

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES 24, 25 AND 26

Impact Report

IN SOCIETY

Make It Count

you-make-it.org

You Make It

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1. EXECUTIVE FOREWARD



On behalf of all at You Make It, I would like to extend huge appreciation for all of the supporters who get behind our racial justice agenda. Between August 2024-August 2025, we ensured the development and delivery of 3 holistic employability and empowerment programmes aimed at young working-class, racialised, unemployed and underemployed women from largely East London and neighbouring boroughs. Without you, this would not have been possible.

This report provides quantitative and qualitative data. It shows that, consistent with our track record since inception in 2011, engagement with our services across each of our 4 month long programmes meant our community of women were able to transform their life chances with changes to their employment status, improvements to their mental health, extensive professional and personal skills development, and an improved sense of belonging in a city which although tough, really does hold so many opportunities.

The success of our programmes is in the context of an increasingly challenging time for employment amongst young people in London, notably those from racialised communities, and especially women. As an organisation established and run by women with their own lived experiences of intersectional discrimination, and who also live in those same areas that our participants are from, we have strong relatability and awareness of the barriers our participants face to progress upwards in life. However, we continue to build successful partnerships with progressive funders and employers who recognise that now more than ever is the time to resist anti-DEI agendas, which have sadly begun to gain in momentum.

With all of this in mind, I would like to call on all those reading this report to share it with others in your networks, be they other funders or other employers, because what we do works, and it needs to continue. To quote a graduate from one of the programmes we report on in this publication:

"Last year I was in such a dark place that I struggled to imagine things ever getting better. This year I feel like a completely different person. YMI genuinely changed the direction of my life. Through the mentoring, therapy and support of the programme, I found confidence in myself again, secured a full-time job and finally feel hopeful about my future."

Asma Shah
Founder & CEO

Key statistics

- 100% of participants were from racially minoritised backgrounds, reflecting the programme's targeted focus on supporting women facing racial and structural inequalities;
- 64.88% of participants reported experiencing depression or anxiety at the beginning of the programme, reducing to 33.67% by completion, demonstrating a significant improvement in wellbeing;
- 23.96% of participants had caring responsibilities, balancing programme participation alongside family and personal commitments;
- 52.94% of participants were the first in their family to attend university, often graduating from institutions with lower employment outcomes for global majority working-class women;
- All participants completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of the programmes, rating themselves across 27 indicators (1 being the most negative and 5 the most positive). This showed increases across all indicators from entry to completion;
- 58.06% of participants were in employment by programme graduation, increasing to 70.76% six months after completion;
- 83.89% of mentors observed positive changes in their mentees, and 96.59% reported that the experience developed their own professional skill sets.

Participants, their experiences and YMI's impact

The findings presented in this report demonstrate clear and consistent improvements across wellbeing, confidence, professional skills and employment outcomes.

Programmes (P) 24, 25 and 26 were delivered fully in person, enabling participants to benefit from direct engagement, relationship-building and access to a wide range of activities.

Across the programmes, participants engaged in weekly one-to-one mentoring, therapeutic support, workshops, guest speaker sessions, seminars and debate clubs. In addition, wellbeing-focused activities such as yoga and a newly re-introduced running club supported participants to improve both their physical and mental health.

The programmes also introduced new partnerships with external organisations, expanding access to networks, opportunities and resources.

Graduation events provided participants with the opportunity to confidently present their journeys and reflect on their progress, demonstrating the depth of personal and professional development achieved over the course of the programme.



Some of the participants vision boards following a Values and Vision workshop.

2. INTRODUCTION



2.1 Structure of Programmes

You Make It is a race and class inclusion charity that equips young Global Majority working-class women with the mindset, networks, knowledge and experiences needed to lead happier and more empowered lives.

You Make It delivers a holistic empowerment programme designed to address the structural barriers that many participants face in accessing employment opportunities. These barriers often include limited access to professional networks, financial instability, caring responsibilities and challenges related to mental health and wellbeing.

This report evaluates the outcomes and impact of Empowerment Programmes P24, P25 and P26, focusing on changes in wellbeing, confidence, professional skills and employment outcomes.

The findings presented in this report are based on participant surveys completed at the beginning, end and 6 months after the end of the programme alongside mentor feedback.

For four months, beneficiaries weekly accessed:

- One-to-one mentoring with carefully matched, networked and nurturing professionals, supporting participants to identify personal and professional goals and take actionable steps towards achieving them;
- Interactive workshops led by diverse industry professionals, exploring key themes such as confidence-building, nutrition, entrepreneurship and employability;
- Inspirational guest speaker sessions, featuring established and high-profile professionals who share their career journeys, insights and practical advice for progression;
- Facilitated seminars, led by experienced professionals, providing space for reflection, discussion and deeper learning;
- Debate clubs, designed to strengthen communication skills, critical thinking and confidence in expressing opinions on topical issues;
- Access to one-to-one therapy and pastoral care, ensuring participants receive tailored support where needed;
- Wellbeing-focused extracurricular activities, including yoga, mindfulness, cooking and running sessions, promoting both physical and mental health;
- Celebratory graduation events, where participants confidently present their journeys, reflect on their progress and share their achievements with peers, mentors and supporters.

This multi-layered approach ensures that participants are supported holistically, enabling them to build the skills, confidence and resilience needed to navigate both personal and professional challenges.

By combining practical employability support with a strong focus on wellbeing and community, the programme creates a transformative experience that extends beyond its duration.

2.2 Objectives of the Evaluation Report

This report evaluates the extent to which the You Make It programme supports participants to achieve meaningful and sustained progress across a range of personal and professional outcomes.

Beneficiaries

- Enhanced social and professional networks, with participants reporting that they feel more connected, supported and motivated through relationships built with peers and professionals. Participants develop new professional networks, gain a clearer understanding of the importance of maintaining and growing these networks, and are able to identify specific examples of how these connections have supported their progression;
- Improvements in self-esteem and confidence, demonstrated through enhanced communication and interpersonal skills, including the ability to engage with individuals from different social and cultural backgrounds. Participants show increased confidence in articulating their strengths and experiences in professional contexts, including interviews and public speaking opportunities such as graduation events;
- Development of motivation, skills, knowledge and experiences, enabling participants to feel more empowered in navigating employment pathways. Survey data collected at the beginning and end of the programme demonstrates measurable improvements across a range of indicators essential for employability, including confidence, communication, networking and goal-setting;
- Progression towards employment and long-term career development, including entry into employment, engagement in further education aligned with career aspirations, and the development of entrepreneurial ambitions. Outcomes observed both at programme completion and in the months following demonstrate continued progression over time.

The evaluation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the programme contributes to both immediate outcomes and longer-term change, recognising that progression is often gradual and shaped by wider structural factors.

Approach to Measuring Impact

The findings presented in this report are based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the programme. Participants completed self-assessment surveys at the beginning and end of the programme, rating themselves across a range of indicators using a scale of 1 (most negative) to 5 (most positive). These indicators cover areas including confidence, wellbeing, professional skills, networks and access to opportunities. This approach enables the measurement of change over time, providing insight into the extent to which participants perceive improvements in their personal and professional development.

In addition to participant survey data, the report incorporates feedback from mentors, as well as follow-up data collected after programme completion. This allows for an assessment of both immediate outcomes and longer-term progression.

By combining multiple data sources, the evaluation provides a robust and holistic understanding of the programme's impact.



3. KEY DATA AND SURVEY RESULTS



3.1 Beneficiaries

Participants rated themselves and their experiences against a range of 27 indicators on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most negative and 5 being the most positive.

They completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of the programmes, and a shorter questionnaire six months after graduation to record their employment outcomes.

Data across the three programmes show a clear positive impact across all 27 indicators, with average scores rising from 3.07 to 3.92.

