

THE START THINKING SOLDIER REPORT

An Army Recruiting Group Insight Report into the impact
of self awareness on career fulfilment



Contents

- i. The context for the research
- ii. The sample and methodology

Main findings – 17–21 year olds

- 1. Career aspirations and expectations
- 2. Career path clarity
- 3. Barriers to following career of choice
- 4. Awareness of strengths and weaknesses
- 5. Optimism about the future

Main findings – 30+ year olds

- 6. Perceptions and experience of working life
- 7. Career changes
- 8. Barriers to career development
- 9. Career success
- 10. Summary of key findings
- 11. Executive Summary: Dr Tomas Chamorro–Premuzic, PhD

Appendix 1 – Sample Details

Appendix 2 – The questionnaires

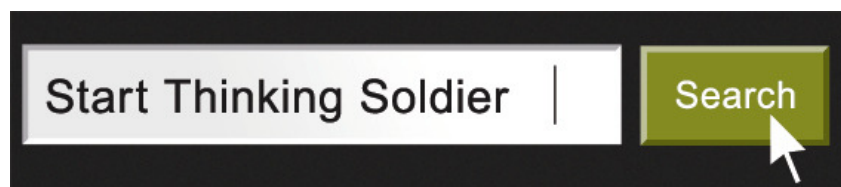
1. The context for the research

Each year the British Army needs to recruit approximately 15,000 quality young male and female soldiers. We must forever build on our understanding of young people today and their influencers, barriers and mindsets when choosing which career path to embark on.

This report reveals some fascinating and unexpected insights and above all highlights the importance of self awareness and consideration when making such an important decision.

The findings from this report coincide with the launch of our groundbreaking new initiative. Entitled, Start Thinking Soldier, it is a more discreet and personal way for people to test their Army skills and receive invaluable personal insights, whether or not they are considering a career in the Army. Start Thinking Soldier reflects our Army training which focuses on the individual, bringing people's strengths to the fore and providing world class training to overcome their weaknesses, leading to a career that fulfils your individual potential.

Lieutenant Colonel Eilean Cunningham, Army's Recruiting Group National Headquarters, April 2009.



2. The sample and methodology

Between 6th and 13th March 2009, a sample of 2,182 adults aged 17 to 21 and 2,017 adults aged 30 and above were interviewed online.

Both samples were weighted to be representative of their age group in terms of age, gender, socio-economic group, region, ethnicity and employment status. For a full breakdown of the sample structure for both respondent groups please see appendix 1.

The survey questionnaires for both samples relating to the data analysed in this report are included as appendix 2.

MAIN FINDINGS – 17–21 year olds

The following report is split into two broad sections; the first deals with the findings from a representative sample of 17–21 year olds and covers their career aspirations and expectations, their career objectives and what has influenced them, the barriers they have experienced in following their desired career path and their personal awareness.

The second section of the report concentrates upon the views of 30+ year olds, looking at their perceptions and experience of working life, their career influences and career changes, the barriers they have experienced in following their desired career path/s and their perceptions of career success.

In this second section of the report comparisons will be drawn, where possible, between the younger (17–21) and older (30+) samples.

1. Career Aspirations and Expectations

As 17–21 year olds embark on their working lives just over one-half (55%) disagreed with the statement that ‘I am in a career that I expect to be in for the rest of my life’, i.e. they were not fully committed to their current career choice.

| I am in a career that I expect to be in for the rest of my life | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|------|--------|------|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|------|-----|----------|
| Agree | 31% | 26% | 28% | 44% | 15% | 35% | 34% | 27% | 41% | 28% | 37% | 25% |
| Disagree | 55% | 57% | 61% | 43% | 64% | 47% | 51% | 49% | 56% | 60% | 43% | 49% |
| <i>net agree</i> | -24% | -31% | -33% | 1% | -49% | -12% | -17% | -22% | -15% | -32% | -6% | -24% |

26% of working 17–21 year olds disagreed that their job provides challenge and will help them develop new skills.

| My job is challenging & will help me to develop new skills | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Agree | 56% | 56% | 65% | 64% | 40% | 49% | 40% | 50% | 56% | 67% | 52% | 53% |
| Disagree | 26% | 26% | 25% | 9% | 28% | 26% | 33% | 33% | 32% | 20% | 30% | 32% |
| <i>net agree</i> | 30% | 30% | 40% | 55% | 12% | 23% | 7% | 17% | 24% | 47% | 22% | 21% |

Only half (52%) of 17–21 year olds were ‘doing the kind of job they had imagined themselves doing’, with nearly half unable to achieve their desired role.

