

PERCEPTIONS MATTER

The Common Cause UK Values Survey



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ABOUT COMMON CAUSE FOUNDATION

We are a not-for-profit organisation catalysing action on the values that underpin positive social and environmental change. We act as thinkers, coaches, communicators, learners, participants, convenors and doers.

WWF-UK provided initial funding to set up Common Cause Foundation as an independent organisation in 2015. The Foundation emerged from a long-standing project to understand values in order to inspire action on environmental and social causes. We have a proven track record in providing tools and solutions to help engage values to inspire positive social and environmental change.

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SUMMARY

The far-reaching challenges currently confronting UK society – from climate change and biodiversity loss to inequality and poverty – can seem insurmountable. Our political and social systems seem incapable of taking the leadership decisions necessary to bring about transformational change.

While the reasons for this are myriad, we believe that engaging our common values is critical to help create an alternative, more sustainable path.

Common Cause Foundation contacted a thousand people across Britain and asked them what they valued in life. We looked at groups of compassionate values like ‘helpfulness’, ‘equality’ and ‘protection of nature’ and selfish values such as ‘wealth’, ‘public image’ and ‘success’. Our results are striking:

- 74% of respondents place greater importance on compassionate values than selfish values. We find this to be the case irrespective of age, gender, region, or political persuasion. We can be confident that this result doesn't arise from respondents seeking to cast themselves in a better light by downplaying the importance they attach to selfish values. We were able to test for such bias.
- 77% of respondents believe that their fellow citizens hold selfish values to be more important, and compassionate values to be less important, than is actually the case.
- People who hold this inaccurate belief about *other people's* values feel significantly less positive about getting involved – joining meetings, voting, volunteering. These people also report greater social alienation. They report feeling less responsible for their communities, and they are less likely to feel that they fit in with wider society – relative to citizens who hold more accurate perceptions of a typical British person's values.

These results lead us to pose a crucially important question: *Why is it that such a large majority of people believe their fellow citizens hold selfish values to be more important, and compassionate values to be less important, than is actually the case?*

One explanation is that people are repeatedly told by institutions (for example, the media, politicians, and even schools and universities) that most other people are out for themselves. The impression conveyed is that most people are more concerned about acquiring stuff, making the money to acquire stuff, cultivating their public image, and becoming influential than is actually the case.

Our survey supports this explanation. We asked people what values they felt were encouraged by some key types of institution – arts and culture, schools and universities, the media, government and business. Worryingly, people believe that each of these institutions discourage compassionate values, and encourage selfish values, relative to the importance that they attach to these values themselves. For example, people believe that schools and universities encourage values of wealth, image and ambition more than people themselves hold these values to be important. The more strongly people believe that these key types of institution encourage these selfish values, the more strongly they believe that these values also characterise a typical fellow citizen.

The good news is that this situation can be changed. Such change could be key to building public concern about today's social and environmental challenges, fostering widespread public engagement on these challenges, and reducing people's feelings of apathy and alienation.

There are many ways in which institutions can strengthen compassionate values in society, through their engagement with their members and the public. Values are implicit in the policies and practices that an institution adopts; in the ways that

employees are managed and decisions reached; and in the physical environment provided for members of staff, customers or visitors. These areas of activity can be developed in ways that not only activate those compassionate values, but strengthen them for the long term, too.

In this report we highlight three things that organisations and individuals can do immediately:

- **Promote compassionate values through role models**
- **Convey a more accurate perception of others' values**
- **Challenge assumptions about the values that most people hold to be important**

Promoting compassionate values through role models. Role models play an important part in everyone's lives. People may be in direct personal contact with important role models – their teachers or managers, for example. But role models are also known indirectly – as leaders in government, business leaders, people portrayed in advertisements, and celebrities promoted by the media. People are sensitive to the values held by those they respect – and research finds that the values conveyed by respected figures influence the values of others. Those in positions of influence should examine the values that they demonstrate through the way they conduct their work. Better still, they can foster public debate about values by speaking openly about the compassionate values that motivate them. Members of staff in organisations that help to elevate people to the position of role models (the media or advertising agencies, for example) play a very important role in promoting particular values in UK society. These members of staff should ask questions of one another: Does our influence bring responsibilities? If so, how do we want, collectively, to respond to these? What are the values projected by the people whose public profile we help to create and sustain? Are these values that are helpful to society?

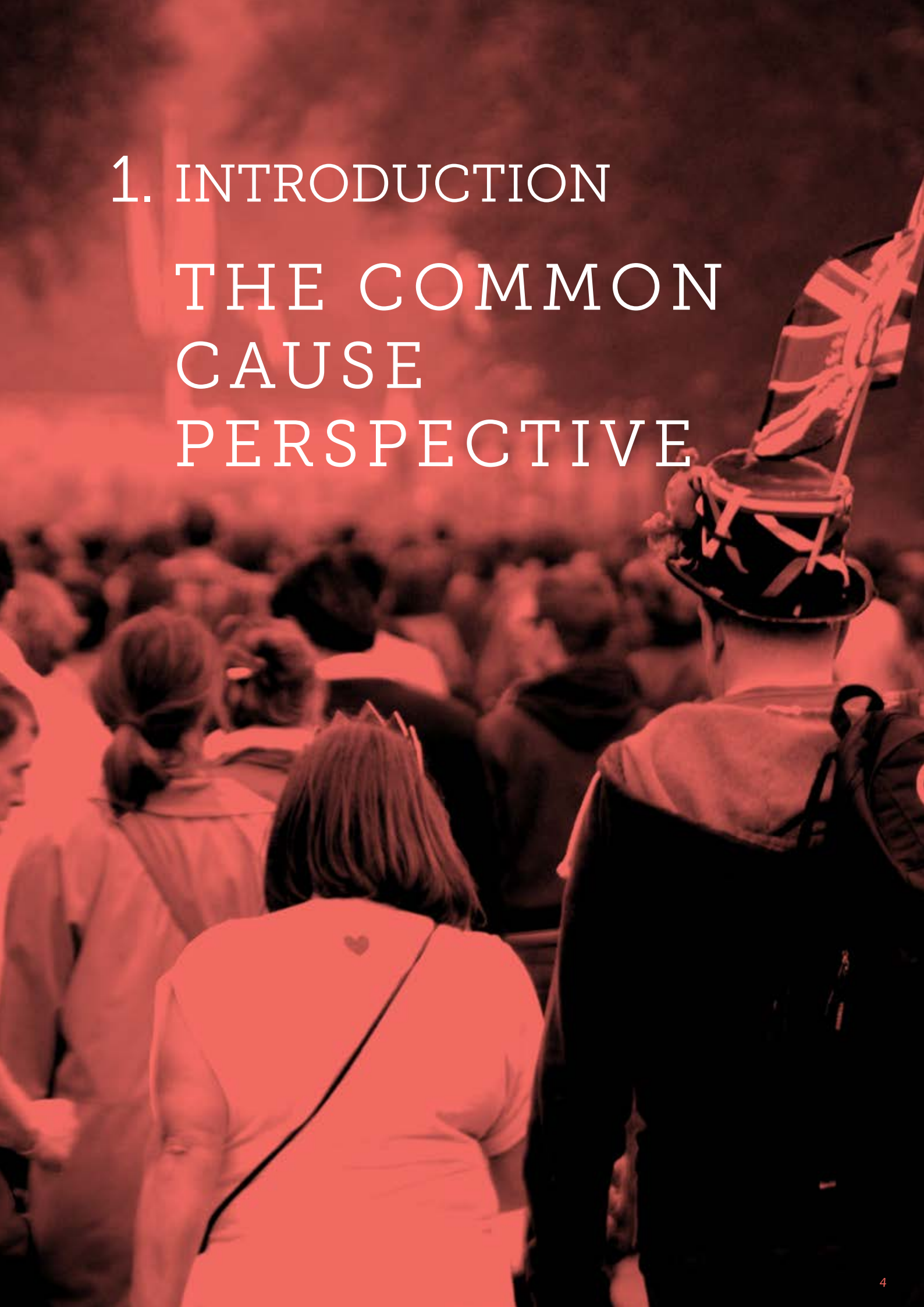
Conveying a more accurate perception of others' values. Simply conveying accurate information about the values of others will help to correct widespread misconceptions. Value surveys can help here. They are easy to run and analyse, and the results generate public interest. Such surveys should become a standard tool used by businesses (engaging their customers or employees), educational establishments (surveying students, pupils or members of staff), media organisations (through online resources), museums (supporting visitors in exploring their own values and those of typical fellow citizens), or civil society organisations (surveying their supporters or people concerned about a particular cause).

Challenging assumptions about the values that most people hold to be important. Any organisation makes assumptions about what motivates its employees, customers, pupils, students, voters, viewers, readers, listeners or visitors. A university admissions department, for example, may assume that most prospective students are primarily motivated by pursuing highly-paid jobs. Such assumptions affect the experience that people have in interacting with the organisation, and the values that these interactions encourage. Organisations often assume that people are best motivated by appeals to their financial interests, cultivation of their public image, or their desire for power and influence. This is often not the case. Moreover, working on this assumption will tend to lead organisations to weaken people's compassionate values and strengthen their selfish values. Members of staff in any organisation should ask of themselves: What are our assumptions about what matters most to the people with whom we interact? Are these accurate? What are the wider social implications of relying on these assumptions?



1. INTRODUCTION

THE COMMON CAUSE PERSPECTIVE



1.1. THREE INTERRELATED CHALLENGES CONFRONTING UK CITIZENS

As a society, people in the UK confront three interrelated challenges:

The first challenge that people collectively confront is to mount proportionate responses to pressing social and environmental problems – from climate change to inequality; from persistent child poverty to biodiversity loss.

Socially, levels of income inequality and poverty are persistent, and the proportion of children who are materially deprived is rising.¹ Racial prejudice is higher now than it was at the start of the millennium² and declining numbers of people believe that legal immigrants should have the same rights as British people.³

Environmentally, UK embedded carbon emissions continue to rise, at a time when it is increasingly difficult to dismiss severe flooding as freak ‘once-in-a-hundred-year’ events, rather than as a sign of underlying changes in our climate.⁴ The variety and abundance of the other species with which we share our islands continues to decline.⁵

The second challenge is to deepen public commitment to civic participation. Active public participation is needed in both local and national political debate. But levels of political participation are static or declining.⁶ There is widespread dissatisfaction with how well the government engages people and declining numbers of people see it as everyone’s duty to vote.⁷

The third challenge is to rebuild social cohesion and reshape social institutions to inspire public trust. People’s trust in social institutions is currently falling.⁸

These challenges are interrelated. Citizens must make vocal demands of decision-makers in government and business. In the absence of such demands, it is difficult to foresee that these decision-makers will embrace change at the scale that is necessary to meet the social and environmental challenges we face – particularly when such changes are often opposed by powerful

vested interests. Such demands, if they are to be made, will emerge from a culture in which there is deep and widespread commitment to civic participation. If this civic participation is to be nurtured, then it will also be necessary to address problems of cultural estrangement, building a wider sense of social cohesion and shared purpose.

Progress in meeting these challenges will be built on a foundation of compassionate values. Political parties of every hue frequently claim to ‘own’ British values. But this rhetoric risks obscuring a deeper understanding: there are commonalities between the values held to be important by most UK citizens. Most people attach greatest importance to compassionate values, regardless of gender, age, region, and political persuasion. But collectively we need to work to strengthen these values further, and support people in acting in line with them.

The public expression of values in the UK arises from the interplay of at least three important factors. This report highlights:

- People’s own values
- People’s perceptions of the values held to be important by fellow citizens
- The values encouraged by our social institutions

We refer to the interplay of these three factors as a ‘values nexus’ (see Figure 1 on p. 11). Drawing on existing peer-reviewed research and new survey data, this report presents an understanding of this nexus and its role in motivating necessary action on today’s social and environmental challenges, in promoting civic engagement, and in building UK citizens’ belief in the possibility of working effectively through different types of social institution.

Before turning to examine these three factors in greater depth, it’s necessary to understand more about what values are and how they work.

1.2. VALUES AND HOW THEY WORK

Values shape people's beliefs about what is desirable, important, or worthy of striving for in their lives.⁹ Psychologists have identified several groups of values but this report focuses on just two: compassionate values and selfish values. These two groups are of particular relevance to people's social and environmental concern, people's motivation to express this concern through various forms of civic action, and people's feelings of social connectedness.

Compassionate Values

A group of 'compassionate values' are associated with stronger social and environmental concern, and stronger motivation to act in line with this concern. The values that comprise this group are listed in **Box 1**. Almost everyone holds all these compassionate values *at some level*, though the relative importance that they are accorded varies from person to person.

Values in this group are related to one another, such that a person who attaches relatively high importance to any one of these values is likely to also attach relatively



high importance to the others. Psychologists refer to this as 'bleed-over' between related values.¹⁰

This is just to say, for example, that if a person believes social justice to be important, then he or she is also likely to think that helpfulness is important.

People who hold compassionate values to be important are more likely to express concern about social and environmental problems – both in the attitudes that they hold, and the behaviours that they adopt in awareness of these problems.¹¹ Moreover, drawing attention – even very subtly – to compassionate values leads people to express deeper concern about social and environmental issues.¹²

Selfish Values

The second group of values that is of particular relevance to expressions of social and environmental concern is 'selfish values' (also listed in **Box 1**). As with compassionate values, everyone (or almost everyone) holds values in this group to be important at some level. Further, selfish values are also related to one another, such that concern about one of these values is likely to 'bleed-over' into concern about other selfish values.

This is just to say, for example, that if a person believes that wealth is important, he or she is also likely to think that authority is important.

Selfish and compassionate values are opposed to one another. This opposition is observed in two different ways.

First, studies have found that when people are asked to rate the importance that they attach to different values, people who rate compassionate values highly are likely to rate selfish values lower, and vice-versa. It is difficult to attach importance to both compassionate and selfish values at the same time.¹³

This is just to say, for example, that most people who attach high importance to authority attach low importance to social justice, and vice-versa. It's not that it's impossible to hold both things to be important – just that, when asked about their values, most people do not attach high

importance to both of these aims.

Second, it has been found experimentally that when a person's attention is drawn – even very subtly – to one group of values, the importance that this person attaches to the other set of values diminishes.¹⁴

Drawing a person's attention to compassionate values tends to temporarily diminish the importance that he or she attaches to selfish values, and vice-versa. People who hold selfish values to be important are less likely to express concern about social and environmental problems. They are less likely to hold attitudes supportive of addressing these problems, and they are less likely to adopt behaviours aimed at mitigating these problems.¹⁵

For example, drawing a person's attention, even very subtly, to 'achievement' (a selfish value) is likely to suppress opposing compassionate values (which include 'helpfulness'). This can be demonstrated experimentally – drawing

attention to achievement leads a person to show less inclination to respond to a request for help than someone in a control group whose attention is drawn to value-neutral things, like food.¹⁶

1.3 WHY VALUES MATTER

In Section 1.1, we highlighted three related challenges confronting UK citizens: to mount proportionate responses to profound social and environmental problems, to deepen public commitment to civic participation, and to rebuild social cohesion and trust in social institutions. In this section we explore the relationship between compassionate and selfish values and action to meet these three challenges.

BOX 1: TECHNICAL NOTE ON VALUES

There are many different groups of values, but in this report we focus on those that are of particular importance in predicting a person's social or environmental concern, and motivation to express this concern through various forms of civic engagement.

Here we draw on two extensive bodies of academic research. These two bodies of research use different vocabularies to describe similar but distinct groups of values.

Professor Tim Kasser, who has pioneered work on life-goals, has defined intrinsic and extrinsic values – terms that we have used in many of our previous publications.

Professor Shalom Schwartz has developed a very widely recognised survey tool that we use in the study reported on here (the Portrait Values Questionnaire). He uses the terms self-transcendence and self-enhancement values.

In this report we use two new terms that, to our knowledge, have no specific definition in the academic literature, but that we believe have greater resonance for a non-specialist audience:

Compassionate values include:

'broadmindedness', 'a world of beauty', 'a world at peace', 'equality', 'protecting the environment', 'social justice', 'helpfulness', 'forgiveness', 'honesty' and 'responsibility'.