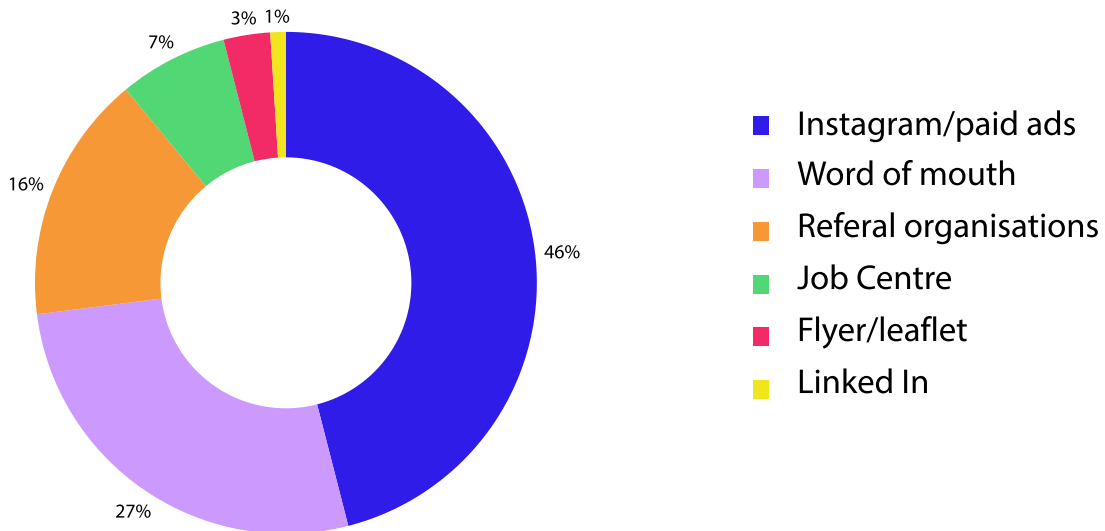
The most significant improvements reported are:

- Feeling connected to opportunities that could benefit personal and professional progression – from 2.7 to 4 (an increase of 1.3);
- Understanding how to promote themselves and their personal brand – from 2.7 to 4 (an increase of 1.3);
- General confidence – from 2.7 to 4 (an increase of 1.3);
- Clarity about future goals and how to achieve them – from 2.7 to 4 (an increase of 1.3);
- Happiness – from 3 to 4 (an increase of 1.0);
- Size and make up of social networks – from 3 to 4 (an increase of 1.0);
- Size and make up of their work or professional network - from 2.0 to 3.3 (an increase of 0.7);
- Writing skills – from 3 to 4 (an increase of 1.0);
- Confidence in interacting and forming relationships with people from different social and cultural backgrounds – from 3.3 to 4 (an increase of 0.7).

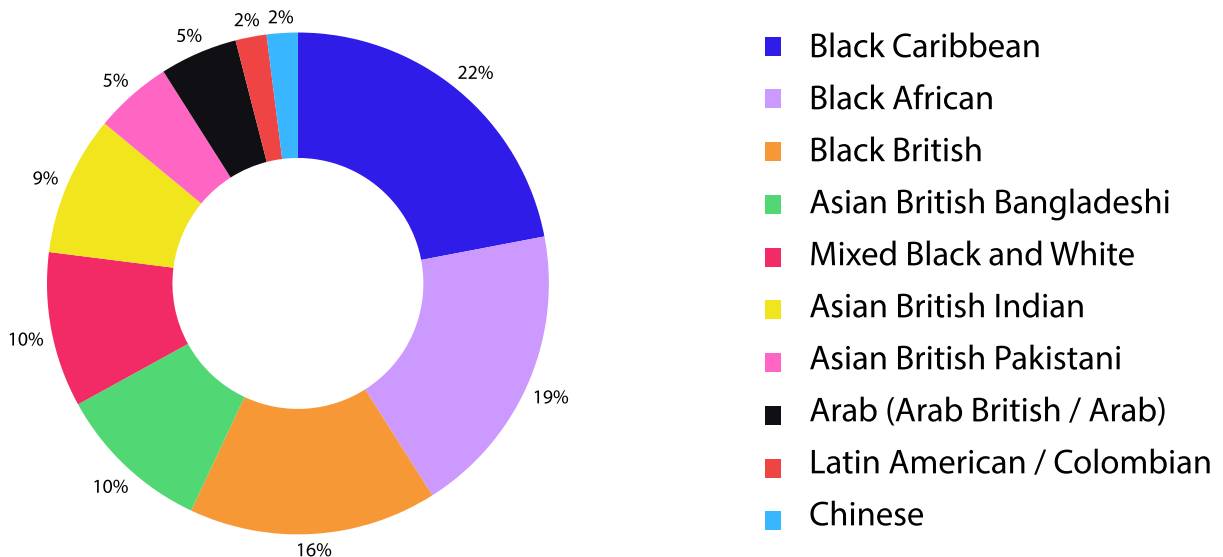
These results demonstrate significant progress across all indicators, with particularly strong gains in confidence, networking and clarity about future goals.

Note: the complete survey questions and results appear in the appendix at the end of this report.

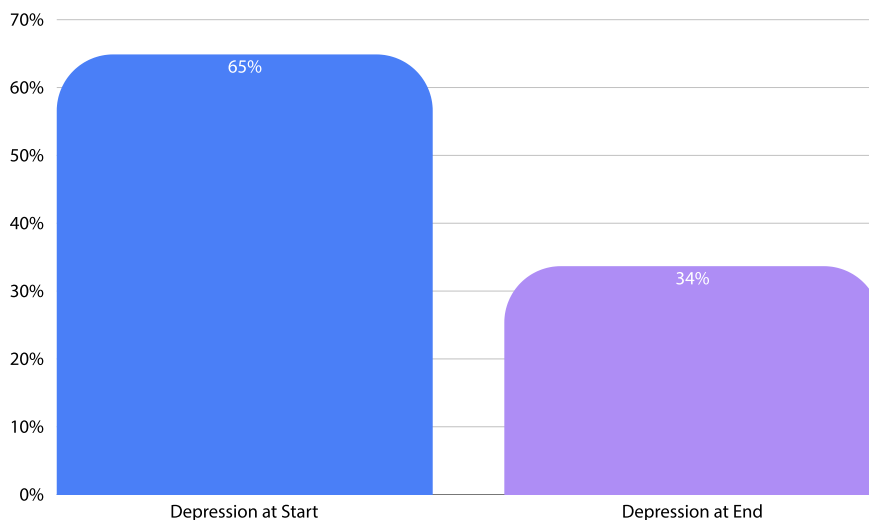
How did YMI participants come to know about the programme?



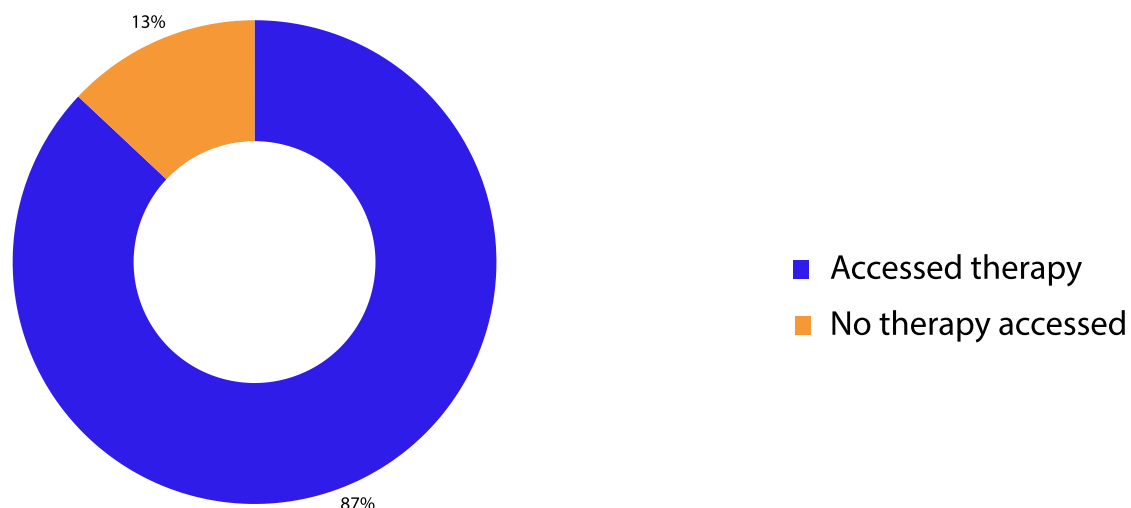
What are the ethnic backgrounds of YMI participants?