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| I imagined I'd do this kind of job | 52% | 56% | 51% | 57% | 45% | 57% | 54% | 50% | 43% | 49% | 71% | 45% |
| I never imagined I'd do this kind of job | 48% | 44% | 49% | 43% | 55% | 43% | 46% | 50% | 57% | 51% | 29% | 56% |
| <i>net agree</i> | 4% | 12% | 2% | 14% | -10% | 14% | 8% | 0% | -14% | -2% | 42% | 56% |

2. Career path clarity and consideration.

When asked to consider their future working life, only around one-third (33%) of 17–21 year olds claim to have a very clear career path in mind. A further 46% have a vague career path in mind, with one-fifth (18%) describing themselves as having no clear career path in mind. We could draw the conclusion, therefore, that approximately two-thirds of 17–21 year olds are unsure of what career path they are best placed to follow.

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| I have a very clear career path in mind | 33% | 33% | 33% | 34% | 29% | 35% | 37% | 30% | 27% | 31% | 39% | 36% |
| I have a vague career path in mind | 46% | 45% | 45% | 42% | 51% | 46% | 44% | 43% | 51% | 46% | 46% | 46% |
| I don't have a clear career path in mind | 18% | 20% | 19% | 19% | 16% | 15% | 17% | 20% | 21% | 20% | 15% | 17% |
| I have no real interest in having a career | 4% | 3% | 3% | 5% | 4% | 4% | 3% | 7% | 1% | 3% | 1% | 1% |
| TOTAL UNSURE WHAT CAREER PATH TO FOLLOW | 68% | 68% | 67% | 66% | 71% | 65% | 64% | 70% | 73% | 69% | 62% | 64% |

When asked to think about the length of consideration given to their current job before accepting it, for most 17–21 year olds the decision was taken very quickly. Three-fifths (61%) accepted their current job following an hour or less consideration and three-quarters (78%) within a day. Whilst this may be a reflection of the current economic climate (and the relief of being offered a job at all) this is more likely to reflect a prevailing attitude amongst young people i.e. hasty and rash.

| How long did you spend thinking about your current job before accepting it? | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| No time at all | 30% | 28% | 32% | 34% | 7% | 21% | 44% | 31% | 37% | 27% | 28% | 25% |
| Less than 5 minutes | 19% | 12% | 14% | 11% | 22% | 24% | 16% | 28% | 20% | 20% | 40% | 14% |
| About an hour | 12% | 19% | 18% | 14% | 9% | 9% | 7% | 7% | 12% | 14% | 4% | 12% |
| A couple of hours | 10% | 10% | 4% | 15% | 9% | 10% | 7% | 11% | 5% | 10% | 14% | 15% |
| A day | 7% | 6% | 4% | 17% | 18% | 4% | 3% | 9% | 3% | 5% | 7% | 7% |
| A couple of days | 13% | 14% | 17% | 5% | 23% | 11% | 13% | 8% | 17% | 13% | 5% | 8% |
| 3-7 days | 4% | 7% | 5% | 2% | 7% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 5% | 4% | 0% | 7% |
| More than a week | 7% | 5% | 7% | 2% | 3% | 19% | 8% | 6% | 3% | 6% | 4% | 12% |

3. Barriers to following career of choice

Opinion is divided as to whether there are, or have been, barriers to being able to follow preferred career paths. Just over one half (53%) of all 17–21 year olds believe that they have experienced restrictions or barriers, just under one-third (31%) think not and the remaining 16% are undecided.

| There have been barriers to you being able to get the job you'd really like | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Agree | 53% | 56% | 49% | 54% | 54% | 54% | 54% | 50% | 51% | 55% | 60% | 52% |
| Disagree | 31% | 28% | 39% | 32% | 23% | 33% | 30% | 31% | 33% | 25% | 26% | 35% |
| <i>net agree</i> | 22% | 28% | 10% | 22% | 31% | 21% | 24% | 19% | 18% | 30% | 34% | 17% |

A significant proportion (over two-fifths) stated a lack of skills (42%) and educational qualifications (43%) as the barrier to a desired career path. Financial and time pressures have been barriers for 52% and 32% respectively, whilst emotional constraints, such as lack of confidence and encouragement, have affected 44% and 22% respectively. Two in five (42%) of 17–21 year olds agreed that a lack of good careers advice in schools had hindered their ability to follow a career path of choice.