Values in this group are associated with greater concern about social and environmental issues, and greater motivation to engage in various forms of civic action. These are known to academics as 'self-transcendence' values and encompass some of the 'intrinsic' values.

Selfish values include: values of 'wealth', 'social recognition', 'social status' and 'prestige', 'control or dominance over people', 'authority', 'conformity', 'preserving public image', 'popularity', 'influence' and 'ambition'.

Selfish values are associated with lower concern about social and environmental issues, and lower motivation to engage in various forms of civic action. These are known to academics as 'self-enhancement' values and they are similar to 'extrinsic' values.

1.3.1 VALUES AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Research demonstrates that people who attach relatively higher importance to compassionate values, or relatively lower importance to selfish values, hold more positive attitudes towards action to address social and environmental challenges. These people are also more likely to act in ways that help to address these challenges. This is an extensive and robust body of research, and we did not seek to extend it in this study.¹⁷

1.3.2 VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

People who attach greater importance to compassionate values have been found to be more likely to be involved with civil society organisations (through membership, making financial donations, and volunteering time). They are also more likely to be involved in political activism (for example, by boycotting products, contacting a politician or government official, joining public demonstrations, or participating in illegal protest activities). People who attach importance to selfish values are less likely to become engaged in these ways.¹⁸

1.3.3 VALUES AND CULTURAL ESTRANGEMENT

Cultural estrangement is the feeling of not fitting in or not belonging to wider society. Widespread feelings of cultural estrangement in the UK could erode our cultural cohesion and the loyalty that we feel towards one another. It has been found that Britons who perceive a wider gap between their own values and those that they see as characterising people in British society report higher levels of cultural estrangement than those who perceive a narrower gap.¹⁹

1.4 THE 'VALUES NEXUS'

Given the profound importance of values, as outlined in the Section 1.3, it is crucial to ask how people's commitment to particular values develops and strengthens.

Recall that we refer to the interrelationships between people's own values, people's perceptions of others' values, and the values seen to be encouraged by social institutions as the 'values nexus' (see Section 1.1). Each of these three factors is likely to both shape, and be shaped by, the other two (see Figure 1 on p. 11).

A deeper understating of this nexus will help to promote collective responses to the challenges outlined in Section 1.1.²⁰ In this discussion, social institutions are taken to include a wide range of different organisations, including media organisations; schools and universities; museums, theatres and galleries; businesses, and government organisations.

1.4.1 PEOPLE'S OWN VALUES

People's commitment to particular values is likely to influence their perceptions of a typical fellow citizen's values (see Arrow A in Figure 1).

People's values are likely to influence the friends that they choose, the neighbourhoods in which they settle, the jobs they do, the TV stations they watch, the newspapers or blogs that they read, and their leisure activities. People will draw on these in forming their beliefs about a typical fellow citizen's values. People's perceptions about the values held to be important by a typical fellow citizen will therefore be influenced by their own values, through decisions that they make in line with these values.

People's commitment to particular values is likely to influence the shape of social institutions (see Arrow B in Figure 1).

People's values will influence their perceptions of the kind of society in which they would like to live – and therefore their beliefs about how social institutions should operate. Citizens play an important role in shaping social institutions – for example, as voters, customers or volunteers. It's known that people's values help to predict their

voting preferences and their purchasing decisions, their motivation to volunteer and their commitment to various forms of civic engagement.²¹ The values of UK citizens will therefore influence the way that these institutions develop.

Clearly, the values held to be important by decision-makers with direct responsibility for these institutions are likely to be still more influential in shaping how they develop.

1.4.2. PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS' VALUES

People's *perceptions* about a typical fellow citizen's values are likely to contribute to deepening their commitment to some values – and to weakening their commitment to others (see Arrow C in Figure 1).

A person's perception of a typical fellow citizen's values influences his or her understanding of what is 'normal' or 'acceptable' behaviour, and therefore the way in which he or she acts (at least when observed by others). But a person's behaviour influences his or her values. When a person perceives *himself* or *herself* as behaving in a particular way, he or she draws inferences about what he or she values, and may modify the importance that he or she attaches to particular values accordingly.²² So a person's perception of what matters to others is likely to influence the importance that he or she attaches to particular values.

How is a person's perception of others' values shaped? A person's perceptions will be influenced by both what fellow citizens *say* is important to them and what he or she *infers* about fellow citizens from the way that they behave.

For this reason, it is very significant if people don't always bear testimony to the values that they hold to be most important – either in what they say, or what they do. As we will see, people often speak and act *as though* they attach particular importance to values that are actually relatively unimportant to them.

People's *perceptions* about other people's values are likely to contribute to shaping social institutions (see Arrow D in Figure 1).

People's perceptions of a typical fellow citizen's values also seem certain to influence the shape of social institutions. This influence will arise in part through public support for particular types of social institution. If most UK citizens believe that a typical fellow citizen is dishonest, this is likely to deepen public support for a social security system geared to catch 'welfare cheats' – even if this risks denying support to some who are deserving. If, on the other hand, most UK citizens believe that a typical fellow citizen is honest, this is likely to deepen public support for a social security system that is accepting of some abuse in the course of ensuring that everyone who needs state support is able to access this in a straightforward way.

A decision-maker's perceptions about a typical fellow citizen's values are likely to have an immediate impact in shaping those institutions in which he or she has an involvement. As we'll see, people's perceptions of others values are often inaccurate and we find no reason to believe that decision-makers are any less susceptible than anyone else to misunderstandings of this kind.

1.4.3 THE VALUES ENCOURAGED BY SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

People's experience of any social institution will contribute to deepening their commitment to some values, and to weakening commitment to others (see Arrow E in Figure 1).

To the extent that institutions tend to encourage particular values, people's experience of these institutions is likely to strengthen the importance that they come to place on these values. Research finds that over time people learn to place importance on particular values as a result of their social experience.²³ For example, studying law has been found to lead students to place greater

importance on selfish values – perhaps because of the competitive nature of undergraduate law degrees.²⁴ People’s interaction with social institutions – for example, schools, shopping malls and television – will influence their values. The influence of social institutions is also likely to operate at a national level. It’s known that citizens in more economically de-regulated countries tend to attach relatively greater importance to selfish values, and lower importance to compassionate values.²⁵

People’s experience of any social institution will influence their beliefs about the values of a typical fellow citizen (see Arrow F in Figure 1).

Institutions are likely to influence people’s *perceptions of other peoples’ values*.²⁶ Where institutions have been designed in expectation that people behave in line with particular values, behaviour associated with these values is more likely to be elicited. Think about what a social institution incentivises and rewards, what it measures, and what implicit assumptions it conveys about the way that most people behave. These characteristics contribute to creating and affirming people’s perspectives on human nature.²⁷

Institutions encourage people to behave in particular ways. These patterns of behaviour convey an understanding of what motivates people and of the values that people hold to be important. If social institutions repeatedly elicit particular kinds of behaviour, then this is likely to shape wider perceptions of the values held to be important by a typical UK citizen.

So, for example, if social institutions are designed in ways that anticipate citizens will behave in predominantly

self-interested ways, self-interested behaviour is more likely to be elicited, providing ‘social proof’ of the importance of selfish values.²⁸ As one social psychologist writes:

“[T]he image of humans as self-interested leads to the creation of social institutions (e.g. work-places, schools, governments) in that image which, in turn, transforms that image into reality.”²⁹



THE VALUES NEXUS

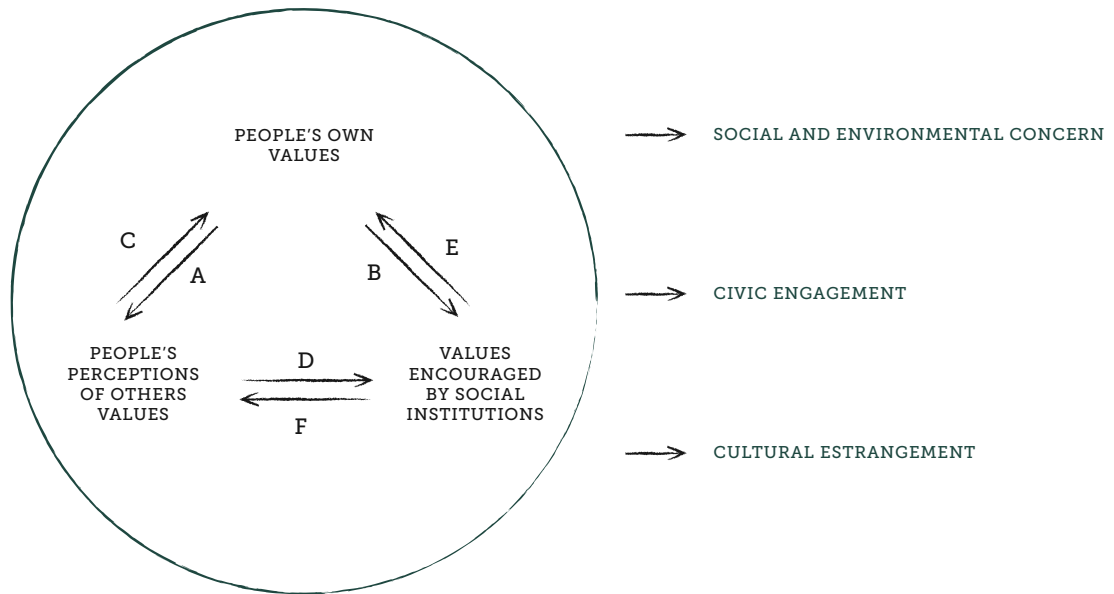
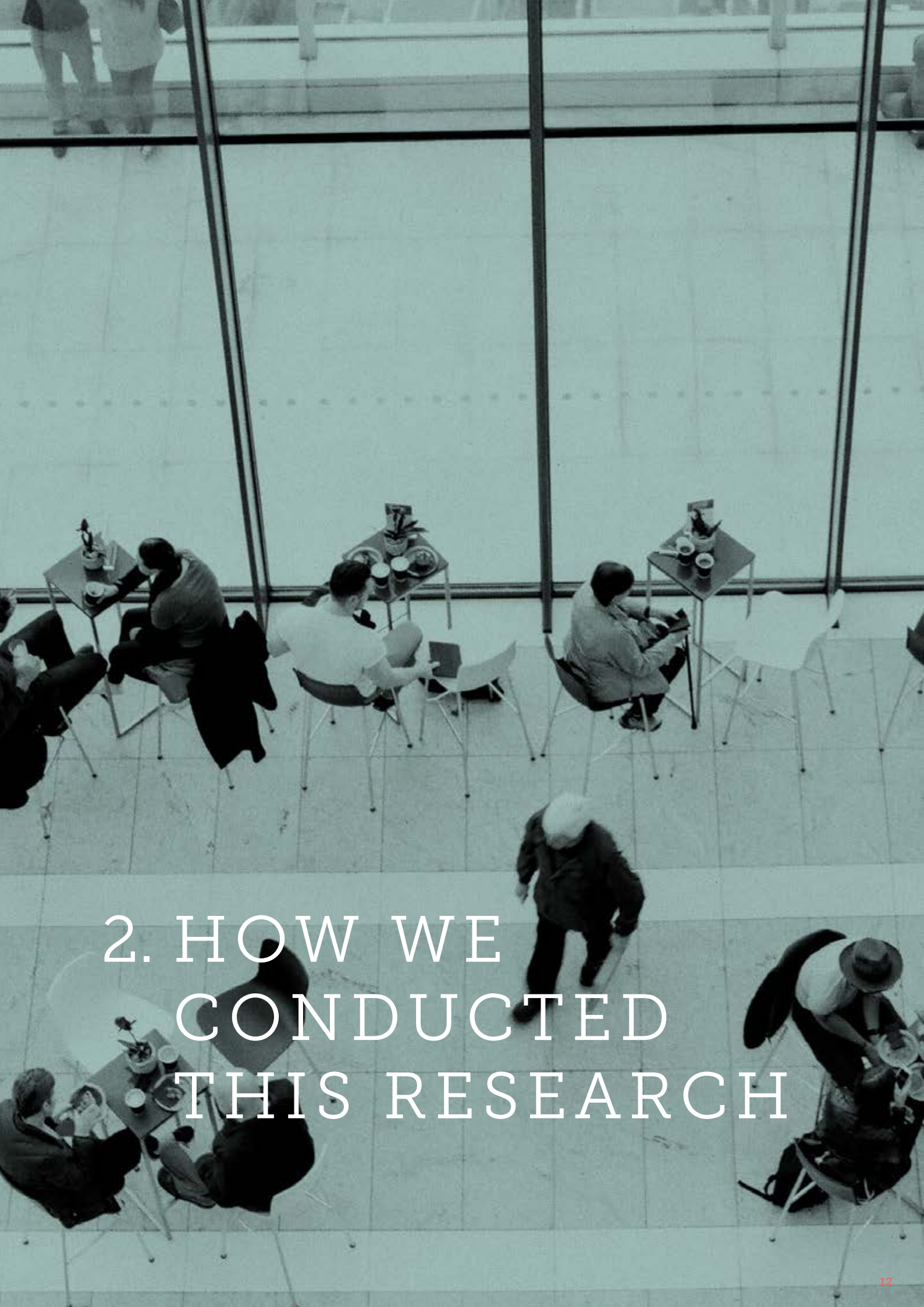


Figure 1: The 'values nexus'

People's own values, people's perceptions of others' values, and the values encouraged by social institutions are likely to interact in ways detailed in this section and summarised in this figure. A person's own values will influence the type of people with whom they have contact (whether this contact is personal, or via the media) and therefore this person's perceptions about a typical fellow citizen – including a typical fellow citizen's values (Arrow A). Social institutions will be shaped in part by people's own values (for example, through the preferences that people express as decision-makers, voters or consumers) (Arrow B). Believing that most people hold particular values to be more important than is actually the case is likely to lead a person to attach greater importance to these same values himself or herself (Arrow C). Social institutions are also likely to be

influenced by people's perceptions of others' values (Arrow D). Social institutions are likely to influence citizens' values through the expectations they create about how citizens will behave (do these institutions, for example, encourage a focus on selfish values such as authority and wealth, or compassionate values such as justice and equality?) (Arrow E). Social institutions are likely to influence people's perceptions of others' values (Arrow F). Interaction between these elements of the values nexus will shape the values that UK citizens hold to be important – and will therefore contribute to determining levels of concern about social and environmental problems, commitment to civic engagement and feelings of cultural estrangement.



2. HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS RESEARCH

2.1 THE SURVEY

We asked Ipsos-MORI to contact one thousand demographically representative UK citizens. These people were presented with:

- A series of demographic questions on gender, age, the region of the UK in which they live, the highest level of education that they attained, perceptions of their household income.
- A series of questions that have been developed by psychologists to test for biases in the way that people respond (see **Box 2**).
- A well-validated and widely used survey tool to assess participants' own values.³⁰
- This same values survey, a second time, but now asking participants to think about the values of 'a typical British person'.
- This same values survey, a third time, but now asking participants to think about the values encouraged by one of five different types of social institution. For this part of the survey participants were randomly assigned to one of five different conditions and asked about the values encouraged by either: arts and culture, the business

sector, the education system, the media, or government.³¹

- A series of questions that have been developed by psychologists to test for 'cultural estrangement'.³²
- A series of questions that have been developed by psychologists to test attitudes towards 'civic engagement'.³³
- A series of questions about participants' civic engagement in the last five years: had participants voted, attended a public meeting or demonstration, got in touch with a government official, volunteered, distributed information about a social cause, signed a petition, donated money?
- Questions about political persuasion (liberal versus conservative).

2.2 FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

After conducting the survey, we invited a sub-set of respondents to participate in follow-up interviews. Twenty people participated in these interviews, which were conducted by a psychologist from the University of Essex. These conversations, which typically lasted an hour, were recorded and transcribed. Analysis of this material

BOX 2: TESTING FOR BIASES

It might be argued that participants in a survey such as this will tend to overstate the importance that they attach to compassionate values and to understate the importance that they place on selfish values. They may do so consciously to project a more positive public image or unconsciously because they hold unrealistically high opinions of themselves.

