

# FUTURE LEADERS CONNECT

The policy priorities of young people in 2019  
[#FutureLeadersConnect](#)



# INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Future Leaders Connect is the British Council's global network of emerging policy leaders.

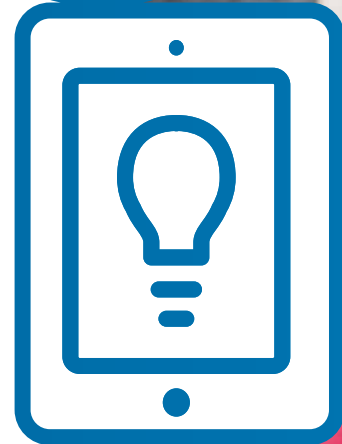
We identify exceptional leaders aged 18–35 from around the world through a rigorous application process, where they demonstrate their potential to make transformative change in their communities, countries and wider global context. During the application process, these people identify the policy areas which they believe to be global priorities and identify the past and present global leaders who they most admire.

In 2019, we received almost 16,000 applications from 13 countries around the world, making this a significant, if self-selecting, sample of young policy leaders' views on the challenges facing their national and regional contexts.

These 13 countries are: the USA, Canada, Mexico, Kenya, Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, the UK, Poland, India, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The USA does not have data sets included in this piece of research as the applicants were selected outside the online application process. We regret that this means that we do not have data to share from the USA this year, but we have included our findings from 2018 on the USA for context.

We conduct this analysis on our applicant pool each year, aiming to build a longitudinal picture of the policy priorities and admired global leaders and how this may be changing over time. In this short report, we present the findings from our 2019 Future Leaders Connect applicants and compare these with findings from previous years.



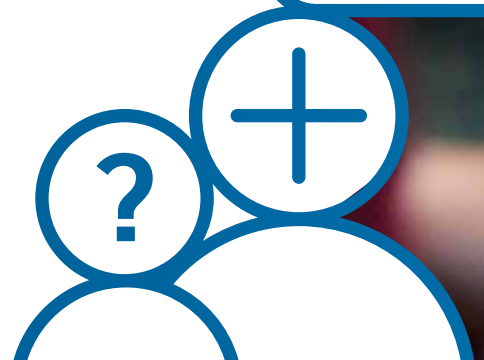


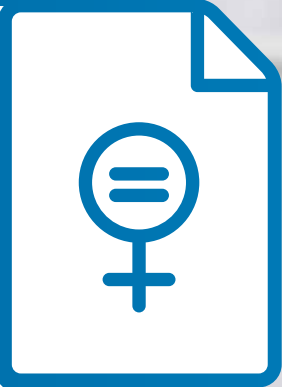
# POLICY PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Future Leaders Connect applicants were asked the following question: *Which of the following policy issues is of greatest concern to you?* They were asked to choose three options from a readymade list. This list was compiled from the most popular policy priorities identified by approximately 11,000 applicants to Future Leaders Connect in 2017, which we continue to use.

