

The YPCA research aims to understand the career aspirations, influences, and challenges faced by young people in Scotland approximately one year after leaving school. Young people are asked about their views on ideal career priorities, influences on career-decision making, preferred industries, confidence in managing their own career, and their perceived career barriers. This infographic compares the responses of male and female young people.

Responses received

Female	1512
Male	1298

 **Top job / career priorities** (Top 4, % selected)

Female		Male	
Good pay	55%	Good pay	57%
Helping others	43%	Job satisfaction	44%
Work-life balance	42%	Learning new skills	36%
Job satisfaction	38%	Work-life balance	35%

 **Perceived barriers to career** (Top 4, % selected)

Female		Male	
Not enough jobs	43%	Lack of opportunities	41%
Lack of opportunities	43%	Not having contacts	35%
Not having enough confidence	39%	Not enough work experience	33%
Not having contacts	39%	Not enough jobs	32%

 **Top Industries** (Top 5, % selected)

Female		Male	
Caring	18%	Engineering	26%
Creative Industries	17%	Construction	22%
Medicine and health	16%	Digital, computing, and IT	15%
Teaching / education	15%	Creative Industries	12%
Personal care (for example: beauty, haircare, wellness)	8%	Sport	12%

 **Confidence in Career Management Skills** (Average score, 1=Not confident, 10=Extremely confident)

Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
7.6	7.4	7.4	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.8	6.7	6.7
Understand and build on my skills, strengths and achievements		Understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices		Identify and build relationships with people who can help you in your career		Make informed career decisions		Consider new things I may not have thought of when it comes to my career journey		Find and use career information easily	

 **Key Influences on career** (% a fair amount / a great deal)

Top 3 people influencers			Top 3 Influencing factors		
Female	Parent(s) / carer(s)	77%	Female	Learning new skills or being good at something	85%
	Teacher(s)	54%		Doing something i believe in	85%
	Other family member	54%		My interests / hobbies	79%
Male	Parent(s) / carer(s)	78%	Male	Learning new skills or being good at something	82%
	Other family member	52%		The need to earn money	75%
	Careers adviser	50%		My interests / hobbies	75%

This research was conducted by SDS's Evaluation and Research team over a five-week period between October and November 2025. This is a collaborative project, informed by several partner organisations. A total of 2,859 young people responded to the research. The results are weighted to represent the population as a whole.

Young People's Career Ambitions (YPCA) 2025/26

Ethnicity

SDS Evaluation & Research Team

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Responses received

ME	412
White	2404

Top job / career priorities (Top 4, % selected)

ME		White	
Good pay	58%	Good pay	56%
Job satisfaction	42%	Job satisfaction	40%
Learning new skills	39%	Work-life balance	39%
Work-life balance	39%	Helping others	33%

Perceived barriers to career (Top 4, % selected)

ME		White	
Not having contacts	46%	Lack of opportunities	42%
Lack of opportunities	44%	Not enough jobs	38%
Not enough work experience	35%	Not having contacts	36%
Not having enough confidence	34%	Not having enough confidence	36%

Top Industries (Top 5, % selected)

ME		White	
Engineering	15%	Engineering	16%
Digital, computing, and IT	15%	Creative Industries	15%
Creative Industries	15%	Construction	13%
Medicine and health	13%	Teaching / education	11%
Caring	10%	Caring	11%

Confidence in Career Management Skills (Average score, 1=Not confident, 10=Extremely confident)

ME	White	ME	White	ME	White	ME	White	ME	White	ME	White
7.2	7.5	7.2	7.3	6.7	7.2	6.8	7.0	6.9	6.9	6.7	6.7
Understand and build on my skills, strengths and achievements		Understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices		Identify and build relationships with people who can help you in your career		Make informed career decisions		Consider new things I may not have thought of when it comes to my career journey		Find and use career information easily	

Key Influences on career (% a fair amount / a great deal)

Top 3 people influencers			Top 3 Influencing factors		
ME	Parent(s) / carer(s)	74%	ME	Learning new skills or being good at something	86%
	Careers adviser	60%		Doing something i believe in	79%
	Teacher(s)	54%		My interests / hobbies	77%
White	Parent(s) / carer(s)	79%	White	Learning new skills or being good at something	83%
	Other family member	53%		Doing something i believe in	79%
	Friend(s)	50%		My interests / hobbies	77%

