



# MEETING, MIXING, MENDING

HOW NCS IMPACTS YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL INTEGRATION

AN INDEPENDENT REPORT BY:

**James Laurence, February 2018**

*Centre for Social Investigation, Nuffield College, University of Oxford  
Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research, University of Manchester*

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### KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

1. **NCS has more positive impacts on young people who join the programme with lower social integration.** It also has positive effects on young people who join the programme already more socially integrated.
2. **Participating on NCS can help overcome barriers to social integration experienced by young people in society.** It has more positive impacts for young people joining the programme with less positive mixing with other ethnic groups or more negative encounters. It also has more positive impacts for young people who come from more disadvantaged and more segregated communities.
3. **NCS helps close the 'integration gap' between more and less socially integrated young people and communities.** It achieves this by bringing up the social integration of those young people who are less socially integrated, or who face greater barriers to integration, while maintaining the integration of those young people who are more socially integrated, or who face fewer barriers.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

- National Citizen Service (NCS) is a government-backed initiative that brings together young people from different backgrounds, aged 16-17, to engage in a programme of activities encouraging personal, social and civic development. By the end of 2016, 300,000 young people had participated in NCS and 12% of all 16- to 17-year-olds took part in the programme (National Audit Office, 2017).
- This report focuses on a key aim of NCS: to promote “a cohesive society by mixing young people from different backgrounds”. It explores how NCS impacts young people’s social integration, particularly their *attitudes towards other ethnic groups and how frequently they mix with other ethnic groups*.
- In measuring whether the programme works, previous evaluations have focused largely on the average impact of NCS on participants’ social integration. But those joining the programme face different barriers to integration, and it could be that NCS particularly helps those young people who face greater barriers.
- Therefore, building on a major evaluation of the scheme from 2015, this report asks:
  1. Does NCS have stronger impacts for young people who join the programme less socially integrated to begin with?
  2. Does NCS help overcome barriers to social integration faced by young people, such as less frequent positive contact with people from different ethnic groups, or more frequent negative encounters?
  3. Can NCS help build social integration in communities where it is much weaker, such as in more socio-economically disadvantaged areas or more ethnically segregated communities?

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

- Surveys were conducted among a sample of NCS participants who took part in the 2015 summer programme, and a control sample of similarly-aged young people who expressed an interest in participating on NCS but did not take part on the summer programme.
- Participants completed surveys before NCS began and three to five months after the programme ended. The control sample completed identical baseline and follow-up surveys over the same period. The data was collected by Ipsos MORI as part of their 2015 evaluation of NCS<sup>1</sup>.
- The impact of NCS was measured by looking at the changes in social integration reported by participants before and after participation. These changes are then compared to any changes reported by the control group over the same period. The difference in the changes between the two groups provided a measure of the impact of NCS: a difference-in-difference approach.

## 1.3 WHAT DID WE FIND?

- **Across participants as a whole, NCS leads to important improvements in social integration.** On average, participants reported an increase in warmth towards people from different ethnic groups; an increase in positive mixing with other ethnic groups; and an increase in positive perceptions of cohesion in their communities. They also reported no increase in their frequency of negative mixing with people from different ethnic groups.
- **However, behind these average impacts of NCS are critical differences in how participation impacts social integration for different groups of young people.** Young people join the programme showing important gaps in their levels of social integration. For example, those who join the programme with lower levels of social integration to begin with; young people who faced more barriers to social integration in their daily lives; and young people who came from communities where social integration is weaker.

- **NCS had more positive impacts on social integration for young people who had a lower level of integration to start with.** At the same time NCS had weaker positive impacts, but no negative impacts, for young people who joined the programme already reporting higher social integration. The result is that NCS helps close the social integration gaps for young people who, before joining NCS, reported lower integration.
- **NCS had more positive impacts on social integration for young people who faced greater barriers to integration in their everyday lives.** For instance, it led to bigger improvements in the attitudes of young people who joined reporting less frequent positive mixing with other ethnic groups, or more frequent negative encounters, in their daily lives. NCS therefore helps close the gap in social integration for those young people who face greater barriers to integration in their lives.
- **NCS had more positive impacts for young people who came from communities where social integration is weaker.** In particular, young people from more disadvantaged areas and more residentially segregated areas joined the programme with weaker social integration. However, NCS had more positive impacts on the integration of young people from these areas. NCS therefore helps to close the social integration gap for young people coming from communities where social integration is weakest.
- **Collectively, NCS both raises average levels of social integration among participants and helps close the ‘integration gaps’ between more and less integrated young people and communities.** The programme achieves this by bringing up the social integration of those young people who join reporting less social integration, or who face greater barriers to integration, while at the same time maintaining the integration of those young people who join reporting more social integration, or who face fewer barriers.
- **There are some gaps in integration NCS is less effective at overcoming; in particular, for young people living in less ethnically diverse areas.** Although young people in less diverse areas reported weaker social integration, NCS does not have a stronger impact on their integration outcomes. Instead, it exerts similarly small positive impacts on young people from both diverse and homogeneous areas. Therefore, while still boosting integration for participants, NCS does not significantly close the integration gap for young people from less diverse areas.

## 1.4 WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

- **NCS can be particularly effective for building social integration among young people, and communities, where social integration is weakest.** Recruitment drives that help bring such young people on programme, for example in more segregated and more disadvantaged areas, could enhance NCS’s impact on young people, their communities, and society. However, recruitment should not be focused solely on selecting less integrated young people on programme without first researching what the consequences of this may be. It may be that it is mixing young people in teams with different levels of integration that is important for building young people’s social integration.
- **The local focus of NCS can limit its positive impact in certain areas.** For example, in more ethnically homogeneous local authorities, opportunities for positive mixing between ethnic groups on NCS is low. However, design tweaks may help overcome these obstacles, such as ‘match-making’ teams across local authorities based on the ethnic (as well as socio-economic) composition of participants. This will enhance opportunities for mixing between groups.
- **The benefits of NCS after participation should be ‘topped up’.** There is a risk that the benefits accrued during NCS may not be sustained. One possibility is encouraging participants to continue their involvement in NCS, for example by returning as team leaders or co-ordinators. Alternatively, schools might take-up the subsequent role of co-ordinating further engagement activities post-participation.
- **Future evaluations should consider how NCS can exert different impacts for different groups of young people.** In doing so, they may help avoid conclusions that the programme is weaker or ineffective for certain outcomes. In reality, it may be particularly effective for a small proportion of participants – but those are the participants who will benefit the most.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/sites/default/files/14-090747-01%20NCS%202015%20Evaluation%20Report%20Final%20PUBLIC%20v2%2031072017.pdf>

## 2. CONTEXT OF EVALUATION

### 2.1 BACKGROUND TO NCS

The key aims of NCS are to promote:

- A cohesive society by mixing young people from different backgrounds.
- A responsible and mobile society by supporting the transition into adulthood and development of employment skills such as teamwork, leadership and communication.
- An engaged society by enabling young people to understand and deliver social action in their communities and enhancing their involvement in the democratic process.

A typical NCS programme lasts four weeks and places young people into teams of 12 to 15 members. Participants stay within these teams throughout the programme, undertaking three core phases. Firstly, they attend an outdoor residential activities phase, learning team-building skills (held more than one hour away from their homes). Secondly, a residential phase within their local areas, learning a series of new skills, including life skills aimed at preparing them for independent living. Thirdly, a local community project phase, with the projects designed and implemented within their teams, such as planting a communal garden (National Audit Office, 2017).

All 16-17 year olds across England and Northern Ireland are eligible to participate in NCS. In 2016, 93,000 young people attended NCS. This equates to 12% of all 16- to 17-year-olds in England (National Audit Office, 2017). Across England, a number of socio-demographic groups are over-represented on the programme relative to their national proportion, including: females, ethnic minorities, young people on free school meals, those with special educational needs and those from the most disadvantaged communities (National Audit Office, 2017). An explicit aim of the programme is to bring together young people from different ethnic, social and economic backgrounds. To encourage this, social mix providers are incentivised to create a profile of participants that matches the makeup of young people from the local authority in which a programme is run. The social mix characteristics targeted are ethnicity, free school meal status and special educational needs status.

### 2.2 AIMS OF THE REPORT

This report focusses on the impact of NCS on social integration; particularly attitudes towards different ethnic groups and mixing between different ethnic groups. Previous evaluations of NCS have documented the overall positive impacts of participation for young people's social integration (Ipsos MORI, 2014, 2015b, 2017b). These evaluations largely look at the average changes in social integration among participants. However, behind these overall impacts of NCS may exist key differences in how participation affects social integration for different groups of young people. For example, NCS may be particularly effective for building social integration among young people who are less integrated to begin with, when they go on programme.

This report asks three key questions:

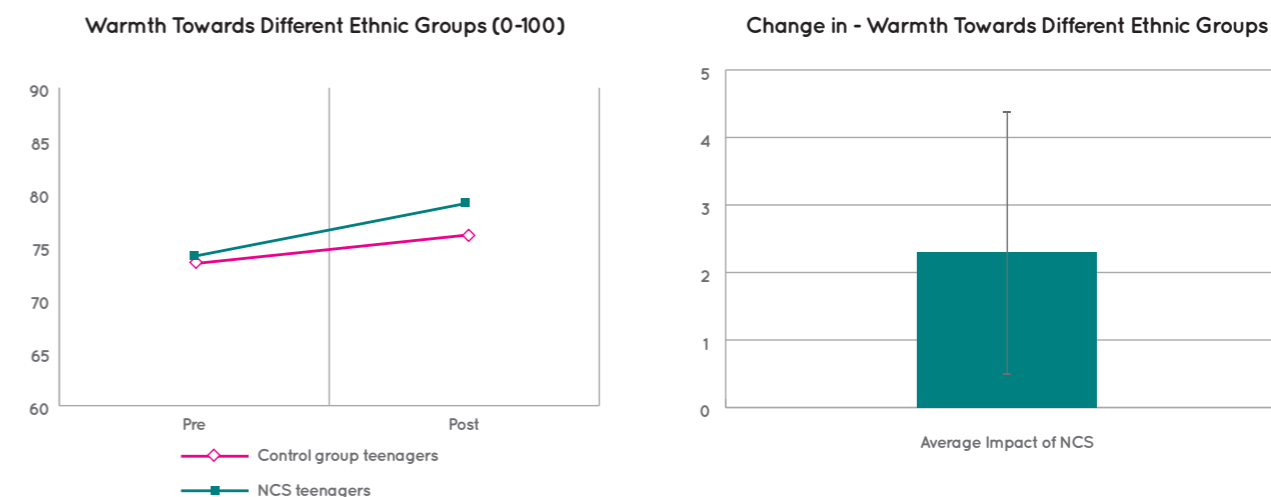
1. Does NCS have more positive impacts for young people who join the programme reporting lower levels of social integration to start with?
2. Does NCS have more positive impacts on attitudes towards ethnic difference for young people who join the programme facing more barriers to social integration in their daily lives. In particular, for those who report less frequent positive (or more frequent negative) social contact with other ethnic groups?
3. Does NCS have different impacts on social integration for young people who come from communities where social integration may be stronger or weaker? In particular, for those young people coming from more or less ethnically segregated, socio-economically disadvantaged or ethnically diverse areas?

### 2.3 METHODOLOGY

#### How impact is measured

The impact of NCS is evaluated by surveying participants before they start the programme and 3-5 months after participation to see whether any changes have occurred in indicators of social integration over the evaluation period<sup>2</sup>. These changes are then compared to a 'control group' of young people who did not participate in NCS, but who were surveyed over the same period as the participants. This group is composed of a random sample of 15-17 year olds who expressed an interest in participating with NCS but did not participate on the programme during the 2015 summer phase<sup>3</sup>. The aim is to create a control group of young people who are as similar to the participants as possible. In doing so, the control group is designed to represent the changes that would have occurred (if any) among the programme sample of participants had they not participated in the NCS programme. The impact of participation is estimated by looking at the change occurring before and after programme participation among participants compared to the change occurring over the same period among the control group. The difference in these changes (that is, the differences over time) provides the size of the impact of participation (known as a difference-in-differences approach). The sample figure below shows an example of this:

**SAMPLE FIGURE - CALCULATING THE IMPACT OF NCS: 'HOW TO READ THE FIGURES'**



The left-hand panel shows the pre- and post-period scores for the participant group and control group. For the participant sample, warmth towards different ethnic groups increased by five points.

Over the same period, warmth towards ethnic difference among the control sample increased by 2.64 points. The difference in these changes between the participant and control groups is 2.36 points. Therefore, participating in NCS had an effect of increasing warmth by +2.36 points. The right-hand panel shows the final (difference-in-difference) impact score as a bar graph<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> This work formed part of a wider Economic and Social Research Council grant which received ethical approval from the University of Manchester Ethics Committee (Ref: 15225).