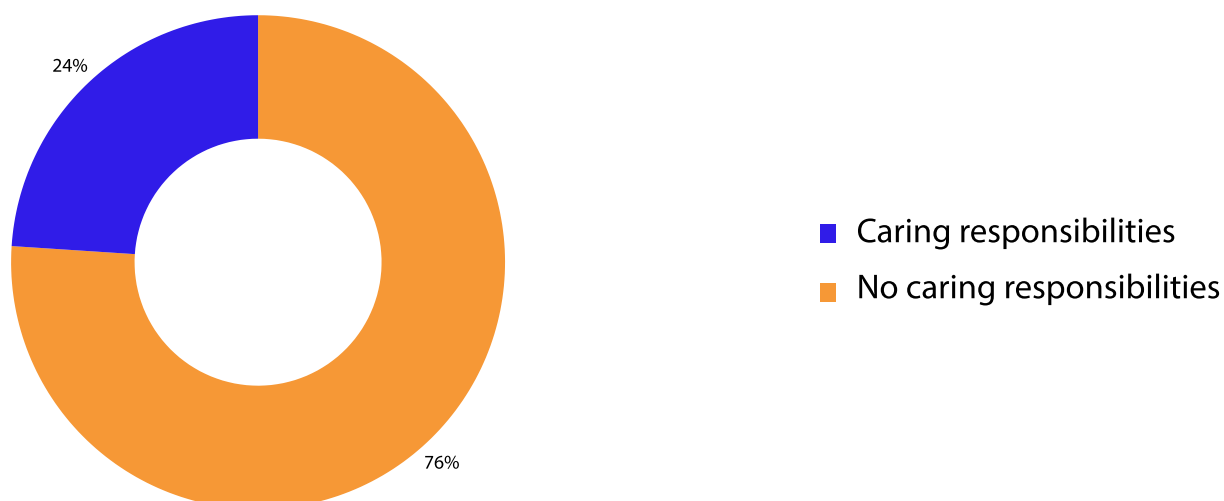
What percentage of YMI participants disclosed depression/anxiety at the start and end?



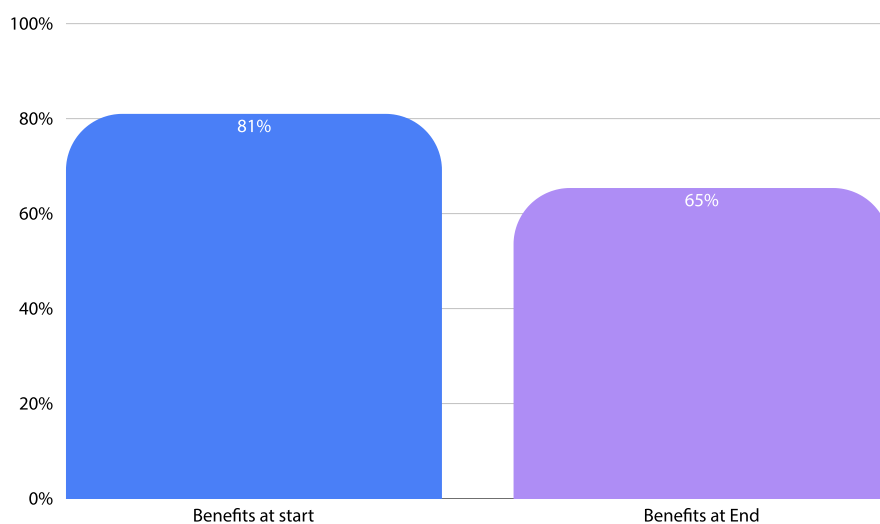
What percentage of YMI participants accessed YMI-funded therapy during the programme?



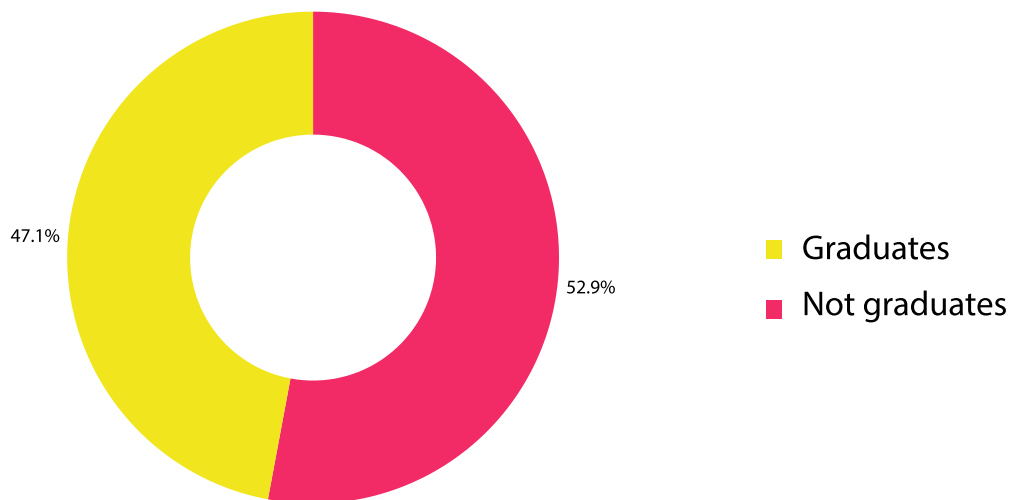
What percentage of YMI participants had caring responsibilities?



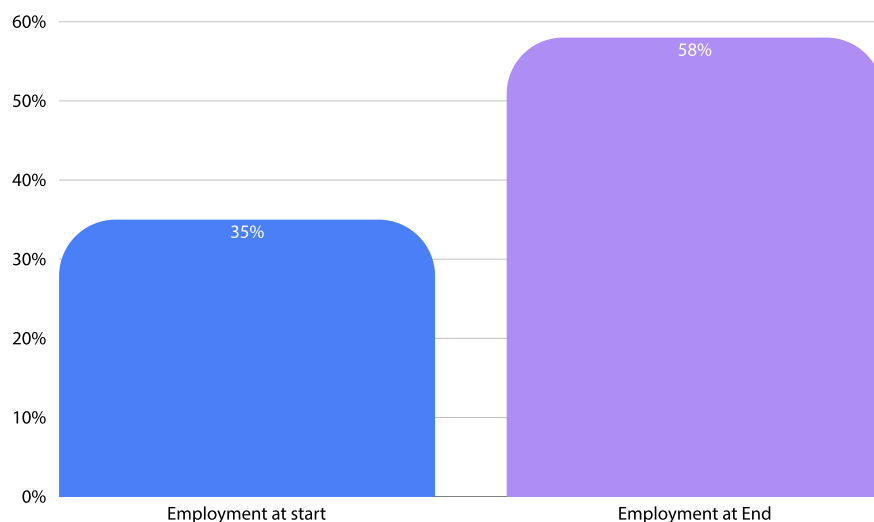
What percentage of YMI participants were accessing benefits at the start and end of the programme?



Percentage of participants who were graduates?