Young People's Career Ambitions (YPCA) 2025/26

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT)

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Responses received

LGBT	335
Non-LGBT	1286

Top job / career priorities (Top 4, % selected)

LGBT		Non-LGBT	
Good pay	53%	Good pay	57%
Job satisfaction	42%	Job satisfaction	41%
Helping others	37%	Work-life balance	40%
Work-life balance	36%	Learning new skills	35%

Perceived barriers to career (Top 4, % selected)

LGBT		Non-LGBT	
Not having contacts	44%	Lack of opportunities	42%
Lack of opportunities	43%	Not enough jobs	37%
Not enough work experience	39%	Not having contacts	36%
Not earning enough money to live on	39%	Not having enough confidence	35%

Top Industries (Top 5, % selected)

LGBT		Non-LGBT	
Creative Industries	30%	Engineering	18%
Teaching / education	16%	Construction	15%
Caring	16%	Digital, computing, and IT	11%
Hospitality	14%	Creative Industries	11%
Media	12%	Caring	10%

Confidence in Career Management Skills (Average score, 1=Not confident, 10=Extremely confident)

LGBT	Non-LGBT	LGBT	Non-LGBT	LGBT	Non-LGBT	LGBT	Non-LGBT	LGBT	Non-LGBT	LGBT	Non-LGBT
7.3	7.6	7.1	7.4	6.7	7.2	6.6	7.1	6.8	7.0	6.4	6.8
Understand and build on my skills, strengths and achievements		Understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices		Identify and build relationships with people who can help you in your career		Make informed career decisions		Consider new things I may not have thought of when it comes to my career journey		Find and use career information easily	

Key Influences on career (% a fair amount / a great deal)

Top 3 people influencers			Top 3 Influencing factors		
LGBT	Parent(s) / carer(s)	70%	LGBT	Doing something i believe in	85%
	Teacher(s)	52%		My interests / hobbies	85%
	Friend(s)	48%		Learning new skills or being good at something	81%
Non-LGBT	Parent(s) / carer(s)	80%	Non-LGBT	Learning new skills or being good at something	85%
	Other family member	56%		Doing something i believe in	78%
	Careers adviser	50%		My interests / hobbies	77%

Young People's Career Ambitions (YPCA) 2025/26

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

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Responses received

SIMD 1	709
SIMD 5	456

Top job / career priorities (Top 4, % selected)

SIMD 1		SIMD 5	
Good pay	51%	Good pay	53%
Job satisfaction	40%	Job satisfaction	42%
Learning new skills	38%	Work-life balance	39%
Helping others	38%	Helping others	32%

Perceived barriers to career (Top 4, % selected)

SIMD 1		SIMD 5	
Lack of opportunities	42%	Lack of opportunities	45%
Not enough work experience	38%	Not having contacts	44%
Not enough jobs	37%	Not enough jobs	39%
Not having enough confidence	34%	Too much competition	36%

Top Industries (Top 5, % selected)

SIMD 1		SIMD 5	
Creative Industries	14%	Engineering	19%
Caring	14%	Construction	14%
Construction	13%	Creative Industries	14%
Digital, computing, and IT	12%	Teaching / education	13%
Engineering	11%	Medicine and health	12%

Confidence in Career Management Skills (Average score, 1=Not confident, 10=Extremely confident)

SIMD 1	SIMD 5	SIMD 1	SIMD 5	SIMD 1	SIMD 5	SIMD 1	SIMD 5	SIMD 1	SIMD 5	SIMD 1	SIMD 5
7.5	7.5	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.2	7.0	7.1	7.0	6.8	6.8	6.8
Understand and build on my skills, strengths and achievements	Understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices	Identify and build relationships with people who can help you in your career	Make informed career decisions	Consider new things I may not have thought of when it comes to my career journey	Find and use career information easily						

Key Influences on career (% a fair amount / a great deal)

Top 3 people influencers			Top 3 Influencing factors		
SIMD 1	Parent(s) / carer(s)	76%	SIMD 1	Learning new skills or being good at something	86%
	Careers adviser	59%		Doing something i believe in	81%
	Other family member	53%		The need to earn money	76%
SIMD 5	Parent(s) / carer(s)	81%	SIMD 5	Doing something i believe in	81%
	Other family member	53%		Learning new skills or being good at something	81%
	Teacher(s)	52%		My interests / hobbies	79%

