which followed directly on from their

placements and involved them remaining in their placement country. In some cases, opportunities at host partner organisations have been taken up by volunteers completing their placements.

vi. Greater clarity on career path

More generally, analysis revealed that the volunteer experience appeared to provide greater clarity on career direction, whether that be in international development or otherwise. For some respondents, the volunteer experience made them reflect on what job satisfaction meant for them. A supporting factor here for greater clarity on career path occurred for those that realised job satisfaction entailed finding employment that sought to make a difference or have an impact for others.

For others, the experience helped in achieving career goals and clarifying career pathways. As one respondent noted, *“I don’t think it influenced my career choices as such, I was always going to make these choices, but they did help me get there though”*.

For others, the placement was vital in providing more direction: *“The position propelled me. I know we talk about it was a volunteering thing but it was a vital step in my career development. If you are looking at impact in my career development that definitely contributed a great deal with what I am doing now... it refined and refocused my trajectory”*.

Whilst changes in understanding, attitude and behaviour during placement undoubtedly affected the careers of many volunteers, it was not the only contributory factor. Importantly, the time at the end of volunteer placements often involves major changes, such as geographical relocation and/or a change in employment status. As such, a range of additional contextual factors and potential mechanisms come into play. Two factors that many respondents referred to were the availability of potential employment opportunities post placement and the impact of other personal contextual factors.

For some respondents, their main goal during their placement was completing it with little consideration given to what happened after the placement. As one volunteer stated, *“After I came back, I didn’t have a game plan... there was a certain amount of push and pull”*. For others, although they may have had an increased desire to work in sectors such as international development, their future career path was heavily influenced by the available employment opportunities. The following quote sums up the dilemma for one volunteer:

“I did look to see if there was work in the NHS [National Health Service] because that was where I’d come from and it just seemed a bit hopeless so I just thought, well, I’ll see what is around in the NGO world and haven’t looked back”.

Another respondent described it as ‘serendipitous’ that they ended up working in international development; such was the complexity of factors that influenced their career direction.

For some respondents, changes in personal contextual factors, combined with changes during their placements, influenced future career direction. After completing sometimes lengthy placements overseas, a number of respondents expressed hesitation about living overseas again to pursue a career in international development. One volunteer, for example, expressed how the thought of missing time with their grandchildren was a disincentive to continuing development work overseas despite their desire to do so. Conversely, some personal contextual factors also contributed to volunteers undertaking further international volunteering and/or placement overseas.

In summary, Diagram 3 below illustrates the broad influencing factors on the career direction of volunteers post placement. Whilst changes in understanding, attitude, and behaviour during placement were seen to provide increased professional experience and personal drive, these have the potential to be supported, countered, and influenced by other post-placement factors such as personal contextual factors and the availability of career opportunities.

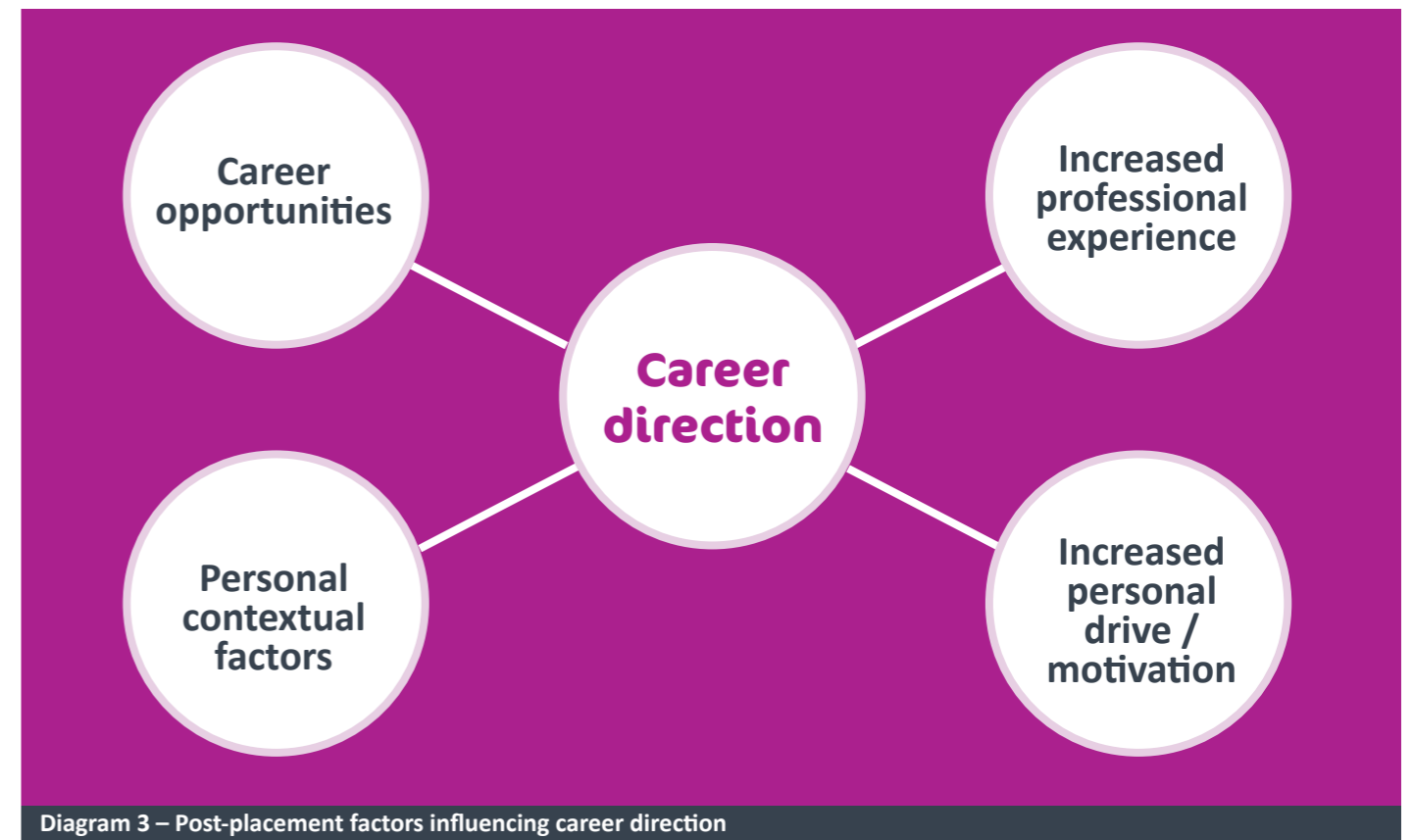
Influencing people

Volunteers frequently spoke about how they have harnessed their experiences whilst on placement to try and influence others when their placement had ended. In some instances, the influencing took the shape of challenging negative behaviours such as an articulation of stereotypes and

prejudices, and in other cases it focused on encouraging and fostering positive behaviours such as persuading others to volunteer, donate to, or join campaigns. Some influencing was more neutral in nature and less purposeful. For example, in a number of cases volunteers recounted talking about their experiences to others and in some instances this had an unintended impact on the people they talked to, which in turn resulted in those individuals taking action, such as fundraising or volunteering activities.

Participants described influencing actions as taking place at five different levels: individual; group; organisation; government; and global. Larger numbers of participants described influencing at the individual level, whereas small numbers talked about influencing at a higher level. At each level influencing activities also spanned formal and informal channels, although individual influencing was more commonly associated with informal approaches and formal approaches were more commonly associated with influencing at other levels. Diagram 4 on page 26 summarises the identified levels of influencing.

At an individual level, many participants described influencing family and friends or individual colleagues and this was most common within an informal context, by challenging perceptions or stimulating interest in development, social action and volunteering, or in some instances encouraging donations or engagement with fundraising activities.



“My mum has posted a picture on Facebook of her and some people giving out bags and books to school children. I feel like she would have never have done that and I feel as if I have had an influence on her. When I told her I wanted to do ICS she did not understand ... I thought it was my own cup of tea but now my mum has joined the breakfast so we have to share the tea. It’s taken four years” (ICS national volunteer).

Some talked about the personal changes they experienced on placement and how they influenced the way they have raised their children, and felt that this has had some impact on their children’s life choices and attitudes.

“My VSO placement was towards the end of the 80s and since then I have had two children and continued working full time. I mention the children as one of the influences that VSO has had is in the way I have brought them up. They are both keenly aware of social justice issues, both volunteer and one is now involved with human rights and the other teaching in an inner city school. I therefore consider this a legacy” (online discussion platform for international volunteers).

Some of the influencing described was with groups, such as school assemblies and awareness raising days in colleges and youth events, or through faith-based groups and institutions:

“I held an event. I was able to convince and bring together groups of people and NGOs and we had some drama acted by school children to show what they think violence is in the home, in the community and at school. It attracted quite a big group of people” (international south/south volunteer).

Others used social media to influence or have set up websites, written blogs or inputted into radio programmes. One person had designed board games reflecting his experience of development with the aim of encouraging others to engage and think about some of the issues that his placement had raised for him:

“I did a radio programme. I was surprised that I was given this opportunity. I used it for fundraising and I was surprised that people donated” (ICS national volunteer).

This type of influencing was usually more structured than individual influencing, with intentions of raising awareness and encouraging action. Generally, group influencing focused on global issues such as SDGs, poverty and environmental issues. Some of the influencing was however more advocacy-based, such as anti-discriminatory practices and rights awareness work with elders:

“My experiences in my volunteering with VSO about planning and monitoring has helped me to lead a group of senior citizens to plan projects and activities according to their capabilities and considering their age. Awareness of their rights makes them courageous to demand care and respect from the government...” (Online discussion platform for international volunteers).

Whilst some of these types of influencing have taken the form of a one-off session, others may have started in this way and then evolved to become more embedded within organisations or networks:

“As a teacher and eventually a primary head teacher I have been actively involved in developing both staff and children’s international awareness. I have worked with teaching teams to achieve International School Status, facilitated Global Education programmes and encouraged curriculum changes to include community cohesion and greater understanding of global issues” (online discussion platform for international volunteers).

Many of the examples cited where influencing had taken place at an organisational level were from volunteers who were working in the development sector. They described how they had brought about change within the organisations they work for, and whilst they may have carried out these actions without their volunteer experience, it had informed how they approached their action; others felt they may not have moved to work in this sector without their volunteer experience. One of the corporate volunteers had tried to influence his company to financially support a project that he planned to action when he returned to work. He was not successful in this endeavour but then went on to approach other organisations to ask for support and sponsorship.

At a national or governmental level, a number of participants talked about writing to and lobbying MPs. Sometimes this was done at an individual level and sometimes through groups and networks. One participant had been instrumental in setting up a policy and advocacy programme for NGOs to influence both governments and donors. A small number of participants had been involved in advising government; for example one person had advised on inclusive economic development and another had directly inputted into a white paper. One participant described how his placement had helped him come to the realisation that it is possible to influence governmental change by working within government, rather than just through external lobbying.

Some volunteers were involved in influencing through global networks feeding into global debates on inequality and social action. Some of the youth volunteers had set up platforms for global debate and one volunteer was directly involved in international broadcasting: *“Much of my career: my interests, my reporting, my coverage for the BBC has been influenced by VSO” (international North-South volunteer).*

Whilst some of these influencing actions would have been undertaken by individuals irrespective of their volunteering experience, there was a perspective for some that their placement experience has given exposure and skills which have in turn provided confidence and motivation to influence individuals and organisations.

Changes in practice

Participants talked about how their placement experience had resulted in changes in practice after their placement. Unsurprisingly the context in which they were working or living in after their placement impacted on the types of change in

practice. For those who now work for organisations that work with and through volunteers, their insight from first-hand experience of volunteering informed how they have gone on to support and work with volunteers. For some of the participants who work in development, their VSO placement has informed their approach to programme design, relationships with funders and partners, and openness to collaboration and sharing:

“The VSO placement challenged me to think critically about: development and the impact we are trying to make, critically about our work with government, relationships with the donor as a funder and pressure for deliverables and meeting the needs on the ground. It has helped me to design stronger programmes and develop and prioritise partnerships”.

Some described how they have used learning from their placement to engage and work with communities and leaders and they have applied it to subsequent work. The importance of working in a participatory way and ensuring that the voices of most marginalised are reflected and heard were other prominent changes which participants linked to their placement experience. Participants described how they are actively using these approaches in their work and some are disseminating learning to others.

A number of corporate volunteers had been promoted soon after their volunteer placement and talked about how they have used approaches learnt from their placement in their new roles. They described increased patience, better intercultural communications with colleagues and clients and one said that they felt an increasing pride in their organisation after their placement. One participant said that after her placement she arranged for young people living with HIV and AIDs to come to parliament; she felt that she may not have used this approach before her placement but that her placement had highlighted the power of bringing people from the community level to influence decision makers.

Irrespective of current context, many participants talked about how their placement had helped to improve their ability to listen, observe and take time to work things out; looking beneath the surface to understand behaviours and motivations rather than making assumptions and jumping to conclusions. Many said that it has helped them adjust their pace of work and approach things in a more considered way rather than rushing in. This in turn has supported them in taking a calmer approach to work, but also life beyond work. Some also said that their placement has influenced their ability to think critically and have confidence in challenging individuals, colleagues and organisations.

Variations across volunteer type

Even when disaggregated, an impact on career change or direction predominates as an outcome across all volunteer types. However, there are subtle variations in the kind of career change. For international South-South and North-South volunteers, as well as Global Xchange youth volunteers, the



impact is experienced in a range of ways, reflecting the diversity of scenarios identified in the section above on career change. However, for Y4D volunteers, it appears that the outcome was more likely to be a cementing of pre-existing plans for career direction rather than a change. All the Y4D volunteers said that they were already planning or embarked upon a career in international development prior to their volunteer placement, and this may be linked to the expectation that this cadre of volunteers were expected to have some relevant experience prior to their placement. They consistently gave examples of how their volunteer experience had supported their existing career trajectory. For national ICS youth volunteers, reference was made to increased clarity on career direction and how experience gained through placements opened up new career opportunities. For corporate volunteers, frequent reference was made to subsequent career development – particularly in terms of promotions and increased responsibilities – within their corporate employer organisations.