<sup>3</sup> This could be because: young people had signed up but were placed on a waiting list due to full programmes; or because they signed up to attend a programme but did not arrive on the day; or young people who provided their contact details online or at a recruitment event but did not follow-up their interest during the evaluation period.

<sup>4</sup> The lines extending above and below the bar on the right-hand panel are the confidence intervals which surround the estimated size of the impact of participating.

## Sample

The data used in this report was collected by Ipsos MORI (on behalf of DCMS) as part of their 2015 evaluation of NCS (see 2015 Evaluation Report and the Technical Appendix for full details). This report studied NCS participants who attended the 2015 full summer programme in England<sup>5</sup>. The evaluation method consisted of paper and online surveys. Given the number of young people participating on NCS, the 2015 evaluation sampled a subset of the summer cohort of participants: those whose programmes started the week commencing 27 July 2015 and the week commencing 3 August 2015. The total number of participants on the full programme during the evaluation period was n = 13,800. The response rate to the first, baseline evaluation was 85% (n = 11,685). 4,721 young people were re-contacted to participate in the follow-up survey<sup>6</sup>. Of this, 1,608 young people returned the follow-up questionnaire (a follow-up response rate of 34%). Overall, 14% of those young people who completed the baseline survey before the programme are also present in the follow-up survey.

For the control group sample, 36,815 young people were contacted to complete the baseline questionnaire. Of this, 6,881 returned completed surveys (a response rate of 19%). 5,126 of these young people agreed to be re-contacted to participate in the follow-up survey and 3,985 were re-contacted. 2,041 of this control group responded (a follow-up response rate of 51%). The overall response rate of those young people in the control group who completed the baseline survey and the follow-up survey was 30%.

## Measures

This study used two sets of social integration measures. The first set examined young people's attitudes towards other ethnic/racial groups. This included feelings of 'warmth/coldness' towards different ethnic groups and perceptions of relations between different groups within one's local area, i.e. perceptions of 'community cohesion':

- **Warmth towards other ethnic groups:** Young people in the survey sample were asked "Everybody has different views about different groups of people. Imagine a thermometer that runs from zero to one hundred degrees, where 0 to 50 means you feel colder (less favourable); 50 to 100 degrees means you feel warmer (more favourable); and 50 means you don't feel particularly warm or cold. Using this thermometer please write in how you feel about people from...a different race or ethnicity to you". Studies have validated the 'feeling thermometer' questions as robust self-report indicators of out-group attitudes using experimental and Implicit Association Test measures (McConnell & Leibold, 2001).
- **Community cohesion:** Here young people in the survey sample were asked "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: my local area is a place where different backgrounds get along well together" ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). This measure is used by the UK government to assess community cohesion, and previous work has shown an association between low 'community cohesion' and increasing support for organisations promoting extremist ideologies (Blakemore, 2016; Casey, 2016).

The second set of indicators examined behavioural measures of social integration; in particular, young people's frequency of positive and negative social contact with different ethnic groups. More frequent positive inter-ethnic mixing is a core part of social integration. However, an often overlooked feature of mixing between different ethnic groups is that not all contact is positive and some experiences can be negative. While positive contact can improve attitudes towards different ethnic groups, a negative encounters can be associated with more negative attitudes. The challenge is that bringing people from different backgrounds together not only increases opportunities for positive contact but also increases the risk of more negative contact. It is therefore important to examine both positive and negative social contact:

- **Positive and negative social mixing:** Young people were asked "People report having positive and negative social contact with others from all kinds of backgrounds. Thinking of your own experiences with people from a different race or ethnicity to you, how often, if at all, would you say you have had...(a) POSITIVE or GOOD experiences. For example, someone being friendly to you, or making you feel welcome?" and (b) 'NEGATIVE or BAD experiences. For example, someone being mean to you, or making you feel unwelcome". These are measured on a five-point scale of 'Never' to 'Very often'. These measures are designed to accurately capture how frequently young people experience positive social mixing and negative social mixing with other ethnic groups (Lolliot et al., 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Absent from this evaluation are those who participated on the 2015 summer test programme, autumn programme and spring programme, and the small number of young people who participated in Northern Ireland.

<sup>6</sup> The large reduction in the 'n' of young people re-contacted to participate in the follow-up survey is primarily driven by the fact that only n = 6,656 of the n = 11,685 who completed the baseline survey agreed to be re-contacted.

## Analysis

To measure the impact of NCS the participant and control group samples were first made comparable across a number of dimensions; for example, on their socio-economic status, their demographics (for example, gender and ethnicity), or their pre-participation levels of civic engagement. This was achieved using a statistical technique known as kernel density propensity score matching (PSM)<sup>7</sup>. This report aimed to closely mirror the PSM approach taken in the 2015 NCS Evaluation<sup>8</sup> (Ipsos MORI, 2017b). A fuller discussion of the matching procedure is in Appendix A. Regression analysis was then performed on the matched sample of participants and the control group of young people<sup>9</sup>. After matching and accounting for missing data, the responses from 1,449 participants and 1,935 control group young people were analysed<sup>10</sup>. The social integration outcomes reported in this paper are the predicted outcomes derived from the statistical regression models<sup>11</sup>. That is, the difference-in-difference score for each variable analysed.

A key aim of the report was to explore differences in the impact of NCS across sub-categories of young people; for example, comparing the impact of participation on those who join the programme with higher and lower levels of pre-participation social integration. Interaction terms were used within the regression analyses to test for whether differences between groups were statistically significant. The social integration outcomes across sub-groups are reported in this paper when the differences in the impact of participation between groups is statistically significant at the 97.5% level. This stricter test of significance (beyond the conventional 95% level) has been applied given that the number of outcomes and models that have been examined. Setting significance at a conservative threshold of 97.5% manages the risk of discovering a significant result simply by chance (known in the literature as a 'Type I' error). Due to the achieved sample size, it was difficult to fully test for differences in the impacts of NCS between young people who self-report as white or non-white<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The propensity score specification was designed to broadly replicate the kernel-based matching approach taken by Ipsos MORI in their 2015 evaluation of NCS.

<sup>8</sup> This was based on the available information in the 2015 Ipsos MORI Evaluation Technical Report.

<sup>9</sup> For robustness non-response weights were also tested to account for changing compositions of the samples between the baseline and follow-up surveys.

<sup>10</sup> This is in line with the Ipsos MORI evaluation which used 1541 participants and 2012 controls.

<sup>11</sup> The large confidence intervals for some predicted scores stem from small sample sizes when creating subcategories of young people based on their attitudes and behaviours before participation.

<sup>12</sup> Small samples of particular non-white groups, (e.g. self-reported Asian, Black, Mixed and other) make separate analysis for each sub-group especially prohibitive.

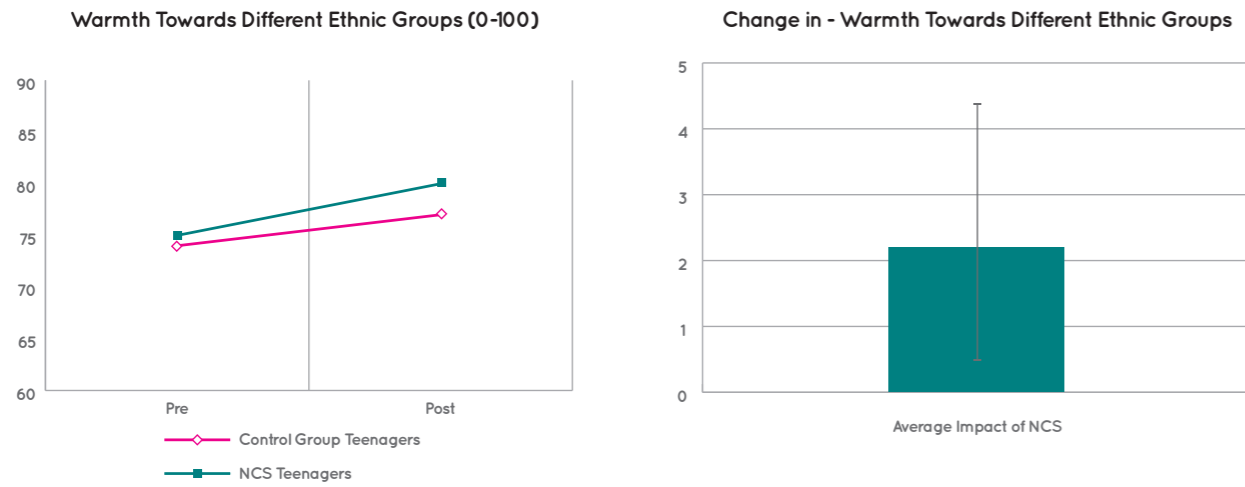
# 3. RESULTS

## 3.1 WHAT ARE THE OVERALL IMPACTS OF NCS ON SOCIAL INTEGRATION ACROSS ALL PARTICIPANTS?

Figures 1 to 4 show the average changes in social integration that occurred among the participant and control groups, as well as the 'difference-in-difference' impact scores. Figures 1 to 3 show that, on average, participants reported relatively small but important improvements in social integration. Three to five months after participating on NCS, young people reported an increase in warmth towards other ethnic groups; more positive perceptions of community cohesion; and increases in positive contact with other ethnic groups. In addition, young people who completed NCS did not report more frequent negative contact (Figure 4). Therefore, despite the increased opportunities for negative contact that can come from bringing people from different backgrounds together, these were not realised on the NCS programme. There were small differences in this trend for white and non-white young people, with negative contact declining more among white young people in the analysis, but only slightly.

### Warmth Towards Different Ethnic Groups

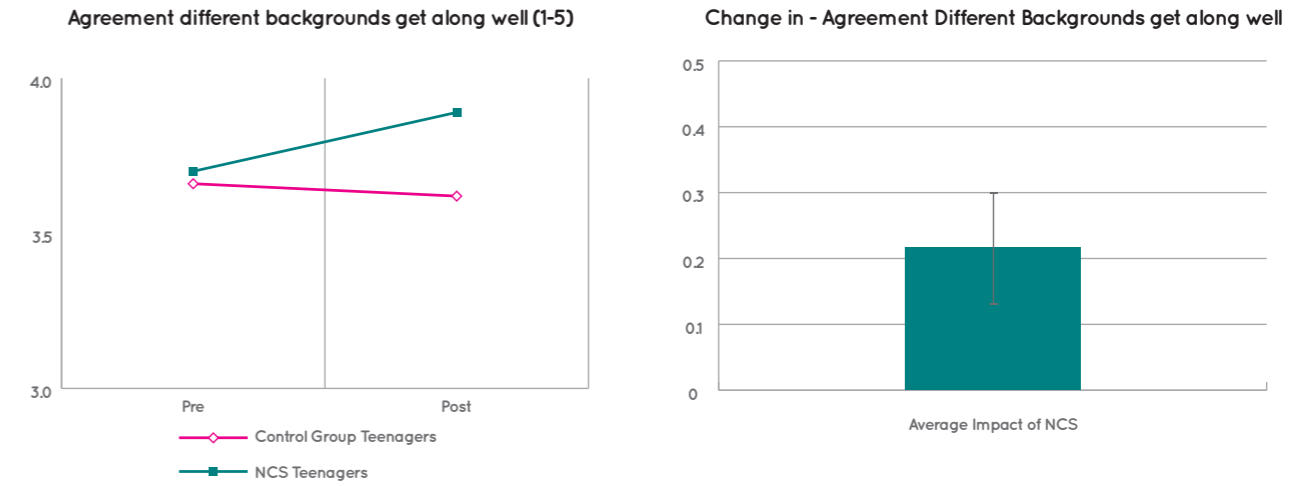
**FIGURE 1**  
NCS IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S WARMTH TOWARDS DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS



This figure shows NCS leads to increases in young people's warmth towards other ethnic groups.

### Community Cohesion

**FIGURE 2**  
NCS IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF COHESION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES



This figure shows NCS leads to improvements in young people's perceptions of cohesion in their community.