## The policy issues they were asked to choose from

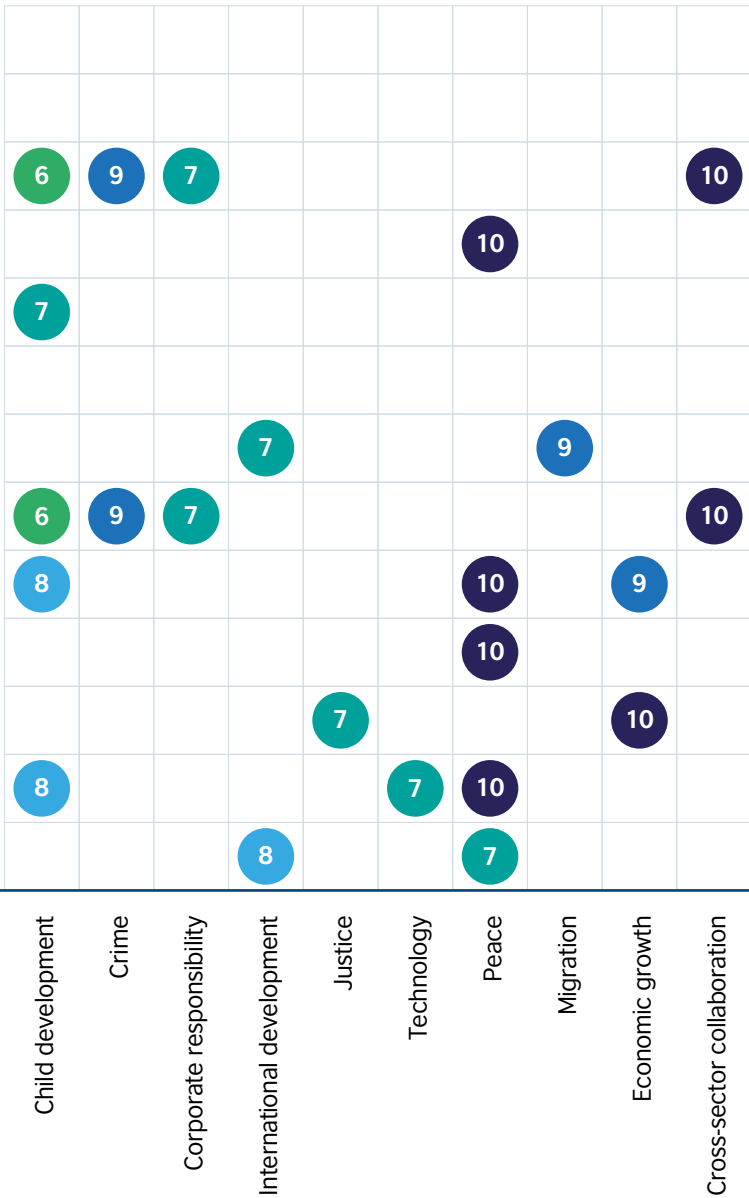
- Access to education
- Child development, children's rights
- Corporate responsibility
- Corruption
- Crime
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Democracy
- Demography and population change
- Disability rights
- Economic growth
- Economic inequality and poverty
- Education for women and girls
- Faith, interfaith dialogue and engagement
- Food and water
- Gender equality, women and girls
- Health
- Housing and homelessness
- Human rights
- International development
- Justice and the law
- Language education
- Literacy
- Migration, borders and refugees
- Peace, conflict and security
- Political leadership
- Rural issues and agriculture
- Skills and education for entrepreneurship
- Sustainability/climate change/environment
- Technology
- Terrorism
- Tolerance, cohesion and diversity
- Transnational co-operation
- Transport and/or infrastructure
- Urbanisation
- Youth issues, youth opportunities
- Other





# THE ISSUES YOUNG PEOPLE CARE ABOUT





## Which major global issue is of biggest concern to you?

### 2019 top ten global results

Access to education	12%
Skills and education for entrepreneurship	7%
Youth issues, youth opportunities	7%
Corruption	6%
Education for women and girls	5%
Sustainability, climate change and the environment	5%
Poverty and economic inequality	5%
Gender equality	4%
Human rights	4%
Health	4%

The 2019 results broadly follow the trends of our previous reports, with the makeup of the top ten unchanged: access to education continues as top priority, and women and girls’ access and rights remain in the top ten. It is striking to see the increased prominence of corruption and skills and education for entrepreneurship, which have both risen considerably in the rankings since 2018. Sustainability and climate change, while remaining high priority, moves from third to sixth place. Our applicants this year have a broader spread of policy priorities than in previous years, with only access to education (12 per cent) attracting double figures.





Child development																				
Crime																				
Corporate responsibility																				
International development																				
Justice																				
Technology																				
Peace																				
Migration																				
Economic growth																				
Cross-sector collaboration																				

### 2018 top ten global results

Access to education	31%
Youth issues, youth opportunities	20%
Sustainability, climate change and the environment	18%
Poverty and economic inequality	17%
Skills and education for entrepreneurship	17%
Gender equality	16%
Education for women and girls	15%
Human rights	14%
Health	14%
Corruption	13%

### 2017 top ten global results

Education	18%
Sustainability, climate change and the environment	16%
Youth opportunities	10%
Security	10%
Economic development	8%
Inequality and poverty	8%
Gender equality	7%
Tolerance and diversity	7%
Health	7%
Political leadership	6%

# EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT: ACCESS, INCLUSION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Education was once again the most popular policy area in 2019, continuing the research trend from 2017 onwards, when this study began. This becomes even more pronounced when we consider all the policy areas affiliated to education: access to education, skills and education for entrepreneurship, and education for women and girls.