| % saying has been a barrier | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Not having the right educational qualifications | 43% | 48% | 43% | 33% | 45% | 44% | 49% | 48% | 42% | 40% | 37% | 40% |
| Not getting enough encouragement from family/friends | 22% | 22% | 23% | 16% | 28% | 23% | 28% | 18% | 24% | 19% | 14% | 23% |
| Not getting good enough careers advice at school | 42% | 44% | 34% | 25% | 46% | 43% | 44% | 49% | 58% | 42% | 43% | 41% |
| Not having the time to pursue it | 32% | 30% | 36% | 33% | 29% | 28% | 24% | 41% | 41% | 27% | 20% | 33% |
| Not having the right skills to pursue it | 42% | 42% | 49% | 20% | 58% | 33% | 50% | 31% | 63% | 38% | 34% | 41% |
| Not having the money to pursue it | 52% | 41% | 58% | 47% | 67% | 52% | 50% | 58% | 64% | 48% | 45% | 47% |
| Not feeling the confidence to pursue it | 44% | 46% | 44% | 35% | 46% | 36% | 47% | 42% | 63% | 37% | 28% | 54% |
| Not enough jobs around that really appeal | 58% | 51% | 54% | 69% | 75% | 62% | 59% | 54% | 49% | 50% | 58% | 71% |
| Not having the right experience | 68% | 69% | 71% | 66% | 84% | 49% | 73% | 49% | 64% | 65% | 60% | 69% |

4. Awareness of strengths and weaknesses

The vast majority (86%) of 17–21 year olds believe that they have more to learn about their personal strengths and weaknesses.

| Do you think you have more to learn about your personal strengths & weaknesses? | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Agree | 86% | 85% | 85% | 86% | 92% | 87% | 88% | 84% | 90% | 82% | 86% | 91% |
| Disagree | 9% | 10% | 8% | 10% | 7% | 6% | 9% | 10% | 6% | 11% | 7% | 7% |
| <i>net agree</i> | 77% | 75% | 77% | 76% | 85% | 81% | 79% | 74% | 84% | 71% | 79% | 84% |

As we might have expected, the most useful sources of information upon an individual's relative strengths and weaknesses reflect those that were felt to be the most influential upon their job choices and careers, i.e. family, teachers and careers advisors and friends.

Usefulness in giving sense of individual strengths and weaknesses (mean score where 4 = very useful and 1 = not at all useful)

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|------|--------|------|------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|------|------|----------|
| Comments from family | 3.05 | 3.02 | 3.10 | 3.05 | 3.11 | 3.13 | 3.07 | 3.00 | 2.96 | 3.09 | 3.03 | 3.01 |
| Comments from friends | 2.99 | 2.95 | 3.06 | 2.98 | 2.95 | 3.04 | 3.01 | 2.99 | 2.91 | 2.98 | 3.02 | 3.06 |
| Comments from teachers/careers advisers | 2.98 | 2.95 | 3.05 | 2.88 | 3.06 | 3.18 | 3.09 | 2.94 | 2.88 | 2.94 | 2.89 | 2.87 |
| Things written in school reports | 2.70 | 2.70 | 2.78 | 2.63 | 2.54 | 2.81 | 2.74 | 2.64 | 2.63 | 2.71 | 2.82 | 2.65 |
| Online tests | 2.34 | 2.26 | 2.38 | 2.20 | 2.23 | 2.54 | 2.43 | 2.38 | 2.26 | 2.38 | 2.15 | 2.40 |
| Exam & other test results | 2.94 | 2.87 | 2.90 | 2.83 | 3.06 | 3.12 | 2.90 | 2.79 | 2.92 | 3.05 | 2.87 | 3.05 |

5. Optimism about the future

17–21 year-olds have high expectations for the level of job satisfaction during their working lives, with four in five (79%) feeling positive about their future working life.

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Very positive | 20% | 18% | 19% | 21% | 24% | 18% | 17% | 19% | 18% | 18% | 27% | 24% |
| Fairly positive | 59% | 62% | 61% | 63% | 56% | 67% | 55% | 51% | 62% | 62% | 46% | 58% |
| Fairly negative | 10% | 10% | 8% | 7% | 14% | 6% | 17% | 11% | 9% | 8% | 15% | 6% |
| Very negative | 3% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 3% | 3% | 4% | 3% | 4% | 1% | 4% | 3% |
| <i>Net positive (very & fairly positive minus very & fairly negative)</i> | 66% | 68% | 70% | 76% | 63% | 76% | 51% | 56% | 67% | 71% | 54% | 73% |

MAIN FINDINGS –30+ year olds

6. Perceptions and experience of Working Life

More than four out of five over-30s (77%) have had more than one career or type of job during their working life to date, or before retiring and more than half (56%) have had three or more.

Number of types of job or careers had during working life

| Number of careers or types of job you have had | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| 1 | 19% | 24% | 16% | 14% | 49% | 14% | 23% | 12% | 17% | 13% | 11% | 25% |
| 2 | 21% | 30% | 22% | 21% | 10% | 29% | 21% | 12% | 19% | 23% | 17% | 17% |
| 3 | 23% | 20% | 29% | 37% | 17% | 27% | 21% | 17% | 17% | 22% | 31% | 17% |
| 4 | 14% | 9% | 22% | 19% | 9% | 12% | 25% | 17% | 9% | 12% | 6% | 7% |
| 5 | 6% | 6% | 4% | 3% | 0% | 4% | 5% | 13% | 5% | 5% | 14% | 11% |
| More than 5 | 13% | 7% | 5% | 7% | 17% | 12% | 1% | 23% | 20% | 20% | 18% | 24% |

When considering the skills development they had benefited from, two in five 30+ year olds felt that they were in a job which did not enable them to grow and develop new skills.