Previous studies have found, however, that responses to values surveys are not unduly affected by such sources of bias – particularly when, as in this case, the survey is conducted anonymously.³⁴ Nonetheless, we wanted to check for these biases. We asked every participant to complete a section of the survey designed to assess whether or not they were likely to respond in a biased manner.³⁵

We checked for two types of bias:

- **Impression management:** a habitual and conscious tendency to try to project a positive public image
- **Self-deceptive enhancement:** an unconscious tendency to project oneself in a positive light

We then tested to see whether the results we present in this report were impacted by either of these two kinds of bias. We found that they were not.³⁶

was then conducted by a psychologist at the University of Cardiff. In this report, we draw on material from these interviews to deepen our understanding of the results of the quantitative survey.

2.3 REPORTING THE RESULTS

Although we collected data about a wide range of different groups of values, this report focuses only on compassionate and selfish values. In addition to reporting on people's scores on these two groups of values, we also make frequent use of a measure which we call the *adjusted compassionate value score* (see **Box 3**).

A person's own adjusted compassionate value score is a measure of a person's relative inclination towards compassionate as opposed to selfish values. It is calculated by subtracting a person's selfish value score from his or her compassionate value score. A person who attaches greater importance to compassionate than to selfish values has an adjusted compassionate value score greater than zero. Someone who attaches greater importance to selfish than to compassionate values has an adjusted compassionate value score of less than zero.

We also calculated adjusted compassionate value scores for participants' *perceptions about the values held to be important by a typical fellow citizen*. Here we subtracted the score that a participant awarded a typical fellow citizen for selfish values from the score that a participant awarded a typical fellow citizen for compassionate values.

2.4 CONSULTATION

Preliminary results of this analysis were then shared with experts drawn from a range of different organisations, including civil society organisations, political parties, think tanks, businesses, and universities. We held one-to-one meetings with these experts, each of whom is listed in the acknowledgements. This input was invaluable in developing this report.

The remainder of this report presents and discusses the results of this research. The next three sections focus on each of the three key elements of the values nexus as we have described this in Figure 1: *Citizens' own values, citizens' perceptions of others' values, and citizens' perceptions of the values encouraged by social institutions*.



BOX 3: ADJUSTED COMPASSIONATE VALUE SCORE

In this report, we make use of a measure of people's values that we call the *adjusted compassionate value score*. This is a useful shorthand way of showing how much importance a person attaches to compassionate values relative to selfish values. This measure enables us to simplify the presentation of many of our results. Similar measures have also been used in a good deal of the academic work on which this report draws.

Recall that compassionate and selfish values are 'opposed' to one another: people who hold compassionate values to be important are likely to attach lower importance to selfish values, and vice-versa.

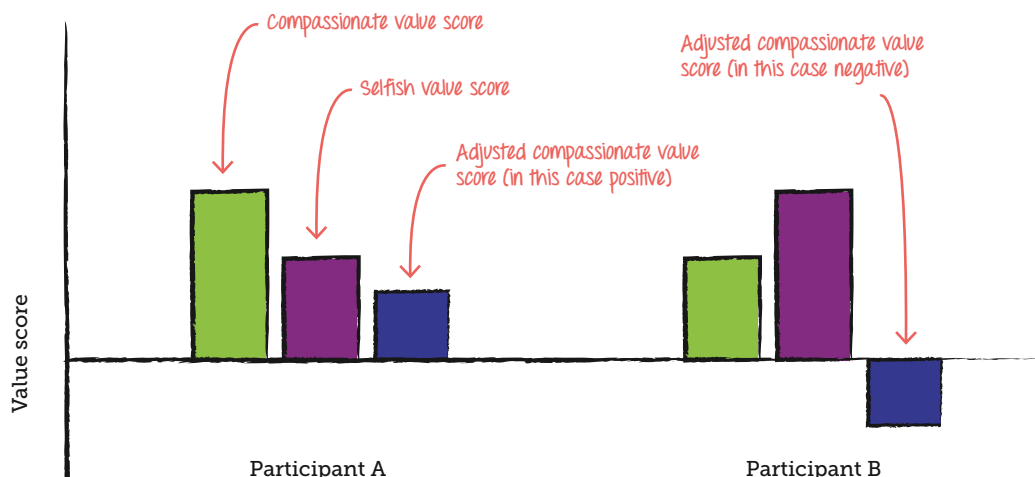
Our survey asked participants to rate the importance of each value on a numerical scale. We then calculated average scores for compassionate values, and average scores for selfish values. The adjusted compassionate value score was calculated by subtracting a person's selfish value score from a person's compassionate value score.

Look at the data for Participant A in Figure 2 below. She holds compassionate values to be more important than selfish values, and in this respect she is typical of the majority of people we surveyed. Her adjusted compassionate value score is therefore positive.

Now look at the data for Participant B. He is not typical of most UK citizens, in holding selfish values to be more important than compassionate values. His adjusted compassionate value score is negative.

We also asked people what they *think* a typical fellow citizen values. We can present this as an adjusted compassionate value score.

Here we take a person's assessment of the importance that a typical fellow citizen attaches to compassionate values and subtract his or her assessment of the importance that a typical fellow citizen attaches to selfish values.



$$\text{Compassionate Value Score} - \text{Selfish Value Score} = \text{Adjusted Compassionate Value Score}$$

Figure 2: Calculation of adjusted compassionate value score for two hypothetical participants

3. UK CITIZENS' OWN VALUES



3.1 WHAT DOES A TYPICAL UK CITIZEN VALUE?

The majority of survey participants place greater importance on compassionate values than selfish values.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of adjusted compassionate value scores for the demographically representative sample of one thousand UK citizens. 74% of people report caring about compassionate values more than selfish values.

Of course, this isn't to suggest that selfish values, such as wealth and social status, are unimportant to most people: at some level, they are important to almost everyone. But our results corroborate earlier surveys of UK citizens in showing that most people place greater importance on compassionate values than on selfish values.³⁷

It may be that people 'secretly' hold compassionate values to be of lower importance than they report in surveys such as ours, and 'secretly' attach greater importance to selfish values. Perhaps, when asked as participants in a survey, most people feel more comfortable saying that compassionate values are important to them, and tend to down-play the importance of selfish values.

We were able to test for such bias in the way that people reported their values (see **Box 3**).

We found that there was no association between people's reports about their compassionate or selfish values and their tendencies to either: a) modify their responses to meet with social approval; or b) try to elevate others' perceptions of them.

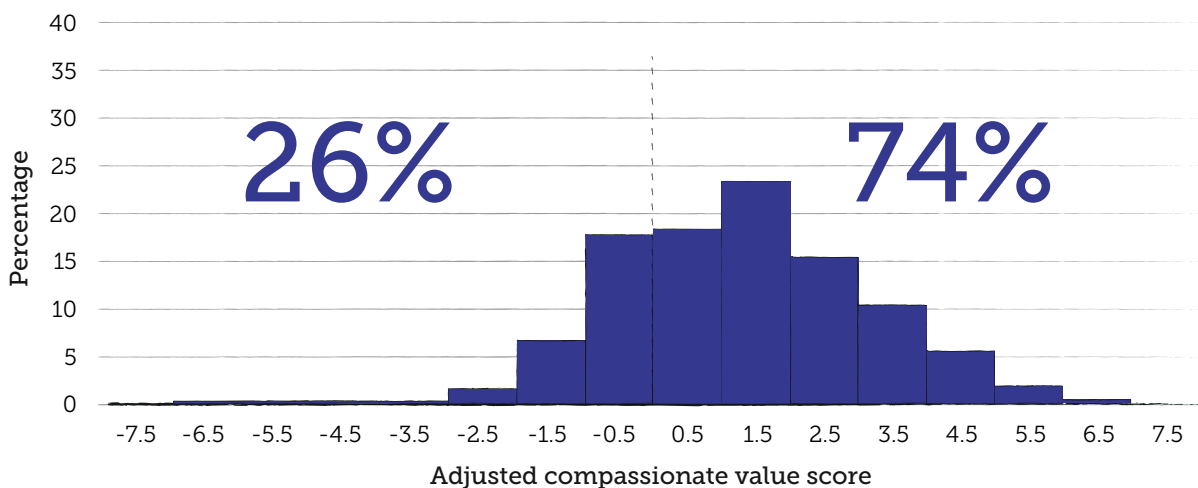


Figure 3: Adjusted compassionate value score for respondent's own values.

This histogram shows data for a demographically representative sample of one thousand UK adults. Most UK citizens have an adjusted compassionate value score greater than zero (i.e. to the right of the black dotted line). In other words, most UK citizens attach greater importance to compassionate values than to selfish values.

3.2 UK CITIZENS' OWN VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We found that UK citizens who have a relatively higher compassionate value score are also significantly more likely to report having engaged in a range of different types of civic engagement. This result corroborates other published research.³⁸ The reverse is true for people with a relatively higher selfish score. See Table 1, and Figure 4 below.

These results, coupled with a great deal of other published evidence regarding the associations between compassionate and selfish values and social and environmental concern, further underscore the importance of understanding citizens' values and the factors that influence these.

	What is the relationship with a person's compassionate value score?	What is the relationship with a person's selfish value score?
Activities in last five years		
Voted in a national or local election	Positive (see Figure 4, below)	Negative (see Figure 4, below)
Other forms of civic engagement, including signing a petition, getting in touch with a government official, attending a public meeting, volunteering, donating	Positive	Negative
Attitudes		
Attitudes towards various forms of civic behaviour	Positive	Negative

Table 1: Relationships between a person's values and engagement in various forms of civic behaviour.³⁹



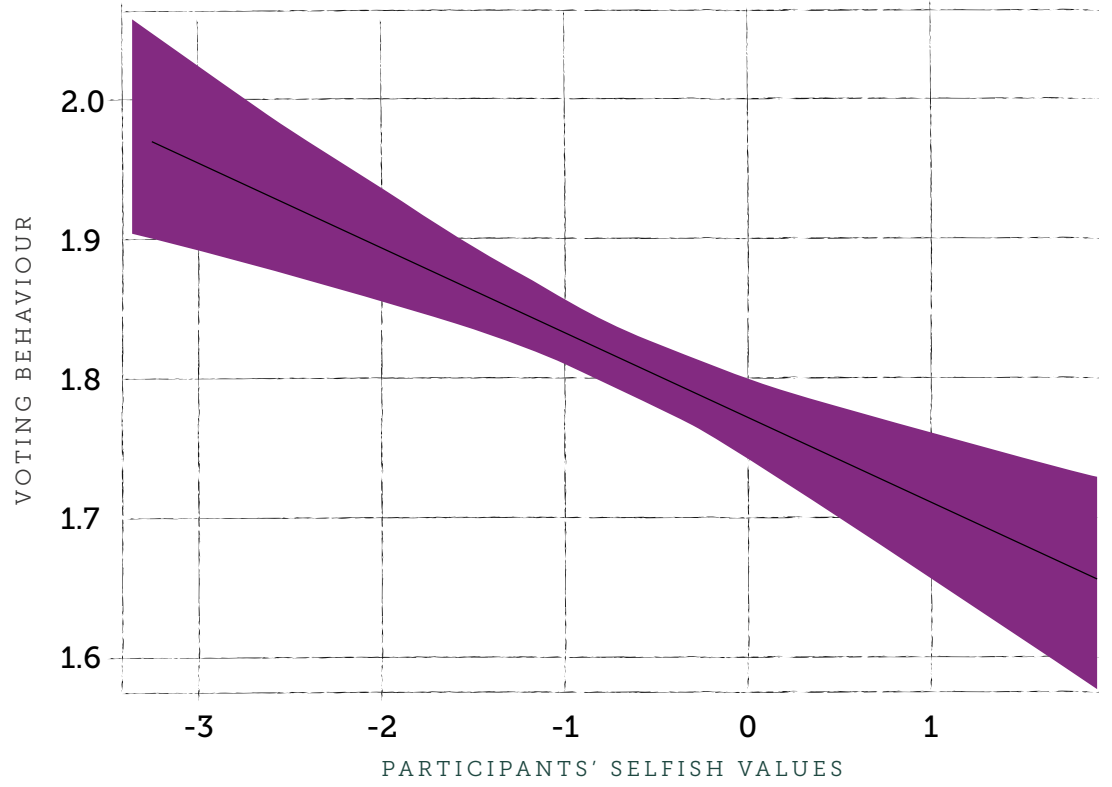
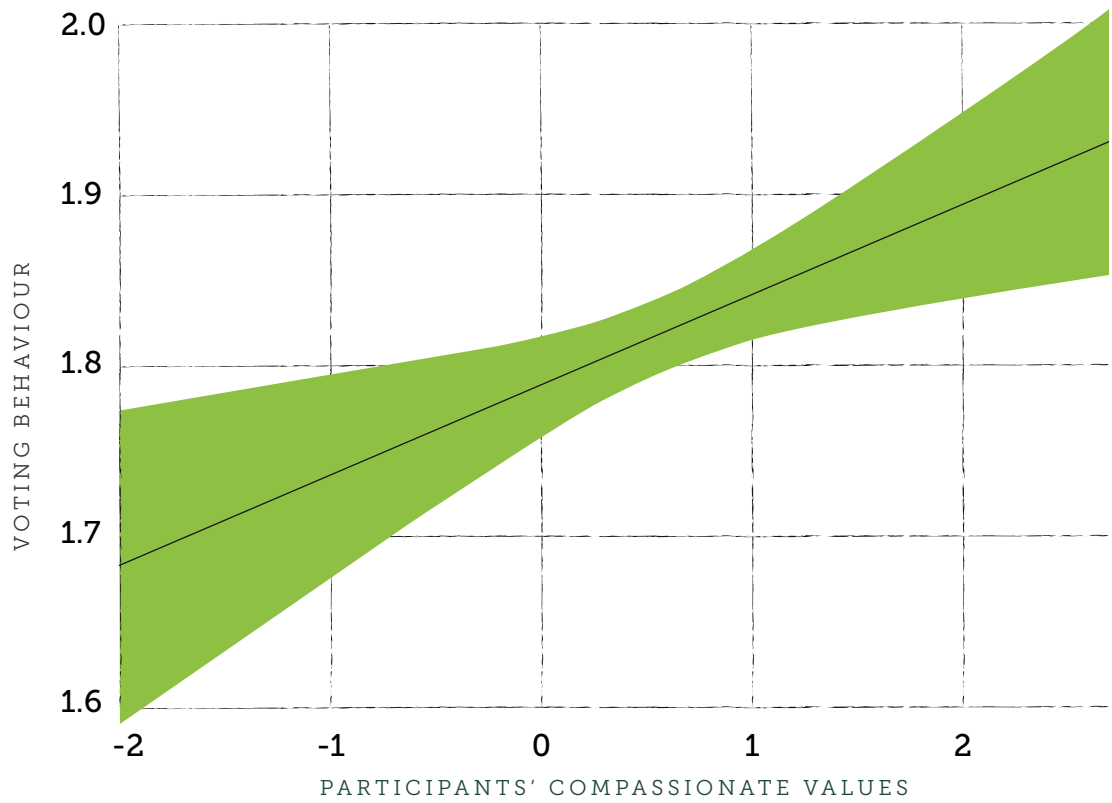
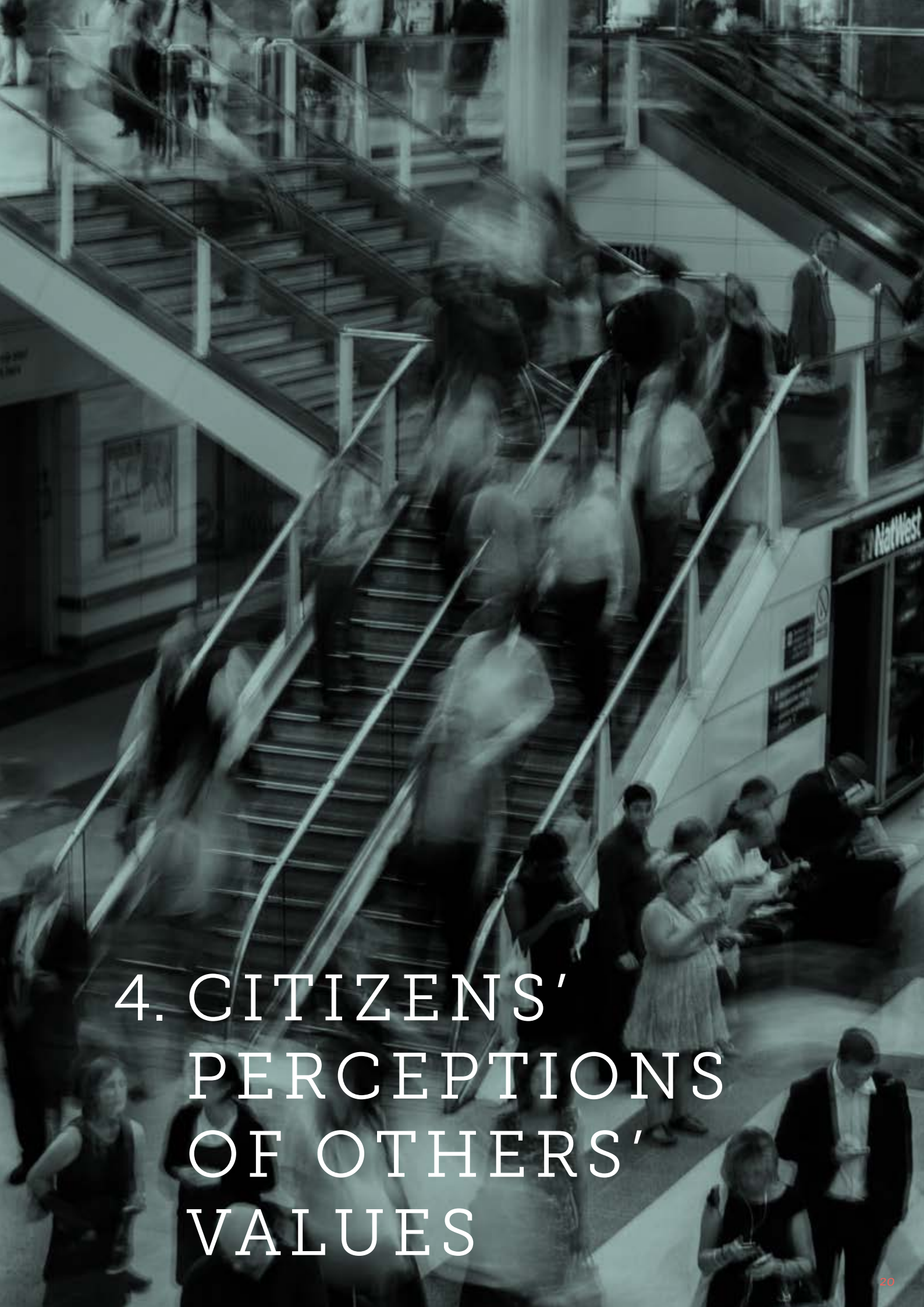