## Access to education

As in previous years, access to education has taken first place in the wide variety of policy areas open to our applicants. It is notable, however, that this year the vote has been split more evenly among the policy areas, with 12 per cent of global participants choosing access to education in 2019 compared with 31 per cent in 2018. Access to education was, however, the most popular policy area in every country apart from Mexico, Canada and Kenya, with only Canada and Kenya placing this policy area below their top three priorities.



## Skills and education for entrepreneurship

Skills and education for entrepreneurship continues to climb in our applicants' estimations of important areas, placing second globally in 2019. This is striking in a global context of a 'youth bulge', rising youth unemployment and a reduced median age in many of the countries in which this programme operates: skills and enterprise are increasingly recognised as important needs for young people who face uncertainty in the labour market with often uneven access to vocational training. As in 2018, Nigeria and the wider African continent placed skills higher than other countries as a rule, although Indonesian applicants also placed skills and education for entrepreneurship in their top three priorities. Only four countries (UK, Mexico, Pakistan and Canada) placed this area outside their top ten.

# URSHIP



## Education for women and girls

Education for women and girls rose two places to become the fifth most popular global policy area, taking five per cent of applicants' votes. This prioritisation is, however, markedly different once we examine the country-level results. Pakistan placed education for women and girls an emphatic second in its list of priorities, with India choosing this as the fourth most popular policy. While Morocco, Poland, Egypt and Nigeria all considered education for women and girls to be their fifth most popular policy, the remaining countries saw this slipping further down the rankings, and the policy area did not feature in either Tunisia or Indonesia's top ten areas.



## Other education policy areas

Language education was featured far more prominently as a policy priority than in previous years, particularly in Tunisia, where it placed fifth, and Morocco and Egypt, where it placed fourth; Indonesia also sees language education in its top ten policy areas. Another policy area linked to education is literacy, which was particularly important to our Moroccan and Egyptian applicants, where it was the third most popular policy. Pakistan also identified literacy as a core policy priority, placing this sixth in their list of policy areas.

# COUNTRY BY COUNTRY

## TOP POLICY AREAS

	Most popular	Interesting findings
Canada	34% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment 27% – Economic inequality and poverty 21% – Gender equality, women and girls	Sustainability, climate change and the environment was the most popular policy area in Canada by a significant margin, the only country in the Future Leaders Connect network where this was the case.
Egypt	26% – Access to education 25% – Skills and education for entrepreneurship 24% – Literacy	Egyptians overwhelmingly chose education-related issues, with access to education, skills and education for entrepreneurship and literacy firmly filling the top three spaces. These were followed by language education and education for women and girls, clearly demonstrating the importance of education in the country.
India	34% – Access to education 27% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment 20% – Gender equality, women and girls	Gender equality placed above the global average in India, with sustainability, climate change and the environment chosen more frequently than in previous years.
Indonesia	36% – Access to education 19% – Skills and education for entrepreneurship 19% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment	Access to education was chosen by the largest proportion of applicants, far exceeding the second-place priority of skills and education for entrepreneurship.
Kenya	37% – Youth issues, youth opportunities 24% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment 23% – Corruption	Corruption was chosen far more than the global average in Kenya, and Kenya is the only country where youth issues placed first and at a significant margin compared with other areas. Kenya is also the only country besides Canada not to feature access to education in its top three priority areas, dramatically lower than the global average.
Mexico	30% – Economic inequality and poverty 30% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment 29% – Access to education	Economic inequality is positioned well above the global average in Mexico, taking first place ahead of sustainability, climate change and the environment. Access to education places third while skills sits outside the top ten priorities, the only one of our 13 countries for which this is the case.