Professional development: Over half 30+ year olds did not feel they were developing their skill set in their current/ past jobs and the table below shows that a similar proportion (42%) didn't even feel that their job utilised the skills and strengths they already hold/ held. A similar proportion (39%) also felt that their current/ past role did not enable them to address their weaknesses.

Expectations of working life being met: Opinion is fairly evenly divided when 30+ year olds are asked to think about whether they want to pursue their current job for the rest of their career, with just over half (54%) saying they would be happy to do so and just under half (46%) expressing a desire for change.

The accuracy of assumptions that had been made about working life do vary between the 30+ year olds and the younger 17–21 year old age group, although trying to explain the differences is difficult. The higher proportion of 30+ year olds saying they 'never imagined they would do/ have done this sort of work' may be the result of greater opportunities available to this generation, or possibly that they harbour lower expectations.

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| I imagined I'd do this kind of job | 47% | 54% | 49% | 36% | 36% | 56% | 38% | 50% | 48% | 50% | 61% | 41% |
| I never imagined I'd do this kind of job | 53% | 46% | 51% | 64% | 64% | 44% | 62% | 50% | 52% | 50% | 39% | 59% |
| <i>net agree</i> | -6% | 8% | -2% | 28% | -28% | 12% | -24% | 0% | -4% | 0% | 22% | 56% |

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|------------------------------------|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| My job has taught me new skills | 45% | 41% | 46% | 48% | 69% | 34% | 52% | 43% | 44% | 40% | 39% | 48% |
| My job hasn't taught me new skills | 55% | 59% | 54% | 52% | 31% | 66% | 48% | 57% | 56% | 60% | 61% | 52% |
| <i>net agree</i> | 10% | -18% | -8% | -4% | 38% | -32% | 4% | -14% | -12% | 20% | 22% | 56% |

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| I want to do this job for the rest of my life | 46% | 40% | 48% | 40% | 30% | 58% | 41% | 50% | 50% | 49% | 51% | 47% |
| I don't want to do this job for the rest of my life | 54% | 60% | 52% | 60% | 70% | 42% | 59% | 50% | 50% | 51% | 49% | 53% |
| <i>net agree</i> | -8% | -20% | -4% | 20% | -40% | 16% | -18% | 0% | 0% | -2% | 2% | 56% |

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| My job utilises all my skills & strengths | 49% | 48% | 51% | 48% | 28% | 54% | 40% | 51% | 59% | 48% | 45% | 50% |
| My job doesn't utilise all my skills & strengths | 51% | 52% | 49% | 52% | 72% | 46% | 60% | 49% | 41% | 52% | 55% | 50% |
| <i>net agree</i> | -2% | -4% | 2% | -4% | -44% | 8% | -20% | 2% | 18% | -4% | 10% | 56% |

7. Career changes

Three-fifths of over-30s (62%) have had what they regard as a career change. This demonstrates that the great majority of those (86% of over-30s) who have had more than one job or career have not merely had a number of similar types of job, but have undergone what they view as a significant career change.

| Have you had a career change in your life? | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Yes | 62% | 58% | 62% | 67% | 77% | 65% | 63% | 71% | 60% | 49% | 41% | 74% |
| No | 38% | 42% | 38% | 33% | 23% | 35% | 37% | 29% | 40% | 51% | 59% | 26% |
| <i>Net 'YES'</i> | 24% | 16% | 24% | 34% | 54% | 30% | 26% | 42% | 20% | -2% | 18% | 48% |

The main reasons given for undergoing such a change involved personal growth and awareness. The table below shows that just under half (46%) had 'changed as a person along the way and started to want different things'. Just over a quarter admitted that they hadn't thought enough about what they wanted from their career (26%) and a similar proportion that they discovered what interested them had changed and therefore led them in a new direction.

Reasons for making a career change

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| I hadn't really thought about what I wanted out of my career before I started working | 26% | 24% | 32% | 20% | 19% | 23% | 32% | 20% | 33% | 17% | 34% | 32% |
| I changed as a person along the way and started to want different things | 46% | 47% | 35% | 40% | 48% | 55% | 53% | 45% | 41% | 55% | 26% | 50% |

| | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| I discovered that my skills and interests were different from what I would have expected and that led me in a new direction | 28% | 37% | 32% | 12% | 36% | 23% | 15% | 36% | 28% | 33% | 38% | 19% |
| I had placed too much importance on financial reward and not enough on personal fulfilment | 9% | 10% | 11% | 9% | 0% | 6% | 8% | 15% | 9% | 8% | 16% | 6% |
| If I'd had a clearer sense of my own strengths and weaknesses before I started I wouldn't have needed to make a career change | 8% | 5% | 3% | 11% | 10% | 11% | 18% | 7% | 7% | 4% | 0% | 16% |
| I was forced into a career change because I didn't have the right skills and qualifications | 5% | 4% | 0% | 6% | 8% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 2% | 2% | 14% | 11% |
| None of the above | 18% | 16% | 29% | 32% | 12% | 10% | 20% | 19% | 13% | 12% | 13% | 13% |