Figure 4: Relationships between the importance that participants place on compassionate values or selfish values and their voting behaviour

The top graph shows the incidence of voting behaviour rising with increasing compassionate value scores. The bottom graph shows the incidence of voting behaviour falling with increasing selfish value scores. The coloured areas show 95% confidence limits.



4. CITIZENS'
PERCEPTIONS
OF OTHERS'
VALUES

4.1 WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK THAT A TYPICAL BRITISH PERSON VALUES?

Our survey results reveal that most UK citizens (77%) underestimate the importance that a typical British person attaches to compassionate values while also overestimating the importance that a typical British person attaches to selfish values. In other words, people tend to assume that a typical fellow citizen has a lower adjusted compassionate value score (see **Box 3**) than is actually the case.

Figure 5 shows the data for the adjusted compassionate value score for participants' assessment of their own values (blue bars) and for participants' assessment of the values of a typical fellow citizen (yellow bars).

This gap between what UK citizens *actually* value and what UK citizens *believe* that a typical British person values does not seem to be due to biases in the way that people responded to our survey. Just as we were able to test for the effects of such bias in explaining the results regarding people's own values, so we were able to test for such

bias in people's perception of others' values (see **Box 2**). Following these tests, we concluded that this 'gap' does not arise as a result of reporting bias.

Follow-up interviews conducted with twenty of our survey participants offered further support for our finding that UK citizens tend to believe that others attach less importance to compassionate values, and more importance to selfish values, than is actually the case.

Here are some typical examples of the ways in which participants reflected on others' values:

"All young people want is wealth, that's the big thing, if you ask them for one thing, they want to be rich" (Participant 5).

"A lot of people don't care about anything except money." (Participant 15).

"There's focus on earning money, and that's what's valued, not being a capable, competent human being. I don't think it's [being competent is] something people value any more, they don't value it in themselves." (Participant 10).

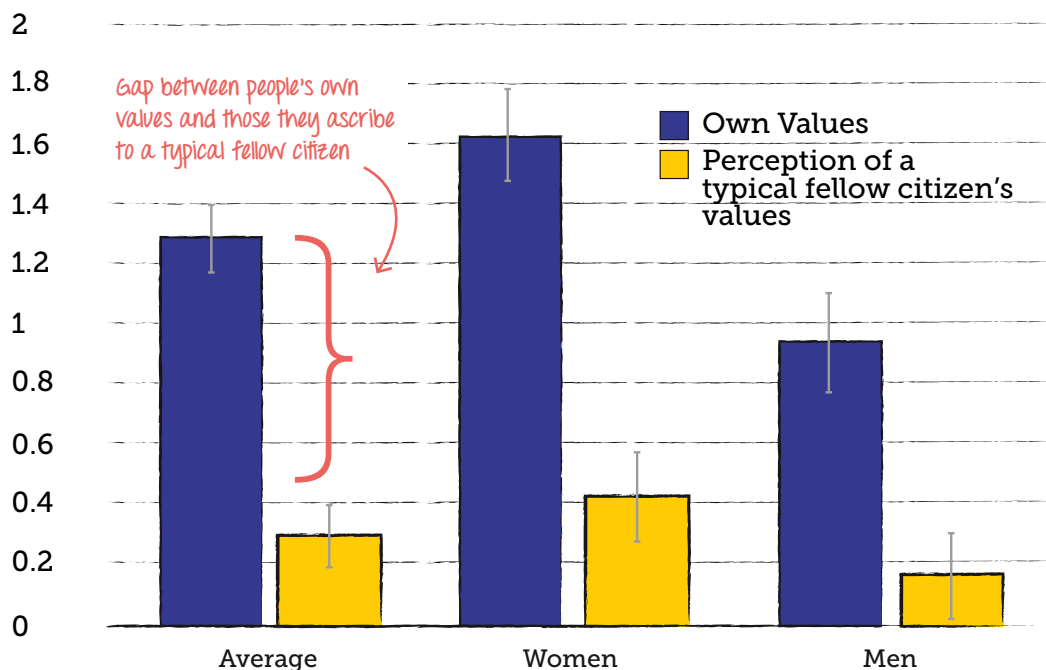


Figure 5: Adjusted compassionate value scores by gender

The adjusted compassionate value score for respondents' own values (blue bars) and respondents' perception of a typical fellow citizen's values (yellow bars). On average, a UK citizen has an adjusted compassionate value score of 1.28. As can be seen, this is significantly higher among women than men. These differences between men and women are discussed further in the Appendix. Bars show 95% confidence limits.

“We have a culture of self, and not a culture of responsibility, it’s all about me, my needs, not the society’s need” (Participant 2).

Only a small minority expressed the feeling that a typical fellow citizen attached importance to compassionate values. For example, one respondent said:

“I think in general most people are kind and considerate” (Participant 20).

In Section 1.4.1 we suggested that people’s own values will influence their perceptions of a typical fellow citizen’s values. We also suggested that, reciprocally, perceptions of a typical fellow citizen’s values will influence a person’s own values (see Section 1.4.2). Our data are consistent with this perspective. We find a significant positive correlation between a person’s own adjusted compassionate value score and his or her perceptions of a typical fellow citizen’s adjusted compassionate value score.⁴⁰

4.2 HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT OTHERS’ VALUES?

When interviewed after completion of the survey, we found that many participants perceive a gap between their own values and those of typical fellow citizens.

Here is some of what participants said:

“It’s not that easy [to express social justice] these days. Years ago when so many people were really poor and there was nothing, I mean, we managed, in fact, where I lived, if you get a new set of furniture, you’d pass your old one to the next person on the road, that sort of thing, and that’s how it worked. There was a community. And I like that because you do understand the other person’s point of view and you try to help them, but you don’t get much of that these days unfortunately” (Participant 5).

“I think in today’s society a lot of people can look down on you if you... I think it’s hard to convince people in this day and age to care about other people in the world, and I think it is getting harder as well” (Participant 12).

Eleven participants (from a total of twenty that we interviewed) identify a value gap between themselves and others, and express the view that selfish values are communicated or expressed in public forums, for example by media or the government. Six participants express frustration about this perceived gap. For example:

“I want to change their [other people’s] values, but inside, to my mind, I understand that I cannot force them.” (Participant 4)

“Our society can be quite image-driven, so money, and clothes, and obviously you need money for that, so you need to be involved a lot in work, and that sort of thing can be very time consuming, and you don’t always have the time to spend on friends, family, and the people you like... and it makes you feel a bit lonely.” (Participant 9)

4.3 UK CITIZENS’ PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS’ VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In Section 3.2 we explored the relationship between people’s own values and civic engagement. **Our results also show that a person’s perceptions of a typical fellow citizen’s values are important in predicting civic engagement. We found that the more strongly a person perceives a typical fellow citizen to hold compassionate values to be important, the more positive that person’s attitude towards various forms of civic engagement, and the more likely that person is to vote.**⁴¹

We also found, conversely, that the more strongly a respondent perceives a typical fellow citizen to hold selfish values to be important, the less likely he or she is to hold positive attitudes towards various forms of civic engagement, and the less likely he or she is to vote. Results for other forms of civic behaviour did not reach statistical significance. See Table 2, and Figure 6 over leaf.

What might the reason be for this relationship between civic engagement and a person's beliefs about a typical fellow citizen's values? One of our respondents clearly felt that to act in line with their compassionate values would leave them looking peculiar, or invite hostility:

"I think it can be quite hard [to express responsibility], because people see you as a hippie... So, yeah, some people just think you're crazy. I think with today's culture, you buy something, you don't think of where it's come from, you don't really think it's gonna go in the end, and it is sort of like a very fast paced life, and when you're the only one out of a group saying let's protect the environment they're gonna say shut up." (Participant 12).

Another indicates that they tend to 'play along' with what they take to be more socially dominant values:

"Well it's a very materialistic, capitalistic environment and society that we live in. I don't like it very much. I try to express my values as much as possible, but to live with them [other people], you just try and play the roles as much as possible..." (Participant 17).



	What is the relationship with a person's perception of others' compassionate values?	What is the relationship with a person's perception of others' selfish values?
Have you voted in a national or local election in the last five years?	Positive (see Figure 6, top)	Negative (see Figure 6, bottom)
Attitudes towards various forms of civic behaviour	Positive	Negative

Table 2

Relationships between a person's perception of a typical fellow citizen's values and engagement in various forms of civic behaviour.⁴²

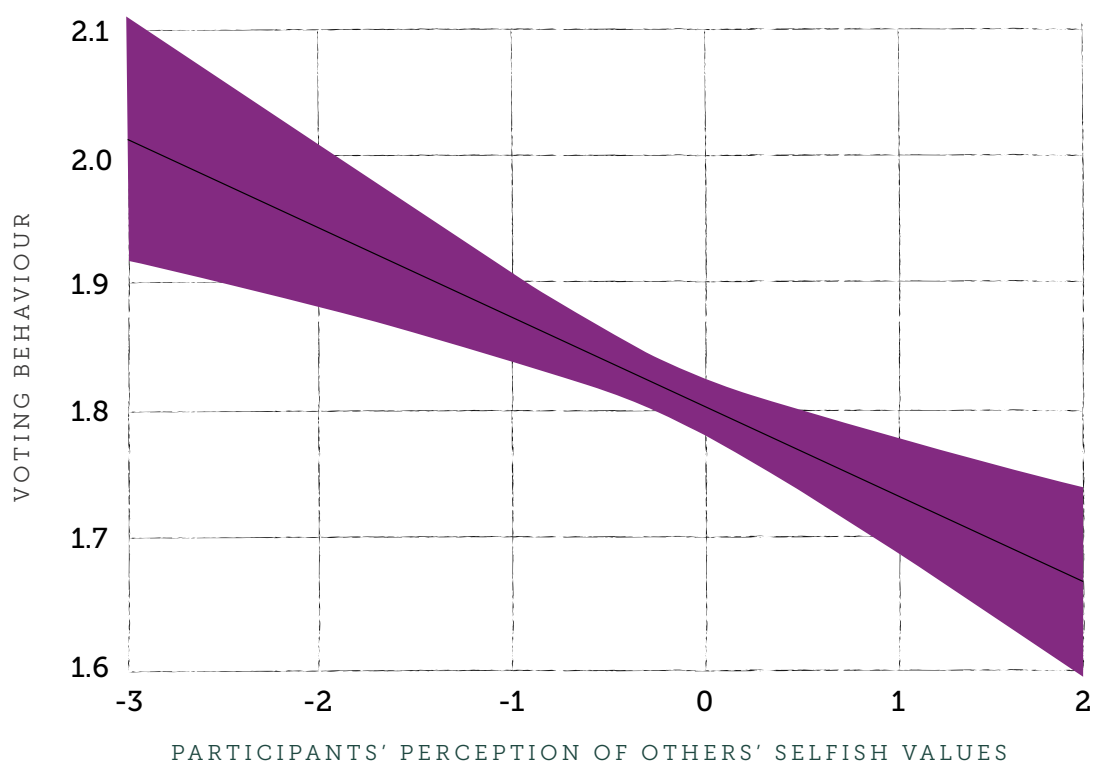
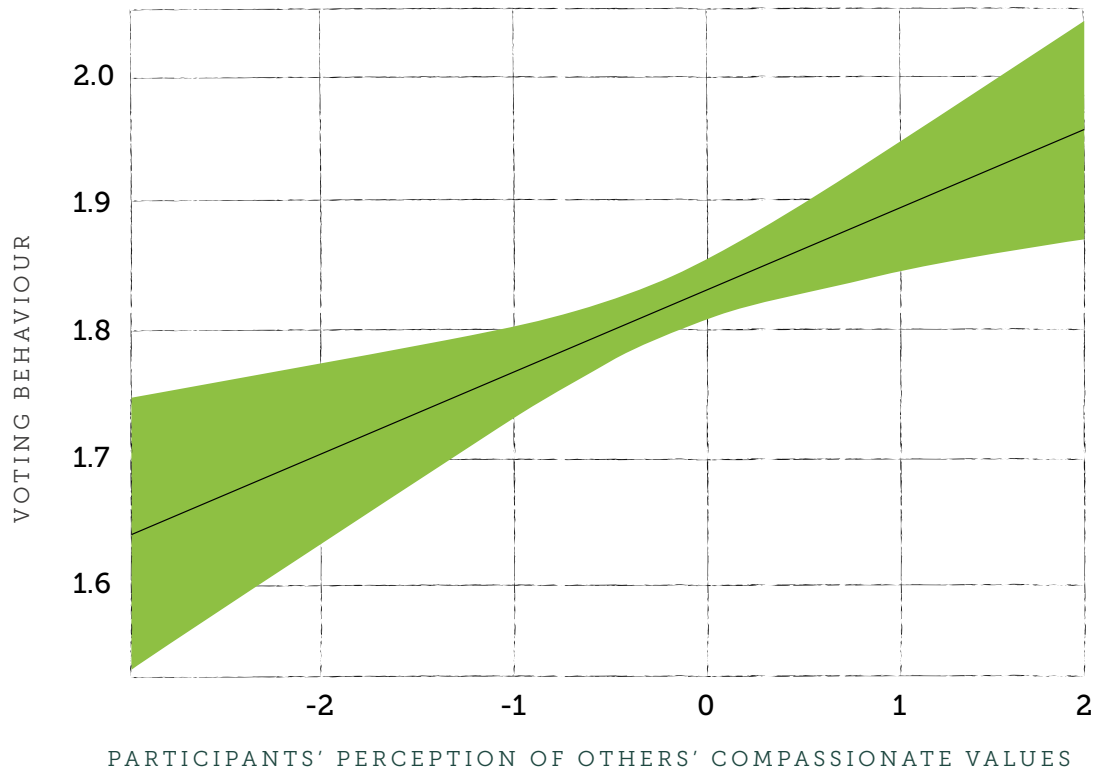


Figure 6: Voting behaviour and perceptions of others' values

Relationship between participants' voting behaviour and their perceptions of the importance that a typical fellow citizen places on compassionate values (top graph) and on selfish values (bottom graph). The coloured areas show 95% confidence limits

As we've seen, it appears that UK citizens hold compassionate values to be more important than they typically give one another credit for. If people were to come to recognise this, then this could promote civic engagement. But could it be that conveying a more accurate perception of others' values will be particularly effective among those who attach greater importance to compassionate values themselves?