Outcomes in terms of changes in practice appear to be similar across volunteer types, with respondents commonly referring to being more patient, more respecting of diversity and difference, better at building relationships and more understanding. One specific reference recurred with corporate volunteers, who emphasised a change in practice in being better at cross-cultural working with colleagues based in their organisations' offices in other countries.

Other variations include the fact that further international volunteering was more frequently referenced by international South-South and North-South volunteers in comparison to other volunteer types. International North-South volunteers made more specific reference to volunteering promotion and a range of outcomes including campaigning, supporting local charities, undertaking grassroots community work, influencing others and consumer patterns. Of the other volunteer types, only Global Xchange youth volunteers made significant reference to campaigning and impacts on their consumer patterns. Interestingly, a couple of references were made to setting up new groups and charities by national ICS volunteers – something that will be worthy of further investigation in subsequent data collection. Responses may also reflect different levels of awareness and definitions of international volunteering and how it is perceived by respondents.

The survey was analysed to explore whether there was a relationship between the type of volunteer and post-placement action. The only statistically significant difference identified was that ICS national volunteers are more likely to be in community, social or political action post placement (Appendix B, Chart 27).

The survey identified that there is a statistically significant association between age at the start of the placement and the change in action post placement, with those who were younger when they undertook their placement being more likely to increase their community, social and political action post placement (Appendix B, Chart 28).

There was no statistically significant relationship between post-placement action and gender, type of partner placed with, thematic area or whether living within or away from the community with which the volunteer was working. There was, however, a relationship between the type of role being undertaken by the volunteer and post-placement action. Those with a primary role of community capacity building, training or those involved in direct service delivery are more likely to be involved in community, social or political action after their placement (Appendix B, Chart 29). There was also a relationship between the decade in which the placement took place and post-placement action. Those who volunteered in earlier decades were more likely to be active post placement, but this may just be because they have had more time in which to be active (Appendix B, Chart 30).

3.4. Understanding relationships between mechanisms and outcomes: links between changes during placement and post-placement activities and behaviours

Given the diverse range of changes during placement and subsequent outcomes in the form of post-placement activity, many interview respondents did not make explicit linkages between specific factors. The overriding impression from the analysis process was that a complex combination of changes during placement contributed to a wide range of post-placement outcomes – linkages that respondents often struggled to define. It is therefore not possible to identify common linear patterns of change throughout the volunteer journey.

Nevertheless, it was possible to extract from the interview data a number of relationships between mechanisms of changes in understanding, attitudes and behaviours during placement and post-placement outcomes. In terms of career change – the most frequently referenced outcome – similarities and differences are visible across volunteer type. For international North-South and South-South volunteers, a clear link is made between the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, and learning during the placement and subsequent career changes and direction. For international North-South volunteers, a further link is made between increased awareness of development and inequality during placement and career change/direction. In contrast, for Global Xchange youth volunteers undertaking three month placements, a strong link to career change/direction after placement is increased confidence and motivation during the placement. Although mentioned frequently by all other types of volunteers, no explicit clear links are made between changes during placement and subsequent career change and direction.

Post-placement changes in practice vary in their linkages to changes in understanding, attitude and behaviour across volunteer types. International North-South and corporate volunteers as well as Global Xchange and Y4D volunteers all reference increased awareness – particularly of culture, development, community needs/challenges and self-awareness – as impacting upon post-placement changes in practice, such as being more patient and better cross-cultural working. Interestingly, for international North-South volunteers, some of those placed in African countries mentioned new skills as key to changes in practice, whereas those placed in Asian countries spoke more of the importance of increased awareness, changes in attitude, and building relationships during their placements. The one major point of difference was with international South-South volunteers where the gaining of new skills during placement, such as management skills and human relations, was highlighted as having a direct link to post-placement changes in practice.

The only other post-placement outcome that respondents expressed clear linkages back to their placement experience was changes in consumer patterns. For international North-South volunteers, living/working with limited resources and an awareness of poverty were seen as mechanisms in different cases for change in consumer patterns. In contrast, some Global Xchange volunteers highlighted increased awareness of culture and the environment as responsible for changes to consumer patterns.

The survey showed a statistically significant association between the level of change in action post placement and the extent to which the VSO placement was identified as influencing this change. (Appendix B, Chart 31). This means that those volunteers who have been more involved with social action post placement are more likely to say that this change is due to their placement to a significant extent. There was also a statistically significant association between the changes that happened during placement and the change in action post placement. Appendix B presents a series of charts (Charts 32-40) showing analysis of the post-placement changes for those who identified big changes in awareness during their placement. Charts 41-50 show analysis of the post-placement changes for those who identified big personal changes during their placement.

3.5. Impacts resulting from post-placement changes

Where interview participants described post-placement activity they were asked if there had been any impact of which they were aware. Unsurprisingly, participants were often not able or confident to describe specific impacts because of the nature of the activity. The length of time that had elapsed since the end of the placement varies considerably across the sample and this in turn affects the potential for impact to be realised. Identified impact fell into four categories:

i. Personal (daily influence, foundations, step-change in views)

Many participants recounted how their actions beyond their placement have resulted in changes at a personal level. For many this was linked to career development and opportunities. For some this was about an increased commitment to ongoing learning and development, and for others it was more about changes in practice or changes in career direction. Some had felt confident to undertake more formal volunteering positions as a result of skills and confidence gained on their placement and talked about the impact they are able to have through these positions. Many of the corporate volunteers interviewed had, since their placement, been promoted within their company and some spoke of greater job satisfaction, pride in the company and enthusiasm to remain within the company. They felt that their promotion had been supported by skills enhanced through their placement.

ii. Community

A number of participants who had been involved with influencing friends and family said that they had observed that they are now more likely to donate money to support organisations working to support social justice, reduction of poverty and inequality, and humanitarian action. Others said that they have given presentations to people who have gone to volunteer nationally or internationally.

Some participants talked about their role in influencing policy change – they described how their energy and enthusiasm for particular issues had been sparked or reignited by their placement and how the knowledge gained in placement had increased their levels of confidence in that they had become involved in policy influencing. Areas of policy that participants talked about included SDG development, gender, fair trade, and environmental campaigns. For example, one participant became more active in sustainable development during her placement and took up the role of chair of the local fair trade partnership after her placement. Her city went on to become the world's first fair trade city in the 2000s.

iii. Within existing organisations/structures

Some participants recounted how their use of skills, knowledge and learning from their placement has resulted in them considering themselves to be more effective in their current role. One corporate volunteer, for example, had set up an informal network of corporate employees which she felt would have an impact on company performance. Others had been involved in the promotion of volunteering within the company and this had resulted in more people applying to take up volunteering opportunities and stronger partnerships to support volunteering placements.

Some participants had been involved in the development, promotion, or management of standards within either paid or voluntary positions since their placement. This has ranged from monitoring prison standards to fair trade standards for vegetables and carbon credit standards to promote sustainable practice amongst farmers.

Some of those working in the international development sector described how they have applied learning from their placement to their current role. Many said that their placement had given them insight into the perspective of the communities that they are now working with and also an increased awareness of the importance of working in a participatory way. They felt that these insights have enabled them to design better programmes and be more effective in other areas such as advocacy, fundraising, donor management, and campaigning. One participant talked about how his placement made him aware of the potential for volunteering, and he now builds volunteering into his programme design and also places a significant emphasis on the importance of partnership in his work.

iv. New initiatives

Some participants made strong links between their placement experience and them establishing groups, networks and organisations. In some cases these were very informal arrangements, but in other cases they were formal organisations. Many were quite new and had not been running long enough to see any clear impact, but some others had been established for a considerable period. One participant, for example, had established an organisation working with families of children with disabilities in his country of placement and has worked with 6,000 children over a 28-year period. In this case, the work spans service delivery and campaigning on disability rights and has increased access to services for children with disabilities in that country. Another participant described setting up a charity which has worked with 3,000 families and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDs.

South-South international volunteers were particularly active and involved in establishing new initiatives after their placement. One organised a relief operation to remote areas following a national disaster, another has opened a community programme on sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDs, and one has set up a charity providing skills training to women which has so far worked with over 1,000 women. Others talked about supporting entrepreneurship in their own country after their placement, and one had set up an organisation which raises money for gender-based community projects focusing on child marriage and gender-based violence.

Youth volunteers have also been active in establishing networks and groups which are often less formal and have not been in existence for as long, so have not had sufficient time for impacts to be clearly understood and defined. One had established a WhatsApp group focusing on African politics and social justice, and the group now has over 2,000 members. Another set up a young environmentalist group which has been running for a number of years.



7-year-old Blessing Asokiyine (centre) with her classmate Klevin Atinga and VSO volunteer Mary Carnable, at Goriko kindergarten in Bolgatanga, Ghana.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Key findings

The *Impact Beyond Volunteering* study has revealed interesting details on the complex pathways whereby volunteers experience changes during the act of volunteering, how this translates into post-placement outcomes, and the contribution this potentially makes to subsequent development impacts.

In terms of volunteer motivations, the study found that a desire to make a difference was the most significant driving factor, with career development and direction also being important. However, the utilisation of existing skills was also noted, suggesting that professional volunteering has particular appeal to volunteers with specific skills. Family and friends were observed to have an impact on volunteer motivations, and international North-South volunteers are more likely to be motivated by the prospect of adventure.

During volunteering, a wide range of changes in understanding, knowledge and attitudes can take place. Most prevalent is an increase in awareness across a wide range of issues, including poverty, development, inequality and injustice, cultural differences, similarities, and dynamics. The acquisition of new skills and knowledge is also important and is likely to be just as significant for volunteers that already have professional skills. Many volunteers note a change in attitude, both externally in terms of how they interact with others and internally in relation to an increase in self-awareness. In these cases, volunteers become more aware of cultural sensitivities, place more emphasis on relationship building and reflect on their own previously held views. Many volunteers identify a clear link to an increase in confidence, and for some, increased resilience and adaptability are felt to be significant.

Once volunteers have completed their placements, many refer to changes in career direction, how they had gone on to influence others and the ways in which they do things differently through changes in practice. In terms of career change and direction, some move into the field of international development and some experience a greater commitment to remain in the international development sector, suggesting linkages to pre-placement motivations. Others note an increased interest in the focus area of their placement and gained greater responsibility in their jobs as a result of new skills, knowledge and experience. In terms of influencing others, volunteers often use their increased awareness gained through their placements to challenge negative behaviours and stereotypes and promote positive causes through, for example, persuading people to campaign. The format of this influencing is seen to be both formal and informal and to take place at the level of individuals, groups, organisations, governments, and globally. There is a significant increase in the levels of community, social and political action for volunteers after their placement, and many indicate that this shift has been directly influenced by their placement experience.

Identifying post-placement impacts is more challenging. Although it is possible to identify changes and impacts at an individual and personally experienced level, respondents were less confident when describing impacts on others. Nevertheless, some impacts have been reported and can be broadly categorised as occurring at the community level, within existing organisations and structures, and through the establishment of new initiatives.

4.2. Limitations

The most significant limitation of this study is the extent to which participants have been able to articulate the longer term impact of post-placement actions. Impacts on volunteer action post placement, for the purposes of this study, can only be self-reported and not triangulated within the communities in which they occur and in many cases, participants were unaware or unsure of the impact of their actions. Despite this limitation the study has been able to capture useful data on the changes that occurred for individuals during their placement and the ways in which these changes have resulted in changes in action.

The online discussion platform, which was the first stage of the study, aimed to establish a broad range of responses from as wide and diverse a group of returned volunteers as possible in order to gain insight into the spectrum of perspectives and experiences. The responses from this phase were used to inform the second phase – the in-depth interviews.

The aim of this second phase was to understand where changes do occur for individuals during placement, how and why this happens and similarly, where these changes impact on the actions of the volunteer after their placement and again, how and why this happens. In order to be able to capture relevant data to answer these questions, the sample for the in-depth interviews targeted volunteers who felt that they had experienced changes. It is expected that not all volunteers will experience these changes. The survey however aimed to test the scale of changes for volunteers and also explore the extent to which change does not occur for volunteers.

It is also worth noting that the way in which participants articulate motivation may be influenced by their personal perspective. Although many volunteers did talk about career development as a significant motivating factor, some may have felt disinclined to focus on it, although that does not necessarily mean it was not important for them.

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6. Appendix A – Survey tool

Has your VSO volunteering experience changed your life or those of others?

VSO is undertaking a study to understand if and how global volunteering contributes to impact above and beyond the placement itself. We want to find out how VSO volunteering may have had a long term impact on the lives of volunteers after their placement and any subsequent impact this has had on poverty and social injustice.