Around half (53%) of those over-30s who had not to date (or during their working life if retired) undergone a career change indicated that they would like to. This figure was highest (63%) among 30-34 year olds and fell gradually to 23% among 55-64 year olds. Over one-quarter (28%) of those who had retired would have liked to have had a career change.

8. Barriers to career development

Opinion is divided among the currently employed 30+ year olds as to whether there are, or have been, barriers to being able to follow preferred career paths. Just under one half (47%) believe that they have experienced restrictions or barriers, with the remainder (53%) saying not.

| Have you faced barriers to following the career you'd really like? | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|----------|
| Yes | 47% | 49% | 44% | 54% | 60% | 48% | 47% | 52% | 45% | 41% | 47% | 39% |
| No | 53% | 51% | 56% | 46% | 40% | 52% | 53% | 48% | 55% | 59% | 53% | 61% |
| Net 'YES' | -6% | -2% | 12% | 8% | 20% | -4% | -6% | 4% | -10% | 18% | -6% | -22% |

The most frequently cited barriers relate to lack of finances and advisory support, with the 30+ year olds being much more likely to mention inadequate careers advice from school as a barrier to career development when compared to the 17-21 year olds. The 'older' employed are also more likely to mention not having the right educational qualifications and skills, as a barrier to their career progression, when compared to their younger counterparts.

Barriers to being able to follow desired career path (% saying yes)

| % saying has been a barrier | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|--|-----------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Not having the right educational qualifications | 56% | 51% | 68% | 61% | 50% | 61% | 60% | 46% | 51% | 56% | 63% | 43% |
| Not getting enough encouragement from family/friends | 33% | 30% | 37% | 39% | 46% | 29% | 24% | 34% | 34% | 32% | 34% | 26% |
| Not getting good enough careers advice at school | 64% | 56% | 65% | 68% | 60% | 63% | 62% | 70% | 63% | 64% | 70% | 60% |
| Not having the time to pursue it | 46% | 41% | 51% | 54% | 45% | 41% | 55% | 37% | 40% | 53% | 51% | 35% |
| Not having the right skills to pursue it | 51% | 46% | 45% | 53% | 57% | 59% | 65% | 49% | 49% | 47% | 53% | 40% |
| Not having the money to pursue it | 61% | 51% | 61% | 66% | 69% | 56% | 64% | 53% | 63% | 72% | 66% | 55% |
| Not feeling the confidence to pursue it | 58% | 56% | 61% | 54% | 60% | 54% | 73% | 52% | 53% | 61% | 59% | 56% |
| Not enough jobs around that really appeal | 50% | 33% | 44% | 62% | 65% | 47% | 56% | 42% | 41% | 62% | 58% | 48% |
| Not having the right experience | 58% | 48% | 49% | 65% | 64% | 66% | 74% | 52% | 61% | 57% | 66% | 46% |

9. Career success

Looking back with hindsight, the thing that over-30s say would most have helped when they took their first job is ‘having more confidence in yourself’, cited by nearly three in five (58%). Despite the large majority of over-30s who report having made a career change, less than a third (32%) say that having ‘more time to decide on a career path’ would have been helpful before taking their first job.

How helpful would the following have been when taking your first job?

| % saying would have been 'very helpful' | GB | London | SE | SW | Wales | E. Midlands | W. Midlands | Eastern | Yorks. & Humber | NW | NE | Scotland |
|---|-----------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| More / better advice on careers | 45% | 50% | 41% | 47% | 52% | 49% | 47% | 42% | 36% | 42% | 45% | 48% |
| A better personal awareness of your skills and weaknesses | 46% | 57% | 45% | 51% | 29% | 39% | 45% | 41% | 31% | 42% | 58% | 55% |
| More confidence in yourself | 58% | 62% | 58% | 46% | 51% | 46% | 66% | 58% | 44% | 57% | 66% | 72% |
| More time to decide upon your career path | 32% | 39% | 25% | 26% | 34% | 34% | 33% | 29% | 28% | 25% | 36% | 43% |
| A better awareness of the job market | 41% | 47% | 40% | 38% | 56% | 37% | 43% | 43% | 30% | 34% | 42% | 51% |