Our evidence suggests that this is not the case. Rather, conveying a more accurate perception of a typical fellow citizen's values is likely to be effective irrespective of the importance that a person already attaches to compassionate values himself or herself.

Figure 7, below, illustrates this.

4.4 UK CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS' VALUES AND CULTURAL ESTRANGEMENT

We find that a person's perception of a typical fellow citizen's values is important in predicting his or her own feelings of cultural estrangement. Generally speaking, our results show that people are more likely to express feelings of cultural estrangement if they feel that a typical fellow citizen places relatively high importance on selfish values, or relatively low importance on compassionate values.⁴³

This is particularly true for people who themselves attach relatively high importance to compassionate values.⁴⁴ Cultural estrangement is highest among people who have high compassionate values themselves but who perceive others to have low compassionate values.

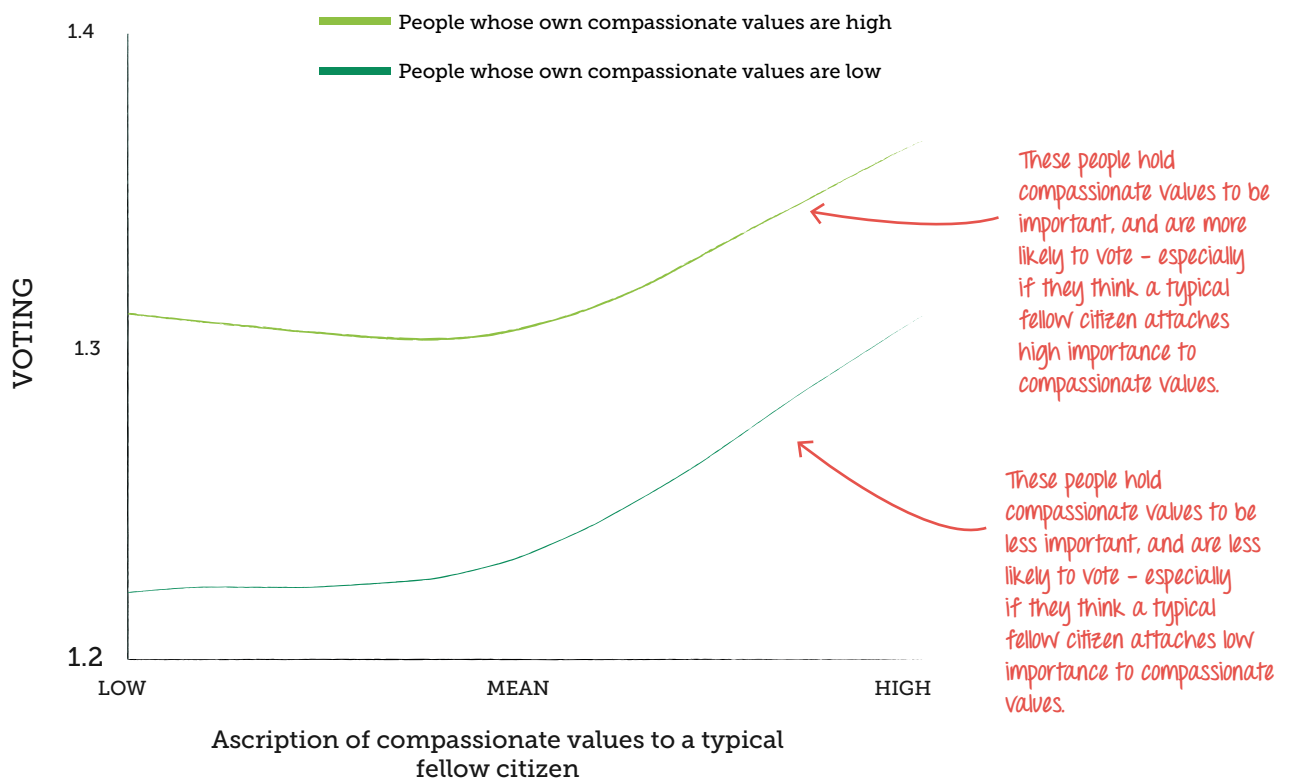


Figure 7

This graph shows how people's voting behaviour varies with their perception of the importance that a typical fellow citizen places on compassionate values. The upper line shows the nature of this relationship for someone who personally holds compassionate values to be relatively important (someone in the 80th percentile). The lower line shows the nature of this relationship for someone who holds compassionate values to be relatively unimportant (someone in the 20th percentile). It seems that, regardless of the importance a person attaches to compassionate values himself or herself, voting is positively related to his or her perception of a typical fellow citizen's compassionate values, for perceptions at or above the national average. This leads us to propose that successfully conveying an accurate perception of the importance that a typical fellow citizen places on compassionate values will lead to greater motivation to vote, irrespective of the importance that a person places on compassionate values himself or herself. (Note: results are shown for two standard deviations either side of the mean.)

As might be expected, the opposite effect is found for selfish values. Among people who attach low importance to selfish values, feelings of cultural estrangement are highly sensitive to perceptions about the importance that other people place on selfish values.

Cultural estrangement is very high among people who attach low importance to selfish values but who perceive that a typical fellow citizen attaches high importance to these values. In contrast, cultural estrangement is very low among people with low selfish values who perceive that a typical fellow citizen attaches low importance to these values.

Our data also point to a relationship between cultural estrangement and civic engagement. People who experience greater cultural estrangement are significantly less likely to vote or to hold positive attitudes towards a range of other forms of civic engagement.

Perceptions matter. UK citizens' perceptions of the values of a typical fellow citizen are likely to be an important factor in fostering greater civic engagement and in reducing cultural estrangement. We believe that, hitherto, most work on values and cultural change has paid too little attention to this important insight.

4.5 IS IT EMBARRASSING TO BE COMPASSIONATE?

In Section 4.3 we discussed one possible reason why people who underestimate the importance that a typical fellow citizen places on compassionate values may be less likely to vote. We suggested that people may commonly fear appearing peculiar, or inviting hostility, by acting in line with their compassionate values. This is particularly likely to be the case where people perceive others as holding these values to be less important than they do themselves.

Other research has found that people can be reluctant to admit to being motivated by compassionate values. Evidence for this emerges in studies of the reasons that people offer to explain why they choose to help other people, or to support social causes. Such studies find that people are often most comfortable when explaining these actions

in self-interested ways. Indeed, a self-interested explanation seems to leave people content that they have given an acceptable account of their actions – one that reassures a listener that they have, indeed, acted from self-interest rather than compassion.⁴⁵

Tragically, perhaps one of the most important barriers to greater civic engagement is people's fear that they appear unusual when they act in line with their compassionate values. Accordingly, people may often be *willing to take action* on social or environmental challenges, or to become more civically engaged. Indeed, they may feel that to take such action or to become more engaged is in line with the values that they hold to be most important. But they don't *actually take such action* or *actually become engaged* – because they believe that to do so would risk drawing attention to their compassionate values and leave them looking a bit peculiar.

This process is likely to be self-reinforcing. An average UK citizen views a typical fellow citizen as holding selfish values to be more important and compassionate values to be less important than is actually the case. This leaves him or her more likely to behave in ways that convey the impression that he or she attaches less importance to compassionate values than is actually the case. Such behaviour, when observed by others, will further perpetuate the widespread misperception about other people's values – the so-called 'norm of self-interest'.

This process is likely to influence not just people's perceptions of others' values or people's perception of 'normal' behaviour. It is also likely to influence people's actual values.

As the circular process outlined above gathers energy, people's *actual* commitment to compassionate values is also likely to weaken. This is because as people become aware of their discomfort in acting in line with compassionate values, their *perception* of their own values is likely to shift in a more selfish direction. When they subsequently reflect on their own values (or when they are asked about their values by others) they are likely to report their selfish values as being of relatively greater importance, and their compassionate values as of relatively less importance.

5. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS



5.1 PARTICIPANTS' OWN VALUES AND THE VALUES THEY BELIEVE TO BE ENCOURAGED BY SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

What do people feel that they are encouraged to value? We asked participants about the values that they feel are encouraged by each of five key types of social institution:

- Arts and culture – galleries, museums, theatre and music
- Business – companies that operate for profit
- The education system – nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and universities
- Media – newspapers, television, radio and social media
- Government – local and national governments

Relative to their own value priorities, people feel that these types of social institution offer lower encouragement for compassionate values and greater encouragement for selfish values. See Figure 8, below.

This result may highlight the scope that many institutions would be afforded to realign their work, so that people come to perceive them as promoting the compassionate values that most British citizens consider of greatest importance.

Decision-makers in large institutions often voice the opinion that they simply can't do more to encourage compassionate values because this wouldn't be acceptable to their customers, voters, students, patrons, readers, viewers, or listeners. These data challenge that perception – and raise the possibility that decision-makers could go far further than they currently do in promoting compassionate values.

In Section 1.4.3 we suggested that over time the values encouraged by particular social institutions will influence the values held to be important by people who regularly interact with these institutions. Our data are consistent with this suggestion. We find that those participants who perceive institutions as encouraging compassionate values relatively more strongly also attach significantly more importance to compassionate values themselves.⁴⁶

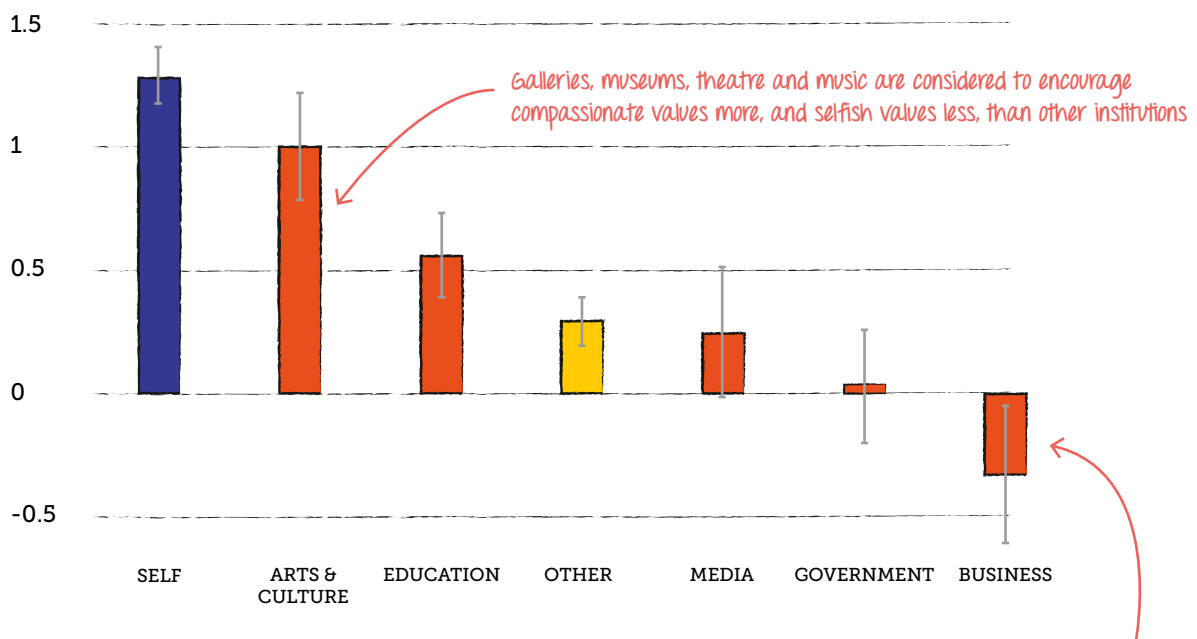


Figure 8: Mean adjusted compassionate value scores for participants' beliefs about the values encouraged by various types of institution

The orange bars show the mean adjusted compassionate value scores for participants' beliefs about the values encouraged by institutions of each type. The blue and yellow bars, added for comparison, show adjusted compassionate value scores for participants' own values and participants' perceptions of others' values, respectively. Of the five institutional categories, business is seen to do least to encourage compassionate values – most people perceive business as doing more to encourage selfish values than compassionate values. Bars show 95% confidence limits.

People feel that business tends to encourage selfish values more than compassionate values



We also suggested in Section 1.4.3 that over time the values encouraged by particular social institutions will influence people's perceptions about the values of a *typical fellow citizen*. Again, our survey results are consistent with this suggestion. We find that those participants who perceive institutions as encouraging compassionate values relatively more strongly perceive a typical fellow citizen as attaching significantly greater importance to compassionate values.⁴⁷

5.2 WHAT DO PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE VALUES ENCOURAGED BY INSTITUTIONS?

It should be asked whether there is widespread public support for better alignment of the values encouraged by various institutions with those held to be important by most citizens.

It's possible that people may typically support institutions in encouraging values other than those that they hold to be most important themselves. For example, a person may not rate 'wealth' to be important himself or herself, but he or she may nonetheless believe that it is desirable that the UK has a strong private sector, driven by business leaders who are focussed on 'wealth creation'. Similarly, a person may not be particularly achievement oriented – but may nonetheless be supportive of an education system that encourages achievement among young people.

However, our interviewees frequently voiced *frustration* about the values that they perceived to be encouraged by a range of different institutions.

For example:

"I think greed can breed greed; they [business leaders] just wanna get more richer and successful, and they probably don't feel they have to do anything else apart from run their own businesses..." (Participant 12)

Nonetheless, participants did express

the perception that people in positions of social influence could step up to setting higher standards. As the participant above continues:

"...but I think those sort of people do need to stand up and do something, because people do listen to them so they could use their influence more positively." (Participant 12)

Other participants allude to examples of a range of institutional constraints on expressing the values that they hold to be important – imposed by their workplace, the media, schools or government.

"I think it's difficult in a rigid hierarchy to say we work as a team; especially with younger people who are so used to looking after themselves..." (Participant 1)

"It [media] shapes, or doesn't give a 360 degree perspective on any issue, there's always a particular slant and you rarely get an unbiased article. I've been shocked when I've read the Daily Mail sometimes. It frames the way people think, and they don't care about other points of views." (Participant 10)

"[The media could] remove these tags, such as 'Super Woman', with the ability to do everything; to have the high-profile job, perfect marriage, all the multi-tasking abilities we're supposed to have – just start removing these labels." (Participant 6)

"The school is good on the curriculums, the reading and writing and science and all that, but we don't teach life values at all. Some of the religious schools do, but not all of the children are religious. So, perhaps lessons on life, and how to treat each other in a good way [are needed]." (Participant 16)

"It's still a bit of a classist society, and think the Conservatives do like to keep it that way, so I think that must hinder true friendship, somehow. I'm not sure they promote equality..." (Participant 19)

Several participants also demonstrate awareness of the role of government in influencing values, revealing a sophisticated understanding of how policies and

legislative programmes might influence values:

“To me, an opinion on unfairness is the government targeting people on benefits... even though there are a few [fraudulent claimants]... But they’re taking thousands out of the system, when there’s tax-dodgers taking millions out of the system. So I think it has to be a top-down approach; lead by example. And if we want a fair and moral environment we’ve really gotta show that through principles and the way they act.”
(Participant 7)

“I think legislation really does embed in people; it changes their practices and the way things are formed; it stops permitting certain things that are important, so where racism is illegal, it obviously drives it underground and is still there for some people, but for others it makes them stop and think that you’re not allowed to do this.”
(Participant 10).