### Positive Mixing with Different Ethnic Groups

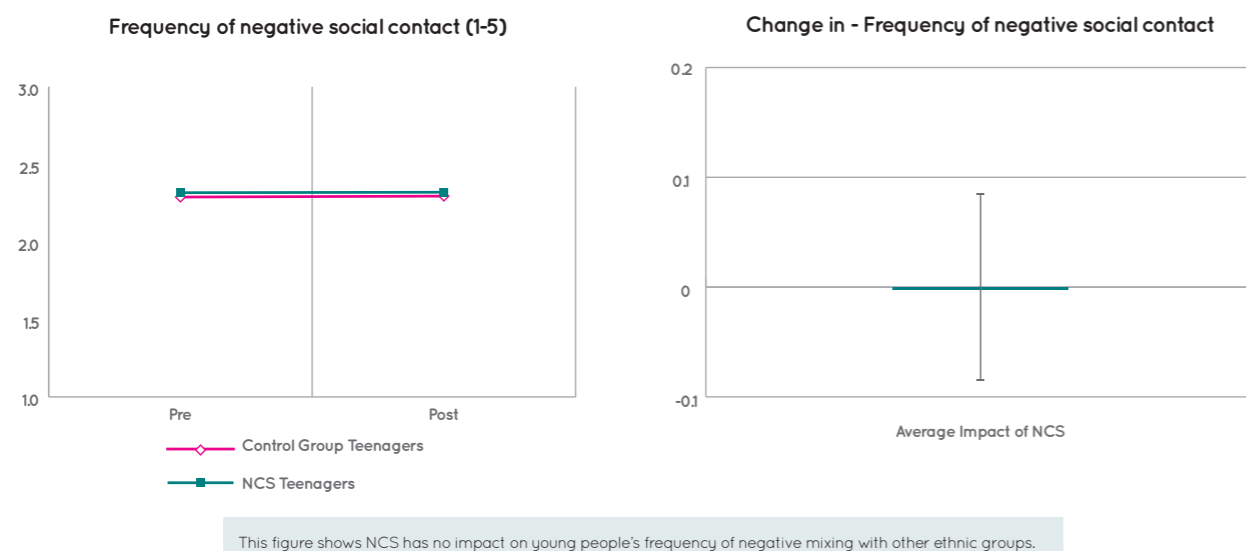
**FIGURE 3**  
NCS IMPACT ON HOW MUCH POSITIVE MIXING YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS



This figure shows NCS leads to increases in young people's frequency of positive mixing with other ethnic groups.

## Negative Mixing with Different Ethnic Groups

**FIGURE 4**  
NCS IMPACT ON HOW MUCH NEGATIVE MIXING YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS



### KEY FINDINGS: WHAT ARE THE OVERALL IMPACTS OF NCS ON SOCIAL INTEGRATION ACROSS ALL PARTICIPANTS?

- When looking at average changes across all participants, NCS lead to small but important improvements in social integration among young people. The programme has weaker positive (but no negative) impacts on young people who join the programme already more socially integrated.
- Despite more opportunities, NCS does not lead to more experiences of negative social encounters with other ethnic groups.
- These findings mirror those reported in the 2015 evaluation of NCS.

### 3.2 HOW NCS IMPACTS YOUNG PEOPLE WHO JOIN THE PROGRAMME WITH HIGHER OR LOWER LEVELS OF INTEGRATION BEFORE PARTICIPATING

Not all young people may experience the same impacts of participating on NCS. One factor that may drive differences in NCS impact could be how socially integrated a young person was before they joined the programme. Young people who already reported high levels of integration (such as very positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups, or frequent positive social mixing) may not have experienced big improvements in their levels of integration given they were already very integrated. In fact, participation could have harmed their levels of integration if, for example, their experience on the programme was not all positive. However, young people who joined the programme with lower levels of integration may have benefited much more from participation and thus reported larger improvements in social integration<sup>13</sup>. This could mean that, behind the relatively small overall impacts observed previously, there may be bigger impacts among those young people who went on programme reporting lower levels of social integration to begin with.

This section of the report therefore examines the following question: **“Does NCS have more positive impacts on social integration for those participants who joined the programme with lower levels of social integration to start with?”**

<sup>13</sup> This could be because the survey questions used to measure social integration often have upper- and lower-limits fixing how a young person can respond. E.g. the frequency of positive social mixing question goes from 1 = ‘never’ to 5 = ‘very often’. Therefore, we may run into ‘floor-’ and ‘ceiling-effects’ where young people who join the programme who already have frequent positive mixing simply cannot increase as much as those who join the programme with less frequent mixing (who have more space to improve). Alternatively, how integrated a young person is before joining the programme may affect the experiences they take away from it.

To test this, the levels of young people’s social integration outcomes before they participated were examined. Here participants (and comparable control group young people) are placed into categories according to whether they reported low, medium or high scores on the integration outcome before the programme participation period. This allowed for the testing of whether, for example, participating on NCS led to bigger increases in warmth towards different ethnic groups if a participant reported colder feelings before going on programme.

## Warmth Towards Different Ethnic Groups

**FIGURE 5**  
NCS IMPACT ON WARMTH TOWARDS OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS DEPENDING ON HOW WARM YOUNG PEOPLE FELT BEFORE GOING ON PROGRAMME

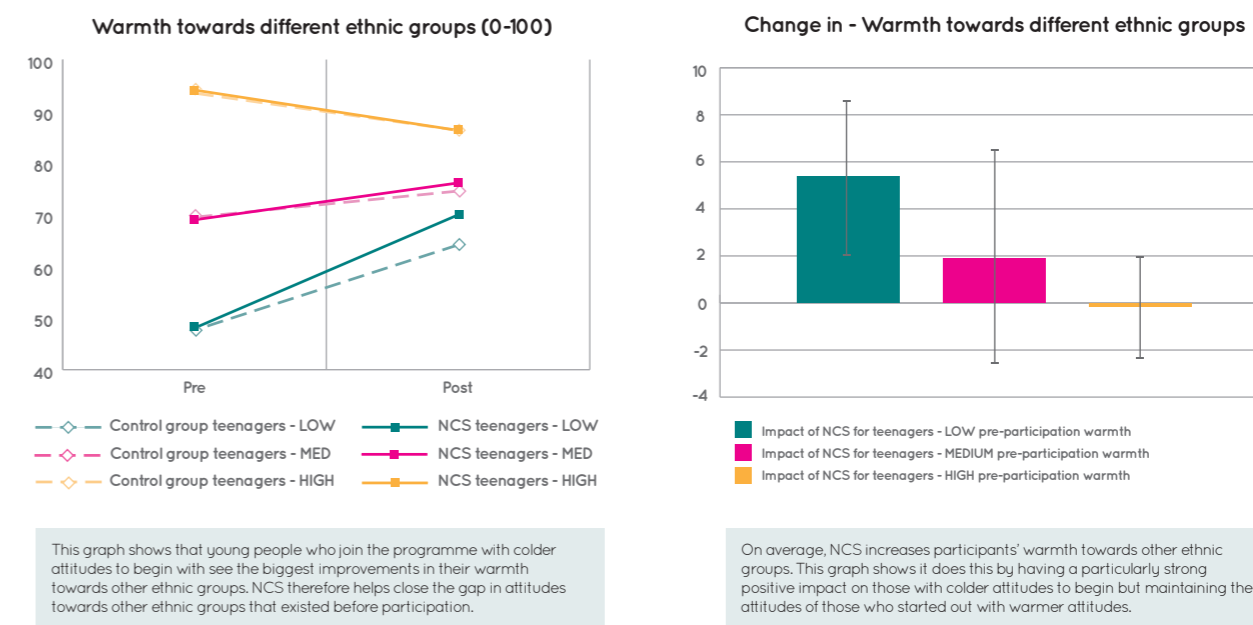


Figure 5 shows the impact of NCS on warmth towards other ethnic groups depending on how warm young people felt before joining the programme. Participant and control samples were grouped into three categories based on their reported pre-participation warmth towards other ethnic groups, as follows:

- Low-warmth before participation (reporting a warmth between 0° and 50°),
- Medium-warmth before participation (reporting a warmth between 51° and 75°),
- High-warmth before participation (reporting a warmth between 76° and 100°).

The first point to note is that, over time, the attitudes of young people who reported warmer feelings towards ethnic difference at the pre-participation period became cooler, while the attitudes of young people who reported cooler feelings at the pre-participation period became warmer. This is likely driven by a phenomenon known as ‘regression to the mean’ (RttM). What is important here is whether, within each sub-category, the participant and control groups see equal or different changes pre- and post-participation.

NCS participants who started out with high-warmth see their attitudes towards ethnic difference having cooled over time. However, the control group who started out with high-warmth reported an equal decline over the same period. NCS therefore had little impact on the attitudes of participants who joined the programme with high-warmth towards other ethnic groups. However, importantly, NCS did not have a negative impact on these young people.

Participants who reported low-warmth before taking part in NCS showed an improvement in their attitudes, and this improvement occurred at a faster rate than young people in the control group. Therefore, NCS had a stronger positive impact on young people who joined the programme with colder attitudes to begin with. The result is that, after participation, the gap in warmth towards different ethnic groups between those who started out with warmer and cooler attitudes was reduced more among NCS participants than among the control group.

**Regression to the mean** is the tendency for values that are more extreme when first measured to be closer to the average on the second measurement. For example, a sprinter that breaks a world record (an extreme value) will probably run closer to his or her average time on the next race. Simply put, if, when first asked, an individual reports being much warmer or much colder towards ethnic difference than the mean for all individuals, then when asked again their response is likely to be closer to the average for all people. For a helpful introduction to the concept see: [https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Regression\\_to\\_the\\_mean](https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Regression_to_the_mean)

To that end, having a control group of young people who did not participate is critical for understanding the impact of the NCS programme. For example, the group of participants who joined NCS with high-warmth towards other groups showed their warmth decline by 7.4 degrees. This could be 'regression to the mean' or it could be that participating had a detrimental effect for those young people who joined the programme already very warm. However, over the same period, the warmth of the control group declined by 7.3 degrees. This was essentially identical to the decline seen among those who did participate. Therefore, it can be stated with greater confidence that 'regression to the mean' was underpinning the decline and not some element of the NCS programme.

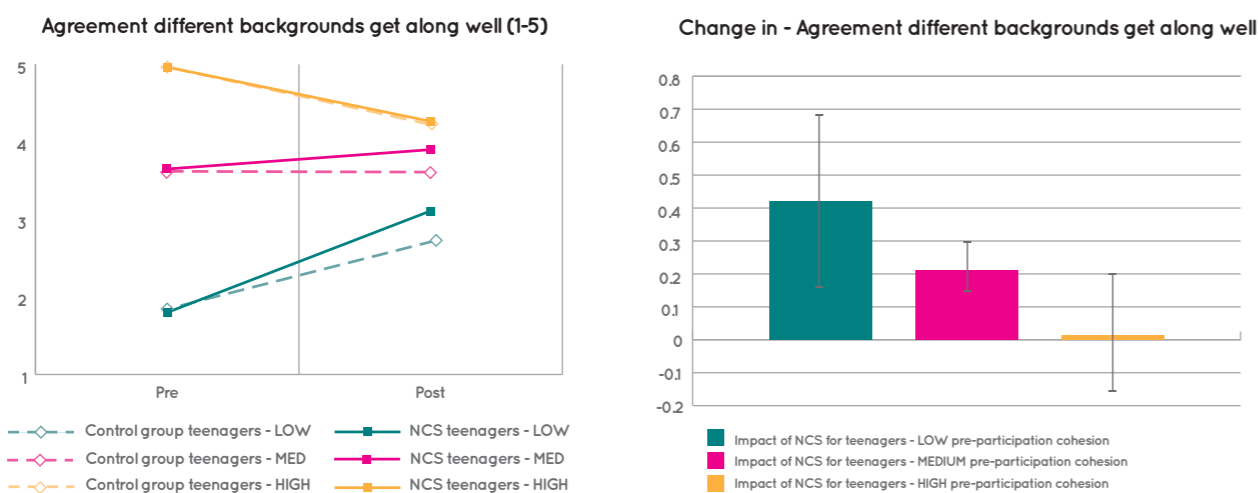
We can see on average, participation increases young people's warmth towards other ethnic groups by 2.31 degrees. However, for young people who had low-warmth before joining, participation increased their warmth by 5.4 degrees.

### Summary:

- Young people who joined the programme with warmer attitudes reported little positive impact but no negative impact of participation.
- For young people who joined the programme with colder attitudes, participation had a stronger positive impact.
- NCS therefore raised average levels of warmth among young people but also closed the social integration gap for young people that existed before participation. This is because NCS enhanced the warmth of those with the coldest attitudes while having no impact on the levels of those starting with the warmest attitudes.
- The smaller overall impact of participation previously observed across all participants was therefore partly caused by the fact that average pre-participation levels of warmth among participants was relatively high: 75° (out of 100°).

## Community Cohesion

**FIGURE 6**  
NCS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY COHESION DEPENDING ON HOW YOUNG PEOPLE FELT ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITIES BEFORE JOINING THE PROGRAMME



This graph shows that young people who join the programme with more negative perceptions of cohesion in their communities see the biggest improvements in cohesion from participation. NCS therefore helps close the gap in community cohesion that existed between young people before they joined the programme.