As a former VSO volunteer we are asking you to take part in this survey. Your feedback will be extremely valuable in helping us to improve the impact that VSO and our volunteers have. Thank you for participating in this study, we very much appreciate your time and effort. We do not require your name or contact information so the information you provide will be anonymous. If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact Nick Zhang at nicholas.zhang@vsoint.org

About you

1. How old are you? (Single choice)

- Under 20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- Over 70

2. What is your gender? (Single choice)

- Female
- Male
- Other

3. What country are you living in now?

(Single choice, drop-down list)

- [All countries]

About your placement(s)

4. How many VSO placements have you completed?

(Single choice. Limit to numeric. If 0 take to disqualification page, this survey is specifically for VSO volunteers – thank you for your interest)

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

5. In what country was your first placement?

(Single choice, drop-down list)

- [All countries]

6. For your first VSO placement what type of volunteer were you? (Single choice, drop-down list)

- International South-South (came from global south to volunteer in different country in global south)
- International North-South (came from global north to volunteer in global south)
- National (volunteered in the country that I lived in prior to volunteering)
- Corporate (scheme supported by employer)
- ICS - national (volunteered in the country that I lived in prior to volunteering)
- ICS - International from UK
- ICS - International (came from global south to volunteer in a different country in global south)
- Global Xchange – UK volunteer
- Global Xchange – non-UK volunteer
- Youth for development
- Pol vol
- Other (please state)

7. What year did your first VSO placement start?

(Numeric input between 1900 and 2016)

8. How long did your first placement last? (Single choice)

- Under 1 month
- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 13- 24 months
- 25-36 months
- Greater than 3 years

9. What type of partner organisation were you placed with in your first placement? (Tick all that apply) (Multiple choice)

	National level	Regional/district level	Local level
Government			
NGO (non-governmental organisation)			
Network			
Private sector organisation			
Other (please specify)			

10. What was the main focus of your placement?

(If you feel your placement had more than one area of focus, please indicate one area in the first column and then indicate other areas in the second column, but if there was one clear focus just complete the primary focus box) (One per row)

Area of focus	Primary focus	Other areas of focus (optional – tick all that apply)
Health		
Education		
Livelihoods		
Gender		
Participation and governance		
Environmental		
Disability		
Inclusion		
Resilience		
Other (please specify)		

11. Which best describes your volunteer role during your placement? (If you feel your role had more than one area of focus please indicate one primary focus in the first column and any other areas in the second column, but if there was one clear focus just complete the primary focus box) (One per row)

Role	Primary role	Other roles (optional – tick all that apply)
Advocacy		
Policy		
Direct service delivery (e.g. teaching in a school or working as a doctor in a hospital)		
Research, monitoring and evaluation		

continues in next column

Building practitioner capacity / training		
Community capacity building / training		
Awareness raising		
Fundraising / resource mobilisation		
Organisational development		
Entrepreneurship / business development		
Financial management		
Other (please specify)		

12. Was your placement in a rural or urban setting?

(Single choice)

- Urban
- Rural
- Mixed
- Unsure

13. During your placement which best describes where you lived? (Single choice)

- I lived in the community that my partner organisation worked with
- I lived near the community that my partner organisation worked with
- I lived far from the community that my partner organisation worked with
- My partner organisation did not work with a clearly defined community linked to a geographical area
- Varied (lived in different places at varying distances from the community that my partner organisation worked with)
- None of the above

Before your placement

14. What country did you live in before your placement? (Single choice, drop-down list)

- [All countries]

15. What were your main motivations to apply to volunteer? (Please indicate up to 3 motivations in order of significance) (One per column and row)

	Most significant motivation	Second most significant motivation (optional)	Third most significant motivation (optional)
Make a difference/ have an impact			
Gain experience to develop career			
Influenced by other people who have volunteered (e.g. friends, family)			
Use existing skills			
Adventure			
Personal development			
A challenge			
Improve own wellbeing			
Learning			
To experience other cultures			
Desire to volunteer			
Other (please specify)			

16. Before your VSO placement were you involved in any community, social or political action? (Tick all that apply) (Multiple choice)

- Campaigning
- Donate to charities
- Entrepreneurship
- Faith based action
- International volunteering
- Grassroots community work
- Influencing and awareness raising amongst friends and family
- Networking
- Politically active
- Reflective practice
- Set up a new group (e.g. support group, campaigning groups)
- Set up a charity
- Set up a new initiative

- Mentoring and befriending
- Trustee
- Formal volunteering positions
- Promotion of volunteering
- Not active
- Other (please specify)

During your placement

17. During your placement did your awareness increase in any of the following areas? (Tick all that apply and indicate the level of increase) (Multiple choice)

	Small increase	Medium increase	Large increase
Power dynamics			
Poverty			
Inequality and injustice			
Environment			
Development			
Culture			
Community needs			
Community challenges			
Volunteering			

18. During your placement did you personally experience any of the following changes? (Tick any that apply and indicate the level of change) (Multiple choice)

	Small increase	Medium increase	Large increase
Change in attitude			
Increased adaptability			
Increased confidence			
Increased resilience			
Motivation			
Widened professional networks and contacts			

continues in next column

New knowledge and learning			
New skills			
Increased self-awareness			
Increased ability to work and live with limited resources			

19. Please describe any other changes that you experienced during your placement (Open text)

20. Thinking about your volunteer placement, how challenging did you find the experience? (Single choice)

- Very challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Slightly challenging
- Not challenging at all

21. Did you experience any of the following personal challenges during your placement?

(Please pick all that apply and indicate the scale of the challenge for you) (One per row)

	Minor challenge	Significant challenge
Loneliness		
Feeling overwhelmed		
Loss of confidence		
Reduced motivation		
Frustration		
Reduction in networks and contacts		
Feeling stressed		

22. Did you experience challenges with any of the following? (Please pick all that apply and indicate the scale of the challenge for you)

	Minor challenge	Significant challenge
The VSO country office		
Host / partner organisation		
Other volunteers		
Poor infrastructure		
Civil unrest		
Corruption		
Other (please state)		

Since your placement

23. Please indicate the types of action you have been involved with since your VSO placement

(tick all that apply) (Multiple choice)

- Campaigning
- Donate to charities
- Entrepreneurship
- Faith based action
- International volunteering
- Grassroots community work
- Influencing and awareness raising amongst friends and family
- Networking
- Politically active
- Research
- Set up a new group (e.g. support group, campaigning groups)
- Set up a charity
- Set up a new initiative
- Supporting individuals in country/location of placement
- Further work in country of placement
- Mentoring and befriending
- Trustee
- Formal volunteering positions
- Promotion of volunteering
- Not active
- Other (please state)

24. Please indicate which of the following statements best describes your action post placement (Single choice)

- After my first VSO placement I have been LESS involved with community / social / political action than before my placement
- After my first VSO placement I have been MORE involved with community / social / political action than before my placement

- After my first VSO placement I have been involved with community / social / political action at a SIMILAR level to before my placement and doing SIMILAR things
- After my first VSO placement I have been involved with community / social / political action at a SIMILAR level to before my placement but doing DIFFERENT things

25. If there has been any change (increase or decrease) in the level of type of community/social/political action since your placement to what extent did your VSO volunteer placement influence this change?

- A significant extent
- To some extent
- A small extent
- Not at all
- Unsure
- Not applicable

26. Do you think that your first VSO placement has influenced any of the following?

	Not at all	A little	Some extent	A lot
Career change or direction				
Consumer patterns				
The way you approach your work				
Knowledge of development issues				
Your resilience				
Attitude towards family relationships				
Your adaptability				
Attitude towards volunteering				
Your confidence				
Desire to learn more about development/ social justice				
Other (please describe)				

27. The above questions have focused on your first VSO placement. If you have done more than one placement and feel for you that significant changes happened on a later placement and have not been included in your responses please summarise these changes below. (Open text)



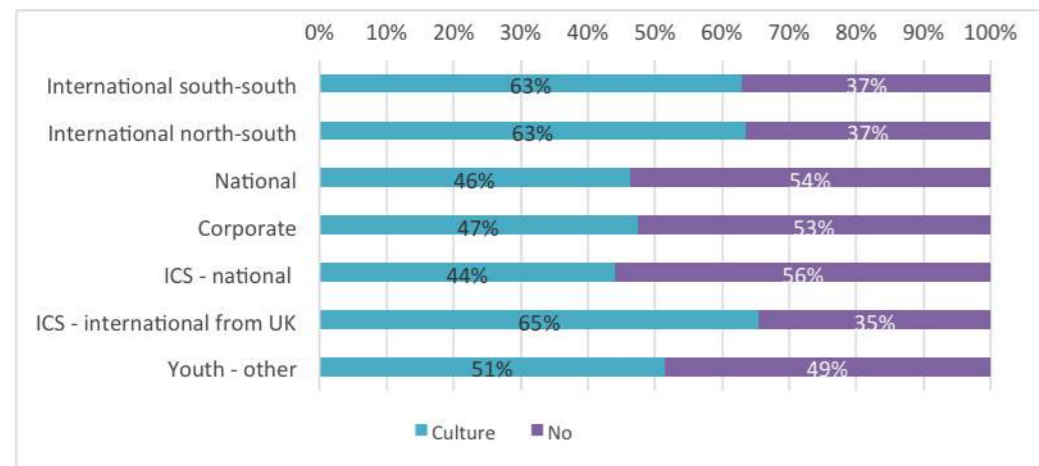
7. Appendix B – Key charts

Chart 1 – Q17 large awareness change during placement by continent (Africa n=1,578 and Asia n=825)

Responses	Africa	Asia	Either
Poverty	50%	42%	47%
No	50%	58%	53%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

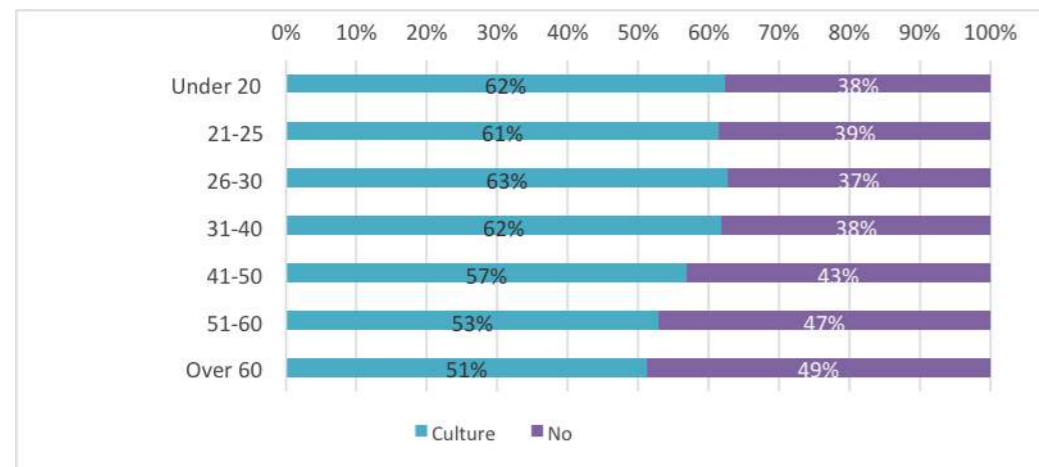
Test statistic (Chi-square) =13.72 with p value<0.001

Chart 2 – Changes in awareness during placement by volunteer type - culture (n=2,716)



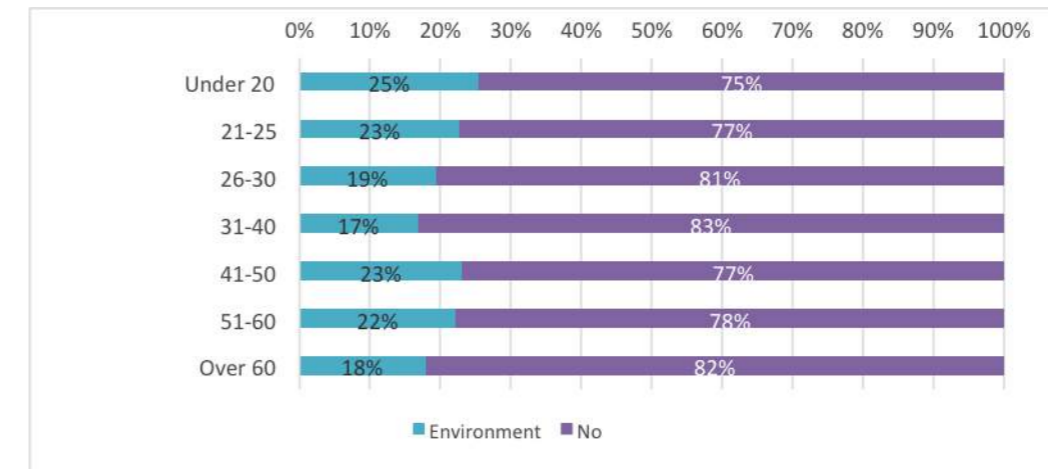
Test statistic (Chi-square) =53.14 with p value<0.001

Chart 3 – Changes in awareness during placement by age – culture (n=2,671)



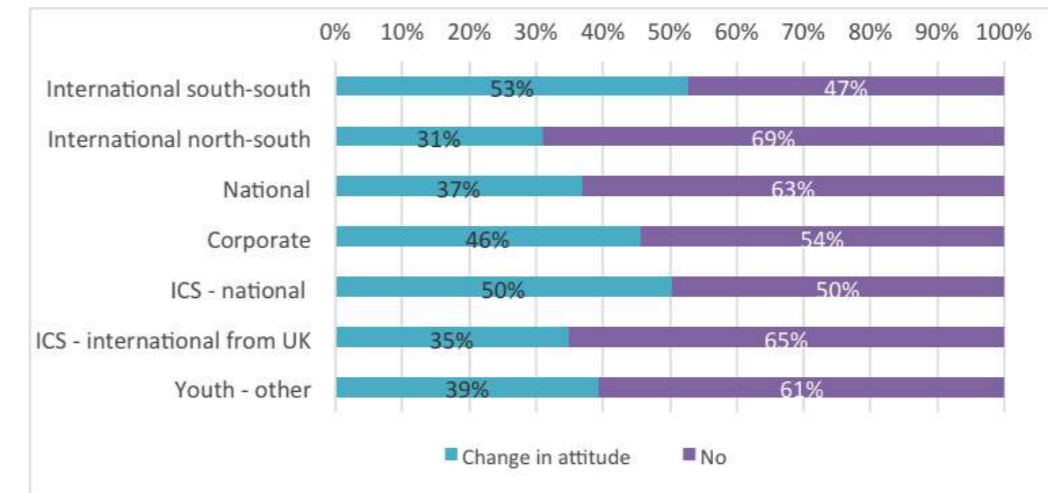
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.67 with p value=0.008

Chart 4 – Changes in awareness during placement by age – environment (n=2,671)