In analysing transcripts from in-depth interviews with twenty participants, we were unable to find any examples of instances where people express approval or satisfaction that social institutions encourage selfish values. On the contrary, a large majority (eighteen out of twenty participants) express the opinion that it is the proper role of institutions to promote values that we identify as compassionate.

5.3 INSTITUTIONS AND CULTURAL ESTRANGEMENT

Participants who feel that social institutions do not encourage

compassionate values report higher levels of cultural estrangement. This is the case irrespective of the importance that people attach to compassionate values.

Cultural estrangement is highest among people who attach high importance to compassionate values, but who feel that institutions do little to encourage compassionate values.

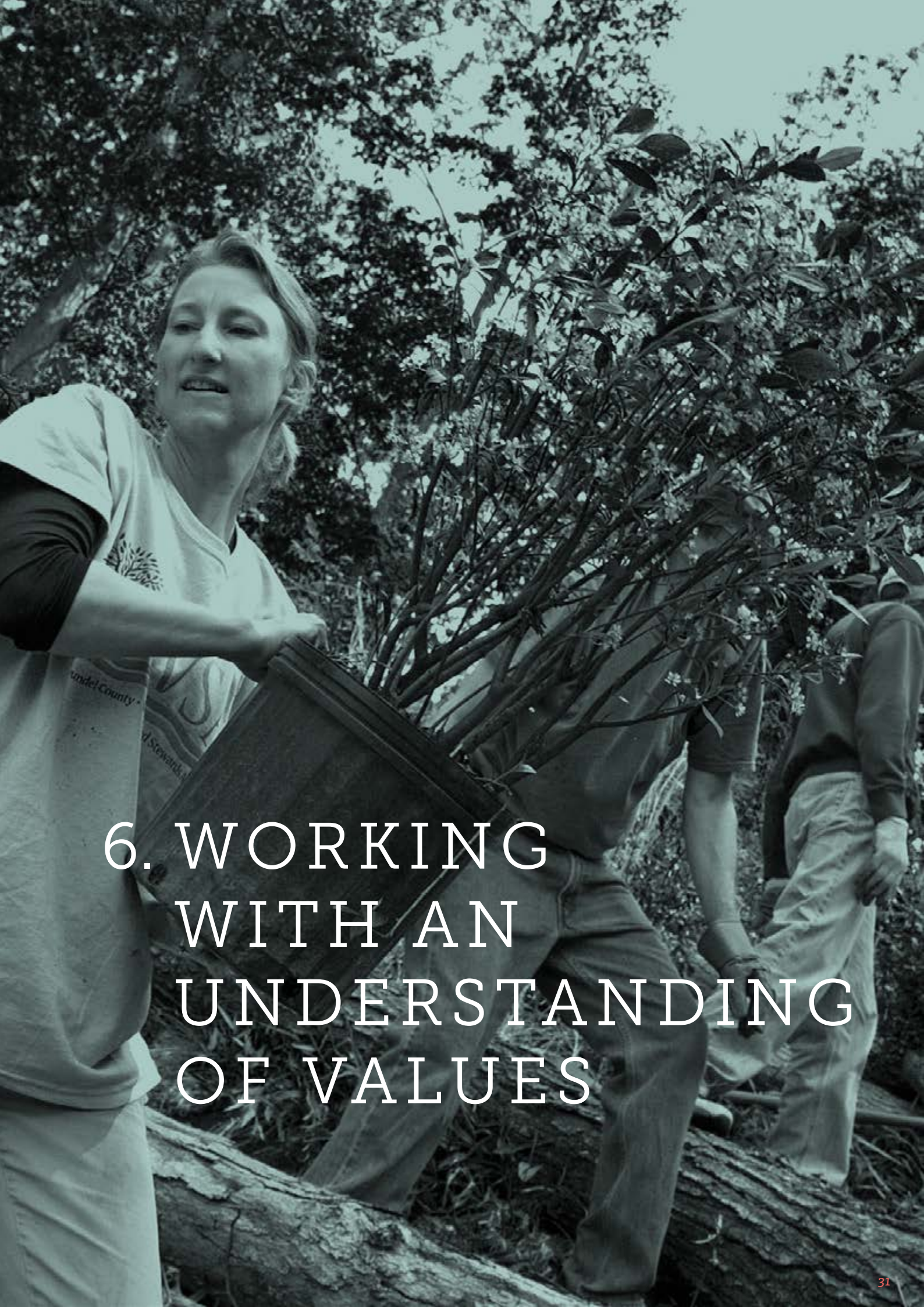
These results are corroborated by findings for selfish values. Here, a person’s sense of cultural estrangement is likely to be high if he or she feels that social institutions encourage selfish values. This relationship is found irrespective of the importance that a person attaches to selfish values. However, people who feel that institutions encourage selfish values are likely to show particularly high levels of cultural estrangement if they also attach particularly low importance to selfish values themselves.

One might imagine that problems of cultural estrangement could be addressed by better aligning an organisation’s values with the values of the people with whom it most frequently interacts. For example, a media organisation might seek to align the values conveyed by its television programming with the values of typical viewers.

But our evidence suggests that this would be the wrong strategy. Even people who themselves attach high importance to selfish values report higher cultural estrangement when they perceive institutions to encourage these values.

Rather, these results raise the possibility that cultural estrangement could be reduced in part if institutions were to work to encourage compassionate values – and discourage selfish values – regardless of the values characterising a typical person interacting with this institution.





6. WORKING WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF VALUES

If UK citizens are to respond collectively to profound social and environmental problems, to deepen public commitment to civic participation, to build social cohesion, and to re-shape social institutions such that these inspire public trust, then they will need to build on a foundation of shared values.

We have argued that this foundation has three interrelated elements. Together, they make up a ‘values nexus’: people’s own values, people’s perceptions of the values held to be important by typical fellow citizens, and the values promoted – deliberately or inadvertently – by social institutions.

The widespread importance that people currently attach to compassionate values presents a basis from which to build. This commitment to compassionate values transcends differences of age, gender, region and even political persuasion (see Appendix).

Compassionate values can be engaged, legitimised and strengthened by many different organisations – including many that don’t formally have a role in helping to address social or environmental challenges, in building civic engagement, or in reversing cultural estrangement.

There are many ways in which organisations can strengthen compassionate values in society. Values are implicit in the ways that organisations communicate, in the policies and practices that they adopt, in the ways that they manage employees and reach decisions, and in the physical environment that they create. All of these areas of activity can be developed in ways that engage and strengthen compassionate values.

Of the possible approaches to strengthening compassionate values, this section focuses on just three:

- *Promoting compassionate values through role models*
- *Conveying a more accurate perception of others’ values*
- *Challenging assumptions about the values that most people hold to be important*

These three approaches can be pursued by, among others: members of staff in civil society organisations working with groups of people living in a particular area or expressing particular concerns; business managers engaging groups of customers or employees; teachers working with pupils, students and fellow members of staff; people working for media organisations through the printed or on-line resources that they produce; members of staff in museums, theatres, or other public spaces supporting visitors in developing an understanding of their own values and those of their fellow citizens.

6.1 PROMOTING COMPASSIONATE VALUES THROUGH ROLE MODELS

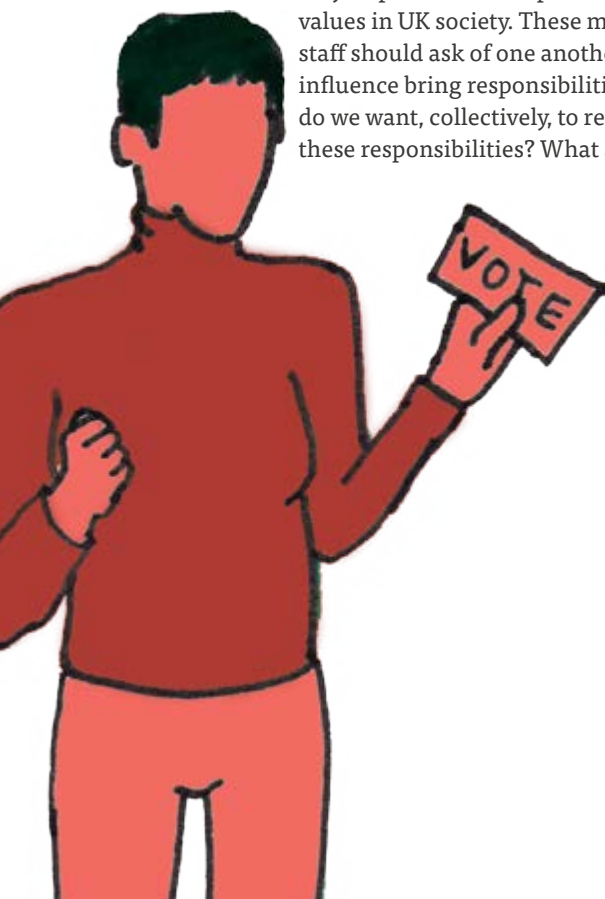
Reading or hearing about the values of another person whom one respects can have a significant impact on a person’s own values. *Studies have found that presenting people with information about the values of respected figures can have long-term impacts on people’s motivation to become involved in civic action on social issues – even several months later.*⁴⁸ If people who find themselves in positions of public influence aimed for openness about the importance that they attach to compassionate values, and reflected publicly on some of the pressures that they encounter to place greater importance on selfish values, they could help to strengthen compassionate values more widely.

This approach can be developed further by drawing comparisons between a person’s own values and those values that he or she ascribes to a typical fellow citizen. Our research suggests that most people mistakenly believe that they hold higher compassionate value scores than the ‘average’ person. People’s ‘inflated’ beliefs about their own values is likely to lead them to imagine that they share the value priorities of a minority of people in the wider population who invite respect because they visibly attach *above average* importance to compassionate values. People can then be taken aback to discover that they don’t in fact hold compassionate values to be as important as some of the role models with whom they had identified themselves.

Being taken aback in this way can be used to good effect. It can leave people feeling dissatisfied with their own values, and this dissatisfaction can become an impetuous for change, motivating people to change their own value priorities in a more compassionate direction.⁴⁹

For example, suppose a prominent public person in Birmingham (perhaps an active community leader) is locally respected as someone who demonstrates compassionate values in how she works. Residents of the city who complete a values quiz in the local paper, or on-line, and who compare their own values to those of this leader may be taken aback to discover a wider disparity between her values and their own than they anticipated. This discovery leaves them feeling dissatisfied with their own values. Over time they are likely to come to place greater importance on compassionate values.

If public figures have an important influence on the values of those who respect them, then this raises questions of those who create and maintain the prominence of these figures. Members of staff in organisations that help to elevate people to the position of role models (the media or advertising agencies, for example) play a very important role in promoting particular values in UK society. These members of staff should ask of one another: Does our influence bring responsibilities? If so, how do we want, collectively, to respond to these responsibilities? What are the values



projected by the people whose public profile we help to create and sustain? Are these values that are helpful to society?

In this section we have highlighted the possible ways in which coming to understand something about the values held to be important by people who command respect may help to shift others' values in the direction of those held to be important by these people. This will have positive influence when these role models are clearly seen to attach high importance to compassionate values.

But this also highlights a danger. Many public figures choose to emphasise the importance that they place on selfish values (for example, public image, social recognition, ambition or wealth). This is an emphasis which is often further magnified by the media. Such messages are likely to shift the value priorities of those who respect these celebrities, such that they come to attach greater importance to selfish values. This will likely lead these people to become less socially and environmentally concerned, and less civically engaged.

6.2 CONVEYING A MORE ACCURATE PERCEPTION OF OTHERS' VALUES

There are many instances where people hold inaccurate beliefs about a typical person's attitudes. A range of studies have found that presenting information on people's misconceptions about others' attitudes can lead to significant changes in people's behaviour. Some studies have invited participants to discuss these misperceptions, while others have simply presented information about them.⁵⁰ Both approaches have proven effective in leading people to modify their behaviour, such that people come to act more closely in line with the attitudes they themselves hold, rather than the attitudes that they (inaccurately) perceive others to hold. For example, participants in one experiment were told that people typically think that they behave more honestly than most other taxpayers. People who were presented with this information were subsequently found to claim significantly lower deductions in their tax returns.⁵¹



We suggest that similar approaches could be used to motivate people to re-examine their values. People could be presented with survey data such as those presented in this report: conveying the insight that most people hold compassionate values to be more important than selfish values, but that most people also believe that others place less importance on compassionate values (and more importance on selfish values) than is actually the case. We predict that this would lead people to be more likely to act in line with their compassionate values.

Where it's possible to work with groups of people, information of this kind could form the basis of facilitated discussions. Where this is not possible, evidence suggests that presenting people with this information in written form – through a website, for example – may be an effective way of leading people to come to act in line with their compassionate values. Such actions will then contribute to developing public understanding that compassionate values are generally held to be more important than most people imagine.

In more developed versions of this kind of initiative, people could be invited to complete two simple value surveys. The first of these surveys would ask a person about his or her own values. The second would ask about his or her perceptions of the values of a typical fellow citizen. A participant's data could then be presented alongside data for the wider population. (This could be done visually using values maps.) The juxtaposition of these two sets of data would illustrate the participant's likely tendency to underestimate the importance that a typical fellow citizen places on compassionate values.

Such approaches could be used in a range of different contexts. Value surveys are easy to

run and analyse, and in common with many 'psychological quizzes' the results generate widespread interest. Such surveys should become a standard tool used by businesses (engaging their customers or employees), educational establishments (surveying students, pupils or members of staff), media organisations (through on-line resources), museums (supporting visitors in exploring their own values and those of typical fellow citizens), or civil society organisations (surveying their supporters or people concerned about a particular cause).

6.3 CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE VALUES THAT MOST PEOPLE HOLD TO BE IMPORTANT

As we've discussed (Section 5), a wide range of different organisations – arts and culture organisations, educational institutions, the media, government and businesses – are seen by most people to encourage selfish values and discourage compassionate values relative to the importance that a typical UK citizen places on these values.

Values are often encouraged in subtle ways, and members of staff in such organisations may need to reflect carefully in order to reach a perspective on what values they are currently working to encourage. Any organisation reflects a particular understanding of what motivates people – whether as employees, customers, pupils, students, voters, viewers, readers, listeners or visitors.

Consider, for example:

- *University campaigns to recruit students and the assumptions made by members of the teaching staff convey an understanding of what motivates students and prospective students. Is this the search for purpose and vocation, or a highly paid job?*
- *Politicians' speeches convey their understanding of what motivates people to vote for them. Is this a fairer and more just society, or more take-home pay?*
- *Managers convey their understanding of what motivates their employees – for example, through the way in which they*

recognise good performance. Is this recognised by the collective celebration of meaningful work well done, or by a financial bonus?

Assumptions about what motivates people in turn shape the experience that people have in interacting with the organisation, and the values that are encouraged.

It is often and implicitly assumed that people are most effectively motivated through appeals to their financial interests, cultivation of their public image, or their desire for power and influence. Indeed, this is sometimes the case. But it's likely to be the case less often than most people imagine. Moreover, regardless of whether or not these assumptions provide an effective basis for encouraging specific behaviours (e.g. buying a product or donating to a charity) they will create the 'collateral damage' of engaging and strengthening selfish values.

Members of staff in any organisation should ask of themselves: What are our assumptions about what matters most to the people with whom we interact? Are these accurate? What are the wider social implications of relying on these assumptions?