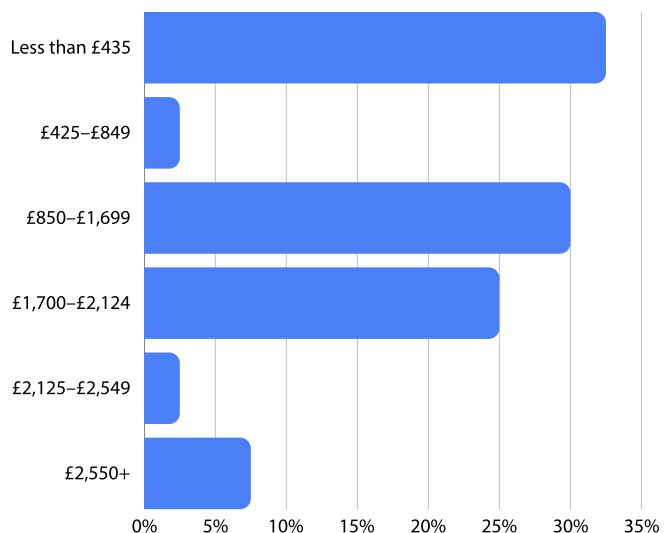
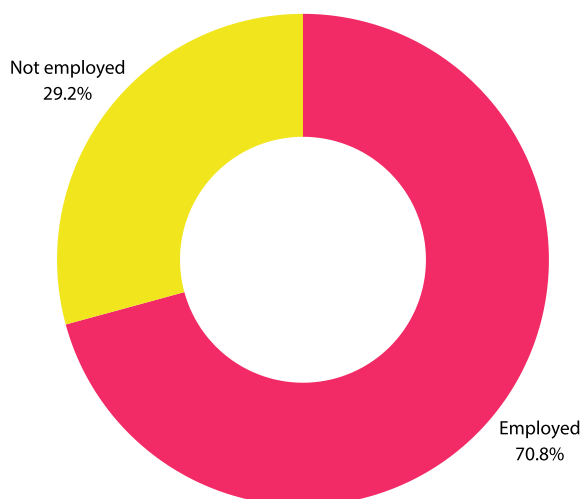


What was the employment status of YMI participants before and after joining the programme?*



*Employment figures include participants in full-time, part-time, freelance, self-employed and temporary work. Some participants continued to receive benefits alongside employment where earnings were below eligibility thresholds or work remained insecure, reflecting the realities of low-paid and precarious employment.

Employment status of graduates 6 months after the programme, including monthly salary banding



3.2 Mentors

Mentors play a central role in supporting participants throughout the programme, providing guidance, accountability and access to professional insights that are often otherwise unavailable.

Feedback from mentors involved in Programmes P24, P25 and P26 demonstrates consistently high levels of engagement, satisfaction and perceived impact.

Mentor feedback highlighted the following:

- 100% of mentors felt prepared for their role before starting the programme;
- 100% reported that the mentor training was useful, equipping them with the tools and understanding needed to support their mentees effectively;
- 100% felt they were a suitable match for their mentee, highlighting the strength of the matching process;
- 83.89% of mentors observed positive changes in their mentees over the course of the programme;
- 96.59% reported that the experience contributed to the development of their own professional skills, particularly in areas such as communication, leadership and coaching; and
- 82% of mentors stated that they would be willing to mentor again in the future, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the programme.

Changes Observed Among YMI Participants

Mentors consistently reported observing meaningful and sustained changes in their mentees, particularly in confidence, motivation and clarity about future goals.

Participants were described as increasingly proactive, reflective and engaged in their personal and professional development. Mentors noted improvements in accountability, communication and the ability to take ownership of their progression.

One mentor reflected:

"She has a strong work ethic and always follows up on the action points we agree promptly and thoroughly. She reflects on feedback positively and has so much untapped potential. It's been a pleasure to support her journey."

Another highlighted the growth in confidence:

"I am very proud of how much her confidence has grown. She's no longer as fearful when sharing ideas and is beginning to take ownership of her future plans."

Mentors also recognised the ambition and potential of participants:

"An incredibly courageous and ambitious young woman who is capable of anything she puts her mind to. She is driven, articulate and a pleasure to work with."

These reflections demonstrate the programme's ability to support participants in building confidence, developing self-awareness and taking meaningful steps towards their goals.

Mentor Experience and Development

The mentoring experience also generated significant benefits for mentors themselves.

Many described the experience as rewarding and impactful, highlighting opportunities to develop their own skills and gain new perspectives.

"It has been a really positive experience to feel that I have helped someone through guidance, encouragement and genuine interest in their progress."

"I found this experience both rewarding and challenging in a positive way. It helped me reflect on my own approach to communication and how I support others."

"I feel more confident in my ability to connect with and support individuals who are early in their careers."

"The programme opened my eyes to the barriers that talented women still face when trying to access meaningful employment. It reminded me that potential isn't the issue. Access, opportunity and confidence are."

"Mentoring challenged me to think differently about my own leadership and communication style. I've become more patient, more reflective and more intentional in the way I support and encourage others, both professionally and personally."

"Working with someone whose life experiences were very different from my own gave me a much deeper understanding of the inequalities many women continue to face. It has made me more conscious of my own privilege and strengthened my commitment to creating more inclusive workplaces."

Mentors also reported gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the programme's participants, reinforcing the importance of initiatives that address structural barriers to opportunity.

Future Involvement

82% of mentors said they would be happy to mentor again in the future, reflecting the positive experience they had throughout the programme. Many described mentoring as both personally rewarding and professionally enriching, while several expressed an interest in becoming involved with other You Make It activities in the future. Feedback on the programme was overwhelmingly positive, with only minor suggestions for additional opportunities to connect with fellow mentors and remain engaged with the wider You Make It community.

Mentee Reflections on Mentoring

Feedback from participants highlights the significant role mentoring played in their development.

Participants described the mentoring relationship as supportive, motivating and transformative, with many noting tangible improvements in their confidence, clarity and readiness for employment.

One participant shared:

"I never realised how life-changing mentoring could be. My mentor didn't just help me improve my CV or prepare for interviews, she completely changed the way I see myself professionally. She encouraged me to challenge my own self-doubt, helped me build my confidence step by step, and gave me practical tools that I continue to use today. Every session ended with a clear action plan, and she always encouraged me to follow through, which made me feel accountable and motivated.

By the end of the programme, I felt genuinely work-ready. I was more confident networking, speaking to employers, presenting my experience and applying for opportunities that I would never have considered before. Her belief in me helped me believe in myself."

Another reflected on the impact of the experience:

"I never realised how life changing mentoring could be. I've made so much progress in areas I didn't even know I needed to develop."

These reflections highlight the value of structured, consistent mentoring relationships in supporting participants to build confidence, develop skills and progress towards their goals. Overall, the findings demonstrate that mentoring is a highly effective component of the programme, delivering benefits for both participants and mentors while strengthening the wider support network available to those involved.



4. MEASURING ECONOMIC IMPACT



This section considers how You Make It achieves value for money, specifically, the extent to which it empowers beneficiaries to become financially independent and not (or less) dependent on benefits. Our approach identifies the key benefits associated with the programme, assigns a value to each, and presents our estimates below.

Costs

The expected overall costs for delivery of the three You Make It programmes evaluated in this report are £388,272 (£129,424 per programme). The total number of participants for the three cohorts across 2024 and 2025 was 57, making the cost for each individual £6,812. This total amount includes full-time staff (wages, national insurance costs, pension contributions, etcetera), freelance staff including therapists, sessional support worker(s) and workshop leaders as well as overheads relating to programme delivery.

There is an argument that time given pro-bono should be costed and included, but we have regarded this as a 'free good' and not included this as a cost.

Benefits

Benefits can be direct or indirect. The main benefits are:

- reductions in state benefit payments;
- reductions in costs of treatment for mental health issues; and
- earning better wages and salaries, thus increasing tax contributions.

Wider benefits, including societal, have not been included. They accrue because working people are, for example, less likely to become ill and use health services. They are also less likely to become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, which reduces costs to the criminal justice system. Evaluations of very large government programmes often include estimates of these wider benefits, but the number of participants in these national interventions can number in the thousands, which makes more reliable estimates of the benefits feasible.

We have followed standard practice in that we have estimated the 'outcome' of the participants immediately and also six months after completion to reflect sustained changes to their lives. We also need to consider over what period the benefit should be claimed as being due to the programme. Projecting it too far forward would not be credible; even if the changed behaviour is maintained, the extent to which it can be accredited to the programme or other intervening life experiences becomes difficult to determine. We, therefore, include in the estimates below values resting on two assumptions, namely that (i) the actual benefits accrue for a year since the programme ended, and (ii) the benefits are maintained for three years.