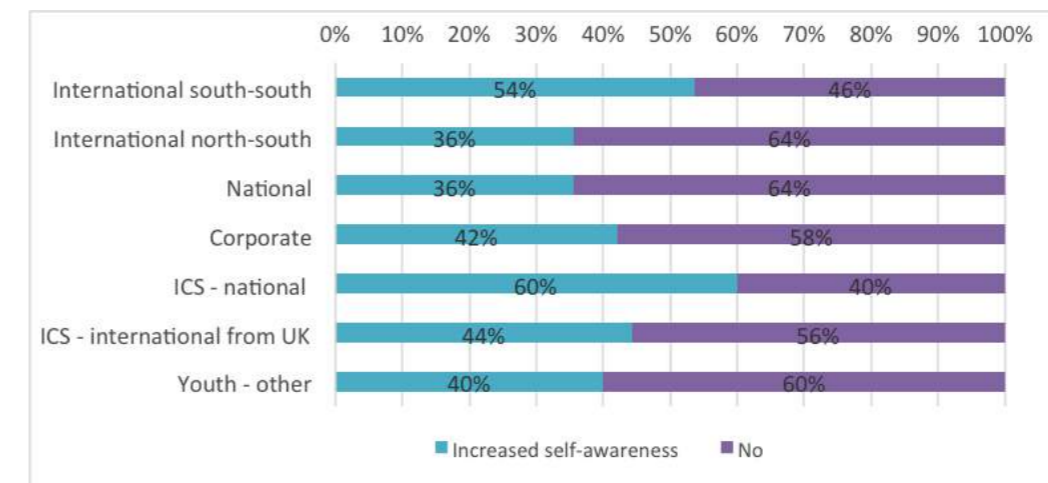
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.15 with p value=0.032

Chart 5 – Changes during placement by volunteer type – change in attitude (n=2,716)



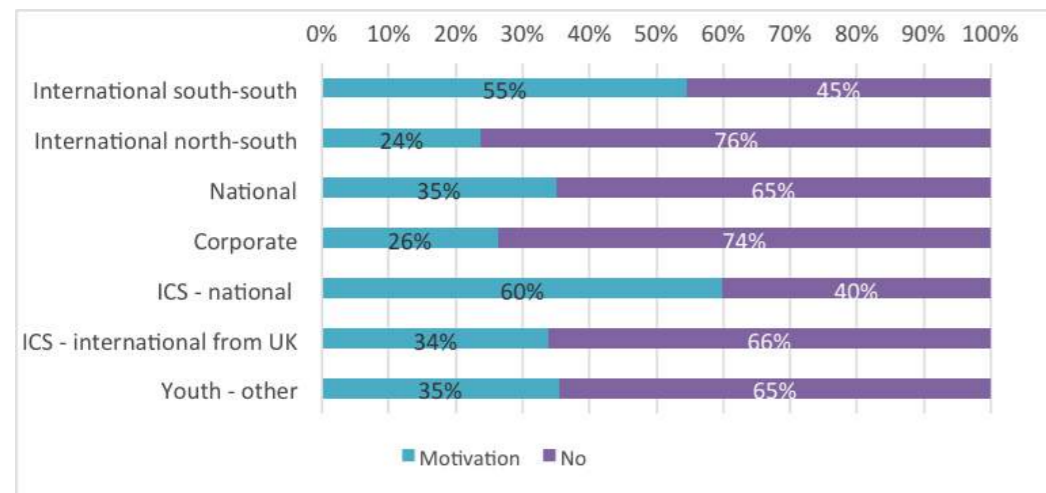
Test statistic (Chi-square) =75.34 with p value<0.001

Chart 6 – Changes during placement by volunteer type – increased self-awareness (n=2,716)



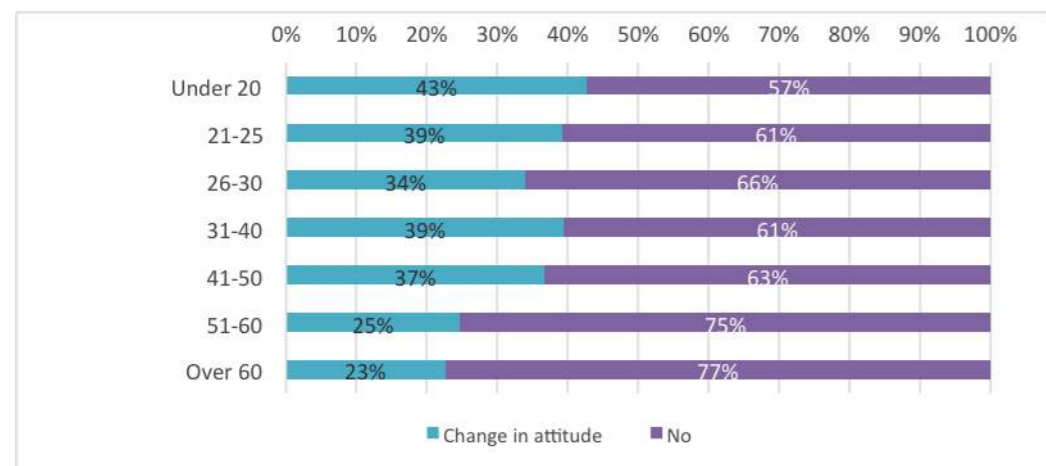
Test statistic (Chi-square) =69.22 with p value<0.001

Chart 7 – Changes during placement by volunteer type – motivational change (n=2,716)



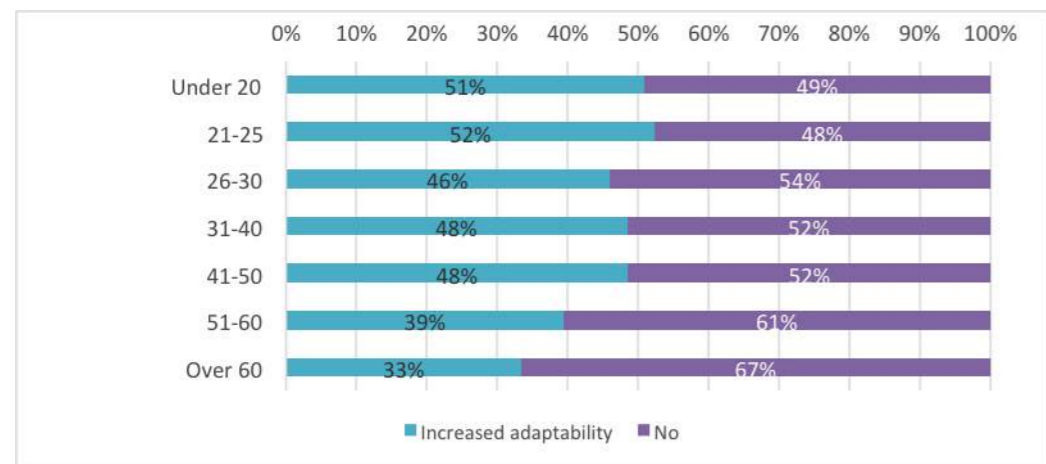
Test statistic (Chi-square) =187.23 with p value<0.001

Chart 8 – Changes during placement by age – change in attitude (n=2,671)



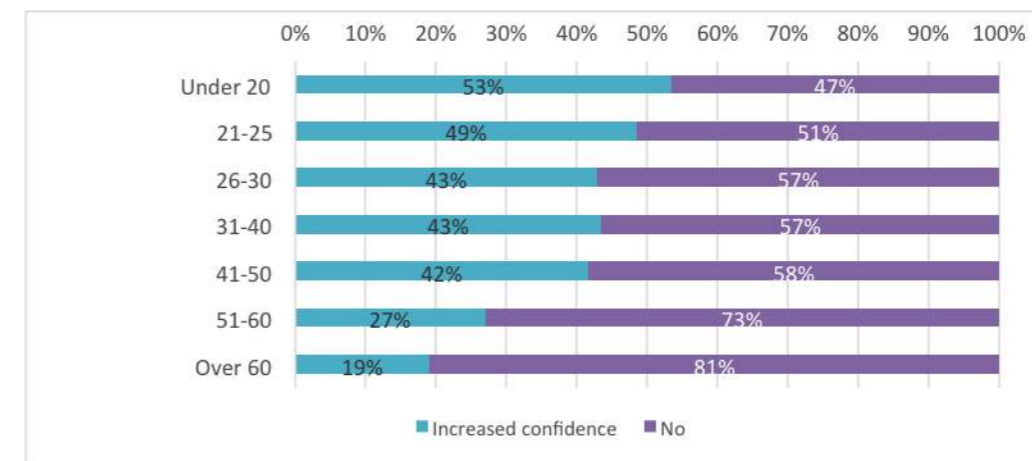
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.48 with p value<0.001

Chart 9 – Changes during placement by age – increased adaptability (n=2,671)



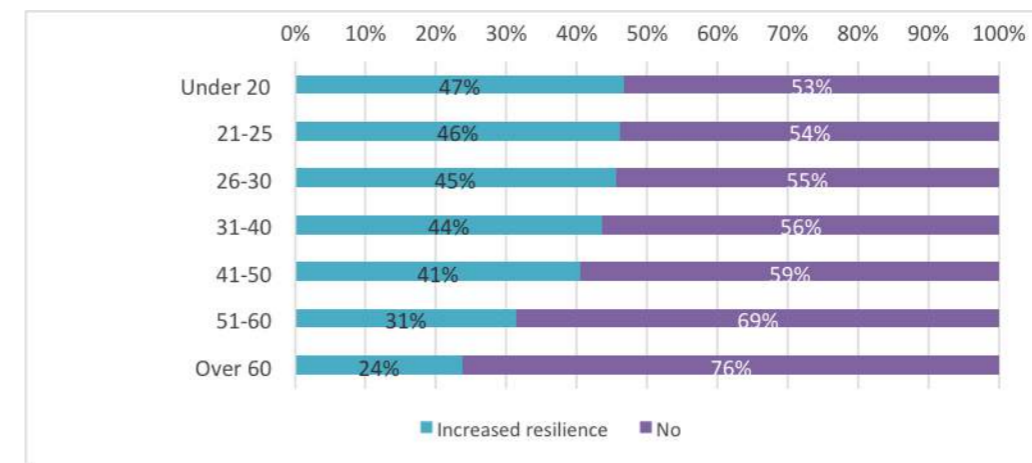
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =3.45 with p value=0.001

Chart 10 – Changes during placement by age – increased confidence (n=2,671)



Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =7.73 with p value<0.001

Chart 11 – Changes during placement by age – increased resilience (n=2,671)



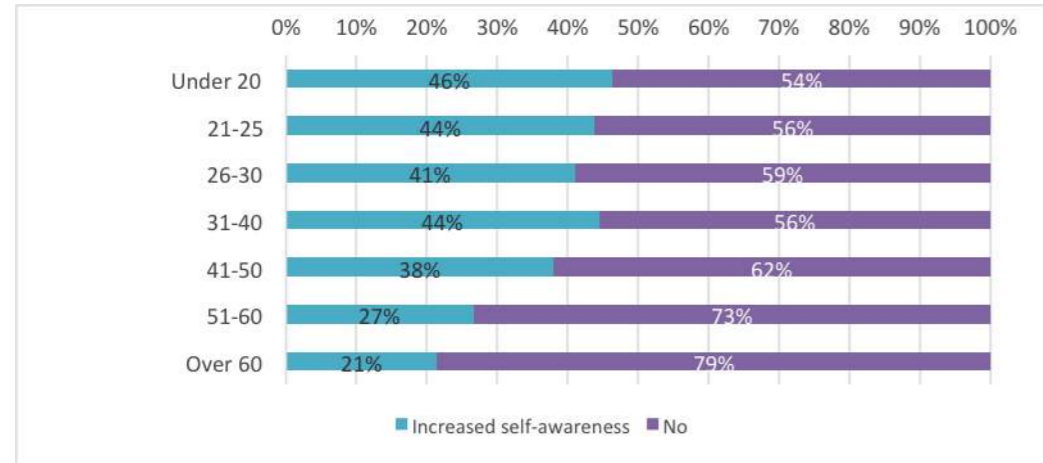
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.63 with p value<0.001

Chart 12 – Changes during placement by age – widened networks (n=2,671)



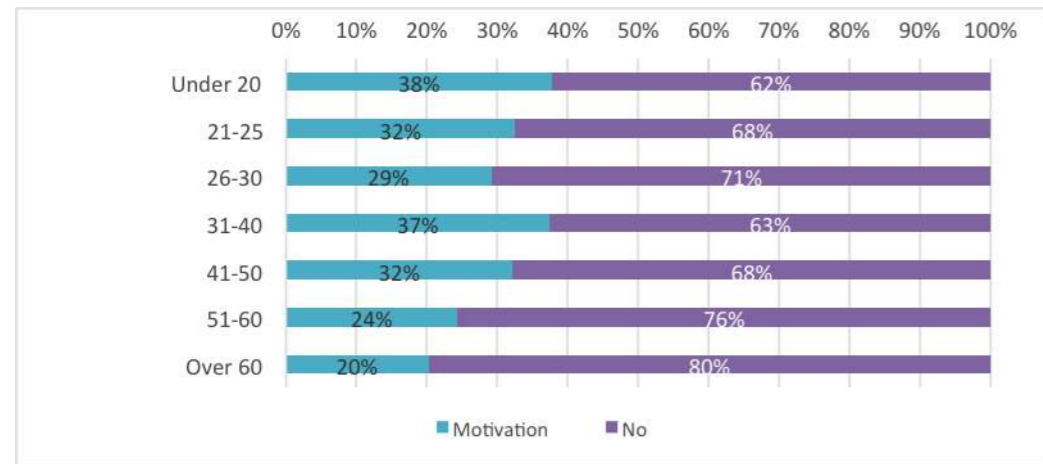
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.25 with p value<0.001

Chart 13 – Changes during placement by age – increased self-awareness (n=2,671)