On average, NCS improves participants' perceptions of cohesion in their communities. This graph shows it does this through a particularly strong positive impact on those who had lower cohesion to begin with, while maintaining the positive views of those who joined the programme with higher cohesion.

**Figure 6** shows the impact of NCS on community cohesion depending on how young people felt about their communities before joining the programme. Participant and control samples were grouped into three categories based on their level of pre-participation community cohesion:

- Low-community cohesion before participation (those who reported they 'strongly disagree'/'disagree' 'my local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well').
- Medium-community cohesion before participation (those who reported they 'neither agree nor disagree'/'agree'...).
- High-community cohesion before participation (those who reported they 'strongly agree'...).

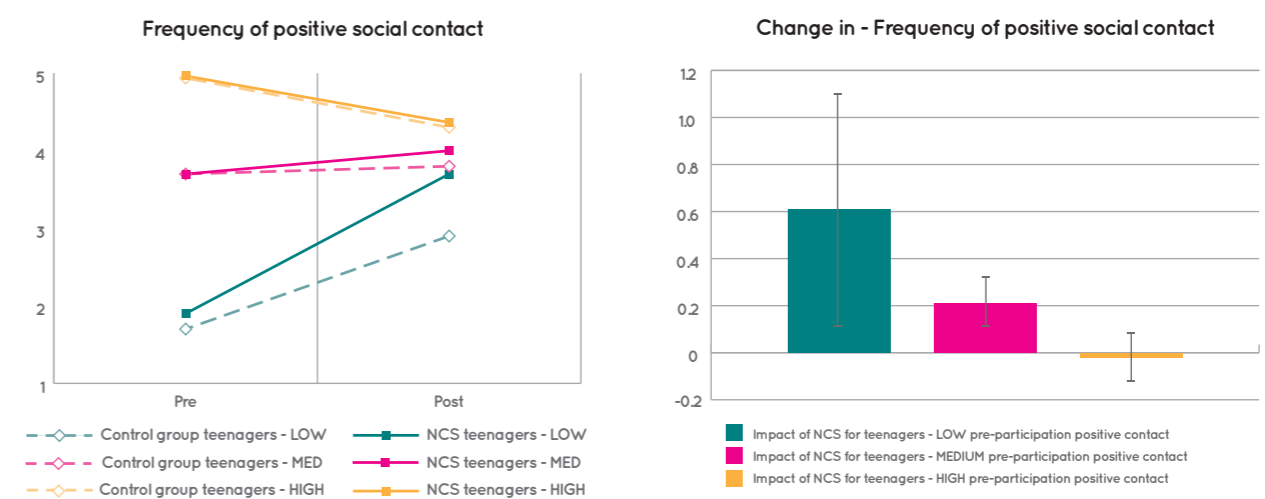
**Figure 6** again shows a general trend towards the mean (RttM) over time. Accounting for this, participants who joined the programme with high-community cohesion reported no impact of participation on their cohesion. Here the participant and control groups see identical changes pre- and post-participation. Young people joining the NCS programme with medium-community cohesion reported some improvement in cohesion, compared to the control group of young people that did not take part. However, young people who reported low pre-participation community cohesion showed a strong positive impact on their cohesion relative to the control group of young people. Subsequently, NCS helped close the gap in community cohesion for those young people who joined the programme with lower levels of cohesion to begin with.

### Summary:

- Participants who joined the programme reporting high cohesion experienced little positive but no negative impact of NCS.
- Participants who joined the programme with medium, and especially low cohesion reported stronger positive impacts of the programme.
- NCS therefore raised average levels of cohesion. However, it also closed the gap in cohesion that existed before participation by bringing up those who were least integrated to begin with.
- The smaller overall impact of NCS previously observed was partly driven by the fact that many participants who joined the programme already reporting medium-to-high community cohesion (the average was 3.7 on a scale of 1-5).

## Positive Mixing with Different Ethnic Groups

**FIGURE 7**  
NCS IMPACT ON POSITIVE MIXING WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH POSITIVE MIXING YOUNG PEOPLE HAD BEFORE JOINING THE PROGRAMME



This graph shows that young people who join the programme reporting less frequent positive mixing with other ethnic groups see the biggest increase in their levels of positive mixing from NCS. NCS therefore helps close the gap in levels of positive mixing that existed before participation.

On average, NCS increases young people's positive mixing with other ethnic groups. This graph shows it does this by having a particularly strong positive impact on those who joined NCS with less frequent positive mixing. At the same time, it maintains the levels of mixing of those who joined NCS reporting frequent positive mixing in their everyday lives.



Figure 7 shows the impact of NCS on positive mixing with other ethnic groups depending on how much positive mixing young people had before joining the programme. Participant and control samples were grouped into three categories based on their level of pre-participation positive mixing with other ethnic groups:

- Low-positive mixing before participation (those who reported positive mixing never/rarely).
- Medium-positive mixing before participation (those who reported positive mixing sometimes/quite often).
- High-positive mixing before participation (those who reported positive mixing very often).

Figure 7 demonstrates again that, over the three to five month period, positive mixing of all three groups of young people tend towards the mean (RttM). Accounting for this, NCS participants who joined the programme with high levels of positive mixing show no increase but also no decrease in positive mixing after participation. Young people who joined the NCS programme with medium levels of positive mixing reported somewhat more frequent positive mixing after participation, relative to the control group. However, participants who started out with low-positive mixing in their daily lives reported a substantial increase in positive mixing from participating on the programme, relative to the control group. This increase almost entirely closed the gap between them and young people who joined the programme reporting medium levels of positive mixing.

### Summary:

- Participants who already reported frequent positive mixing before attending NCS see little impact of participation on their levels of positive mixing.
- Participants joining the programme who reported less frequent positive mixing experience see much larger increases in positive mixing after participation.
- NCS therefore raised average levels of positive mixing but also closed the gap between those who, before participation, reported higher and lower levels of positive mixing.
- The smaller overall impact of NCS on positive mixing was therefore partly driven by the fact that average pre-participation levels of positive mixing among participants were relatively high (4.05 on a scale of 1-5).

### Negative Mixing With Different Ethnic Groups

Previously it was observed that, across all participants, NCS did not lead young people to experience more or less frequent negative encounters with people from other ethnic groups. However, as with positive contact, it could be that those participants joining the programme with much less negative contact to begin with show some growth. Or, that those with more frequent negative mixing before participation report some decline. However, this analysis found no evidence that NCS impacted how much negative contact young people have.

### KEY FINDINGS: HOW NCS IMPACTS YOUNG PEOPLE WHO GO ON PROGRAMME WITH HIGHER OR LOWER LEVELS OF INTEGRATION BEFORE PARTICIPATING:

- NCS has stronger positive impacts on social integration for young people who join the programme less socially integrated to begin with.
- The programme has weaker positive (but no negative) impacts on young people who join the programme already more socially integrated.
- Therefore, NCS helps close the gaps in social integration for young people who are less integrated before participating.
- The result is that NCS raises average levels of social integration among participants by bringing up those young people less socially integrated at the outset, but maintaining the integration of those who are already more socially integrated to begin with.

## 3.3 OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS: INFREQUENT POSITIVE MIXING AND FREQUENT NEGATIVE MIXING WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS

Mixing with other ethnic groups plays a key role in forming attitudes towards ethnic difference. A lack of positive contact with other ethnic groups, or frequent negative contact, can form significant barriers to generating positive inter-ethnic attitudes. Young people who have infrequent positive contact with other groups, or more frequent negative experiences, express less positive attitudes towards different ethnic groups (Hewstone, 2015). A central tenet of NCS is that it encourages positive social mixing between young people from different backgrounds. NCS may therefore have more positive effects on the attitudes of young people joining the programme with less frequent positive mixing or more frequent negative experiences in their daily lives.

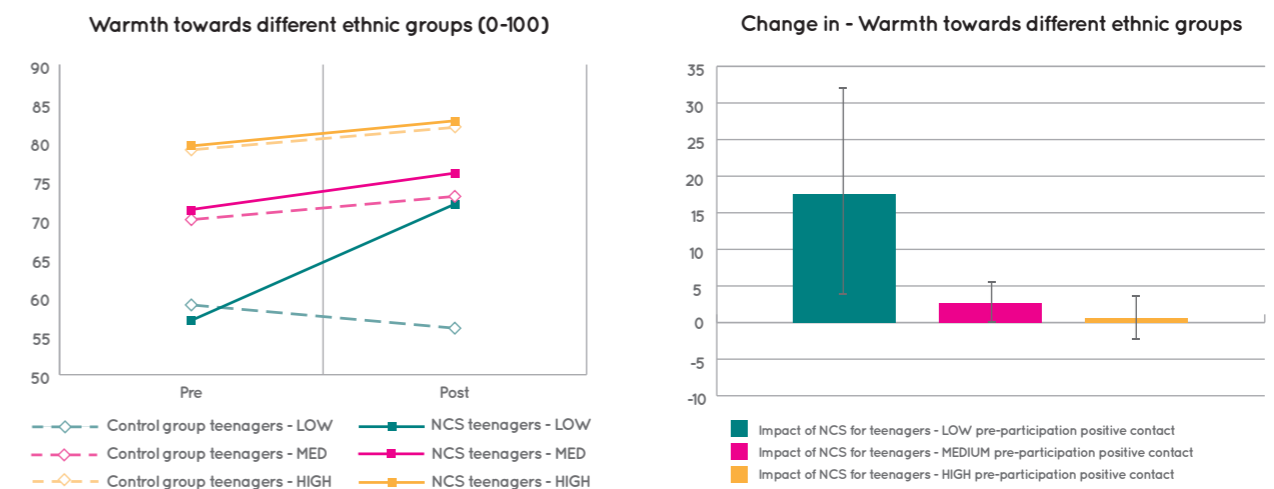
This section of the report therefore asks: **“Does NCS have bigger impacts on social integration attitudes for participants who join the programme with less positive mixing, or more negative encounters with other ethnic groups?”**

Here the main integration outcomes analysed are young people’s attitudes towards ethnic difference. Participants (and comparable control group young people) are first placed into categories according to whether they reported low, medium or high levels of positive and negative mixing with other ethnic groups before participating on NCS<sup>14</sup>. This allows for a test of whether NCS has different impacts on young people’s integration attitudes depending on how much positive/negative contact they had with other groups before joining.

<sup>14</sup> Here the hypothesis is the absence of positive (or presence of negative) mixing leads to less positive attitudes towards ethnic difference. However, the opposite is also likely the case. That less positive attitudes lead to more negative (and less positive) mixing. Under the latter case, NCS might increase rates of positive mixing (and decrease rates of negative mixing) by improving attitudes towards ethnic difference. Both processes are likely operating.

### Warmth Towards Different Ethnic Groups: differences by pre-participation positive mixing

**FIGURE 8**  
NCS IMPACT ON WARMTH TOWARDS OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH POSITIVE MIXING YOUNG PEOPLE HAD BEFORE JOINING THE PROGRAMME



This graph shows that young people who join the programme with less positive mixing report the coldest attitudes towards other ethnic groups. However, participating on NCS leads to much bigger improvements in the attitudes of this group. NCS therefore helps close the gap in integration attitudes for young people who normally have very little positive social mixing in their daily lives.

On average, NCS increases young people’s positive views of other ethnic groups. This graph shows it does this by particularly helping those with fewer experiences of positive mixing in their daily lives, while maintaining the attitudes of those who normally have frequent positive mixing.

**Figure 8** shows the impact of NCS on feelings of warmth towards other ethnic groups for young people who reported low-, medium- or high-levels of positive mixing in their daily lives before joining NCS.