Common Cause Foundation has produced resources to support members of staff in asking these questions, in identifying these implicit assumptions, and in developing alternative ways of engaging people – with a view to strengthening compassionate values. For example, our recent publication Common Cause Communication: A Toolkit for Charities analyses the values implicit in the ways that a wide range of different charities communicate with their supporters.⁵² We are committed to developing these resources further to help people working in a wide range of different organisations.

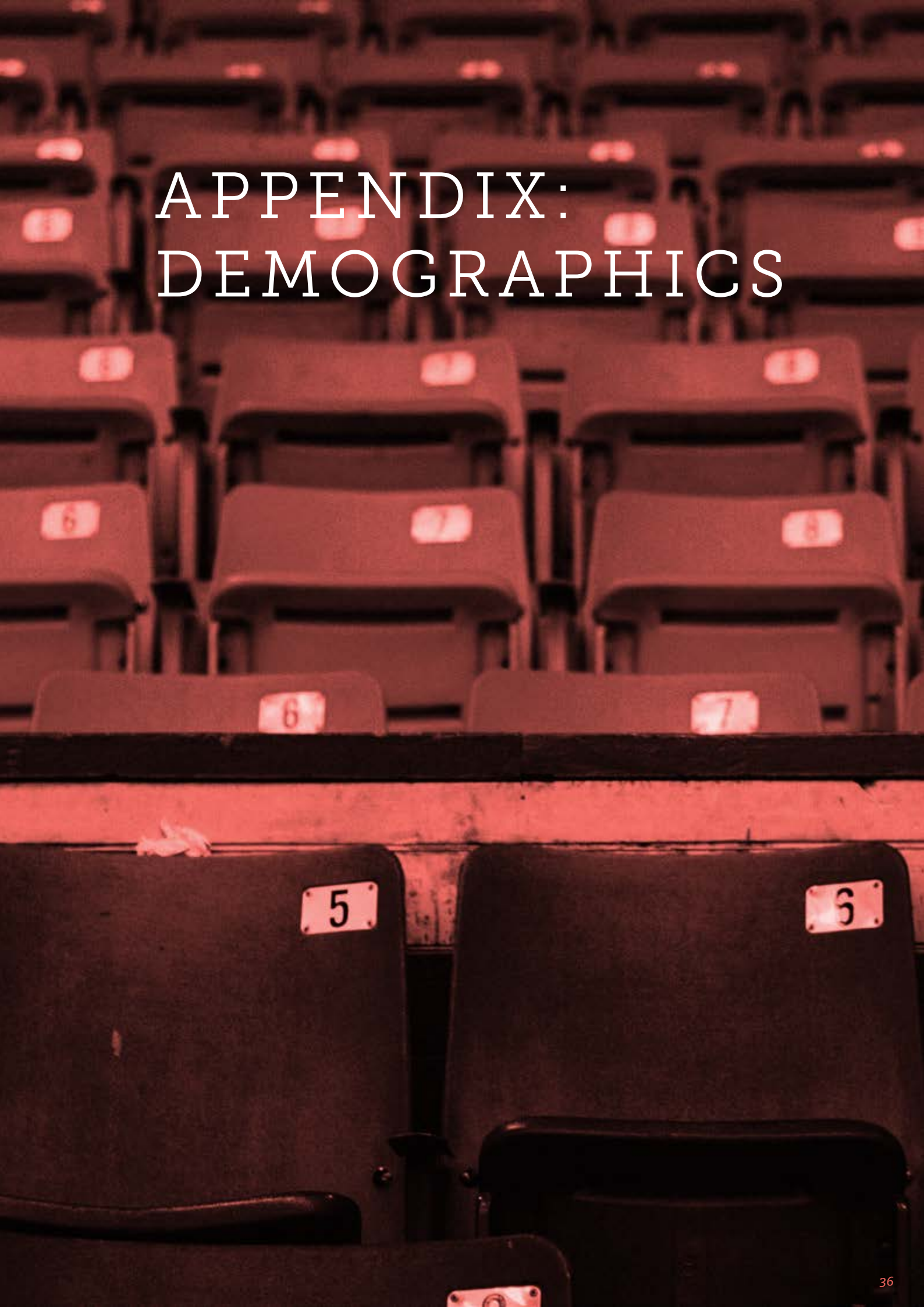
6.4 A FINAL NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

We conclude with a note of encouragement for anyone working to strengthen compassionate values. We'd urge people working in this way to recognise the importance of what they are doing – and the likelihood that their work will have impacts reaching far beyond those of which they

are aware. We have shown that people's values are shaped by a complex interplay of feedback processes. Work to strengthen compassionate values in one area is likely to have positive and unforeseen impacts in many others.



APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS



A.1. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Figure 5 (p. 21) shows people's values, and people's perceptions of a typical fellow citizen's values, broken down by gender.

Women hold significantly higher adjusted compassionate value scores than men.⁵³

Women, we predict, are therefore likely to express greater concern about a range of social and environmental issues. It also seems likely that women's values will tend to lead them to be more motivated to engage in various forms of civic action.

A.2. VARIATIONS WITH AGE

Figure 9 shows how people's own adjusted compassionate value scores, and perceptions of others' adjusted compassionate value scores, vary across age groups in our sample of one thousand UK citizens.

Young people (in the age range 18-24) have the lowest adjusted compassionate value scores. These means increase across age groups, and are highest in the age-range

55-64. They then dip slightly among older people.

There are two possible explanations for variation in adjusted compassionate value scores between age groups.

- It's possible that people who are older today – for example people in the age range 55-64 who have the highest adjusted compassionate value scores – had lower adjusted compassionate value scores when they were in their late teens or early twenties, some forty years ago. Perhaps these people have come to develop higher adjusted compassionate value scores as they have grown older. If this pattern can be expected to persist, then we can predict that people who are in the age-range 18-24 today will come to hold greater adjusted compassionate value scores, as they grow older. There is certainly evidence that people come to attach greater importance to compassionate values as they grow older.⁵⁴
- Alongside the effects of aging, it might also be that people who are currently in their late fifties or early sixties have had relatively high adjusted compassionate value scores throughout their lifetimes.

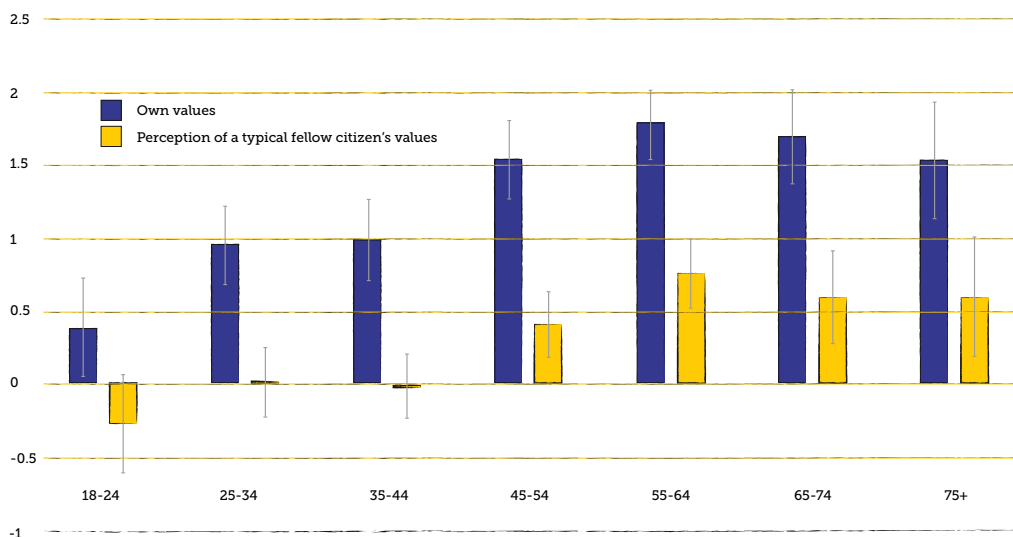


Figure 9: Adjusted compassionate value scores by age

People's own adjusted compassionate value scores (blue), and perceptions of others' adjusted compassionate value scores (yellow), shown for different age groups. Older people hold compassionate values to be significantly more important (and selfish values to be significantly less important) than younger people. Older people also have a significantly more accurate perception of a typical fellow citizen's values than younger people. Bars show 95% confidence limits.

This could be the case, for example, if people of this age developed higher adjusted compassionate value scores during formative years, as teenagers and young adults in the 1960s and 1970s. By comparison, today's young people may have lower adjusted compassionate value scores than people of the same age in the 1960s and 1970s – perhaps because of social and political changes in the UK over the last few decades. If this is the case, today's young adults could be expected to continue to have relatively low adjusted compassionate value scores, even as they grow older. This would suggest that, as a society, the UK is headed towards holding selfish values to be more important and compassionate values to be less important.

It is important to ask which explanation is most persuasive, because this is likely to have implications for the trajectory of public concern about social and environmental issues in the UK, and for levels of civic engagement. Unfortunately, data on how British people's values change over time are sparse, and we can't yet differentiate authoritatively between these two possibilities.⁵⁵

A.3. POLITICAL PERSUASION

Participants in our survey were asked about their political persuasion. We established that there are differences between liberals and conservatives in the importance that they place on compassionate and selfish values – liberals tend to hold higher adjusted compassionate value scores than conservatives. See Figure 10.

But liberals and conservatives also differ in their beliefs about the values of a typical fellow citizen. Conservatives hold significantly more accurate beliefs than liberals about a typical fellow citizen's values (although even conservatives still significantly underestimate the importance that a typical fellow citizen places on compassionate values and over-estimate the importance placed on selfish values).⁵⁶

Previously published research, conducted in the US, has found that both liberals and conservatives have skewed perceptions of the other's values. But liberal perceptions of conservative values were found to be more inaccurate than conservative views of liberal values.⁵⁷ Our results are consistent with a similar phenomenon existing here in the UK.

Liberals have higher adjusted compassionate values than conservatives

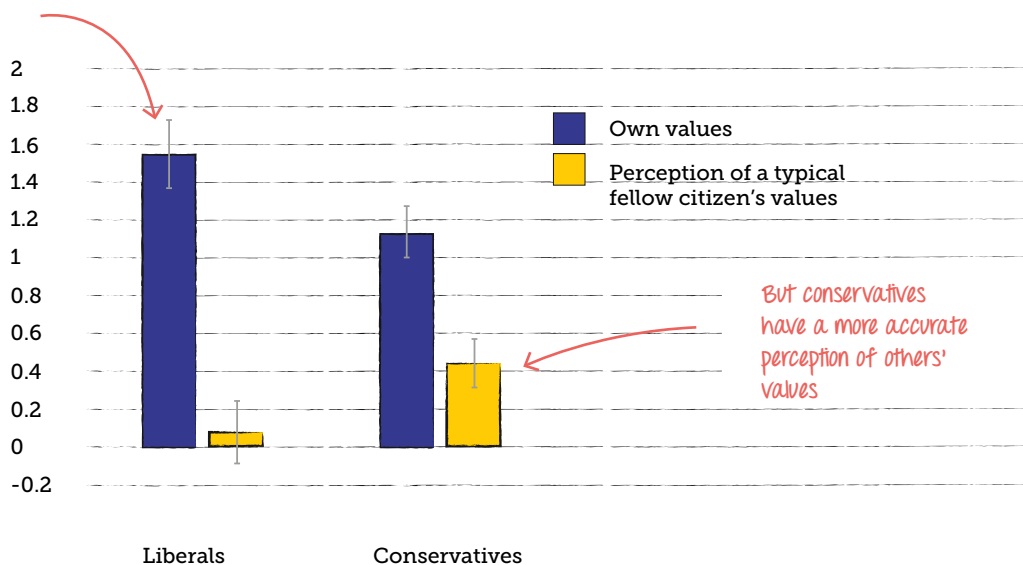


Figure 10: Adjusted compassionate value scores by political persuasion

People's own adjusted compassionate value scores (blue), and perceptions of others' adjusted compassionate value scores (yellow), shown for people of different political persuasion. Liberals have a significantly higher adjusted compassionate value score. Conservatives have a significantly more positive assessment of the values of a typical fellow citizen than liberals. Bars show 95% confidence limits.

A.4. REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Figure 11 shows mean adjusted compassionate value scores for people's own values, by UK region.

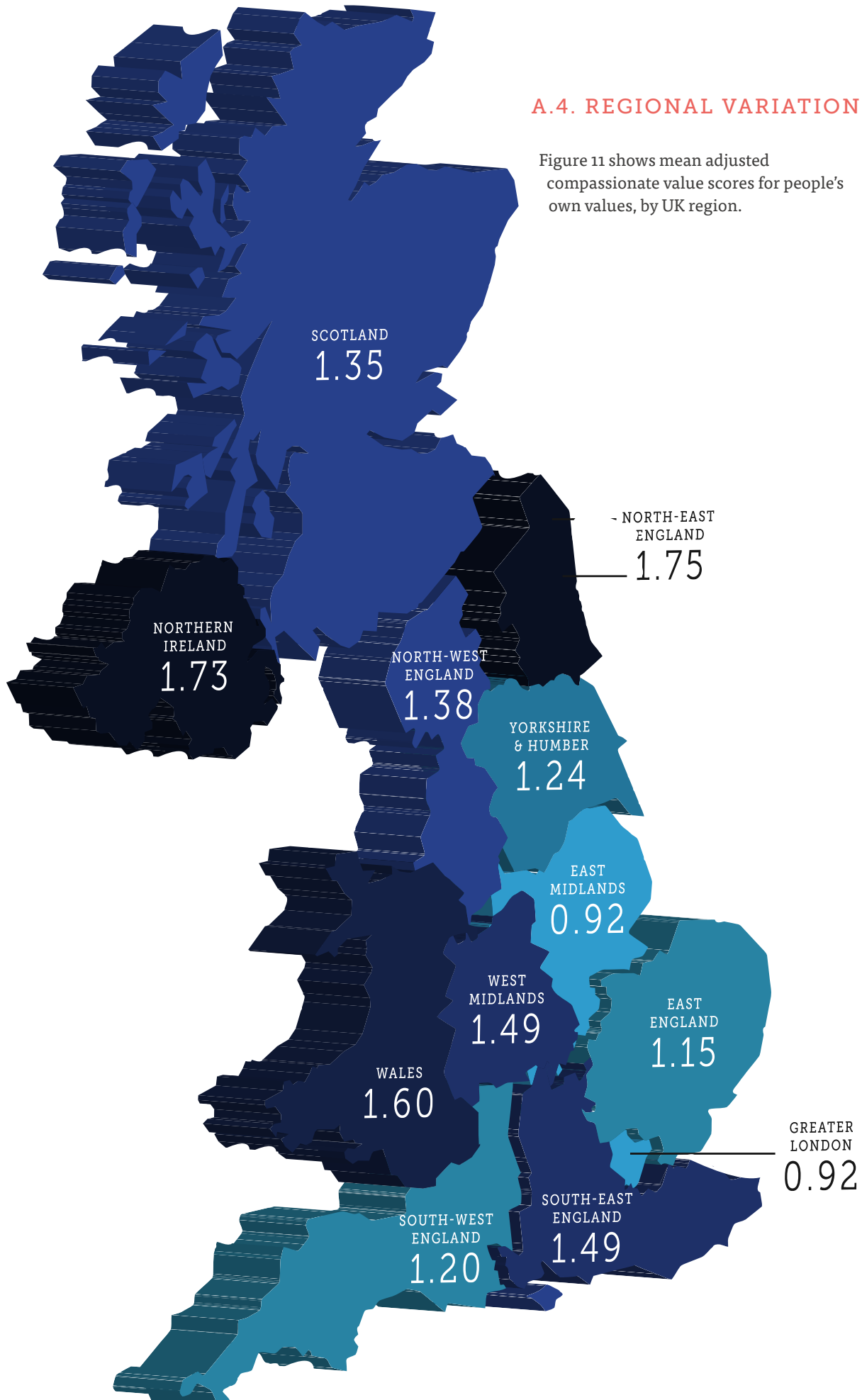
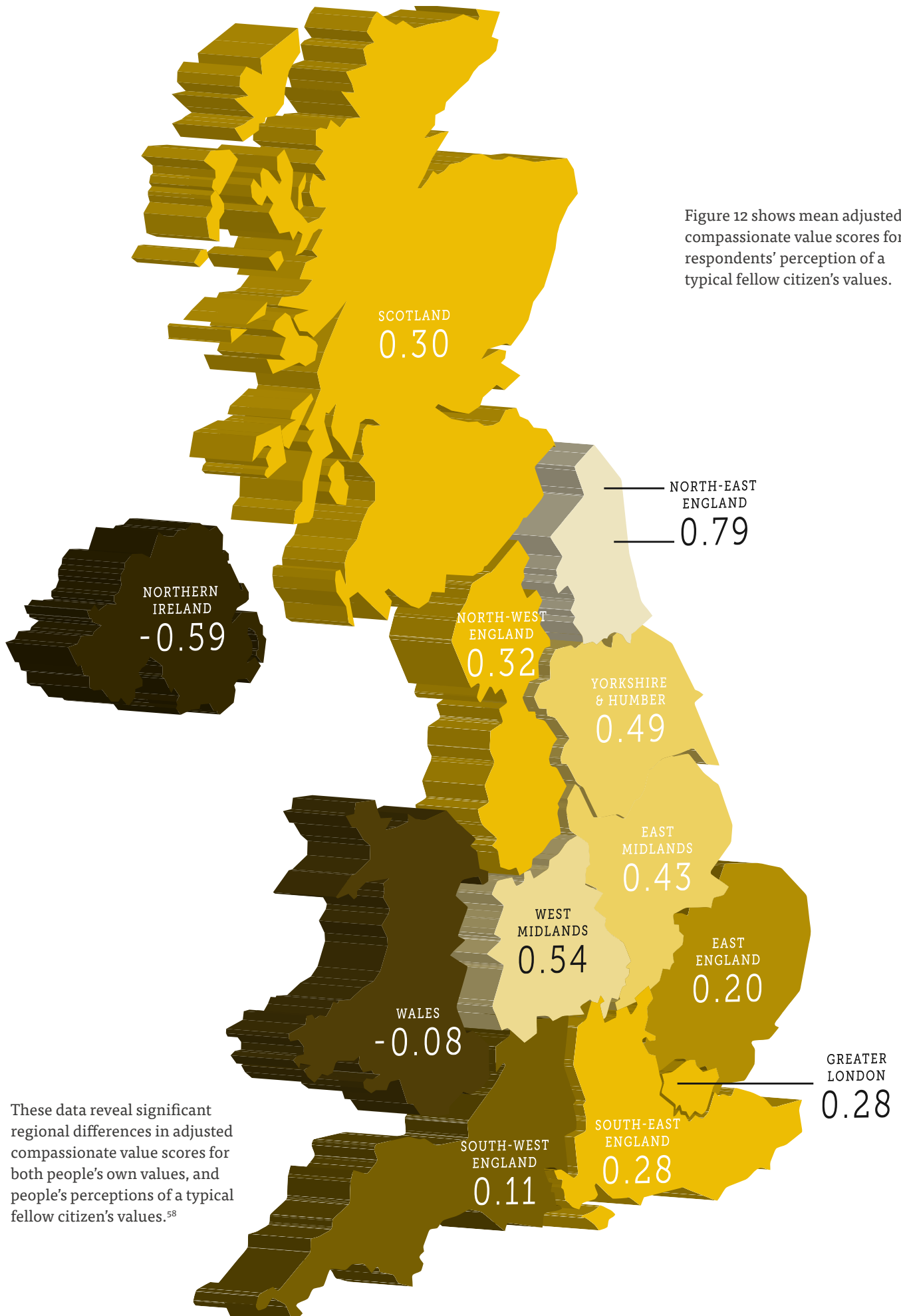