	Most popular	Interesting findings
Morocco	<p>19% – Access to education</p> <p>11% – Skills and education for entrepreneurship</p> <p>11% – Literacy</p>	Morocco matches Egypt for policy priorities, with access to education, skills and education for entrepreneurship and literacy taking the top three spaces. Language education was chosen far more frequently than the global average.
Nigeria	<p>38% – Access to education</p> <p>30% – Skills and education for entrepreneurship</p> <p>24% – Youth issues, youth opportunities</p>	Access to education is a marked priority in Nigeria, with the highest percentage of applicants selecting it as one of their top three priorities from the greatest number of applicants (over 7,000). Skills and education for entrepreneurship is again a pressing priority followed by youth issues.
Pakistan	<p>33% – Access to education</p> <p>25% – Education for women and girls</p> <p>20% – Corruption</p>	Access to education and inclusive education featured prominently in Pakistan, with 58 per cent of all applicants choosing access to education and education for women and girls as two of their top three priorities. Terrorism placed far higher as a priority in Pakistan than seen in the global average – in fifth place.
Poland	<p>37% – Access to education</p> <p>22% – Political leadership</p> <p>21% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment</p>	Poland was the only country where political leadership placed in the top three policy priorities, exceeded only by access to education in popularity.
Tunisia	<p>13% – Access to education</p> <p>13% – Youth issues, youth opportunities</p> <p>10% – Skills and education for entrepreneurship</p>	Human rights and language education complete the top five priorities for Tunisia, where access to education and youth issues compete for first priority among our applicants' responses.
UK	<p>26% – Access to education</p> <p>26% – Economic inequality and poverty</p> <p>21% – Sustainability, climate change and the environment</p>	Economic inequality was much more popular than the global average, and there was a sharp increase in applicants concerned with sustainability, climate change and the environment over previous years.

# ADMIRED CURRENT GLOBAL LEADERS

	Global	Canada	Mexico	Morocco	Tunisia	Egypt	Kenya	Nigeria
01	Bill Gates 13%	Jacinda Ardern 7%	Malala Yousafzai 10%	Barack Obama 4%	Bill Gates 5%	Bill Gates 6%	Barack Obama 11%	Aliko Dangote 13%
02	Barack Obama 12%	Angela Merkel 5%	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 7%	Angela Merkel 2%	Justin Trudeau 5%	Angela Merkel 3%	Bill Gates 5%	Bill Gates 7%
03	Jacinda Ardern 11%	Barack Obama 5%	Barack Obama 4%	Bill Gates 2%	Barack Obama 3%	Barack Obama 3%	Nelson Mandela 2%	Nelson Mandela 6%
04	Nelson Mandela 11%	Michelle Obama 4%	Elon Musk 4%	Jacinda Ardern 2%	Angela Merkel 3%	Steve Jobs 2%	Michelle Obama 2%	Tony Elumelu 6%
05	Malala Yousafzai 8%	Bill Gates 4%	Bill Gates 3%	Malala Yousafzai 1%	Elon Musk 2%	Justin Trudeau 2%	Raila Odinga 2%	Barack Obama 4%
06	Elon Musk 3%	Malala Yousafzai 4%	Angela Merkel 3%	Justin Trudeau 1%	Oprah Winfrey 2%	Elon Musk 2%	Jack Ma 1%	Donald Trump 4%
07	Angela Merkel 3%	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 4%	Michelle Obama 3%	Jack Ma 1%	Jack Ma 2%	Jacinda Ardern 2%	Theresa May 1%	Mark Zuckerberg 3.5%
08	Donald Trump 2%	Justin Trudeau 3%	Jacinda Ardern 2%	Muhammad Yunus 1%	Theresa May 1%	Nelson Mandela 2%	Elon Musk 1%	Michelle Obama 3.3%
09	Justin Trudeau 2%	Elon Musk 3%	Justin Trudeau 2%	King Mohammed 1%	Michelle Obama 1%	Malala Yousafzai 1%	Paul Kagame 1%	Oprah Winfrey 3%
10	Michelle Obama 1%	Oprah Winfrey 1%	Muhammad Yunus 1%	Nour Mahmoudi 1%	Steve Jobs 1%	Naguib Sawiris 1%	Richard Branson 1%	Theresa May 2%