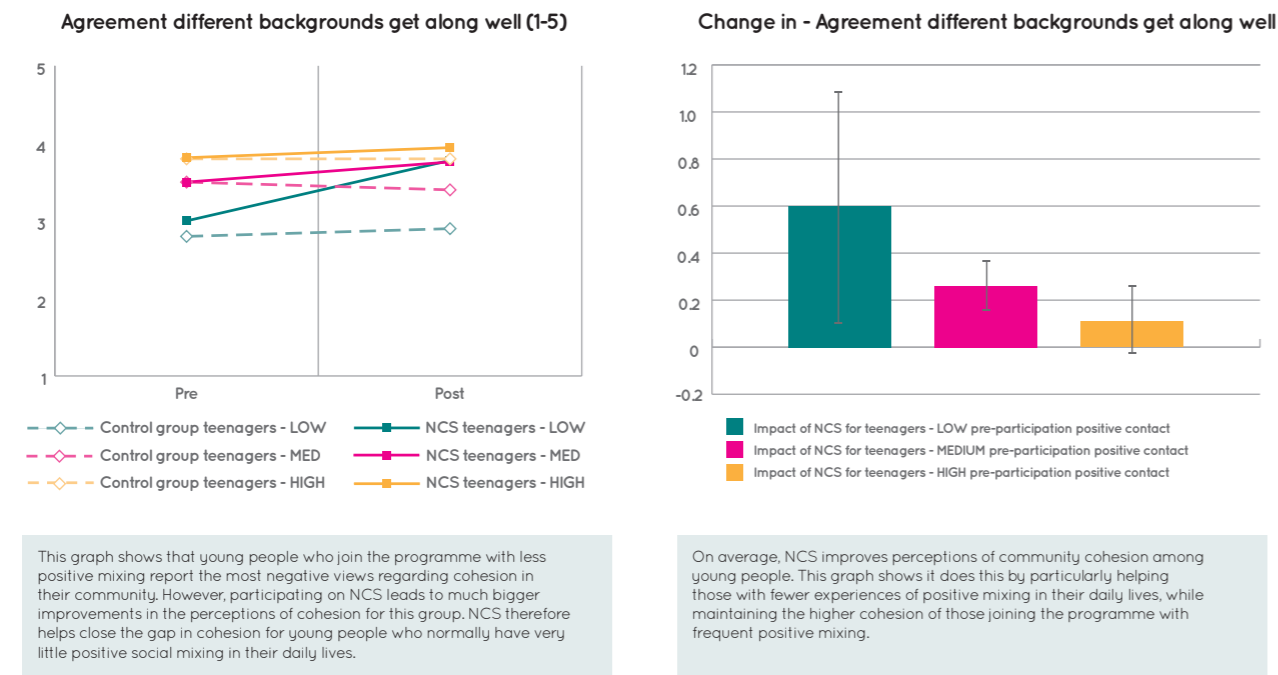
Among all young people, those who reported less frequent positive mixing with other ethnic groups before participation reported colder towards other ethnic groups. NCS had little impact on young people who already had high-levels of positive mixing before participation. Young people who had medium-levels of pre-participation positive mixing showed some improvement in their warmth, close to the average for all participants. However, young people who went on programme with low-levels of positive mixing reported a large improvement in their warmth towards other groups. We therefore see that, on average, participation increases young people's warmth towards other ethnic groups by 2.31 degrees. However, for young people who had low levels of positive mixing with other groups before joining, participation increased their warmth by 17.6 degrees. In fact, participation goes a long way to closing the gap in warmth between young people who went on programme with low-positive mixing and young people who reported medium-levels of positive mixing.

### Summary:

- Young people who joined the programme with lower levels of positive mixing with other ethnic groups reported colder attitudes towards other ethnic groups.
- NCS had little impact on the attitudes of young people who joined the programme reporting high levels of positive mixing with other ethnic groups to start with.
- NCS had a much stronger positive impact on warmth towards other ethnic groups for those young people who joined the programme with the lowest levels of positive mixing.
- NCS goes a long way towards closing the gap in integration attitudes for those young people who normally have very little positive social mixing with other ethnic groups in their daily lives.

## Community Cohesion: Differences by pre-participation positive mixing

**FIGURE 9**  
NCS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY COHESION DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH POSITIVE MIXING YOUNG PEOPLE HAD BEFORE JOINING THE PROGRAMME



**Figure 9** shows the impact of participating on perceptions of community cohesion for young people who join the programme with low-, medium- or high-levels of positive mixing in their daily lives.

Overall, young people who reported more frequent positive mixing before joining the programme reported more positive perceptions of cohesion in their local areas. Participants with high-levels of pre-participation

positive mixing showed a small improvement in community cohesion. However, those participants who joined the programme with medium- and especially low-levels of positive mixing showed bigger improvements in their perceptions of community cohesion.

The impacts of NCS in Figure 9 can also be looked at as percentages<sup>15</sup>. Young people who participated on NCS become, on average, 9.6% more likely to 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well. However, young people who had low-levels of positive mixing with other groups before joining became 24.5% more likely to report that they 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where different backgrounds get along well.

In fact, after participation, young people who went on programme with low-levels of positive mixing completely closed the 'community cohesion gap' with those young people who joined the programme with medium-levels of mixing<sup>16</sup>.

### Summary:

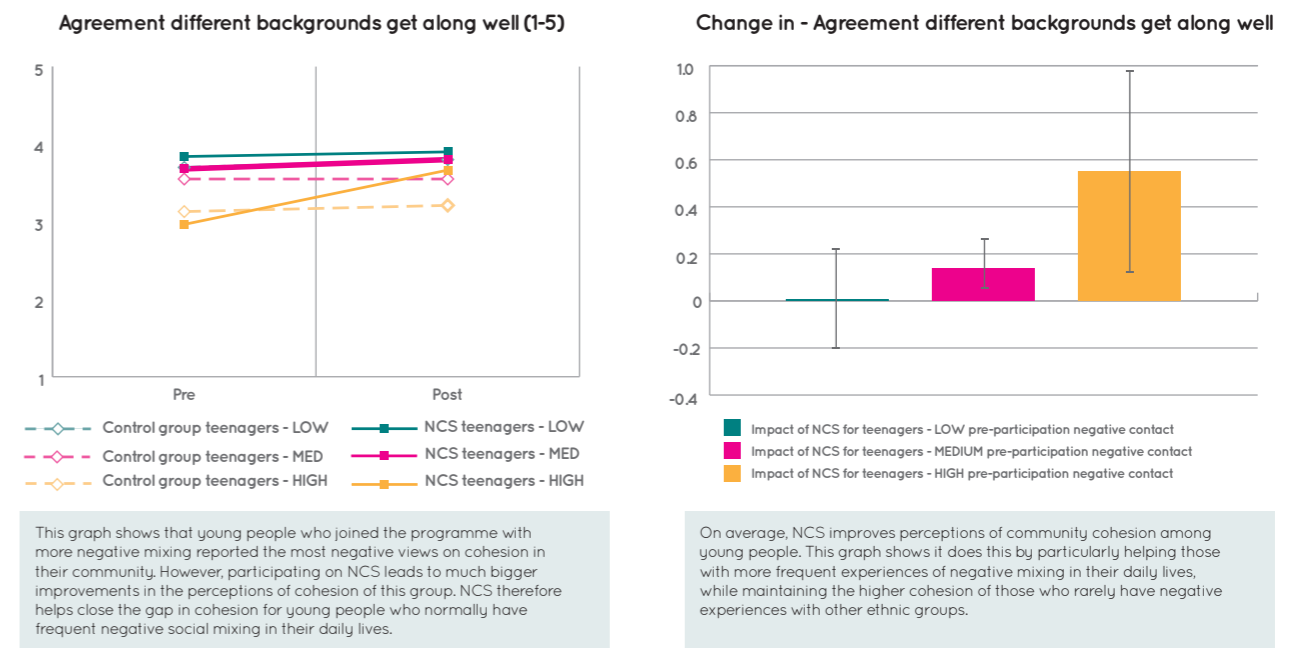
- Young people reporting less frequent positive social mixing with different ethnic groups before participating had lower community cohesion.
- Participation had a stronger impact on community cohesion for those young people who went on programme reporting less frequent positive social mixing (and little impact on those reporting frequent positive mixing before participation).
- NCS therefore goes a long way towards closing the community cohesion gap for those young people who had lower levels of positive mixing before joining NCS.

<sup>15</sup> Here ordered logistic regression models are applied to measure the probabilities that young people's attitudes and behaviours change from participating on NCS.

<sup>16</sup> When this relationship was modelled by grouping individuals into their pre-participation level of positive contact the differences across groups is only significant to a p-value <.05 level. However, treating pre-participation positive contact as a linear measure the differences across young people is significant to a p-value <.025 level. This difference in significance is driven, in part, by some pre-participation positive mixing categories containing a smaller 'n' of individuals. These findings are therefore included in the report.

## Community Cohesion: differences by pre-participation negative mixing

**FIGURE 10**  
NCS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY COHESION DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH NEGATIVE MIXING YOUNG PEOPLE HAD BEFORE JOINING THE PROGRAMME



**Figure 10** shows the impact of participating in NCS on perceptions of community cohesion for young people who reported low-, medium- or high-levels of negative mixing before going on programme. Participant and control samples were grouped into three categories based on their level of pre-participation negative mixing with other ethnic groups:

- Low-negative mixing before participation (those who reported positive mixing never).
- Medium-negative mixing before participation (those who reported positive mixing rarely/sometimes).
- High-negative mixing before participation (those who reported positive mixing quite often/very often).

Young people reporting more frequent negative mixing before participation reported weaker community cohesion. Again, for those young people who disclosed low-levels of negative mixing before participation, NCS had little impact on their community cohesion. However, for those who went on programme with medium- and especially high-levels of negative mixing, NCS had much bigger positive impacts on their community cohesion.

The impacts of NCS in Figure 10 can again be looked at as percentages. Young people who participated in NCS become, on average, 9.6% more likely to 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well. However, young people who had high levels of negative mixing with other groups before joining became 27% more likely to report that they 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where different backgrounds get along well.

This shows that NCS goes a long way towards closing the gap in community cohesion for those young people who joined the programme with more frequent negative mixing.

#### Summary:

- Young people who reported more frequent negative mixing with different ethnic groups before participation reported lower community cohesion.
- Participation in NCS has a stronger impact on community cohesion for those young people who joined the programme with more frequent negative social mixing (and little impact on those reporting less frequent negative mixing pre-participation).
- NCS thus goes a long way towards closing the community cohesion gap between those who, before joining the programme, had higher and lower levels of negative social mixing.

#### KEY FINDINGS: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS: INFREQUENT POSITIVE MIXING AND FREQUENT NEGATIVE MIXING WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS

- **Less frequent positive mixing with other ethnic groups, and more frequent negative mixing, are key barriers to forming positive social integration attitudes.**
- **However, participating on NCS has stronger positive effects on attitudes towards difference for: (a) young people who join the programme with less frequent positive mixing in their daily lives; and (b) who join with more frequent negative mixing in their daily lives.**
- **The NCS programme therefore works to overcome these barriers and closes the social integration gap for those young people with less frequent positive contact and more frequent negative contact.**
- **The NCS programme achieves this impact by bringing up the attitudes of those who joined the programme experiencing greater barriers while maintaining levels of integration among those experiencing fewer barriers.**

### 3.4 OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INTEGRATION: DISADVANTAGE, ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND SEGREGATION ACROSS COMMUNITIES

This report has shown how participating on NCS has stronger impacts on young people who join the programme less socially integrated to begin with; especially for individuals who join with less frequent positive mixing or more frequent negative mixing in their daily lives. A key question therefore is, "What factors in young people's lives affect their social integration before joining the programme?" In addition, "Does NCS have bigger impacts for those from certain backgrounds?" This report has limited potential to examine these questions due to the data available on individuals' personal characteristics, e.g. levels of education or the characteristics of households. What this report can look at is whether the types of area that young people come from matter for social integration, and whether NCS has different impacts for young people from different types of community?

The first thing to note is that there are more differences in the social integration reported by young people who share the same communities than between young people in different communities. In other words, differences in the characteristics of individuals and their households account for more of the variation in social integration than the characteristics of the communities individuals live in<sup>17</sup>. However, communities remain important for social integration; not least because of the opportunities they afford for mixing with other ethnic groups.

The third driver of differential impacts that this report therefore examines is whether the impact of NCS depends on the types of communities young people come from. The report focused on three community characteristics known to be important for social integration between ethnic groups; how advantaged/disadvantaged communities are; how ethnically diverse/homogeneous they are; and how integrated/segregated they are (Cantle, 2001; Casey, 2016; Laurence & Heath, 2008).

This section therefore asks, **"Does NCS have different impacts on social integration for participants who come from more disadvantaged, diverse or segregated communities?"**

This analysis looks at all the social integration outcomes for young people. To explore whether differences exist between communities and in how NCS impacts social integration, participants (and comparable control group young people) are subdivided by whether they live in more/less segregated, diverse or disadvantaged communities<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> This can be looked at by using a measure known as the Intra-class Correlation Coefficient. For example, for perceptions of community cohesion, between 8% and 34% of the variation in cohesion exists between communities (depending on the area-level at which community is treated).

<sup>18</sup> This analysis is run on a slightly smaller number of young people given some of the young people in the data were missing the necessary area level identifiers to match them to their local areas.