Reductions in Benefits

Our data tells us that at the beginning of the programmes, 71% received state benefits. In the end, this number was reduced to 64%.

On the assumption that the individuals would have been receiving basic benefit payments (at an assumed rate of £92 per week), we calculate that the total yearly benefit payments being received by all the participants at the beginning of the programme was £196,251. With the reduction in the number of participants receiving benefits, this is reduced to £177,104. This indicates an annual benefit saving of £19,146, or a three-year benefit saving totalling £57,439.

Number on benefits at start of programmes	41
Average benefit receipt (yearly)	£4,787
Total benefits paid	£196,251

Number on benefits at end of programmes	37
Average benefit receipt (yearly)	£4,787
Total benefits paid	£ 177,104

Average benefit savings	£19,146
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Total: 3 years of benefit savings	£57,439
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Reductions in Costs of Treatment for Mental Health Issues

Our data shows that 65% of participants reported some form of mental health difficulty at the start of the programme, ranging from anxiety and depression to PTSD. Engagement with the programme led to significant reductions in these difficulties for many participants, which we translate into estimated savings to NHS mental health service.

Using an estimated average annual treatment cost of £2,080 per person for mild to moderate mental health conditions, covering direct health and social care costs, we calculate annual NHS savings of £76,960, rising to £230,880 over three years.

Number with mental health issues at start of the programme	37
Cost of healthcare per individual	£2,080
Annual healthcare savings	£76,960
Total: 3 years of healthcare savings	£230,880

Increase in Wages

At the beginning of the programmes, only 39% of the participants were employed and 61% unemployed. By the end of the programme, the number who were employed or freelancing had increased to 58%. Another 12% were in education.

Of the 33 economically active participants, their average monthly income was £1,137. If we apply this income level to the increase in employment, the yearly increase in wages is £150,084, with the three-year increase in wages totalling £450,252.

Number employed and/or freelancing at the programme start	22
Number employed and/or freelancing at the end of the programmes	33
Increase in employment	11
Average wage	£1,137
Gainful employment in yearly wages	£150,084
Total: 3-year increase in wages	£450,252

WAYS TO SUPPORT



The figures on the previous pages show what becomes possible when a woman gets the right support at the right moment. Every place on our programme creates value that reaches well beyond the individual, from real savings to the NHS and the state, to a woman returning to work and building her own financial independence.

None of it happens without the people and organisations who choose to back our work. Here are three ways you can be part of it.

Whichever way speaks to you, it makes a direct difference to the women you're about to read about. If you'd like to explore how you or your organisation could get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

To support, please reach out to:

Meave Hamill
Senior Partnerships & Fundraising Manager
Email: senior.partnerships@you-make-it.org

1. Sponsor Our Programme

Directly fund a woman's place on our 16-week empowerment programme, from her weekly workshops, mentoring and therapy to travel, meals and the wider support that helps her reach fulfilling work.

2. Host A Work Experience

Open your workplace to one of our women through a short placement, giving her real exposure and hands-on experience in a field she wants to build her career in.

3. Become A YMI Mentor

Volunteer to guide and support a young woman through her time on the programme, sharing your experience and helping her build the confidence to move forward.

OUR FUNDERS



Other Funders:

Mageni trust
Englefield Charitable Trust
Green Hat Foundation



5. CASE STUDIES



In this section, we present a selection of participant journeys drawn from Programmes 24, 25 and 26, illustrating the varied and often profound ways in which women experienced change through You Make It.

These stories capture a range of outcomes, including improved confidence and wellbeing, stronger professional direction, increased employability, healthier relationships and greater optimism for the future. They provide deeper insight into the lived realities behind the data presented earlier in this report.

In addition, this section includes longer-term follow-up with previous participants one year after graduation, demonstrating how the programme's impact continues well beyond the 16-week delivery period. The section concludes with a joint mentor and mentee reflection, highlighting the transformative nature of the mentoring relationship from both perspectives.

All interviewees took part voluntarily and participant names have been changed to protect privacy.

5.1 Recent participants

Nisa's Story: "YMI was absolutely life-changing for me"

Key outcomes:

- Increased confidence and self-belief
- Improved emotional wellbeing through therapy and peer support
- Secured full-time employment in a role linked to long-term aspirations
- Developed healthier boundaries and renewed motivation for the future

Nisa (26) completed Programme 24 in November 2024. When she joined You Make It, she described herself as being in a completely different place emotionally and professionally to where she is now.

As the eldest daughter in a large family, Nisa had spent several years carrying significant caring responsibilities following a series of traumatic family bereavements. After leaving university temporarily and taking on retail work to help support her household, she found herself overwhelmed, isolated and struggling to move forward with confidence.

Although she eventually completed her degree, she described feeling "stuck", defeated by repeated job application setbacks and emotionally exhausted by the pressure of holding everything together for others.

Nisa heard about You Make It at a point when she was struggling to prioritise herself. Initially hesitant about joining, she was quickly struck by the warmth of the programme environment and the sense that she was surrounded by women who genuinely understood her experiences. "When I walked into that first room, I met people who were in similar situations to me. I felt a togetherness straight away. For the first time in a long time, I didn't feel alone."



Veronica's Story: "Now I am living, not just surviving"

Key outcomes:

- Improved self-worth and emotional resilience
- Secured a six-month paid professional opportunity
- Greater confidence in building relationships and professional networks
- Renewed motivation to pursue creative and community-focused ambitions

Veronica (27) completed Programme 25 in April 2025. Prior to joining You Make It, she describes herself as feeling lost, professionally uncertain and emotionally drained after leaving work due to ill health.

Although highly capable and degree educated, Veronica found herself questioning whether traditional employment pathways truly aligned with her values, while simultaneously struggling with confidence, identity and workplace experiences that had left her feeling unseen and misunderstood.

What immediately drew her to You Make It was the fact that it centred racially minoritised

women and intentionally created a safe and culturally aware environment.

"I felt there weren't enough spaces where I could show up fully as myself. With You Make It, I felt seen from the beginning."

Throughout the programme, Veronica benefited from the weekly in-person workshops, mentoring, therapy and wellbeing sessions. She speaks particularly strongly about the sisterhood that developed amongst the cohort, describing the Friday sessions as somewhere she could decompress, reflect and rebuild.

"I could talk, laugh, cry if I needed to. It became a place where I felt safe enough to really look at my life honestly."

The combination of mentoring and therapy had a profound impact on Veronica's ability to challenge old patterns of self-neglect and begin prioritising her own wellbeing.

"Before, I was surviving. I was functioning, but I wasn't living."

"The programme taught me what a real support system looks like and how important it is to care for myself emotionally."

Professionally, Veronica developed greater confidence in speaking to others, creating opportunities and positioning herself in new environments. Through the support of her mentor and wider YMI networks, she also secured a six-month paid opportunity within a media organisation, giving her valuable professional experience and renewed clarity on future possibilities. Alongside this, Veronica has begun developing ambitions to establish her own creative social enterprise focused on supporting young people through art-based activities.

"YMI validated so much of what I already felt but had never had affirmed. It gave me confidence to believe my ideas matter." Friends, family and her partner all observed visible changes in her confidence, routine, discipline and boundaries by the end of the programme. "Now I am living, not just surviving - and that is a huge shift."

People that noticed the changes, are Veronica's family:

"My family have all noticed the difference in me. They say I seem lighter, happier and much more confident than I was before the programme."

My partner especially has seen how much my routine and mindset have changed. I now prioritise my wellbeing, set healthy boundaries and make time for the things that bring me joy. Before YMI, I felt like I was simply surviving. Now I genuinely feel like I'm living."

Looking ahead, Veronica hopes to continue building her career while developing her own creative social enterprise to support young people through art. She remains passionate about creating safe spaces where others can express themselves, just as You Make It created one for her.

"YMI didn't just help me find direction, it helped me find myself again. It reminded me that I deserve to take up space, to dream bigger, and to build a life that I'm proud of."

"YMI validated so much of what I already felt but had never had affirmed. It gave me confidence to believe my ideas matter."