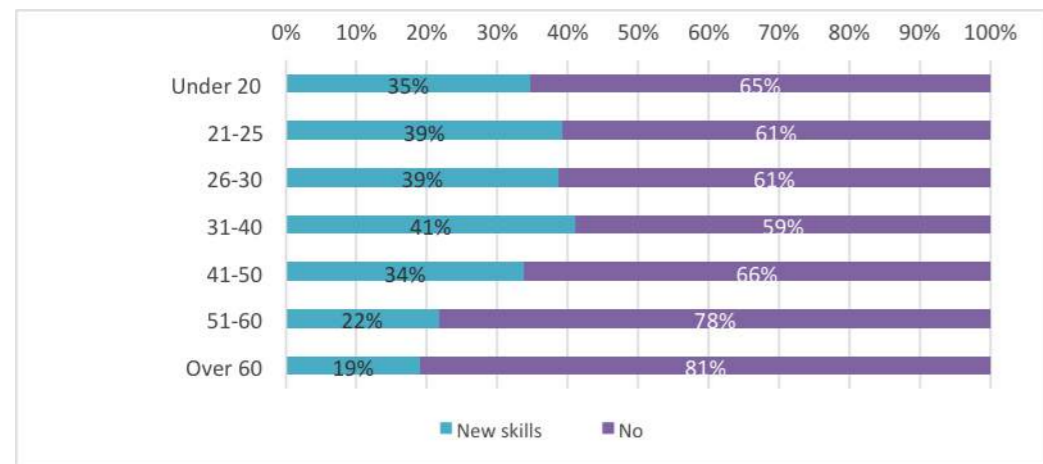
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =5.25 with p value<0.001

Chart 14 – Changes during placement by age – increased motivation (n=2,671)



Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.97 with p value=0.003

Chart 15 – Changes during placement by age – new skills (n=2,671)



Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.97 with p value=0.003

Chart 16 – Personal change during placement by continent – increased confidence (Africa n=1,578 and Asia n=825)

Responses	Africa	Asia	Either
Increased confidence	46%	39%	44%
No	54%	61%	56%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

Test statistic (Chi-square) =9.81 with p value=0.002

Chart 17 – Personal change during placement by continent - working with limited resources (Africa n=1,578 and Asia n=825)

Responses	Africa	Asia	Either
Increased ability to work and live with limited resources	59%	52%	57%
No	41%	48%	43%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

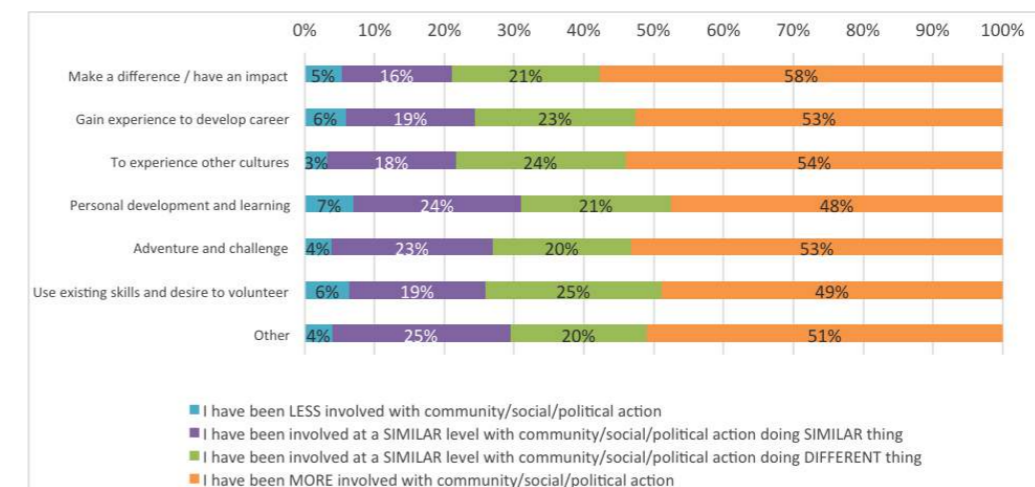
Test statistic (Chi-square) =10.26 with p value=0.001

Chart 18 – Personal change during placement by continent - networks (Africa n=1,578 and Asia n=825)

Responses	Africa	Asia	Either
Widened professional networks and contacts	21%	25%	23%
No	79%	75%	77%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

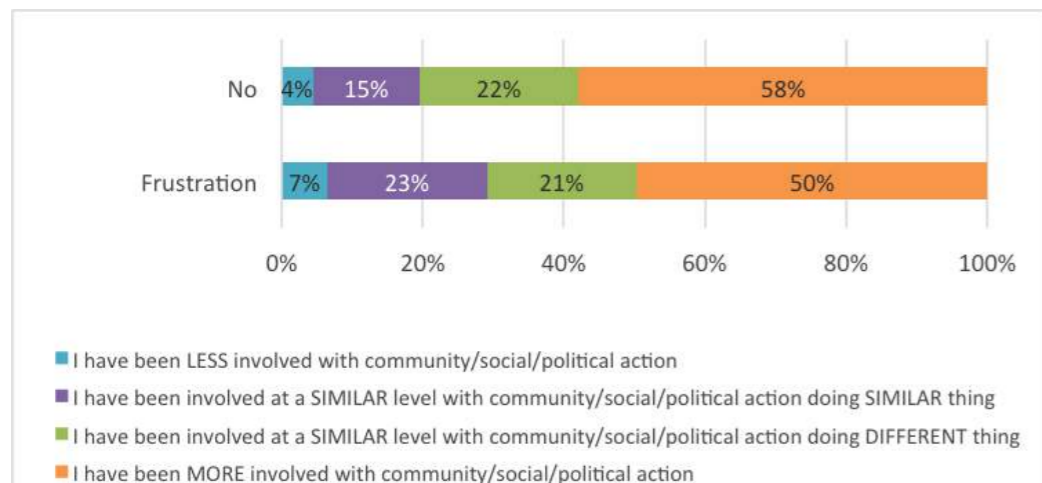
Test statistic (Chi-square) =3.9 with p value=0.048

Chart 19 – Primary motivations for volunteering against post placement action



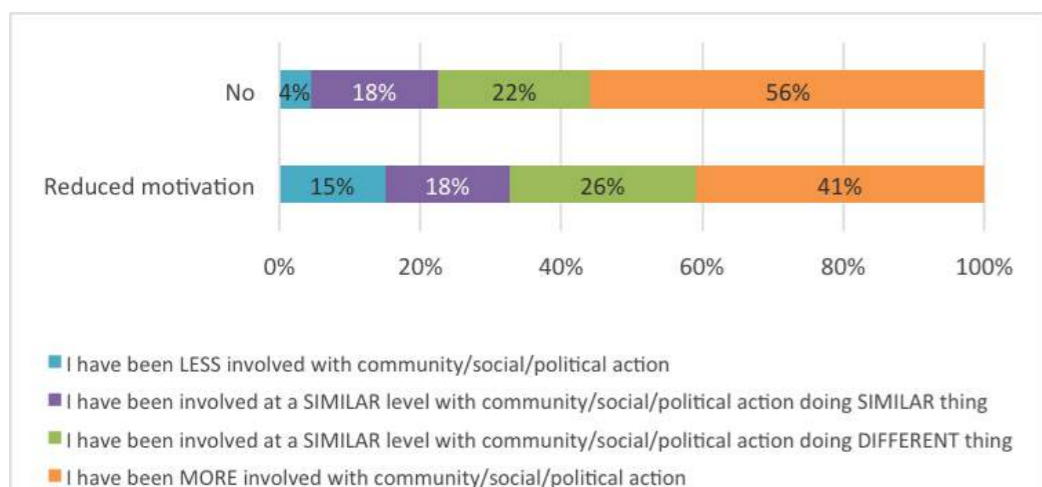
Test statistic (Kruskal-Wallis) =15.1 with p value=0.01.

Chart 20 – Action post placement by personal challenges during placement (Frustration) (n=2,508)



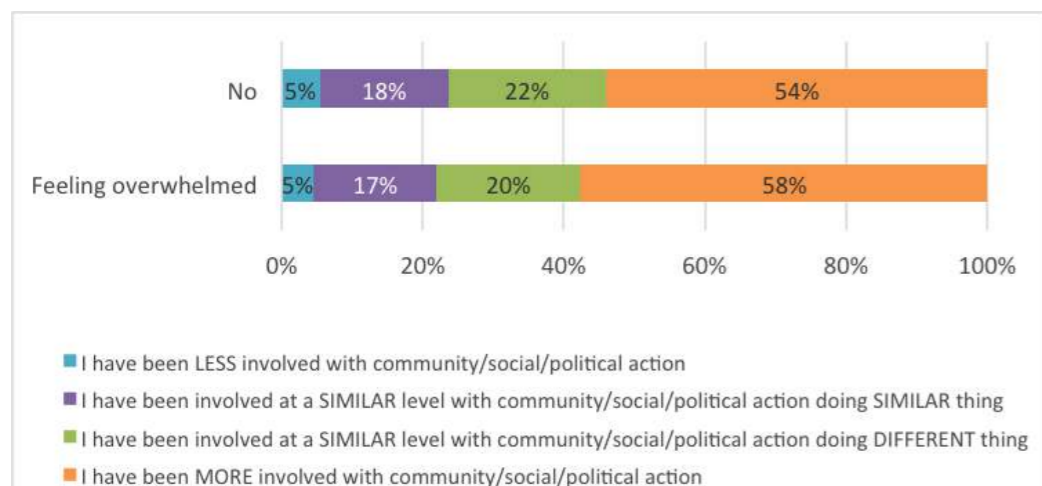
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =5 with p value<0.001

Chart 21 – Action post placement by personal challenges during placement (reduced motivation) (n=2,508)



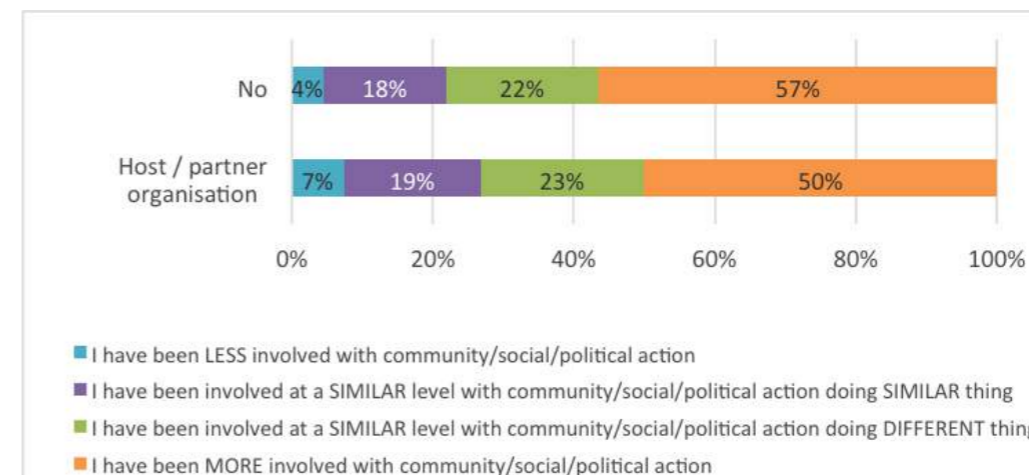
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.59 with p value<0.001

Chart 22 – Action post placement by personal challenges during placement (feeling overwhelmed) (n=2,508)



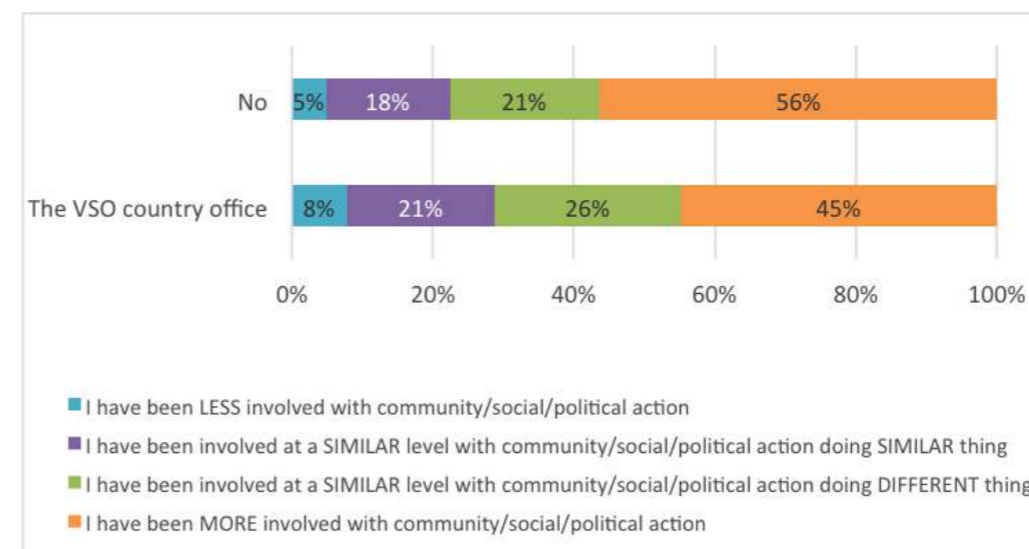
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =1.38 with p value=0.169

Chart 23 – Action post placement by other challenges during placement (host/partner organisation) (n=2,508)



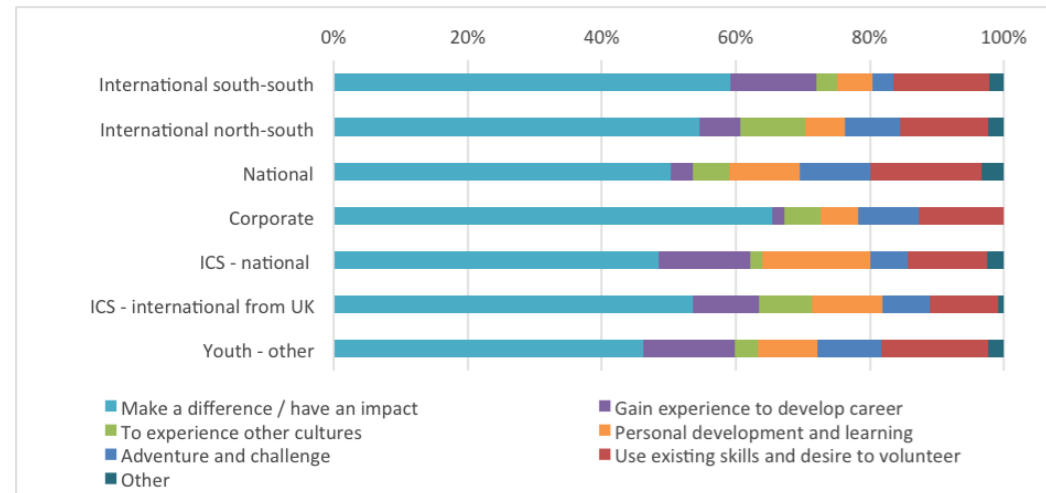
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =3.26 with p value=0.001