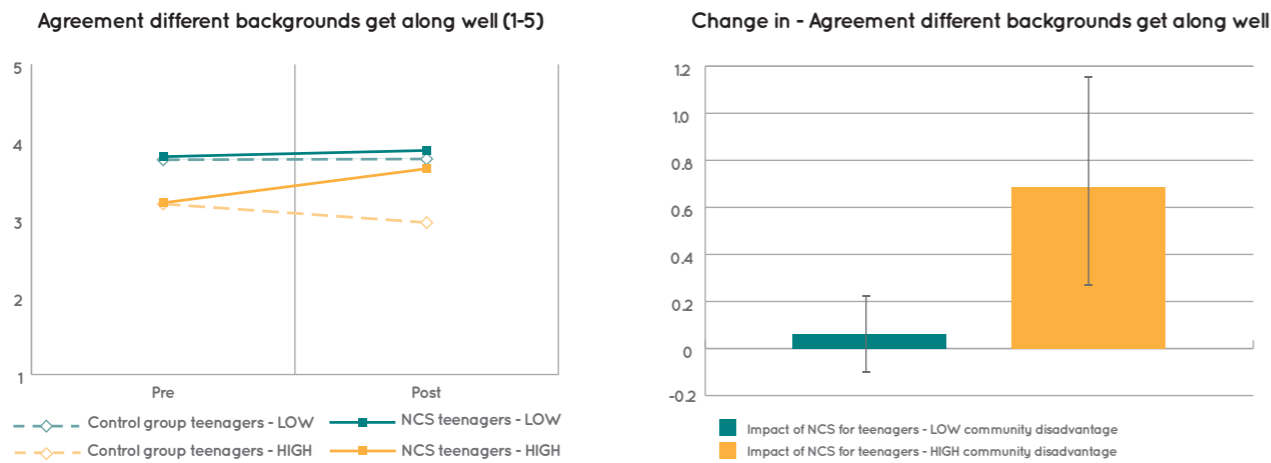
## Community Disadvantage: Community Cohesion

Across both control NCS participant samples, social integration is weaker in more disadvantaged communities, where young people report lower perceived community cohesion, less frequent positive social mixing and more frequent negative social mixing<sup>19</sup>. However, young people tended not to report colder feelings towards other ethnic groups in more disadvantaged communities. The report now examines whether participation in the NCS programme can help close any of these social integration gaps between more or less disadvantaged communities.

### COMMUNITY SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

The level of socio-economic disadvantage in a community is measured by creating an index comprised of key indicators of disadvantage, including: % of an area in social housing, the % of an area that is female headed lone parent households, and the % of an area that is unemployed.

**FIGURE 11**  
NCS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY COHESION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE MOST AND LEAST ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES



This graph shows that NCS has a stronger positive impact on community cohesion for young people from more disadvantaged areas. NCS therefore helps close the gap in cohesion that existed before participation for those young people from more disadvantaged areas.

NCS increases average levels of community cohesion among young people. This graph shows it does this through bigger improvements in cohesion among young people from more disadvantaged communities while maintaining the higher cohesion of those from less disadvantaged communities.

Figure 11 shows the impact of NCS on community cohesion for young people coming from the least and most disadvantaged communities. For young people from less disadvantaged communities, participating on NCS has a marginal positive affect on their community cohesion. However, NCS has a much stronger positive impact on community cohesion for young people from more disadvantaged communities.

The impacts of NCS in Figure 11 can again be looked at as percentages. Young people who participated on NCS become, on average, 9.6% more likely to 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well. However, young people from the most disadvantaged communities became 29.5% more likely to report that they 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where different backgrounds get along well.

After participation, young people from the most disadvantaged communities reported levels of community cohesion close to the levels of young people from the least disadvantaged communities.

<sup>19</sup> Our participant and control sample of young people is not representative of young people across England as a whole; only those who participated on NCS or expressed an interest in it. We cannot claim these patterns are evident across all young people in England.

## Summary:

- Young people in more disadvantaged communities report weaker community cohesion.
- Participation in NCS has a strong, positive impact on community cohesion for those young people from the most disadvantaged communities, but little impact on those from the least disadvantaged communities.
- The result is that NCS goes a long way to closing the community cohesion challenge evident in disadvantaged areas.

## Community Disadvantage: Positive and Negative Mixing with Different Ethnic Groups

Young people coming through NCS from disadvantaged communities reported lower positive contact, and more frequent negative contact, with other ethnic groups than their peers in less disadvantaged areas. However, NCS did not lead to bigger increases in positive mixing for young people from disadvantaged communities. Both young people from more and less disadvantaged communities see similar improvements in positive social mixing after participation. Similarly, participants from both more and less disadvantaged areas saw little change in their levels of negative mixing with other ethnic groups.

## Community Segregation: Community Cohesion

The data in this report show that social integration is weaker in more residentially segregated communities, where young people reported lower perceived social cohesion, less frequent positive social mixing and more frequent negative social mixing<sup>20</sup>. At the same time, young people tended not to report colder feelings towards other ethnic groups in more segregated communities.

To give this some context, in integrated areas, around 69% of young people 'agree' or 'agree strongly' that people from different ethnic backgrounds get along well together in their local area. In segregated areas this drops to about 55%. As a benchmark for these findings, studies suggest that in areas where less than 60% of residents agree there is community cohesion, residents' support for far-right parties tends to increase (Blakemore, 2016). In the next section the report examines whether participation in the NCS programme can help close any of these social integration gaps between more or less segregated communities.

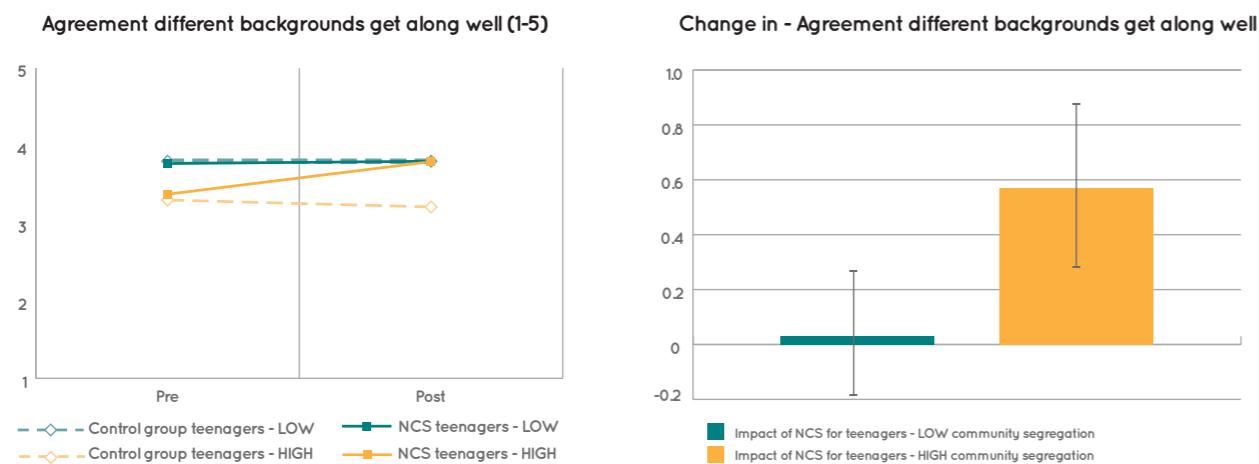
<sup>20</sup> The participant and control sample of young people is not representative of young people across England as a whole; only those who participated in NCS or expressed an interest in it. As such, these patterns may not be evident across all young people in England.

## AREA ETHNIC RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Residential segregation is captured using the 'multi-group entropy index' (Iceland, 2004). This is a measure of the evenness with which different ethnic groups are distributed across an area. An integrated area is one in which people from different ethnic groups are evenly spread across neighbourhoods within an area. A segregated area is one in which different ethnic groups tend to be concentrated in their own neighbourhoods. So, people from different ethnic groups are unevenly spread across the area as a whole. This 'multi-group' measure is useful as it identifies levels of segregation between all groups in an area (not just the majority white group compared to ethnic minorities). Segregation is measured across local authorities. Some of the most integrated areas in the sample of young people analysed here include local authorities such as Lewisham and Enfield. Some of the most segregated areas in the sample include local authorities such as Oldham, and Blackburn and Darwin.

Looking at residential segregation across local authorities may be particularly important for understanding how NCS impacts young people's social integration. NCS aims, where possible, to make the ethnic composition of participants' teams representative of the ethnic composition of the local authority as a whole. This may be particularly important in segregated local authorities. Young people in segregated local authorities may not have the everyday opportunities for mixing that their peers have in more integrated local authorities (as they likely live in less diverse neighbourhoods or go to more homogeneous schools). However, NCS may help overcome this barrier by bringing young people from across the wider local authority to participate together.

**FIGURE 12**  
**NCS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY COHESION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE MOST AND LEAST SEGREGATED COMMUNITIES**



This graph shows that NCS has a stronger positive impact on community cohesion for young people from more segregated areas. NCS therefore helps close the gap in community cohesion that existed before participation for those young people from more segregated areas.

NCS increases average levels of community cohesion among young people. This graph shows it does this through bigger improvements in cohesion among young people from more segregated communities while maintaining the higher cohesion of those from less segregated communities.

**Figure 12** examines whether NCS has different impacts on young people's community cohesion depending on how segregated the communities are that they come from. Among those young people joining the programme from more integrated communities, participating on NCS has little impact on their community cohesion. However, young people joining the programme from more segregated communities see a stronger positive impact on their perceptions of cohesion.

The impacts of NCS in Figure 12 can again be looked at as percentages. Young people who participated on NCS become, on average, 9.6% more likely to 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well. However, young people from the most segregated communities became 23.2% more likely to report that they 'agree' or 'agree strongly' their local area is a place where different backgrounds get along well.

Post-participation, NCS participants from segregated communities reported similar levels of cohesion to young people living in integrated communities<sup>21</sup>.

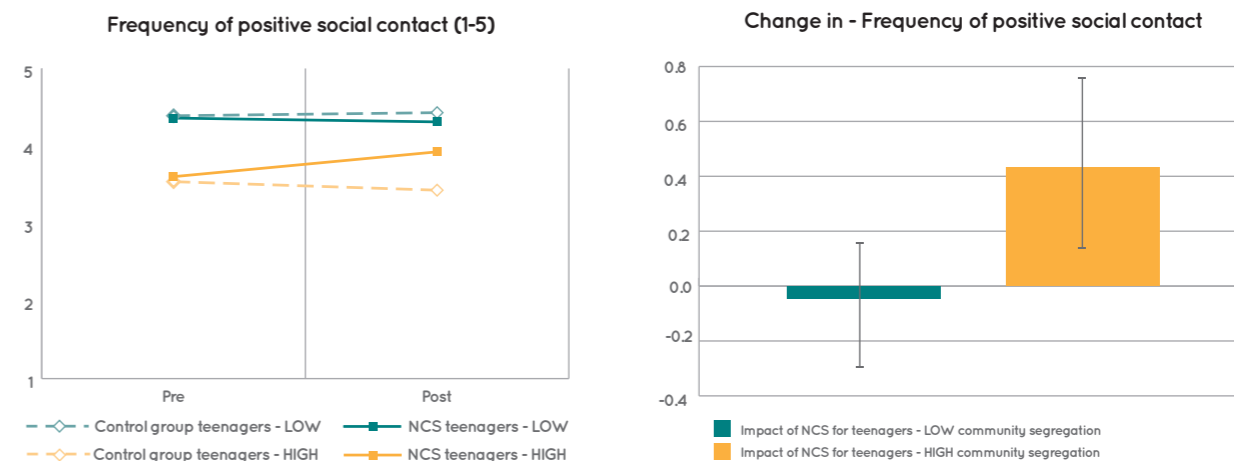
**Summary:**

- Young people from segregated communities reported lower community cohesion.
- Participation on NCS has more positive impacts on community cohesion for those young people from more segregated communities.
- NCS substantially reduces the community cohesion challenge of living in segregated communities.

<sup>21</sup> The difference in the impact of participation between young people from more and less segregated areas is significant to a p-value <.05 level (not the conservative p-value <.025 level this report has adopted). However, there are reasons to believe this finding remains robust. The reduction in sample size due to missing postcode data can reduce statistical power to detect effects. Furthermore, cross-level interactions (between the local authority- and individual-level) can increase standard errors. To that end the decision was taken to present these findings.

**Community Segregation: Positive Mixing with Different Ethnic Groups**

**FIGURE 13**  
**NCS IMPACT ON POSITIVE MIXING WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE MOST AND LEAST SEGREGATED COMMUNITIES**



This graph shows that NCS leads to bigger increases in levels of positive mixing with other ethnic groups for young people from more segregated areas. NCS therefore helps close the gap in positive mixing that existed before participation for young people from more segregated areas.