Kambili's Story: "YMI gave me hope that I can make a beautiful life for myself"

Key outcomes:

- Significant improvement in mental wellbeing and self-esteem
- Access to therapy which supported trauma recovery
- Stronger coping strategies for anxiety, stress and financial pressure
- Renewed motivation, stability and hope for the future

Kambili (26) completed Programme 26 in August 2025 after joining at one of the most difficult periods of her life.

Having experienced long-term trauma, family breakdown, bullying, redundancy and unstable housing, Kambili describes arriving at You Make It with extremely low confidence, high anxiety and very little hope for what the future might hold.

"I genuinely thought it was too good to be true. I had no money, no stability, and I was not in a good place mentally."

Despite these challenges, she committed to attending and quickly found that the programme offered something she had not experienced before: consistency, safety and non-judgemental support.

The weekly workshops became the highlight of her week, giving her routine, structure and a place where she felt noticed positively by others. Activities focused on public speaking, confidence, boundaries, creative expression and emotional wellbeing gradually helped her to come out of her shell.

One particularly important turning point was recognising that she was being seen by others in a positive light.

"For the first time, I realised people were paying attention to me in a good way. That changed something in me."

Kambili describes the therapy provision as life-changing. Having never previously accessed therapeutic support despite years of unresolved trauma, she found the sessions essential in helping her regulate her emotions, process painful experiences and begin imagining a future that felt possible.

"Because of YMI's therapy, I now feel like I have the opportunity to make a good life - a beautiful life - for myself."

Her mentoring relationship also developed into a source of long-term trusted guidance, with her mentor becoming someone she still speaks to regularly for practical advice and emotional encouragement.

Alongside improved confidence and wellbeing, Kambili reports that the programme gave her concrete tools for managing anxiety, handling difficult situations, thinking more positively and making practical decisions around work and finances.

She has since remained in employment, is working towards improved financial stability and continues to use many of the stress-management and self-development techniques introduced during the programme. "Fridays were always the highlight of my week. This programme genuinely transformed the way I see myself and what is possible."

"Because of YMI's therapy, I now feel like I have the opportunity to make a good life - a beautiful life - for myself."

5.2 Follow-ups with previous participants

Safiya's Story: "One year later, I can clearly see how far I have come"

Key outcomes:

- Sustained employment one year after programme completion
- Continued use of confidence, networking and self-management skills developed through YMI
- Increased financial independence and long-term career planning
- Ongoing personal growth, resilience and professional ambition

Safiya (25) completed You Make It in 2024 and was interviewed again one year after graduating in order to reflect on the programme's longer-term impact.

At the point of joining, Safiya was unemployed, receiving benefits and struggling with confidence after a prolonged period of unsuccessful job searching. Although academically capable, she felt disconnected from opportunities and unsure of how to position herself professionally.

She describes herself then as someone who had "lost momentum" and who often felt intimidated in professional settings.

Through You Make It, Safiya accessed weekly mentoring, therapy, employability workshops, communication training and a wide range of guest speaker sessions that exposed her to new sectors, new networks and new ways of thinking about her future.

"At the time, I remember feeling like everything was a struggle and I didn't know where to begin. The programme gave me structure when I didn't have any."

By graduation, Safiya had already noticed significant changes in her confidence, communication and motivation. However, she says the full impact became clearer in the months afterwards as she began applying what she had learned more independently. Within six months of graduating, Safiya secured paid employment in an administrative role. One year on, she remains in work, has increased her hours, and is now actively pursuing further training linked to management and project coordination.

"The biggest difference is that I no longer approach opportunities from a place of fear. I now feel I have something to offer."

Safiya reports that many of the practical tools introduced during YMI continue to shape her day-to-day life: from approaching interviews more strategically, to managing workplace anxiety, building professional relationships and setting healthier personal boundaries. Financially, sustained employment has enabled her to reduce dependence on benefits, contribute more consistently to household costs and begin planning for future savings. Just as importantly, she feels emotionally more stable and future-focused than she did at the beginning of the programme.

"One year later, I can clearly see that YMI didn't just help me in the moment, it changed how I think about myself long term."

Safiya remains connected to several women from her cohort and continues to draw confidence from the relationships and networks built during the programme.

5.3 Mentee and Mentor

Amara and Mat's Story: Created structure, confidence and opportunity"

Key outcomes:

- Improved career clarity, confidence and employability for mentee
- Direct employment opportunity secured through mentor connection
- Increased mentor understanding of equity, access and workplace barriers
- Continued professional relationship beyond the formal programme period

A central feature of the You Make It model is the carefully supported one-to-one mentoring relationship between participants and senior professionals. The experience of Amara and her mentor Mat offers a powerful example of how this relationship can create both immediate and longer-term change.

Amara joined Programme 24 at a time when she was academically capable, highly creative and motivated, but uncertain about how to translate her broad interests into a practical career pathway. Like many participants, she had talent and ambition, but lacked the networks, confidence and structured guidance needed to move forward.

Mat, co-founder of a global employee and customer experience consultancy, volunteered as her mentor through the programme.

Although experienced in leadership and workplace coaching, he describes the You Make It mentoring experience as distinct because it required a deeper understanding of structural inequality, lived experience and the hidden barriers many young women face when trying to access employment.

"The mentor training was excellent because it challenged us to think beyond CVs and interviews. It asked us to understand context, privilege and the practical barriers these women are navigating."

Over the 16 weeks, mentor and mentee met regularly both online and in person, gradually developing a clear action plan focused on employability, professional positioning, confidence and long-term goals.

Mat worked closely with Amara on: identifying her strongest transferable skills, improving her CV and LinkedIn profile, expanding her professional networks, introducing her to contacts in relevant industries, and helping her break down ambitious long-term goals into manageable immediate steps.

"My mentor helped me get from A to B. He gave me a structure that made my goals feel achievable instead of overwhelming."

As the weeks progressed, both reported noticeable changes in Amara's confidence, focus and willingness to put herself forward for opportunities. Her commitment, consistency and openness to feedback also stood out strongly.

By the end of the programme, Mat and his organisation recognised Amara's potential and offered her a role within the company, allowing her to gain paid experience in marketing, administration and social impact work.

"What stood out was how quickly she started believing in her own ability. Once that shift happened, the progress became tangible."

"What stood out most was her willingness to learn. Every conversation built on the last because she always arrived having reflected on previous discussions, completed agreed actions and thought carefully about her next steps. Rather than simply looking for a job, we focused on building a career that reflected her interests, strengths and long-term ambitions. Watching her confidence grow week by week was incredibly rewarding."

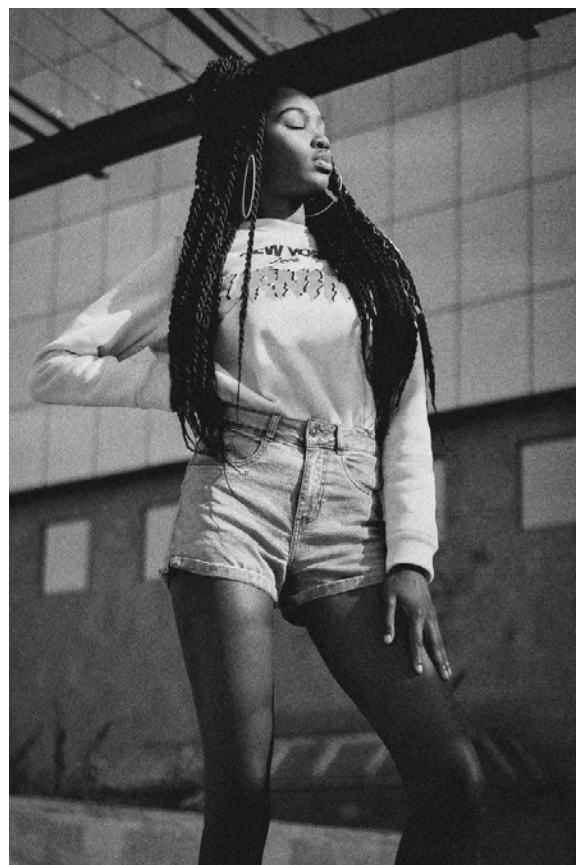
For Mat, the experience also had lasting professional and personal value. He reflects that mentoring through You Make It strengthened his awareness of how privilege, access and confidence shape career progression, and reinforced his commitment to creating more inclusive opportunities within his own workplace.