Chart 24 – Action post placement by other challenges during placement (vso country office) (n=2,508)



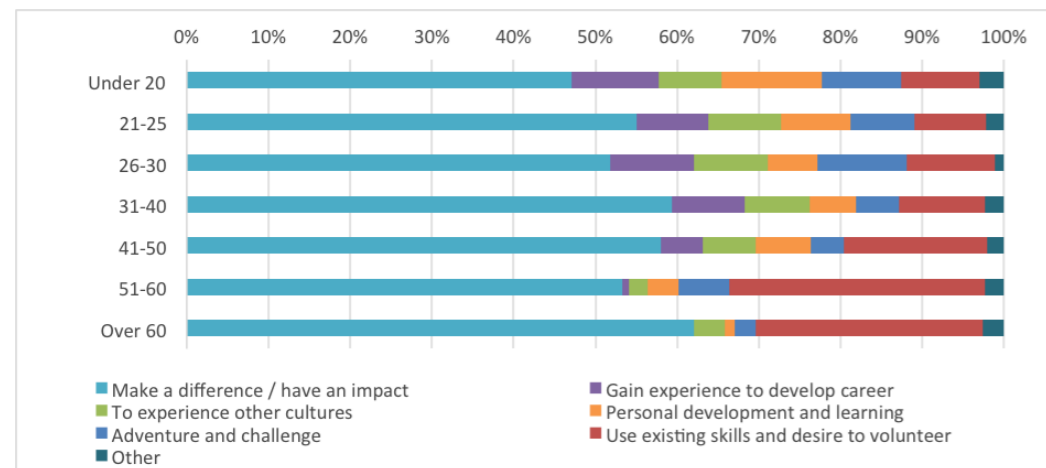
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.06 with p value<0.001

Chart 25 – Most significant motivation by type of volunteer (n=2,607)



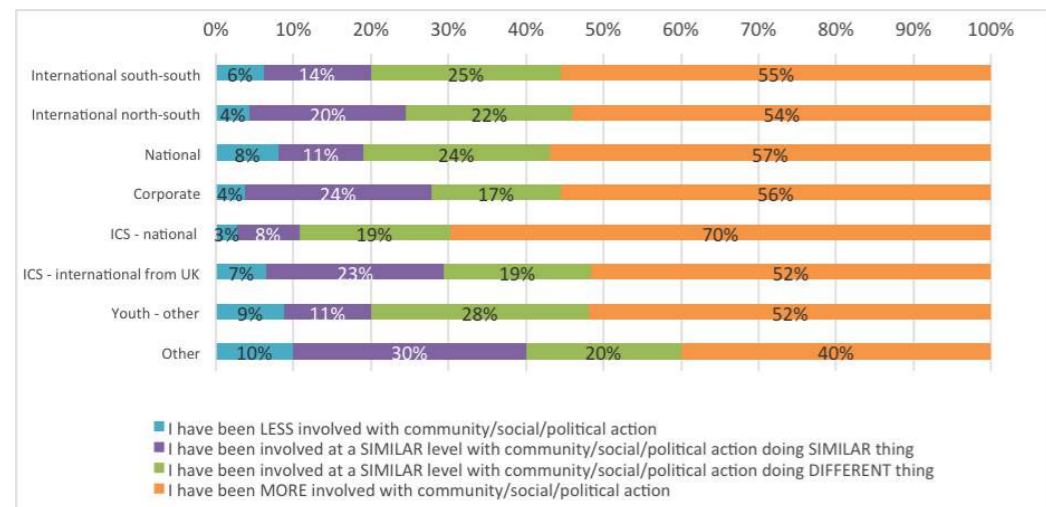
Test statistic (Chi-square) =125.7 with p value<0.001

Chart 26 – Most significant motivation by age of volunteer (n=2582)



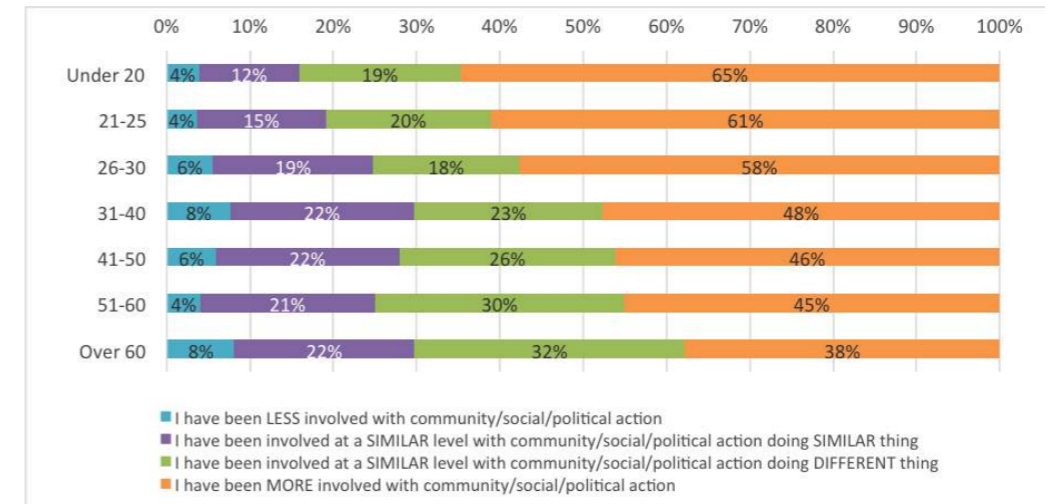
Test statistic (Kruskal-Wallis) =121.1 with p value<0.001

Chart 27 – Action post placement by volunteer type (n=2,503)



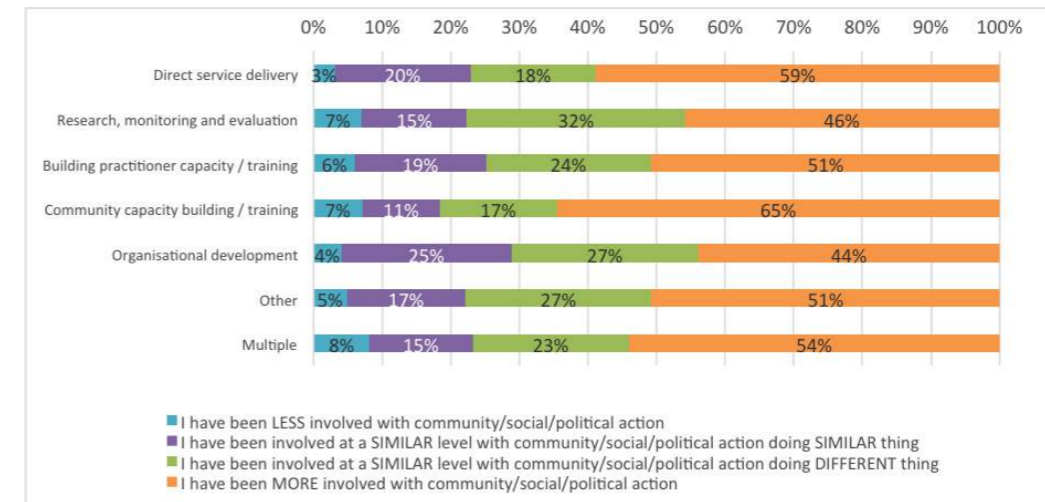
Test statistic (Kruskal-Wallis H) =20.3 with p value=0.003

Chart 28 – Action post placement by estimated age at start of placement (n=2,465)



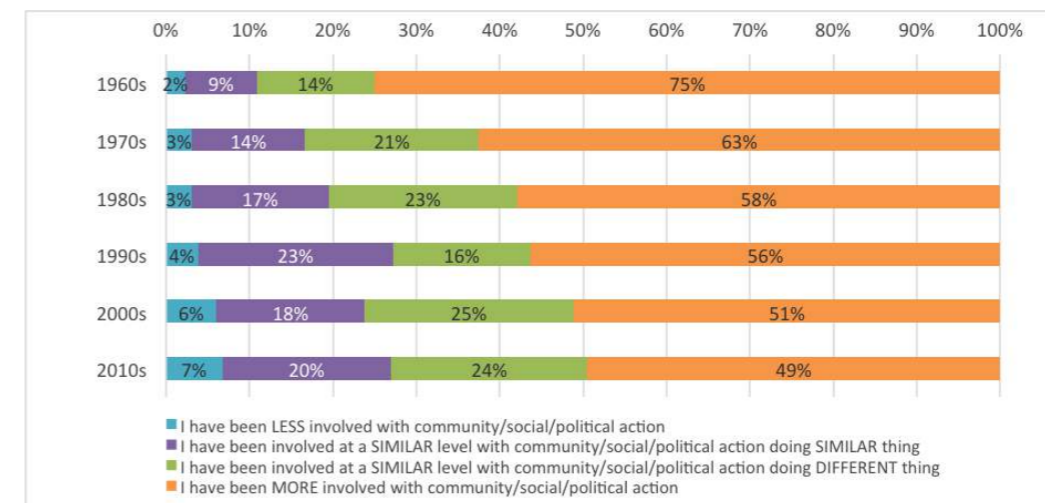
Test statistic (Spearman's rank) = -0.153 p<0.001

Chart 29 – Action post placement by primary role (n=2,423)



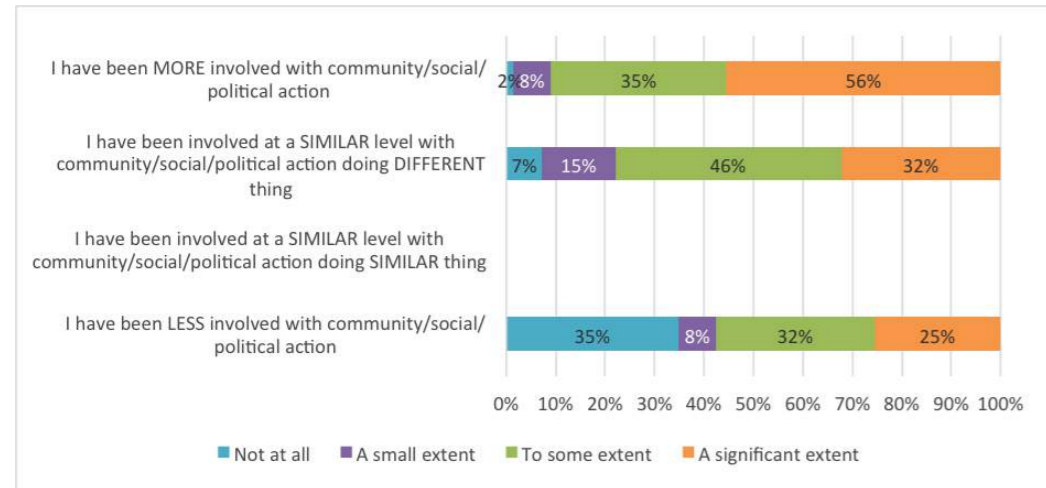
Test statistic (Kruskal-Wallis) =20.0 with p value=0.001

Chart 30 – Action post placement by decade of placement (n=2,677)



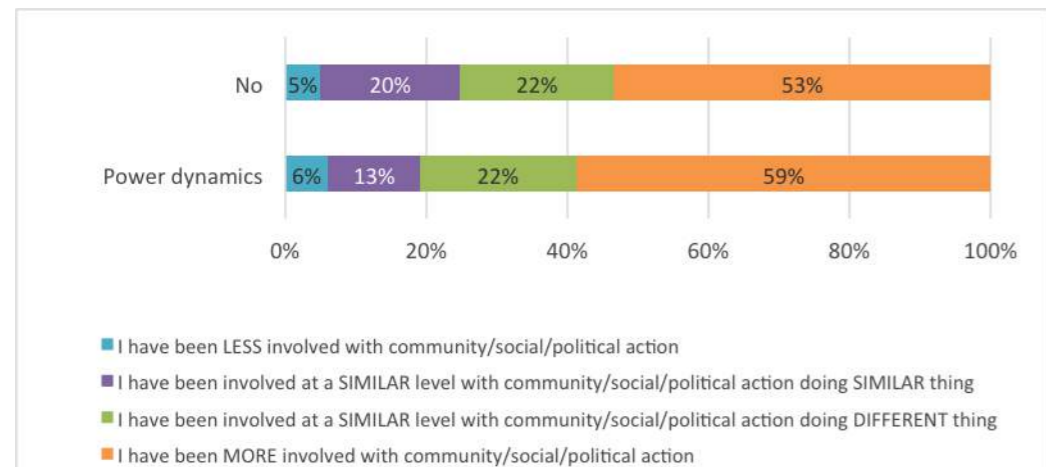
Test statistic (Spearman's rank) = -0.127 p<0.001

Chart 31 – Action post placement by extent of VSO placement influence (n=1,879)



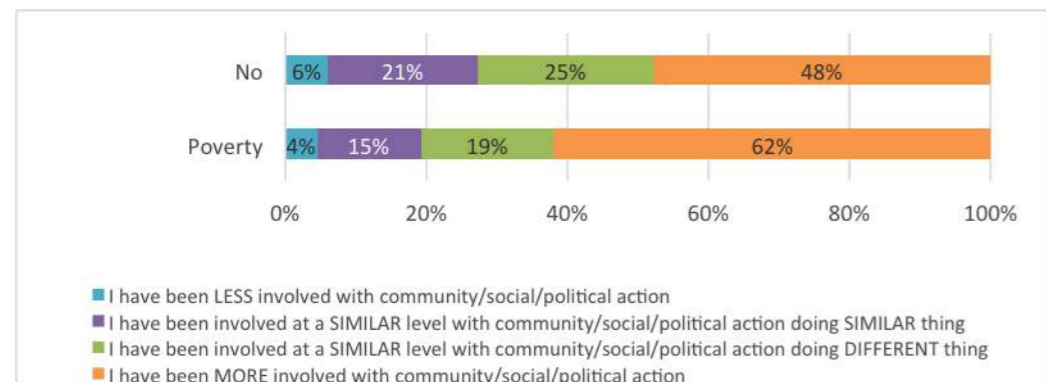
Test statistic (Spearman’s rank) = 0.273 p<0.001