10. Summary of findings

17–21s

- More than two-thirds (69%) of 17–21 year olds do not expect to be in their current career for the rest of their lives
- 26% of working 17–21 year olds disagreed that their job provides challenge and will help them develop new skills, with a further one-fifth (18%) sitting on the fence and claiming to neither agree or disagree with the statement that ‘my job is challenging and will help me develop new skills.’
- Only half (52%) of 17–21 year olds are ‘doing the kind of job they had imagined themselves doing’.
- Two-thirds of 17–21 year olds (68%) do not have a very clear career path in mind.
- Three-fifths (61%) of 17–21s accepted their current job following an hour or less consideration and more than three-quarters (77%) did so within a day.
- Just over one half (53%) of all 17–21 year olds believe that they have experienced restrictions or barriers when pursuing their desired, a significant proportion
- Perhaps contrary to popular belief, the vast majority (86%) of 17–21 year olds are aware that they have more to learn about their personal skills and weaknesses.
- Almost half mentioned a lack of skills (42%) and educational qualifications (43%) as the barrier to a desired career path.
- 17–21 year-olds have high expectations for the level of job satisfaction during their working lives, with four in five (79%) feeling positive about their future working life, and one in five (20%) feeling ‘very positive’.

Over–30s

- Nearly four out of five over–30s (77%) have had more than one career during their working life to date, or before retiring and more than half (56%) have had three or more.
- Three-fifths of over–30s (62%) have had what they regard as a career change.
- When considering the skills development they had benefited from, more than half of 30+ year olds (55%) felt that the job (or jobs they have had) did not enable them to grow and develop new skills.
- More than half of over–30s (51%) didn’t even feel that their job utilised the skills and strengths they already hold (or held, if retired).
- Just over one-quarter admitted that they hadn’t thought enough about what they wanted from their career (26%) and a similar proportion that they discovered what interested them had changed and therefore led them in a new direction.

11. Executive Summary: Dr Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, PhD

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Three Key Generic Psychological Links:

Self-awareness is extremely important for job satisfaction. People are better (perform better) and happier (are more satisfied) if they work on something they are good at. Hence knowing your strengths and limitations (what you can and cannot do) is a key determinant of both job satisfaction and job performance (Demetriou & Kazi, 2006; Fletcher & Bailey, 2003). Conversely, if you don't know what you are good at you will end up in the wrong job and, in turn, be unhappy at work.

Gaining knowledge of your skills, and basing career choice personal strengths is key for happiness in work. Lay people tend to think that happy employees do better at work (because they are more satisfied), but, in reality, it is highly-performing employees that end up being happy. Thus job performance impacts on job satisfaction more than the other way around (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Schleicher, Watt, & Greguras, 2004). Thus it is harder to make people happy if they are bad at the job than to make them unhappy if they are good at the job.

People's career choices are influenced by their perception of what they can do (T. Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007; Oswald & Ferstl, 1999), and these perceptions affect their choices regardless of their accuracy – thus thinking that you are bad at something will stop you from doing something, even if you are actually quite good at something. Conversely, thinking that you are good at something when you actually aren't, will lead to disappointing results – because high expectations are bound to collapse. Thus self-knowledge is important, but so is self-confidence; in some cases, the belief that you can do something will help you become good at something (pick up some skills), but in others, it is preferably to know one's limitations.

That 55% of 17–21 year olds do not expect to be in the same career for the rest of their lives, highlights the *uncertainty* with which most late adolescents/young adults think about their careers and is congruent with the finding (below) that people are hungry for more knowledge about what they can and cannot do.

The fact that 17–21 year olds are so unsure about the career paths they should embark on can be explained by three main factors: a) our personality traits and vocational interests do not really stabilise until later on in life (30 years onwards) (T. Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007) – i.e., until then, people change quite a bit; b) in industrialised, rich economies (like the UK), people can choose not to start working until later in life, but at the same time they are also forced to choose a career path

very early (when they do their A-levels first, and then at University); c) people's expectations of what each career path can bring (pros and cons) are not very accurate (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001).

The finding that 26% of working 17–21 year olds disagreed that their job provides challenge and will help them develop new skills, with a further one-fifth (18%) sitting on the fence and claiming to neither agree or disagree with the statement that 'my job is challenging and will help me develop new skills, is worrying because unchallenging jobs tend to promote job dissatisfaction (that is, the less challenged people feel at work, the more dissatisfied they are). (Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnham, 2009).

Conversely, if people feel challenged at work they not only feel "empowered" or inspired, but they also pick up novel skills, which in turn has a positive impact on their intellectual competence.

Only half (52%) of 17–21 year olds were 'doing the kind of job they had imagined themselves doing'. With the wider range of choices available, it is only normal that youngsters feel more pressure for choosing right (choices increase responsibilities and pressure – think, for instance, of how equal opportunities for sexes or ethnic groups have created pressure for hitherto discriminated groups to perform as highly as those groups previously advantaged). Importantly – and from a psychological point of view – this also creates more uncertainty and doubts in people. It is a bit like going to a restaurant with 20 or 30 main courses options on the menu, or going to one that has just 4 (the choice is easier in the latter).