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Care Experienced

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Responses received

CE	150
Not CE	2686

Top job / career priorities (Top 4, % selected)

CE		Not CE	
Good pay	51%	Good pay	56%
Helping others	49%	Job satisfaction	41%
Learning new skills	40%	Work-life balance	39%
Job satisfaction	37%	Learning new skills	33%

Perceived barriers to career (Top 4, % selected)

CE		Not CE	
Lack of opportunities	43%	Lack of opportunities	42%
Not having contacts	41%	Not enough jobs	37%
Not earning enough money to live on	38%	Not having contacts	37%
Not enough work experience	37%	Not having enough confidence	35%

Top Industries (Top 5, % selected)

CE		Not CE	
Caring	18%	Engineering	16%
Creative Industries	16%	Creative Industries	15%
Armed forces, policing or security	12%	Construction	12%
Medicine and health	12%	Digital, computing, and IT	11%
Hospitality	10%	Teaching / education	10%

Confidence in Career Management Skills (Average score, 1=Not confident, 10=Extremely confident)

CE	Not CE	CE	Not CE	CE	Not CE	CE	Not CE	CE	Not CE	CE	Not CE
6.9	7.5	6.8	7.3	6.8	7.1	6.3	7.0	6.5	6.9	6.0	6.7
Understand and build on my skills, strengths and achievements		Understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices		Identify and build relationships with people who can help you in your career		Make informed career decisions		Consider new things I may not have thought of when it comes to my career journey		Find and use career information easily	

Key Influences on career (% a fair amount / a great deal)

Top 3 people influencers			Top 3 Influencing factors		
CE	Parent(s) / carer(s)	68%	CE	Learning new skills or being good at something	79%
	Careers adviser	66%		The need to earn money	79%
	Friend(s)	54%		Doing something i believe in	76%
Not CE	Parent(s) / carer(s)	78%	Not CE	Learning new skills or being good at something	84%
	Other family member	53%		Doing something i believe in	79%
	Teacher(s)	50%		My interests / hobbies	77%

Young People's Career Ambitions (YPCA) 2025/26

Disability

SDS Evaluation & Research Team

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Responses received

Disabled	436
Non-disabled	1287

Top job / career priorities (Top 4, % selected)

Disabled		Non-disabled	
Good pay	53%	Good pay	57%
Helping others	45%	Job satisfaction	42%
Job satisfaction	39%	Work-life balance	39%
Work-life balance	38%	Learning new skills	36%

Perceived barriers to career (Top 4, % selected)

Disabled		Non-disabled	
My wellbeing	42%	Lack of opportunities	42%
Not having enough confidence	40%	Not having contacts	38%
Lack of opportunities	39%	Not enough jobs	38%
Not enough jobs	37%	Not enough work experience	34%

Top Industries (Top 5, % selected)

Disabled		Non-disabled	
Creative Industries	23%	Engineering	18%
Caring	18%	Construction	14%
Teaching / education	14%	Creative Industries	12%
Medicine and health	13%	Digital, computing, and IT	11%
Digital, computing, and IT	11%	Teaching / education	9%

Confidence in Career Management Skills (Average score, 1=Not confident, 10=Extremely confident)

Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled
6.8	7.7	6.8	7.5	6.3	7.3	6.3	7.2	6.3	7.1	6.0	7.0
Understand and build on my skills, strengths and achievements		Understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices		Identify and build relationships with people who can help you in your career		Make informed career decisions		Consider new things I may not have thought of when it comes to my career journey		Find and use career information easily	

Key Influences on career (% a fair amount / a great deal)

Top 3 people influencers			Top 3 Influencing factors		
Disabled	Parent(s) / carer(s)	75%	Disabled	Doing something i believe in	79%
	Careers adviser	50%		Learning new skills or being good at something	79%
	Teacher(s)	49%		My interests / hobbies	78%
Non-disabled	Parent(s) / carer(s)	80%	Non-disabled	Learning new skills or being good at something	86%
	Other family member	55%		Doing something i believe in	80%
	Friend(s)	49%		My interests / hobbies	78%