Chart 32 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – power dynamics (n=2,508)



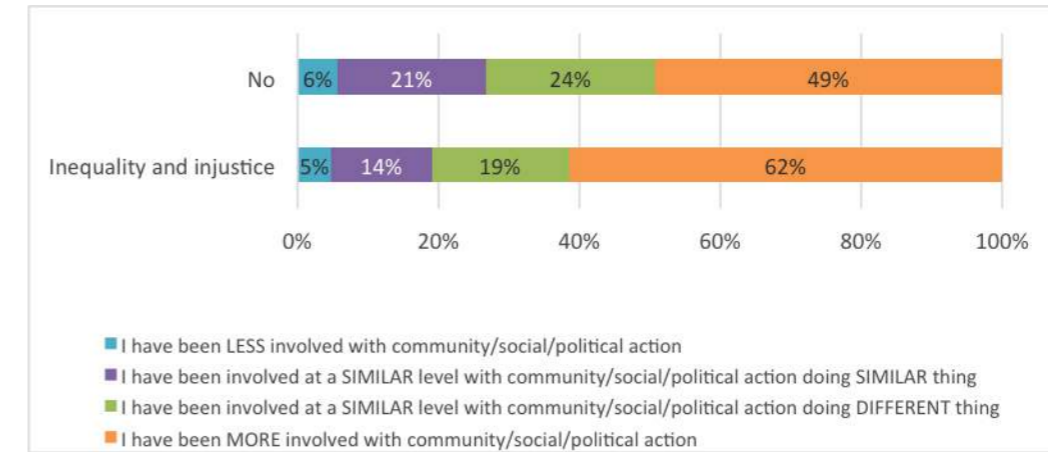
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.54 with p value=0.011

Chart 33 –Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – poverty (n=2,508)



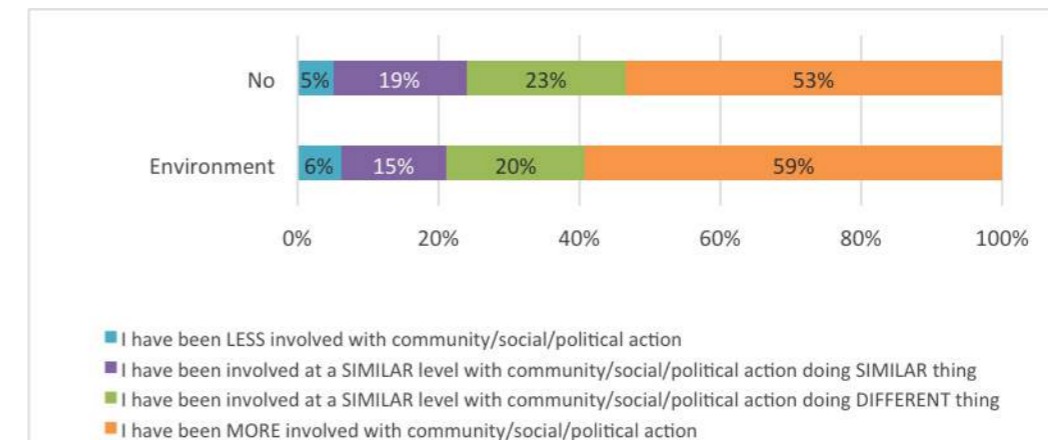
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.93 with p value<0.001

Chart 34 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – inequality and injustice (n=2,508)



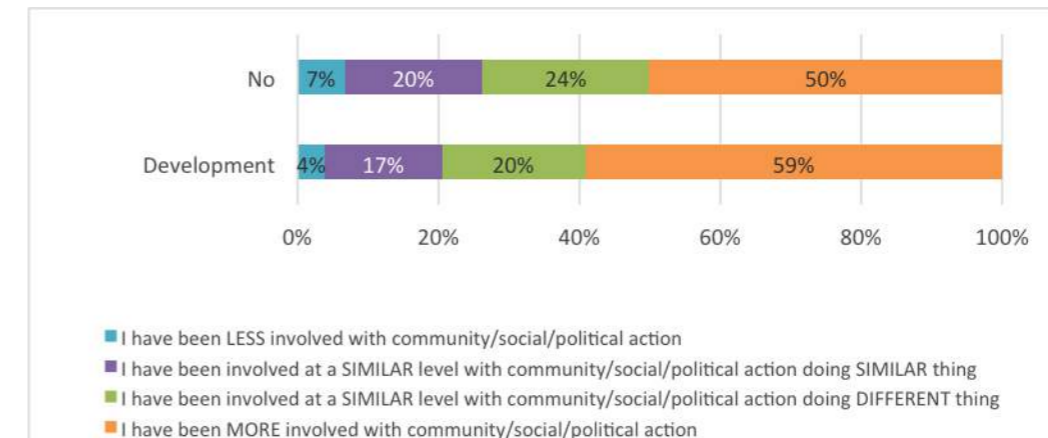
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.01 with p value<0.001

Chart 35 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – environment (n=2,508)



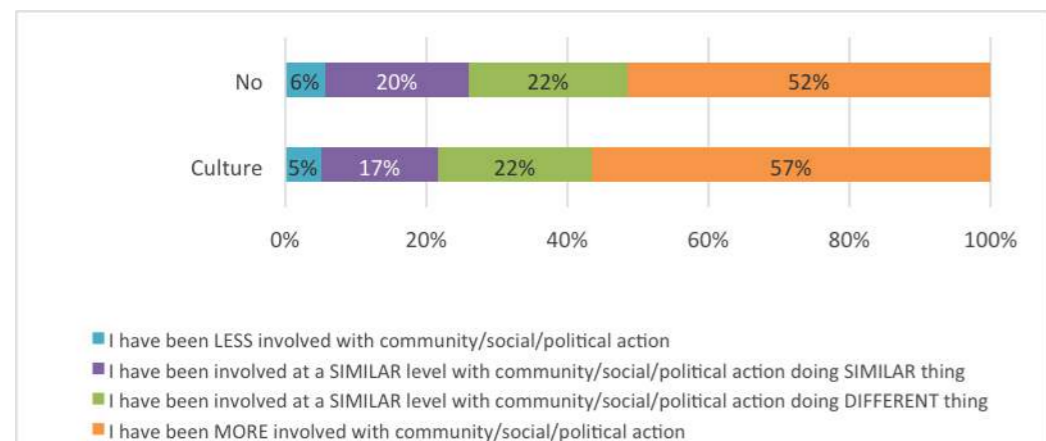
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.09 with p value=0.037

Chart 36 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – development (n=2,508)



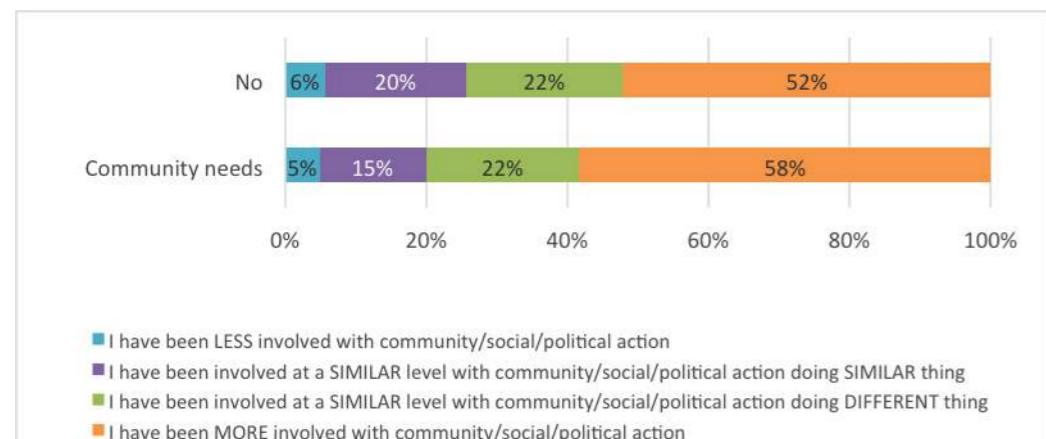
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.71 with p value<0.001

Chart 37 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – culture (n=2,508)



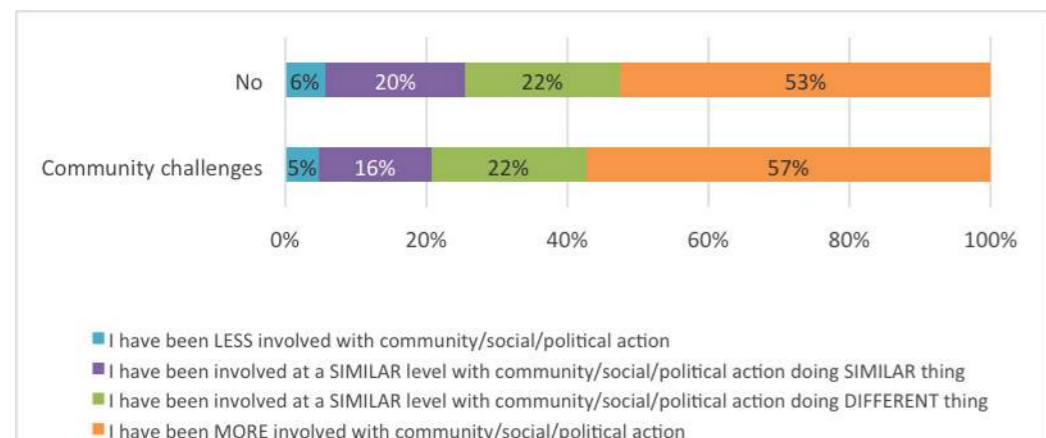
Test statistic (Spearman’s rank) = 0.273 p<0.001

Chart 38 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – community needs (n=2,508)



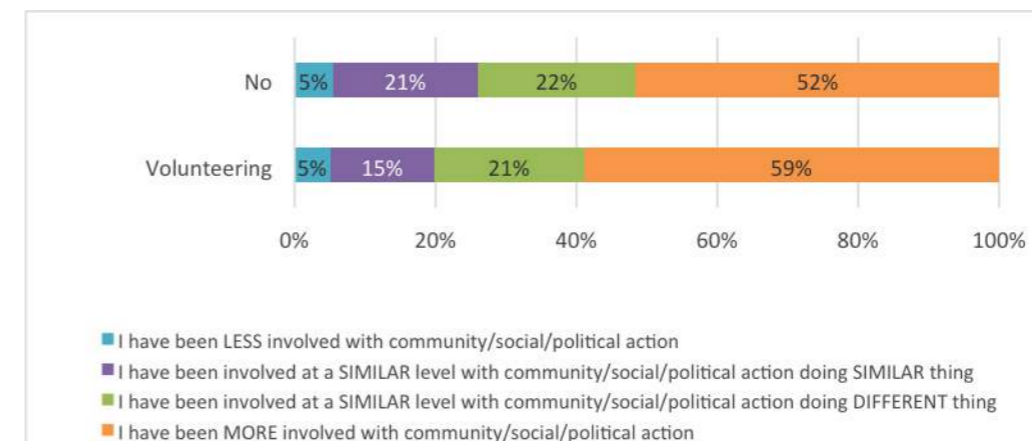
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =3.39 with p value=0.001

Chart 39 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – community challenges (n=2,508)



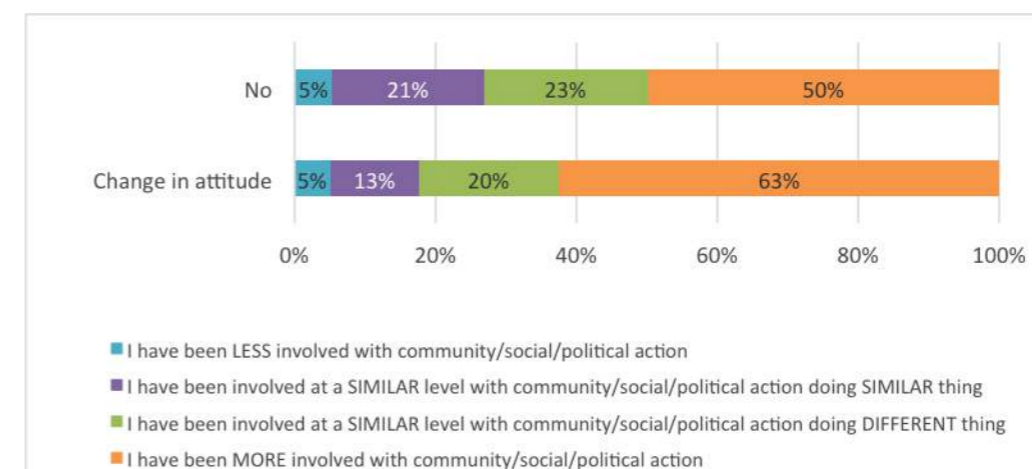
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =2.78 with p value=0.005

Chart 40 – Action post placement by changes of awareness during placement – volunteering (n=2,508)