Two-thirds of 17–21 year olds have no clear career path in mind (68%). This suggests that young people are very open to the suggestions of others when choosing their job role. Counter-intuitively, parents actually play a minor role compared to teachers, peers, friends, and even the media (all these factors are called "non-shared environment" in psychology and refer to what makes people growing in the same family, with the same parents, and often the same genes, often so different).

Three-fifths (61%) accepted their current job following an hour or less consideration and three-quarters (78%) within a day. This shows how "random" non-informed choices can be. It would be much better if people make rational and carefully planned decisions, but a lot of preparation and robust feedback and information from others, as well as knowledge of both the system and one's skills, is required for this.

A significant proportion (over two-fifths) stated a lack of skills (42%) and educational qualifications (43%) as the barrier to a desired career path. Whilst educational and skill differences certainly explain differences in both possibilities and outcomes, if people feel confident about their abilities they are more motivated to pursue education and get trained in a way that reduces these initial differences in education (Chamorro–Premuzic, & Furnham, 2009)

Perhaps contrary to popular belief, the vast majority (86%) of 17–21 year olds are aware that they have more to learn about their personal skills and weaknesses. This figure is compelling and resonates with psychological research showing that other people’s feedbacks on our competencies and potential abilities plays a strong role in determining our career choices (Crombie et al., 2005; Furnham, Moutafi, & Chamorro–Premuzic, 2005). Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that in the UK’s current higher-educational system students are over-assessed (i.e., graded extensively) but under-debriefed (T. Chamorro–Premuzic, Arteche, Bremner, Greven, & Furnham, submitted; Delis et al., 2007). Thus university students end up knowing only “how well they did in x assignment in comparison to the rest of the class”, but have little idea of what their real potential is at x or y . This is in line with studies showing low correlations between people’s perceived and actual abilities (Tomas Chamorro–Premuzic & Furnham, 2006; T. Chamorro–Premuzic & Furnham, 2005).

17–21 year-olds have high expectations for the level of job satisfaction during their working lives, with four in five (79%) feeling positive about their future working life, and three in five feeling (20%) ‘very positive’. This is important, because optimistic people tend to make more positive choices, including jobs that are more likely to develop their skills and enable them to grow and mature intellectually. However, a lot of optimism can also be dangerous because of the natural disappointment of not meeting expectations.

The report also shows that having a *real interest* in the job is more important than the money it could make you – this is congruent with the psychological theory of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction being two separate factors: Lack of money increases dissatisfaction but a lot of money does not automatically lead to satisfaction (Eracleous, Chamorro–Premuzic, & Furnham, submitted; Judge, Parker, Colbert, Heller, & Ilies, 2002). In fact, if people *genuinely* enjoy doing something they experience a total sense of happiness that can only be matched by artistic inspiration (de Roo–Adrians, 1974; Helton et al., 2007). This is important, because it shows that there is a lot of room for improvement and that youngsters are *hungry for self-knowledge* or *desperate to know about their real potential*.

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Appendix 1 – Sample structure

| | 17–21 year olds | 30 + year olds |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 51% | 47% |
| Female | 49% | 53% |
| | | |
| Age | | |
| 17 | 20% | |
| 18 | 20% | |
| 19 | 20% | |
| 20 | 21% | |
| 21 | 20% | |
| | | |
| 30–34 | | 12% |
| 35–44 | | 24% |
| 45–54 | | 21% |
| 55–64 | | 17% |
| 65+ | | 26% |
| | | |
| Region | | |
| London | 13% | 12% |
| South | 14% | 14% |
| South West | 8% | 9% |
| Wales | 5% | 5% |
| East Midlands | 7% | 7% |
| Eastern | 9% | 10% |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 9% | 9% |
| North West | 12% | 12% |
| North East | 5% | 4% |
| West Midlands | 9% | 9% |
| Scotland | 9% | 9% |
| | | |
| Socio-economic group | | |
| AB | 20% | 22% |
| C1 | 29% | 29% |
| | | |
| | 17–21 year olds | 30 + year olds |

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| C2 | 19% | 14% |
| DE | 32% | 35% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 88% | 94% |
| Non-white | 12% | 6% |
| Employment status | | |
| Employed (full or part time) | 44% | 49% |
| In full-time education | 49% | 1% |
| Not employed and looking for a job | 5% | 7% |
| Not employed and not looking for a job | 2% | 13% |
| Retired | n/a | 30% |
| Why not looking for a job? | | |
| Full time parent | 49% | n/a |
| Disability | 27% | n/a |
| No decent jobs around | 4% | n/a |
| Can't decide on job for me | 2% | n/a |
| Don't need the money | 2% | n/a |
| About to go travelling | 1% | n/a |
| Can't be bothered | 1% | n/a |
| Other reason | 19% | n/a |

Appendix 2 – The questionnaires

17-21 YEAR-OLDS - Questionnaire

Please say if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

(Strongly agree/slightly agree/neither agree nor disagree/slightly disagree/strongly disagree)

- a) I am in a career for life
- b) My job is challenging and will help me develop new skills

Please say statement is closest to how you feel about your job, even if neither statement exactly describes how you feel?