NCS increases average levels of positive social mixing with other ethnic groups among young people. This graph shows it does this through bigger increases in mixing for young people coming from more segregated communities, while maintaining the higher levels of mixing of those from less segregated communities.

**Figure 13** examines how NCS impacts positive mixing with other ethnic groups for young people from more or less segregated communities. For young people joining the programme from more integrated areas, participation on NCS essentially had no impact on positive mixing, which remained high and largely stable. However, young people from more segregated environments reported a stronger positive effect.

The impacts of NCS in Figure 13 can again be looked at as percentages. Young people who participated on NCS become, on average, 5% more likely to report positive mixing with other ethnic groups 'quite often' or 'very often'. However, young people from the most segregated communities became 19.4% more likely to report positive mixing with other ethnic groups 'quite often' or 'very often'.

After participation, the gap in positive mixing between those from integrated and segregated communities was reduced by over half.

**Summary:**

- Young people from segregated communities reported less frequent positive mixing with other ethnic groups.
- Participation in NCS had a stronger positive impact on levels of positive mixing for young people from segregated areas.
- Thus, NCS helped close the positive mixing deficit for young people from segregated areas.

## Community Segregation: Negative Mixing with Different Ethnic Groups

Young people coming through the NCS programme from more segregated communities reported more frequent negative contact than their peers in less segregated areas. However, there was no difference in the impact of NCS for those from more segregated or integrated communities. That is, young people from both more segregated and less segregated communities reported little change in their frequency of negative contact after participation.

## Community Ethnic Diversity

Unlike disadvantage and ethnic segregation, the extent of ethnic diversity in an area has a more complex relationship with social integration. Young people who live in areas with more people from different ethnic groups, tend to report warmer attitudes towards ethnic difference and more frequent positive mixing with other ethnic groups (although they also report more frequent negative mixing). However, despite the lower integration reported by young people in less diverse areas, participants from these areas did not appear to experience a more positive impact on social integration. This may, in part, be a result of how the NCS programme is structured.

Taking positive mixing as an example, on the whole, young people joining the programme from more diverse areas already tend to report more frequent positive mixing before participation, because of the greater opportunities for mixing in their everyday lives that come from living in diverse areas. Therefore, it is participants from less diverse areas, who tend to have less frequent positive mixing before joining the programme, who could benefit from bigger increases in their positive mixing with other ethnic groups. However, this does not appear to be the case: young people from more and less diverse areas tend to see a similar small improvement in rates of positive mixing.

One reason may be that NCS providers recruit participants from the local authorities they cover. Therefore, the ethnic diversity in the teams that young people are placed in on NCS is strongly determined by the ethnic diversity on the wider area in which young people live. That is, participants who live in more ethnically homogeneous local authorities thus tend to go through the programme in more ethnically homogeneous teams (National Audit Office, 2017). This may have the effect of preserving the gaps in social integration for young people from less diverse areas. In other words, those young people from homogeneous areas who could benefit the most from more opportunities to mix with other ethnic groups may have the fewest opportunities to do so.

### Summary:

- Young people, especially white young people, living in more diverse areas reported warmer attitudes, more frequent positive mixing but also more frequent negative mixing with different ethnic groups.
- However, participation does not close the gaps in social integration between diverse and homogeneous areas. Young people in both diverse and homogeneous areas reported similar marginal improvements in positive social mixing, warmth towards other ethnic groups, and a similar absence of change in negative mixing.
- Further analysis is required to understand the role of NCS for social integration in more and less diverse communities.

### KEY FINDINGS: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INTEGRATION: DISADVANTAGE, ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND SEGREGATION ACROSS COMMUNITIES

- **Young people in more disadvantaged and more segregated areas reported weaker social integration before participation, relative to their peers in more integrated and less disadvantaged areas.**
- **However, NCS has more positive impacts on community cohesion and positive mixing with different ethnic groups for young people from more segregated areas.**
- **NCS also has more positive impacts on community cohesion for young people who come from more disadvantaged areas.**
- **Participation on NCS therefore helps close the social integration gap between communities, by improving the social integration of those who go on programme from areas where integration is weaker.**
- **However, NCS is less effective at closing the gap between young people in more ethnically homogeneous and more diverse areas.**

# 4. IMPLICATIONS

## Limitations

All research has methodological challenges. A transparent approach in discussing these challenges is a marker of good practice in high quality social research. The limitations associated with this evaluation are:

- The results are based on young people who took part in the full 2015 summer programme. Caution should be applied in generalising these findings to the NCS spring and autumn programmes.
- The response rate for the participant sample between the first (baseline) survey and the follow-up survey was relatively low. This suggests that some caution be applied when generalising from these findings to all participants on the 2015 summer programme<sup>22</sup>. However, at least on the characteristics of young people observed, participants who remained in the evaluation did not appear to differ substantially from those who dropped out of the evaluation<sup>23</sup> (see Appendix B).
- Performing an in-depth analysis of whether NCS had different impacts among young white and non-white people (and particular non-white groups, e.g. black, Asian, and so on) was limited by the small sample size of each ethnic group. The report highlighted white/non-white differences where they were especially evident. However, further analysis is advised to examine differences between different ethnic groups.
- The findings in this report represent changes that occurred three to five months after participation. Past evaluations of participants one and two years later have demonstrated the persistence of some positive effects of NCS for social integration and the disappearance of others (Ipsos MORI, 2015a, 2017a). Whether the differential impacts observed in this report will endure remains to be seen.
- While this evaluation has attempted to use validated survey instruments to measure social integration, it is important to remain aware of the shortcomings of such self-reported survey measures, such as young people replying in a way they think is socially desirable and expected of them. There are also internal caveats that need to be considered regarding this type of analysis. In particular, propensity score matching requires decisions taken by the researcher (such as matching method, covariates matched on) which can affect the results. As such, different specifications can potentially lead to changes in findings<sup>24</sup>. Ultimately, replicating these findings in subsequent evaluations of NCS will be important to strengthen confidence in the report's conclusions.

## Overall Summary: 'Closing the Gap'

The key finding of this study is that NCS has more positive impacts on social integration for those young people who join the programme less socially integrated to begin with. For positive social mixing, perceptions of community cohesion and warmth towards other ethnic groups, those young people reporting lower integration before joining NCS saw the biggest improvements in their social integration. Those young people who had higher social integration pre-participation saw little improvement in their outcomes; however, and critically, participation on NCS did not harm their social integration.

Previous evaluations show that NCS increases average levels of social integration among participants. This report confirms and replicates these key findings. However, it shows that NCS accomplishes this by: (a) bringing up the social integration of young people who join the programme with lower integration, while (b) maintaining the social integration of those who join the programme already well integrated to begin with.

<sup>22</sup> A number of factors may affect whether a participant chose to complete the follow-up survey or not. One particularly concerning reason may be that those who did not enjoy NCS were less likely to return the second questionnaire. If this group were more likely to see no change, or even a negative change, in their social integration these findings may be positively biased. Initial analyses using inverse probability weighting did not produce substantively different findings. However, some suggest caution in over-interpretation is advised.

<sup>23</sup> One way of addressing this kind of missing data is to use imputation methods. However, given the large number of missing cases such an approach is not feasible. Inverse-probability weights were applied to account for the changing sample composition. However, these weights did not substantially alter the findings.

<sup>24</sup> The robustness of the findings can also be tested by using alternative matching strategies. The key individual-level findings of the report were replicated using a Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) approach, which somewhat increases confidence in the reliability of findings presented.

The findings therefore demonstrate that behind the smaller overall impacts on social integration established by previous evaluations is evidence that some participants experience much stronger positive impacts. However, the majority of young people who joined the programme reported relatively high social integration: for example, the average warmth towards other ethnic groups reported by participants before starting the programme is 75° (out of 100°). Therefore, the overall impact of participation appears lower given most participants appear quite well integrated to begin with.

NCS is also effective at overcoming barriers to social integration in society which can open critical gaps in social integration between young people. One barrier is a lack of positive mixing with other ethnic groups, or frequent negative mixing, which curtail the development of positive attitudes towards different ethnic groups. NCS exerts stronger impacts on those young people who joined the programme with less positive mixing with other ethnic groups and more negative encounters. This leads to significant reductions in the gaps in positive attitudes towards ethnic difference among participants facing greater barriers to social integration. NCS is also effective at overcoming barriers to social integration in different communities; in particular, the integration deficit reported in segregated or disadvantaged communities. Young people joining NCS from more segregated and more disadvantaged areas see bigger improvements in their social integration after participation, relative to their peers in less segregated and less disadvantaged areas (whose social integration remains relatively high and stable). These stronger impacts go a long way towards closing the social integration gap between integrated and segregated areas and more and less disadvantaged areas.

However, there are barriers to social integration that NCS appears less effective at overcoming; for example, the integration gap between young people in more and less diverse areas. Young people living in diverse areas tend to report warmer attitudes towards ethnic difference and more frequent positive social mixing. NCS does improve the social integration of young people in less diverse areas. However, it exerts a similar impact on young people from more diverse areas as well. This serves to preserve the gap in social integration between more and less diverse areas.

One possible explanation for the persistent integration gap between ethnically diverse and homogeneous areas is that opportunities to mix with other ethnic groups during the programme can be constrained by the ethnic mix of the local authorities in which a programme runs. NCS providers recruit participants from the local authorities they cover. In fact, the ethnic composition of the young people on a programme is designed to mirror the composition of the local authority in which it is based. Therefore, where a local authority is relatively ethnically homogeneous, the participants on that programme will likely be relatively homogeneous as well, limiting opportunities for mixing with other ethnic groups. As the National Audit Office (2017) highlight:

**“...in 63% of 150 local authorities the extent to which young people could mix locally with those from different backgrounds was limited as more than 80% of young people in the local population were reported from a white ethnic background. For example, in Norfolk, a more rural community, 95% of young people from the local population class themselves as white..”**  
**(National Audit Office, 2017, p.21)**

As such, closing the social integration gap between young people in more and less diverse areas may prove more difficult for NCS. However, at the same time, this localised-focus of the programme is likely to be particularly effective for closing the social integration gap between more/less segregated local authorities. In segregated areas, young people from different ethnic groups tend to live in more ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods or attend more segregated schools. This can lead to less sustained, positive everyday contact between ethnic groups. However, as NCS is designed so that the teams that participants are placed in are representative of the local authority as a whole, NCS may bring young people together in segregated local authorities in a way they normally would not experience. Further research is needed to investigate the implications of locally-focused NCS recruitment for social integration.

## Key Implications and Recommendations

This report highlights how NCS can be particularly effective for building social integration among young people, and communities, where social integration is weaker. NCS already recruits significant numbers of participants from disadvantaged communities. Maintaining such recruitment, and possibly encouraging further recruitment in more segregated communities, could potentially yield additional positive impacts of NCS for society.

The findings also flag up areas where the efficacy of NCS for social integration may be more limited; for example, closing the social integration gap between more and less diverse areas. Further research is needed into this issue. However, the local-focus of NCS potentially limits opportunities for positive mixing where young people live in ethnically homogeneous local authorities. Finding ways around this barrier may bring additional benefits of the programme to society. For example, ‘matchmaking’ teams across local authorities based on the ethnic (as well as socio-economic) composition of participants could help overcome these obstacles apparent within more homogeneous areas.

One potential consideration from this report is that recruitment may be better focused solely on those who have lower social integration. However, such endeavours may prove counterproductive. The positive effects of participation for those who join reporting low levels of social integration may be, in part, conditional on mixing with those who already report higher social integration. Concentrating individuals with low social integration on to teams may not yield the benefits observed in these findings.

This report also demonstrates the additional insights that evaluating the impact of NCS across different groups of young people, especially the communities they come from, can bring to understanding the scope of its impact. In particular, when average changes in outcomes across all participants are looked at, NCS appears to have important but relatively small impacts on social integration. However, behind these average effects are much stronger impacts of the programme for some young people and weaker impacts for others. Future evaluations of the programme should take this into account. This will yield additional insights to the evaluation. For example, to avoid conclusions that the programme is ineffective for some outcomes when it may be particularly effective, but only for a small number of participants who stand to benefit the most.

How the gains in social integration might be maintained, or even further augmented, is a critical question; especially among young people from more segregated communities. After participation, there is the risk that the lack of opportunities for positive mixing may reverse any gains made from participation. One possibility is encouraging participants to continue their involvement in NCS, perhaps returning as team leaders or co-ordinators. Another possibility is that schools might take-up a role of co-ordinating further engagement with communities, providing provisions (such as time, funding, guidance) to maintain participants’ involvement in civic activities; especially in their local communities. Where NCS participants came from different schools, such an approach could be particularly effective at creating cross-school opportunities for maintaining the ties between participants, as well as creating further links between schools.