On a personal level, the experience encouraged Mat to reflect on the barriers that many talented women continue to face when entering the labour market. While skills and ambition were never lacking, he saw first-hand how confidence, opportunity and access can make all the difference. The experience strengthened his belief that employers have an important role to play in creating more equitable pathways into meaningful careers

"Supporting someone through that journey is incredibly powerful. You realise how much talent exists when the right support is put around it."

Importantly, the relationship did not end with graduation. Mat continues to support Amara informally as she grows in her role, demonstrating the sustained nature of many YMI mentoring relationships.

Together, their journey reflects one of the programme's most important strengths: pairing aspiration with practical access, and ensuring that women are not navigating change alone.



Reflecting on the wider programme, Mat believes the combination of mentoring, therapy, workshops and practical employability support is what makes You Make It so effective. Each element reinforces the others, enabling participants to build confidence alongside the practical skills required to succeed in the workplace.

You're not simply helping
someone find a job, you're
helping them recognise their own
potential

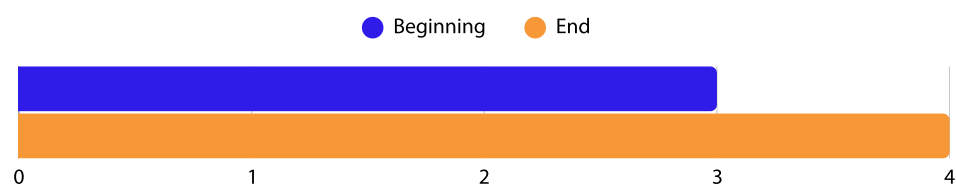
6. APPENDIX: PROGRAMME

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

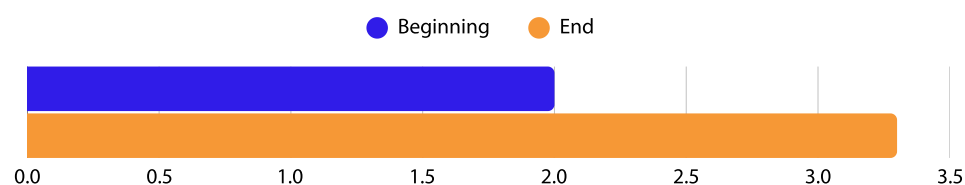


SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

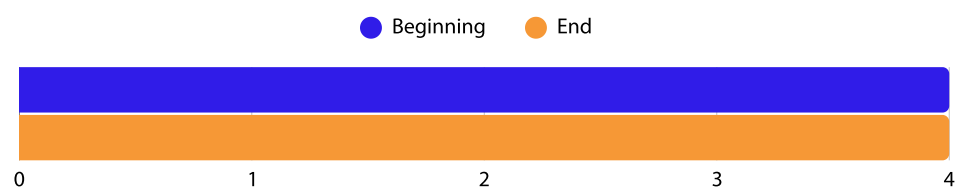
Size and make up of social network



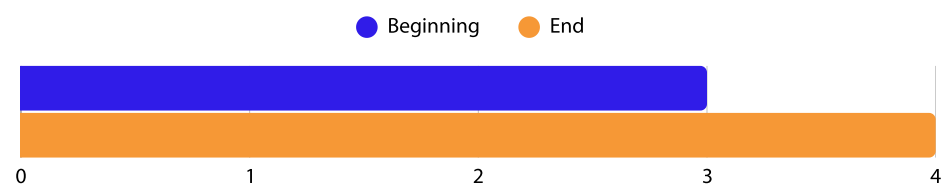
Size and make up of your work/professional network



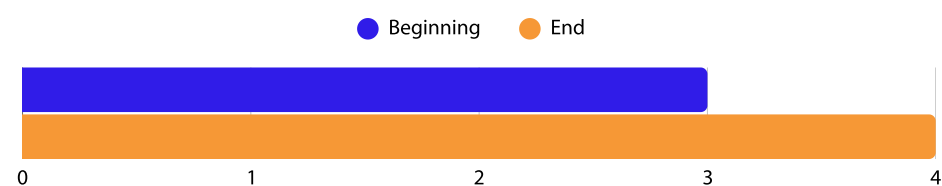
Importance of professional network



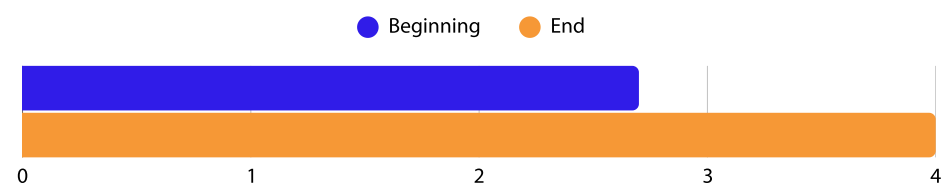
Social interactions outside cultural background