- a) 'I am happy in my job', or 'I hate my job'?
- b) 'I imagined I'd do this kind of job' or 'I never imagined I'd do this kind of job'?

Thinking about the working life ahead of you, which of the following describes you most accurately?

(Rotate)

- a) I have a very clear career path in mind
- b) I have a vague career path in mind
- c) I have no real interest in having a career
- d) I don't have a clear career path in mind

Do you feel that there are or have been barriers to you being able to get the job that you'd really like?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Which, if any, of the following have been barriers to you being able to follow the career path that you'd really like to follow? (Rotate) [Yes/No]

- a) Not having the right educational qualifications
- b) Not getting enough encouragement from family/friends
- c) Not getting good enough careers advice at school
- d) Not having the time to pursue it
- e) Don't think I have the right skills to pursue it
- f) Not having the money to pursue it
- g) Not feeling the confidence to pursue it
- h) Not enough jobs around that really appeal
- i) Not having the right experience

What is your best guess at how long you spent thinking about the job you are in, before you accepted it?

- a) No time at all
- b) Less than 5 mins
- c) About an hour
- d) A couple of hours
- e) A day
- f) A couple of days
- g) Three to seven days
- h) More than a week

Do you think you have more to learn about your personal strengths and weaknesses?

- a) Yes
- b) No

How useful have each of the following been in giving you a sense of your own strengths and weaknesses as a person? (Rotate)

[Very useful/fairly useful/ not very useful/ not useful/don't know]

- Comments from family
- Comments from friends
- Comments from teachers/careers advisers
- Things written in school reports
- Online tests
- Exam & other test results

In general, how positive or negative do you feel about how your working life will develop?

- a) Very positive
- b) Quite positive
- c) Quite negative
- d) Very negative
- e) Not sure
- f) Don't care

30+ YEAR-OLDS – Questionnaire

How many careers or types of job have you had during your working life so far (or until you retired)?

- a) 0
- b) 1
- c) 2
- d) 3
- e) 4
- f) 5
- g) More than 5

Please say which statement is closest to how you feel about your job (or, if you are retired, your career as a whole), even if neither statement exactly describes how you feel?

- a) 'I imagined I'd do this kind of job' or 'I never imagined I'd do this kind of job'?
- b) 'I don't feel as though the job I am doing teaches me any new skills' or 'I feel as though the job I am doing teaches me lots of new skills'
- c) 'I want to do this job for the rest of my career' or 'I don't want to do this job for the rest of my career'
- d) 'My job utilises all of my skills and strengths' or 'My job doesn't really utilise all the skills and strengths I have to offer'

Thinking about the expectations you had for your career when you were first starting out, are you currently occupying a job at a more senior level than you thought you would reach by your current age, or a less senior level, or about the level you expected?

- a) Higher level
- b) Lower level
- c) About as expected
- d) I never had any expectations of the level of seniority I would reach
- e) Don't know

Would you say that you ever have had a career change in your life?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Please indicate which of the following are or were factors in you making a career change? (tick all that apply)

- a) I hadn't really thought about what I wanted out of my career before I started working
- b) I changed as a person along the way and started to want different things
- c) I discovered that my skills and interests were different from what I would have expected and that led me in a new direction
- d) I had placed too much importance on financial reward and not enough on personal fulfilment
- e) If I'd had a clearer sense of my own strengths and weaknesses before I started I wouldn't have needed to make a career change
- f) I was forced into a career change because I didn't have the right skills and qualifications
- g) None of the above

Do you feel that there are or have been barriers to you following the career that you'd really like or the career that you really wanted?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Which, if any, of the following have been barriers to you being able to follow the career path that you'd really like / you really wanted to follow? (Rotate) [Yes/No]

- a) Not having the right educational qualifications
- b) Not getting enough encouragement from family/friends
- c) Not getting good enough careers advice at school
- d) Not having the time to pursue it
- e) Not having the right skills to pursue it
- f) Not having the money to pursue it
- g) Not feeling the confidence to pursue it
- h) Not enough jobs around that really appeal
- i) Not having the right experience

How helpful would you have found the following when you were taking your first job?

[Very helpful/fairly helpful/Not helpful at all]

- a) More / better advice on careers
- b) A better personal awareness of your skills and weaknesses
- c) More confidence in yourself
- d) More time to decide upon your career path
- e) A better awareness of the job market