## 5. APPENDICES

### 5.1 APPENDIX A – PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING LOGISTICS

This report aimed to closely mirror the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) approach taken in the 2015 NCS Evaluation<sup>25</sup> (Ipsos MORI, 2017b). Matching occurred across a number of dimensions, including: age, free school meal status, religion, generalised trust, pre-participation baseline activities (studying A/AS levels, studying other qualifications, looking after the home or children, no plans), pre-participation informal volunteering (looked after a non-family pet, helped someone cooking/cleaning or gardening), hours spent formally/informally volunteering in a typical month, ACORN category of local area, and whether they live in an urban/rural area. In addition, young people were also matched on their levels of pre-participation social integration and their government office region<sup>26</sup>.

As previously noted, the evaluation data available contained a number of missing identifiers for the areas young people came from, which can reduce the number of participants available to analyse. To maximise the sample of participants studied, two sets of matching were conducted (where possible). The first used only individual-level covariates, which maximised the number of participants available to match (as applied in all analyses focused on individual-level heterogeneity alone – Figures 1-10). The second matching used individual- and community-level covariates (as applied in Figures 11-13). All findings from Figures 1-10 were replicated using the matching containing community-level covariates to test for any bias but found none. In the following section the diagnostics for the development of the propensity score and matching procedure undertaken are discussed.

Using the characteristics of young people highlighted above, an initial propensity score was generated. Table A.1 shows the first stage model results for the generation of the propensity score. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test on the propensity model is non-significant (Probability > chi 2: 0.322). There is thus a good model fit using the above characteristics of young people<sup>27</sup>. When the individual-level characteristics were examined to maximise the number in the sample, the fit is even better (Probability > chi 2: 0.87). An additional robustness test of the propensity score is to examine the balance of the covariates within blocks of the propensity score. Using the above specification balance is not satisfied in one block for one covariate: whether, before participation, an individual is 'studying other qualifications'. Given this is only a small amount of imbalance it should not substantially bias the models. To check for sensitivity, this covariate was excluded from the calculation, which created a propensity score which satisfied the balancing property. Using this propensity score did not lead to substantially different results, suggesting the initial imbalance is unlikely to bias the results reported here.

<sup>25</sup> Based on the available information in the 2015 Ipsos MORI Evaluation Technical Report.

<sup>26</sup> There are some differences with the matching approach in the 2015 Evaluation; for example, an index of disadvantage is used instead of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. In addition, a single propensity score for all young people was created and the sample matched on this. However, these differences should not lead to significant differences between approaches.

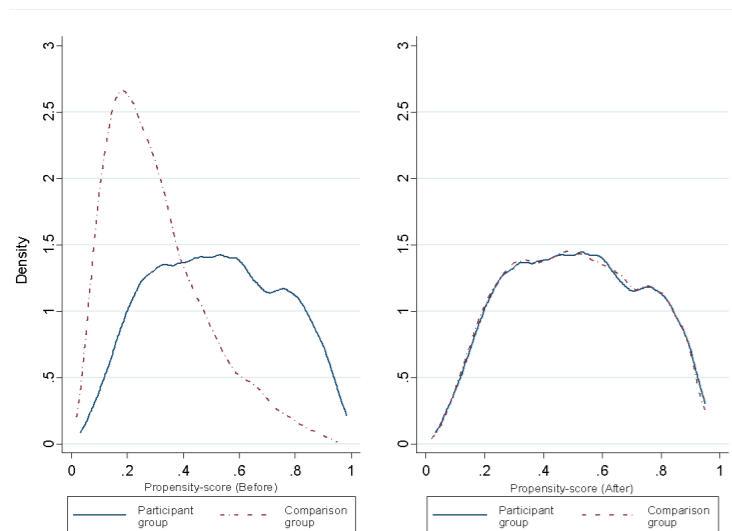
<sup>27</sup> The aim was to keep the propensity score as similar to that applied in the 2015 Evaluation as possible. However, for robustness checking, modifications of this propensity score were tested to improve the model fit, e.g. including quadratic terms for community-level variables. The use of such alternative propensity score specifications did not appear to substantially change the findings.

TABLE A. 1.

| Dependent variable: participant versus control group                                   | Odds ratio | Standard error | P> z  |
|--|------------|----------------|-------|
| <b>cf. Major conurbation/City and Town</b>   |            |                |       |
| Town and fringe/village  | 0.615      | 0.08           | 0     |
| ACORN category: cf. Affluent achievers   |            |                |       |
| Rising prosperity  | 1.929      | 0.359          | 0     |
| Comfortable communities  | 1.175      | 0.146          | 0.194 |
| Financially stretched  | 0.948      | 0.147          | 0.731 |
| Urban adversity  | 1.082      | 0.205          | 0.678 |
| Not private households   | 1.858      | 1.224          | 0.347 |
| Index of disadvantage  | 1.204      | 0.083          | 0.007 |
| H Index of segregation   | 0.001      | 0.001          | 0     |
| Frequency of positive contact  | 1.04       | 0.062          | 0.509 |
| Frequency of negative contact  | 1.178      | 0.069          | 0.005 |
| Warmth towards ethnic out-groups   | 1.003      | 0.002          | 0.204 |
| Age: cf. 16-years-old and below  |            |                |       |
| 16.5-years-old   | 1.054      | 0.14           | 0.692 |
| 17-years-old   | 1.387      | 0.236          | 0.054 |
| 17.5-years-old   | 1.253      | 0.136          | 0.038 |
| 18-years-old   | 1.401      | 0.248          | 0.056 |
| <b>Region: cf. North East/North West/Yorkshire and the Humber</b>                      |            |                |       |
| East Midlands/West Midlands  | 0.333      | 0.046          | 0     |
| East of England/London/South East/South West   | 0.447      | 0.057          | 0     |
| Community cohesion   | 1.175      | 0.06           | 0.002 |
| Generalised trust: cf. Can't be too careful  |            |                |       |
| Depends  | 1.189      | 0.13           | 0.113 |
| Most can be trusted  | 1.351      | 0.177          | 0.022 |
| Sex: cf. Male  |            |                |       |
| Female   | 0.739      | 0.076          | 0.003 |
| Free school meal status: cf. No/Don't know   |            |                |       |
| Yes  | 1.091      | 0.131          | 0.467 |
| Religion: cf. None   |            |                |       |
| Christian  | 0.872      | 0.086          | 0.165 |
| Other  | 3.218      | 0.447          | 0     |
| <b>Hours of formal/informal volunteering: cf. 0 per month</b>                          |            |                |       |
| 0.2 to 2   | 0.926      | 0.147          | 0.629 |
| 2.3 to 6   | 0.899      | 0.116          | 0.411 |
| 7 to 12  | 0.683      | 0.095          | 0.006 |
| 12 to maximum  | 0.621      | 0.084          | 0     |
| Pre-participation informal volunteering: helped someone cooking, cleaning or gardening | 1.145      | 0.121          | 0.201 |
| Pre-participation informal volunteering: looked after a non-family pet                 | 1.168      | 0.141          | 0.197 |
| Pre-participation: studying A/AS levels  | 0.361      | 0.035          | 0     |
| Pre-participation: studying other qualifications                                       | 0.347      | 0.092          | 0     |
| Pre-participation: looking after the home or children                                  | 1.568      | 0.281          | 0.012 |
| Pre-participation: no plans  | 2.397      | 0.554          | 0     |



Using the above propensity score, matching was then undertaken to generate the matched participant and control group samples. Kernel density matching techniques were applied as used in the 2015 NCS Evaluation. Matching was restricted to the region of common support, and applied a bandwidth of 0.06 for the kernel density matches. This resulted in 11 participants who are not matched and excluded from the analysis. To assess the quality of matching, Figure A.1 shows the distribution of the propensity-score for treated and untreated before and after the matching procedure. The kernel density matching procedure produces a close match between the participant and control group samples of young people.



**FIGURE A.1**

This matching procedure undertaken satisfies a number of diagnostics. The mean bias is substantially reduced (from 12.4 to 1.3). The Pseudo R-squared is sufficiently low (0.003). The Rubin's B (the absolute standardised difference of the means of the linear index of the propensity score in the participant and (matched) non-participant group) is less than 25 (12.8). The Rubin's R (the ratio of participant to (matched) non-participant variances of the propensity score index) is between 0.5 and 2 (1.04). Lastly, for each covariate the ratio of the variance of the residuals, orthogonal to the linear index of the propensity score in the participant group over the non-participant group

was examined. None of the covariates indicate ratios of concern. The diagnostics for the matching based on individual-level covariates alone produced substantively similar confidence. Finally, Table A.2 shows the sample profiles on key socio-demographics for the participant and control groups before and after matching. The similarity of the profiles post-matching demonstrates the effectiveness of the matching procedure for creating balanced samples.

**TABLE A.2**

|                              | Before      |           | After       |           |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|                              | Treatment % | Control % | Treatment % | Control % |
| 16-years-old and below       | 38.4        | 40.2      | 38.4        | 37.7      |
| 16.5-years-old               | 14.9        | 15.9      | 15          | 15.7      |
| 17-years-old                 | 8.8         | 8.3       | 8.8         | 9.2       |
| 17.5-years-old               | 29.8        | 29.2      | 29.7        | 29.2      |
| 18-years-old                 | 8           | 6.3       | 8.1         | 8.3       |
| Female                       | 72.6        | 77.8      | 72.7        | 73.7      |
| Free school meal status: yes | 20.7        | 15.6      | 20.6        | 20.9      |
| Religion: cf. None           | 42          | 49.7      | 42.1        | 42        |
| Christian                    | 32.8        | 41.4      | 32.9        | 33.3      |
| Other                        | 25.2        | 8.9       | 25          | 24.7      |

## 5.2 APPENDIX B - SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVENESS BETWEEN BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS

There is a large drop-out of participants from the evaluation between the first survey (the baseline) and the second survey (follow-up). Table B.1 shows the sample profiles on a range of key pre-participation characteristics of the participant sample. It compares the profile of participants who only completed the baseline survey (and did not participate in the follow-up survey) with the profile of those participants who completed both the baseline and follow-up surveys. The profiles are highly similar across most dimensions. However, some differences exist. Participants who completed both surveys were more likely to be female (72% versus 60%), somewhat less distrusting (23% reported 'can't be too careful' versus 28%) and more likely to be studying for A/AS-levels (46% versus 42%)

**TABLE B.1**

|   | Baseline<br>n = 11685 | Follow-up<br>n = 1608 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Pre-participation characteristics</b>        |                       |                       |
| Mean positive contact (1-5)                     | 4.01                  | 4.14                  |
| Mean negative contact (1-5)                     | 2.35                  | 2.29                  |
| Mean warmth towards other ethnic groups (0-100) | 74.36                 | 74.04                 |
| <b>Age composition</b>                          |                       |                       |
| 16-years-old and below                          | 39%                   | 39%                   |
| 16.5-years-old                                  | 15%                   | 15%                   |
| 17-years-old                                    | 8%                    | 9%                    |
| 17.5-years-old                                  | 29%                   | 29%                   |
| 18-years-old                                    | 10%                   | 8%                    |
| Free school meal status                         |                       |                       |
| Eligible for free school meals                  | 23%                   | 21%                   |
| <b>Religion</b>                                 |                       |                       |
| None  | 46%                   | 42%                   |
| Christian                                       | 31%                   | 33%                   |
| Other   | 24%                   | 25%                   |
| <b>Region</b>                                   |                       |                       |
| North East/North West/Yorkshire and Humberside  | 40%                   | 39%                   |
| East Midlands/West Midlands                     | 14%                   | 13%                   |
| East of England/London/South East/South         | 47%                   | 48%                   |
| <b>Generalised trust</b>                        |                       |                       |
| % can't be too careful                          | 28%                   | 23%                   |
| % depends                                       | 52%                   | 53%                   |
| % most people can be trusted                    | 20%                   | 23%                   |
| Mean community cohesion                         | 3.61                  | 3.67                  |
| <b>Sex</b>                                      |                       |                       |
| Female  | 60%                   | 72%                   |
| Mean hours civically engaged                    | 9.14                  | 9.86                  |
| <b>Pre-participation informal volunteering</b>  |                       |                       |
| Helped someone cooking, cleaning or gardening   | 28%                   | 25%                   |
| Looked after a non-family pet                   | 17%                   | 16%                   |
| <b>Pre-participation activity</b>               |                       |                       |
| Studying A/AS levels                            | 42%                   | 46%                   |
| Studying other qualifications                   | 4%                    | 3%                    |
| Looking after the home or children              | 8%                    | 8%                    |
| No plans  | 10%                   | 8%                    |

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