Figure 12 shows mean adjusted compassionate value scores for respondents' perception of a typical fellow citizen's values.



These data reveal significant regional differences in adjusted compassionate value scores for both people's own values, and people's perceptions of a typical fellow citizen's values.⁵⁸

- ¹ Belfield, C., Cribb, J., Hood, A. & Joyce, R. (2015). *Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2015*. London: Institute of Fiscal Studies. Available at: www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/comms/R107.pdf (Accessed 15/12/15).
- ² NatCen (2014). 30 years of British Social Attitudes self-reported racial prejudice data. Available at: www.natcen.ac.uk/media/338779/selfreported-racial-prejudice-datafinal.pdf (Accessed: 15 December 2015). *The Guardian* (2014) Racism on the rise in Britain, 27 May. Available at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/may/27/-sp-racism-on-rise-in-britain (Accessed: 15 December 2015).
- ³ Park, A., Bryson, C. & Curtice, J. (Eds.). (2014). *British social attitudes: the 31st report*. London: NatCen Social Research. Available at: www.bsa-31.natcen.ac.uk (Accessed: 15 December 2015). See p.v.
- ⁴ BBC (2015). CO₂ cuts claim sees minister challenged by experts, 19 March. Available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-31952888 (Accessed: 15 December 2015). MetOffice (2015) Studying the causes of extreme weather in 2014, 5 November. Available at: www.metoffice.gov.uk/news/release/archive/2015/BAMS-report (Accessed: 15 December 2015).
- ⁵ RSPB (2013) *State of nature 2013*. Sandy, Bedfordshire: RSPB. Available at: www.rspb.org.uk/Images/stateofnature_tcm9-345839.pdf (Accessed on 15 December 2015).
- ⁶ Ormston, R. & Curtice, J. (Eds.). (2015). *British social attitudes: the 32nd report*. London: NatCen Social Research. Available at: www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk (Accessed on 15 December 2015) reported little change in similar forms of political and social action between 2004 and 2014. However, Fink, M.H. (2012) Political participation, democratisation and citizens' values in Europe. *Teorija in Praksa*, 49(3): 544-565 found that levels of political participation (comprising these behaviours: contacting a politician, government or local government official; working in a political party or action group; working in another organisation or association; wearing or displaying a campaign badge/sticker; signing a petition; taking part in a lawful public demonstration; boycotting certain products) fell further in the UK over the period 2002-2010 than in most other EU countries.
- ⁷ Park, Bryson & Curtice *op.cit.* 3. 24% of respondents are dissatisfied with how well the government engages people (p. vi); Ormston, R. & Curtice, J. (2015), *ibid.* 57% of Britons surveyed believe they have a duty to vote, down from 76% in 1987 (p. 122).
- ⁸ YouGov (2012). How much do you trust the following to tell the truth? Available at: cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/syrhatyofp/Trust_trends_Nov_2012.pdf (Accessed on 15 December 2015).
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- ¹⁰ See, for example: Sheldon, K. M., Nichols, C. P., & Kasser, T. (2011). Americans recommend smaller ecological footprints when reminded of intrinsic American values of self-expression, family, and generosity. *Ecopsychology*, 3(2), 97-104; Crompton, T., Weinstein, N., Sanderson, B., Kasser, T., Maio, G. & Henderson, S. (2015). No cause is an island: How people are attuned to values regardless of cause. London: Common Cause Foundation. Available at: www.valuesandframes.org (Accessed on 15 December 2015); Chilton, P., Crompton, T., Kasser, T., Maio, G. & Nolan, A. (2012) Communicating bigger-then-self-problems to extrinsically-oriented audiences. Godalming, Surrey: WWF-UK. Available at: www.valuesandframes.org (Accessed on 15 December 2015); Maio, G. R., Pakizeh, A., Cheung, W. Y., & Rees, K. J. (2009). Changing, priming, and acting on values: effects via motivational relations in a circular model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(4), 699-715.

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- ¹⁵ See note 11.
- ¹⁶ Maio et al. *op. cit.* 10.
- ¹⁷ See note 11.
- ¹⁸ Schwartz, S. H. (2010). Basic values: How they motivate and inhibit prosocial behaviour, in Mikulincer, M. E., & Shaver, P. R. (eds.) *Prosocial motives, emotions, and behavior: The better angels of our nature*. American Psychological Association. pp.221-241; Vecchione, M., Schwartz, S. H., Caprara, G. V., Schoen, H., Cieciuch, J., Silvester, J., ... & Mamali, C. (2015). Personal values and political activism: A cross-national study. *British Journal of Psychology*, 106(1), 84-106; Pacheco, G., & Owen, B. (2015). Moving through the political participation hierarchy: a focus on personal values. *Applied Economics*, 47(3), 222-238; Augemberg, K. (2008). *Values and politics: Value priorities as predictors of psychological and instrumental political engagement*. Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I.
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- ²⁰ Elements of this nexus are discussed at greater length in: Ferraro, F., Pfeffer, J., & Sutton, R.I. (2005). Economics language and assumptions: How theories can become self-fulfilling. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 8-24.
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- ²⁸ Miller, D. T. (1999). The norm of self-interest. *American Psychologist*, 54, 1053–1060.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1053.
- ³⁰ The Portrait Values Questionnaire is widely used and forms the basis of part of the European Social Survey, conducted at regular intervals across many European countries. Schwartz, S. H. (2003). A proposal for measuring value orientations across nations. *Questionnaire Development Package of the European Social Survey*, 259-319. Available at: www.europeansocialsurvey.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=126&Itemid=80 (Accessed on 15 December 2015).
- ³¹ We defined these types of institutions more specifically, as follows: “By Arts and culture we mean the galleries, museums, theatre and music that you experience”; “By the business sector, we mean companies that operate for profit”; “By the education system we mean nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and universities”; “By the media we mean newspaper, television, radio and social media”; “By government we mean local and national governments”.
- ³² Cozzarelli, C., & Karafa, J. A. (1998). Cultural estrangement and terror management theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(3), 253-267; Bernard *et al.*, *op.cit.* 19.
- ³³ We asked respondents about six attitudinal factors taken from the Civic Engagement Scale. Doolittle, A., & Faul, A.C. (2013). Civic Engagement Scale. *SAGE Open*, 3(3), 2158244013495542.

- ³⁴ Schwartz, S. H., Verkasalo, M., Antonovsky, A., & Sagiv, L. (1997). Value priorities and social desirability: Much substance, some style. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 36, 3–18.
- ³⁵ We used the 16-item version of Paulhus' Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR). Bobbio, A. N. D. R. E. A., & Manganelli, A. M. (2011). Measuring social desirability responding. A short version of Paulhus' BIDR 6. *Testing, Psychometrics Methodology in Applied Psychology*, 18, 117-135.
- ³⁶ In fact, self-deceptive enhancement was related to participants' perceptions of others' values, but in an unexpected direction. People who scored more highly in self-deceptive enhancement were likely to view a typical fellow citizen as holding selfish values to be less important, and as holding compassionate values to be *more* important. The effects that we report, related to a person's perception of other people's values, might therefore be even stronger were it not for this form of bias.
- ³⁷ Abed, N. & Pakdaman, S. (2013). Value structures among Iranian and British students. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(6), 202-205; Schwartz, S. H., & Bardi, A. (2001). Value hierarchies across cultures taking a similarities perspective. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 32(3), 268-290.
- ³⁸ *op. cit.* 18.
- ³⁹ *Relationships with compassionate values*: Voting behaviour – $r=0.093$, $p<0.01$. Other behaviours – $r=0.217$, $p<0.001$. Attitudes to civic behaviour – $r=0.246$, $p<0.001$. *Relationships with selfish values*: Voting behaviour – $r=-0.137$, $p<0.001$. Other behaviours – $r=-0.080$, $p<0.05$. Attitudes to civic behaviour – $r=-0.098$; $p<0.01$.
- ⁴⁰ Key statistics: $r=0.254$, $p<0.001$.
- ⁴¹ Note that results for civic behaviours other than voting (e.g. volunteering, joining a demonstration) do not reach statistical significance. We predicted that we would find similar results for civic behaviours other than voting to those that we found for voting behaviour and attitudes towards a range of civic behaviours. This failure to reach statistical significance is perhaps attributable to the higher barriers to entry associated with some forms of non-voting behaviour. These are likely to mean that a range of other factors intervene between a person holding values that orient them positively towards a particular behaviour, and actually engaging in this behaviour. This is also likely to mean that we simply find fewer participants who have engaged in these behaviours over the last five years – making it more difficult to detect these effects statistically. We examined the data at the level of individual items making up this part of the survey, requiring higher significance levels to safeguard against possible random occurrences of significance. Here we found a significant and positive association between participants' report of having “got in touch with a local government official about a local issue” and their perception of fellow citizens' self-transcendence values ($r=0.088$; $p<0.001$).
- ⁴² *Relationships with perceptions of other's compassionate values*: Voting behaviour – $r=0.106$, $p<0.001$. Attitudes to civic behaviour – $r=0.117$, $p<0.001$. *Relationships with perceptions of others' selfish values*: Voting behaviour – $r=-0.130$, $p<0.001$. Attitudes to civic behaviour – $r=-0.100$; $p<0.01$.
- ⁴³ This finding corroborates other published research. See, for example, Bernard *et al.*, *op. cit.* 19.
- ⁴⁴ In other words, if a person holds compassionate values to be important, then a relatively small change in this person's perceptions about the compassionate values of a typical fellow citizen tends to have a greater effect on his or her sense of cultural estrangement than a comparable shift in perception for someone who holds compassionate values to be

less important.

- ⁴⁵ Miller, *op. cit.* 28.
- ⁴⁶ Key statistics: $r=0.230$, $p<0.001$. We also found that those who perceive institutions as encouraging selfish values relatively more strongly attach significantly more importance to selfish values themselves ($r=0.360$, $p<0.001$).
- ⁴⁷ Key statistics: $r=0.230$, $p<0.001$. We also found that those who perceive institutions as encouraging selfish values relatively more strongly perceive a typical fellow citizen as attaching significantly greater importance to selfish values ($r=0.292$, $p<0.001$).
- ⁴⁸ Rokeach, M., & McLellan, D. D. (1972). Feedback of information about the values and attitudes of self and others as determinants of long-term cognitive and behavioral change. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 2(3), 236-251.
- ⁴⁹ Grube, J. W., Mayton, D. M., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1994). Inducing change in values, attitudes, and behaviors: belief system theory and the method of value self-confrontation. *Journal of Social Issues*, 50(4), 153-173; Rokeach, M., & Cochkan, R. (1972). Self-confrontation and confrontation with another as determinants of long-term value change. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 2(4), 283-292.
- ⁵⁰ Schroeder, C. M., & Prentice, D. A. (1998). Exposing pluralistic ignorance to reduce alcohol use among college students. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28(23), 2150-2180; Wenzel, M. (2005). Misperceptions of social norms about tax compliance: From theory to intervention. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 26(6), 862-883.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*
- ⁵² Crompton, T. & Weistein, N. (2015) *Common Cause Communication: A Toolkit for Charities*. London: Common Cause Foundation. Available at: www.valuesandframes.org (Accessed on 15 December 2015).
- ⁵³ The mean adjusted compassionate value score for women is 1.63; for men it's 0.94. Our data on gender corroborate other published research. See, for example: Schwartz, S.H., & Rubel, T. (2005). Sex differences in value priorities: cross-cultural and multimethod studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(6), 1010.
- ⁵⁴ Schwartz, S.H. (2006). Basic Human Values: An Overview. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- ⁵⁵ Henrik Dobewall, *personal communication*, 18 September 2015.
- ⁵⁶ Recall that, for all participants, the mean adjusted compassionate value score for perceptions of a typical fellow citizen's values is 0.30. Among conservatives, the mean adjusted compassionate value score for perceptions of a typical fellow citizen's values is 0.43; among liberals this is 0.08.
- ⁵⁷ Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., & Haidt, J. (2012). The moral stereotypes of liberals and conservatives: Exaggeration of differences across the political spectrum. *PLoS ONE*, 7(12).
- ⁵⁸ It is important to note here that participants in the survey were asked to think about the values of a "typical British person". Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, but not Great Britain. Respondents in Northern Ireland may therefore have excluded others who live in Northern Ireland when prompted to think about a typical British person.

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