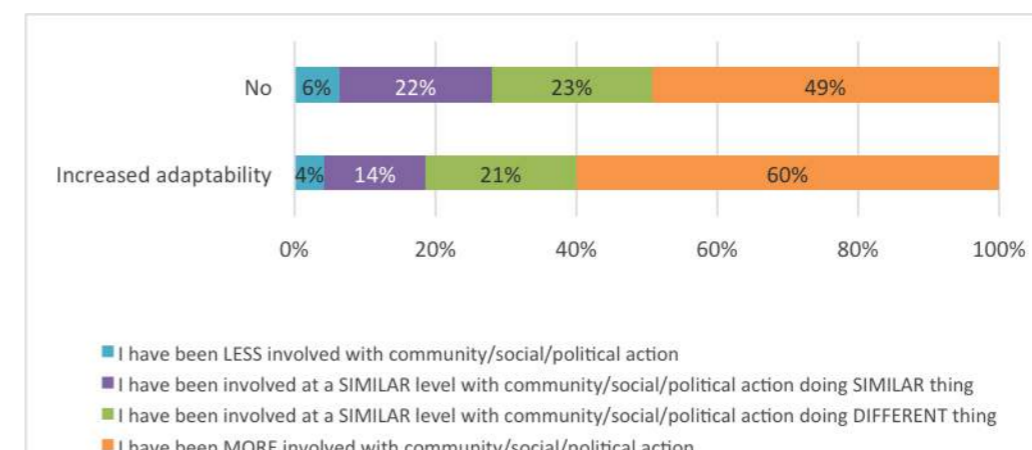
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =3.87 with p value<0.001

Chart 41 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – change in attitude (n=2,508)



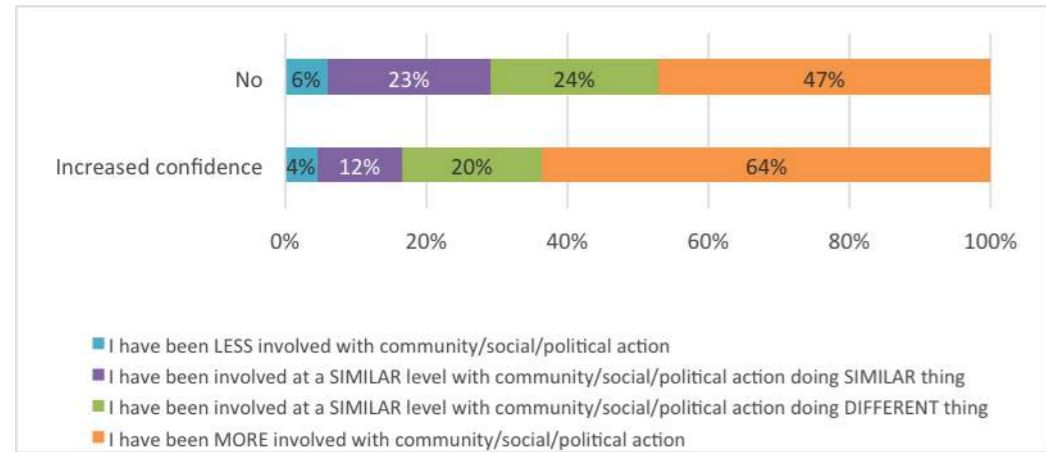
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.25 with p value<0.001

Chart 42 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – increased adaptability (n=2,508)



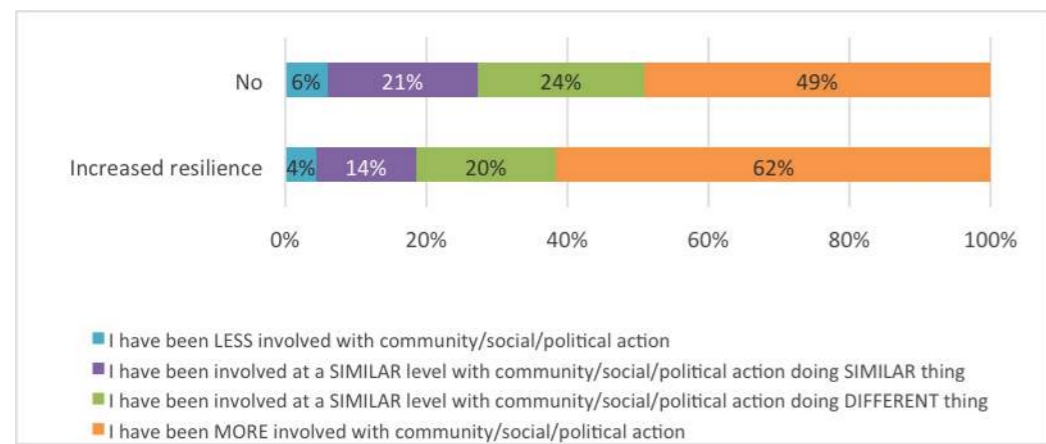
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =5.99 with p value<0.001

Chart 43 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – increased confidence (n=2,508)



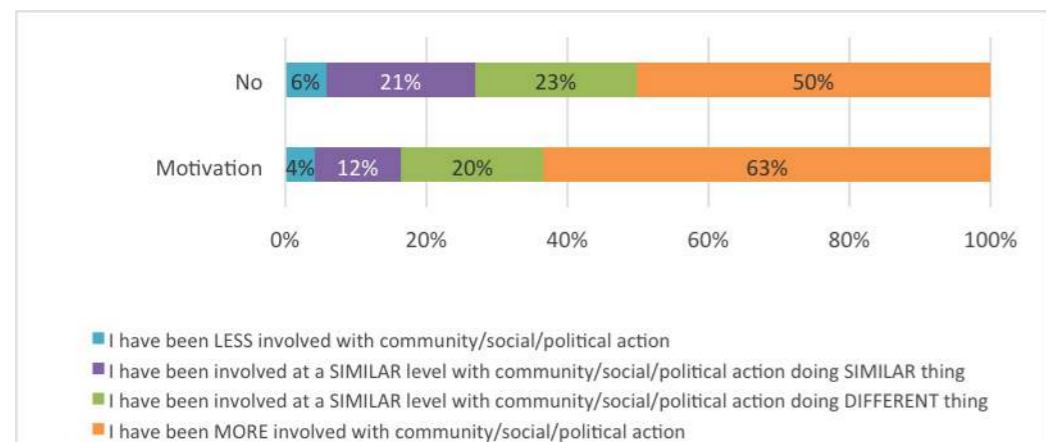
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =8.61 with p value<0.001

Chart 44 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – increased resilience (n=2,508)



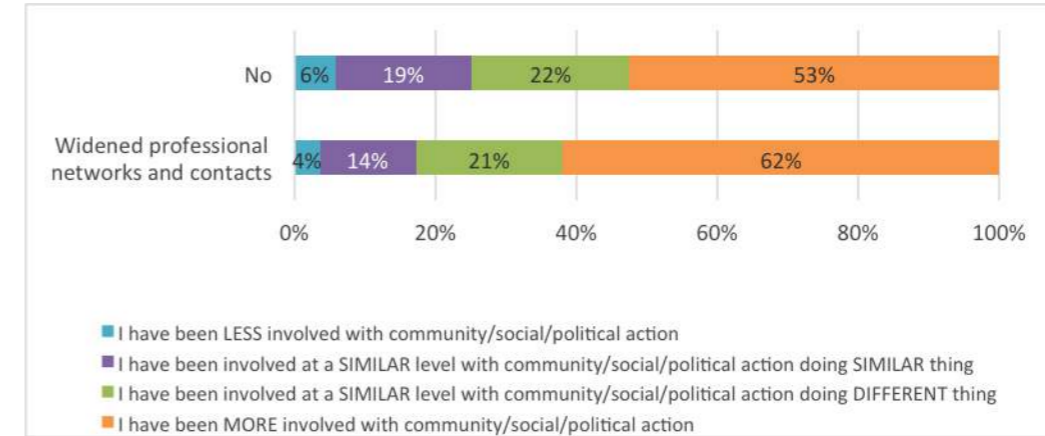
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.41 with p value<0.001

Chart 45 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – motivation (n=2,508)



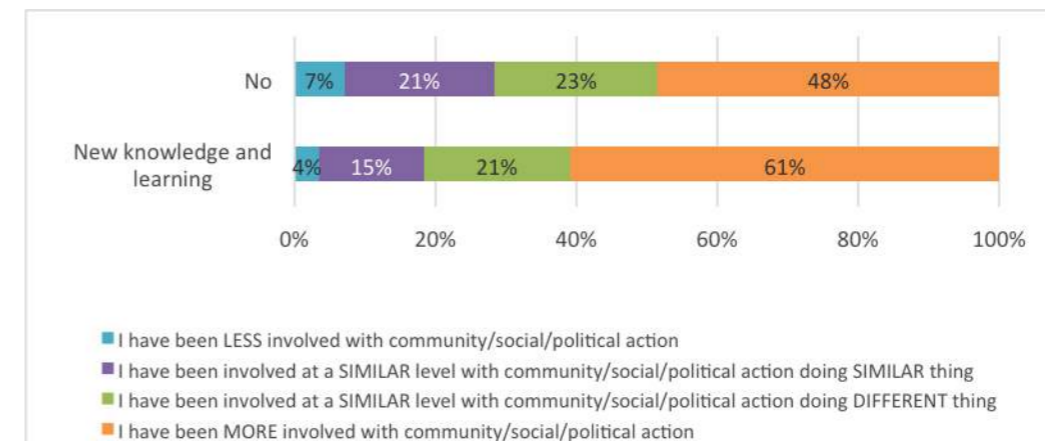
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.66 with p value<0.001

Chart 46 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – networks (n=2,508)



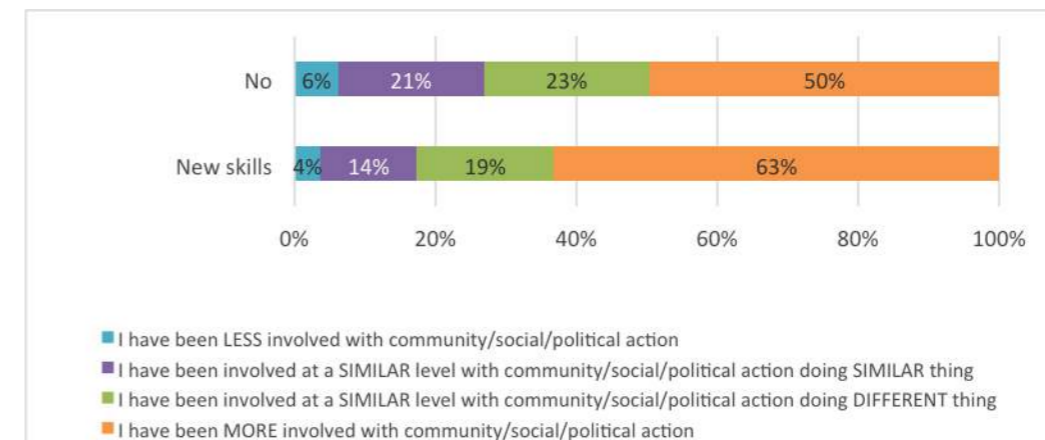
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =4.42 with p value<0.001

Chart 47 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – knowledge and learning (n=2,508)



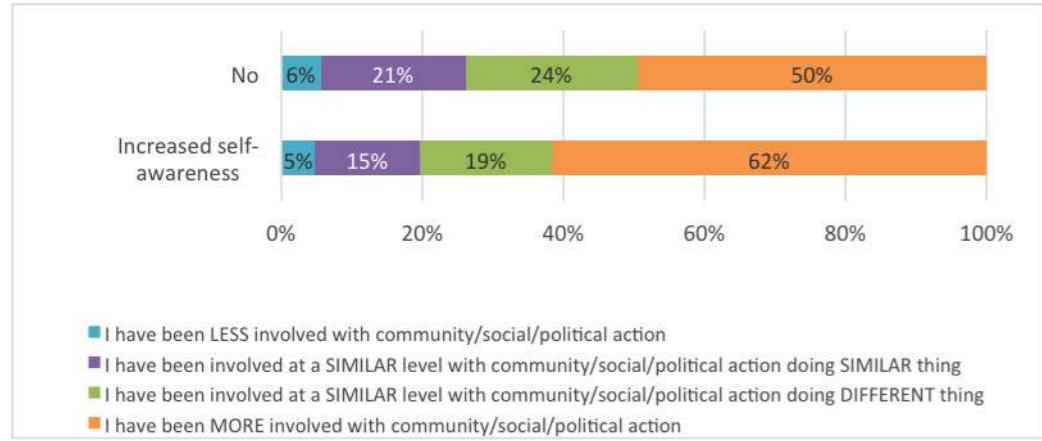
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.88 with p value<0.001

Chart 48 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – new skills (n=2,508)



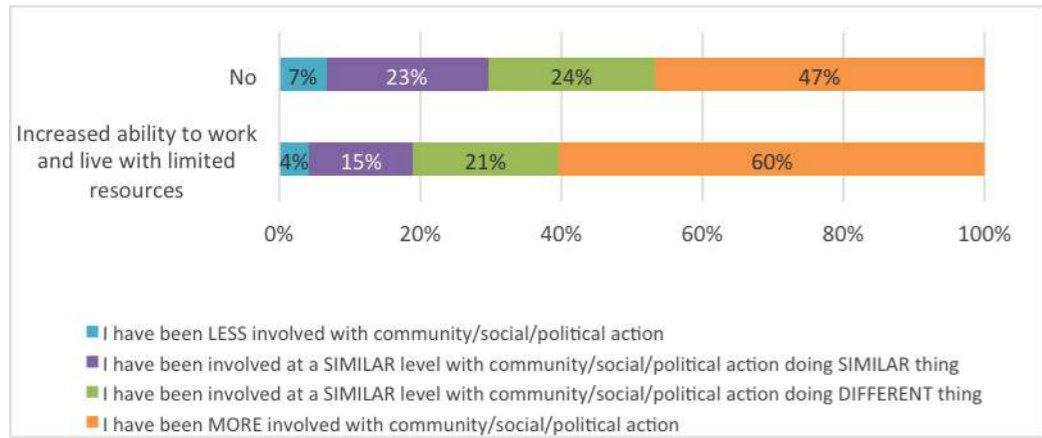
Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =6.9 with p value<0.001

Chart 49 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – increased self-awareness (n=2,508)



Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =5.74 with p value<0.001

Chart 50 – Action post placement by personal changes during placement – coping with limited resources (n=2,508)



Test statistic (Mann-Whitney z) =7.2 with p value<0.001



8. Acknowledgements

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