

Friday Night Theology, 26th June, 2009.
Young People Matter

Would you believe that 14-18 year olds in England are contributing over £300 million to the economy through volunteering and charitable giving? That's the finding of a new report from the Evangelical Alliance released today, *Young People Matter* and reported on [BBC London](#).

The findings of this report are really quite astonishing – nearly half of 14-18 year olds are volunteering on a regular basis. When projected across the country at minimum wage this has an economic value of £210 million a year. To put it another way, it's the equivalent of 33,000 full time workers. And if that's not enough, if we also project their charitable giving nationally then that equates to £110 million each year. The two main reasons young people are doing all this is because they want to contribute to society and they like helping people. Such results surely indicate that perceptions of them as selfish Vikki Pollards, who behave '[like animals](#)', are far from true.

What's more, the report highlights the huge contribution religious organisations have to play in facilitating volunteering. 40% of those surveyed volunteer through a religious organisation, including, perhaps surprisingly, 10% of those who were atheists!

And it's not just that religious organisations are encouraging young people to volunteer, but personal faith and belief are significant: of those Christians who attend church nearly every week, 21% said they were motivated because their church encouraged it, while 48% said they were motivated by their faith. The more active one is as a Christian also makes a difference: 69% of very active Christians volunteer compared with 29% of those who call themselves Christian but attend church less than once a month. The figure for atheists was 30% and for agnostics 52%.

Our report suggests that it is when young people have a strong Christian faith that they both attend church more frequently and want to volunteer more frequently. Given the importance, then, of faith as a motivating factor to volunteering and the numbers of young people volunteering through religious organisations, the significance of all this is surely that faith should not be excluded from the public square.

Young people matter. And they need to know that. Let's hope then, that the results of this report can begin to break down some of the negative stereotypes surrounding young people, and let's praise them for what they are doing.

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To read the press release and download the report, click [here](#).