Confidence forming new relationships

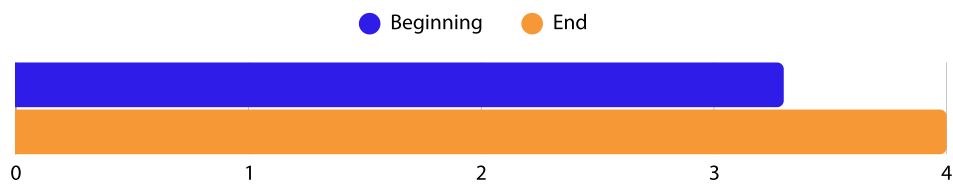


Connected to opportunities

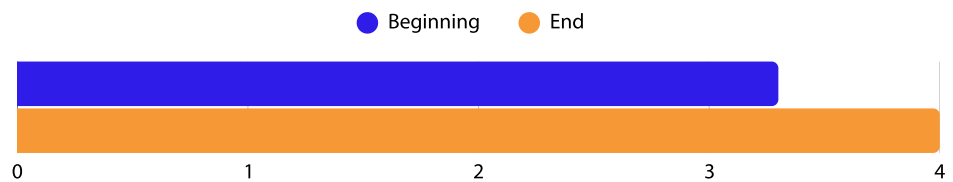


SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

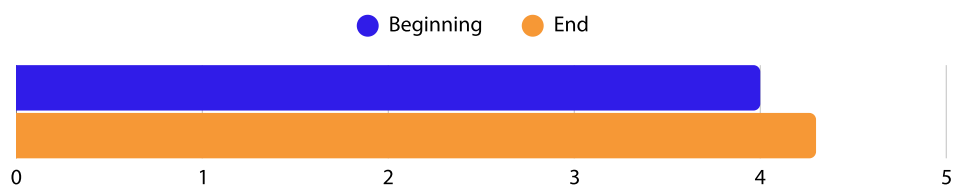
Social Skills



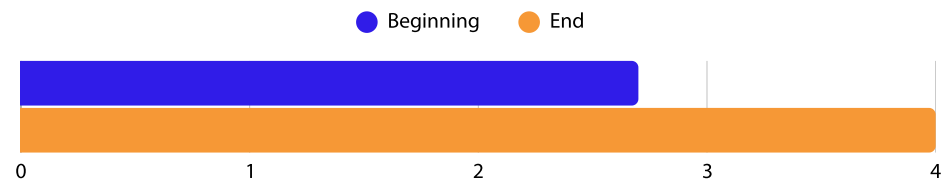
Communication Skills



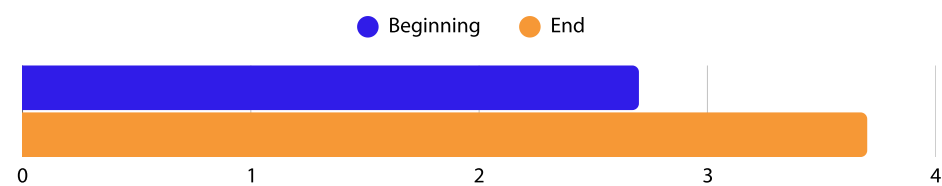
Ability to Work in a Team



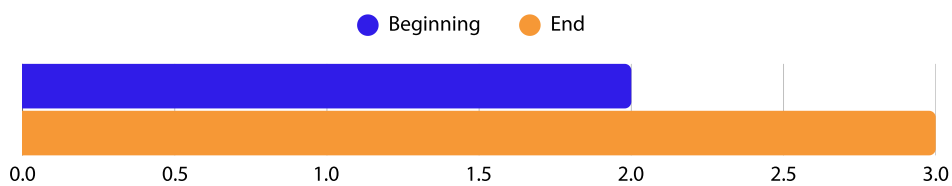
Promoting personal brand



Public Speaking

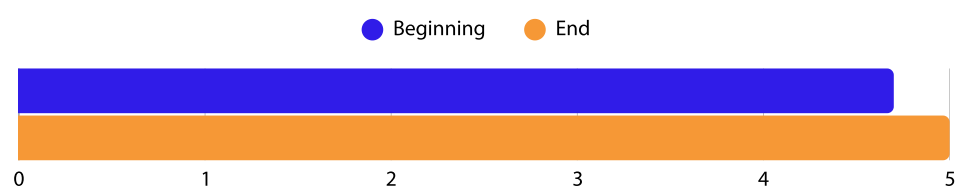


Presentation to online and professionals

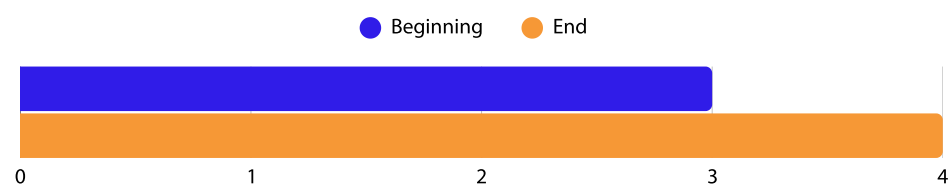


WELLBEING AND HEALTH

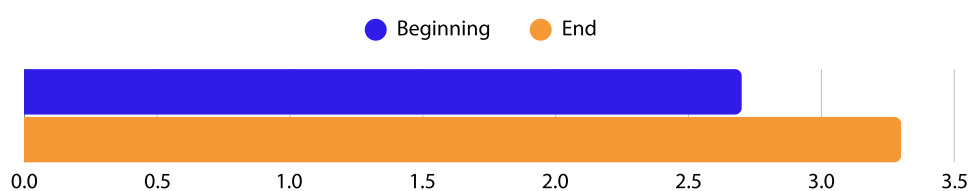
Importance of health and wellbeing



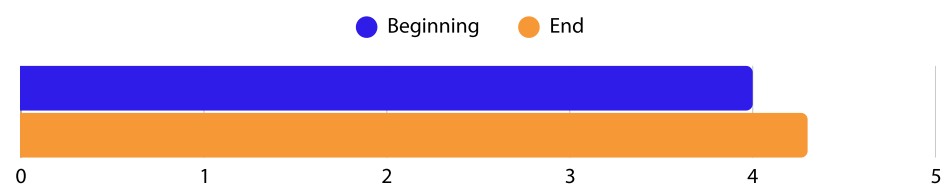
Managing overall wellbeing



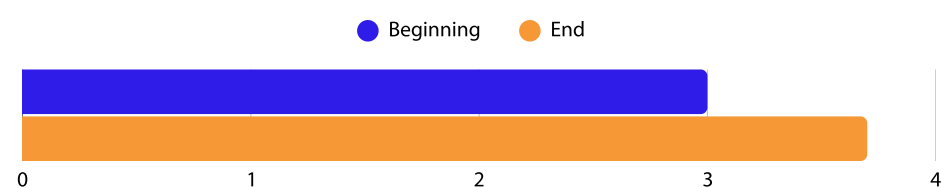
Activities supporting wellbeing



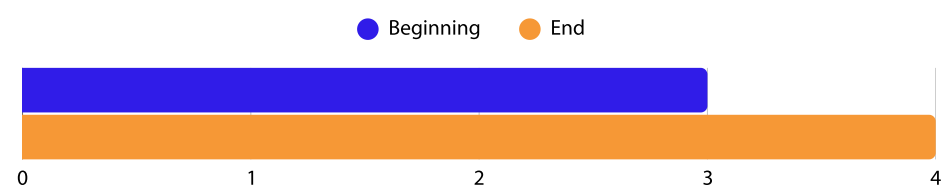
Importance of healthy eating



Nutritious diet

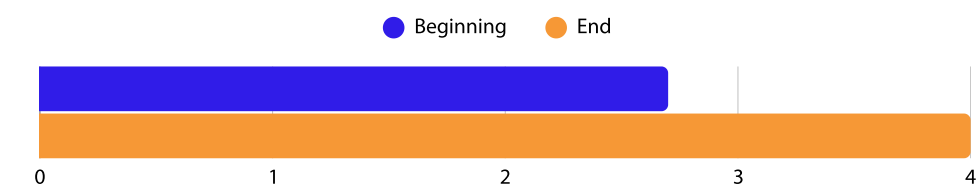


Happiness

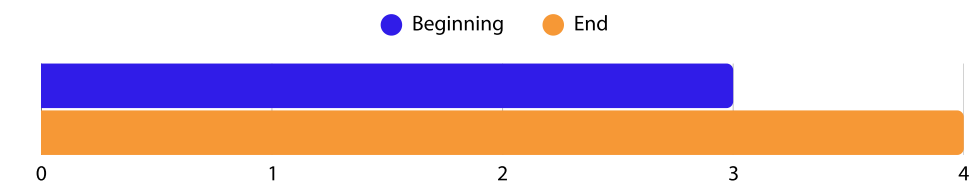


CONFIDENCE & ASPIRATIONS

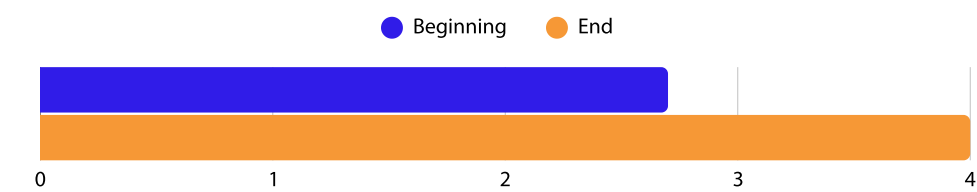
General confidence



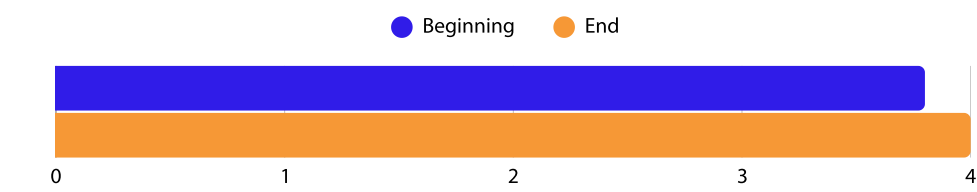
Optimism about future



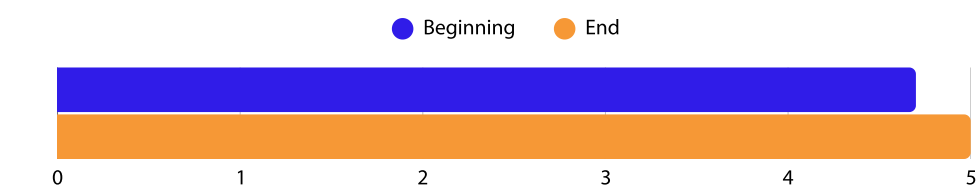
Clarity on future goals



Interest in starting a business



Recommend You Make It





You Make It