**India      Pakistan      Indonesia      Poland      UK**

Narendra Modi 16%	Imran Khan 35%	Joko Widodo 16%	Bill Gates 7%	Jacinda Ardern 6%
Bill Gates 6%	Abdul Sattar Edhi 6%	Bill Gates 9%	Elon Musk 6%	Bill Gates 5%
Barack Obama 6%	Bill Gates 4%	Barack Obama 6%	Donald Trump 3%	Barack Obama 3%
Jacinda Ardern 3%	Justin Trudeau 4%	Jack Ma 4%	Angela Merkel 3%	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 3%
Ratan Tata 3%	Nelson Mandela 4%	Elon Musk 4%	Malala Yousafzai 3%	Malala Yousafzai 3%
Elon Musk 3%	Jacinda Ardern 3%	Jacinda Ardern 3%	Barack Obama 2%	Greta Thunberg 2%
Azim Premji 3%	Malala Yousafzai 3%	Sri Mulyani 3%	Jack Ma 2%	Michelle Obama 2%
Kailash Satyarthi 3%	Elon Musk 3%	Sandiaga Uno 2%	Lech Wałęsa 2%	Elon Musk 2%
Malala Yousafzai 2%	Barack Obama 3%	Susi Pudjiastuti 2%	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 1%	Nicola Sturgeon 2%
Jack Ma 2%	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 2%	Nelson Mandela 1%	Xi Jinping 1%	Angela Merkel 1%

Applicants were asked to name the global leader they most admired. Bill Gates and Barack Obama were the clear winners, this being the first time that Bill Gates has topped our poll for this research. Jacinda Ardern took third place, with Nelson Mandela moving to fourth place, two places lower than his representation in our 2018 data. It is striking that a non-governmental leader has been chosen as the most admired global leader for the first time. Of our 12 countries, India, Pakistan and Indonesia all placed their current political leaders in first place while Nigeria chose a local influential businessman. Our remaining eight countries placed leaders from overseas in their number one spot.

**2019 top five global results**

Bill Gates	<b>13%</b>
Barack Obama	<b>12%</b>
Jacinda Ardern	<b>11%</b>
Nelson Mandela	<b>11%</b>
Malala Yousafzai	<b>8%</b>

**2018 top five global results**

Barack Obama	<b>14%</b>
Nelson Mandela	<b>11%</b>
Justin Trudeau	<b>4%</b>
Angela Merkel	<b>4%</b>
Mahatma Gandhi	<b>3%</b>

# MOST ADMIRED LEADER THROUGHOUT HISTORY

	Global	Canada	Mexico	Morocco	Tunisia	Egypt	Kenya	Nigeria
01	Nelson Mandela 18%	Nelson Mandela 18%	Martin Luther King 11%	Prophet Muhammad 6%	Nelson Mandela 10%	Nelson Mandela 10%	Nelson Mandela 27%	Nelson Mandela 33%
02	Martin Luther King 11%	Martin Luther King 6%	Nelson Mandela 9%	Nelson Mandela 6%	Prophet Muhammad 6%	Mahatma Gandhi 9%	Barack Obama 8%	Martin Luther King 7%
03	Barack Obama 8%	Abraham Lincoln 4%	Winston Churchill 6%	Martin Luther King 6%	Martin Luther King 5%	Prophet Muhammad 4%	Wangari Maathai 8%	Barack Obama 7%
04	Prophet Muhammad 5%	Lester B. Pearson 4%	Mahatma Gandhi 7%	Mahatma Gandhi 3%	Mahatma Gandhi 5%	Martin Luther King 3%	Martin Luther King 6%	Abraham Lincoln 5%
05	Mahatma Gandhi 4%	Mahatma Gandhi 4%	Margaret Thatcher 7%	Abraham Lincoln 2%	Abraham Lincoln 4%	Winston Churchill 2%	Thomas Sankara 3%	Obafemi Awolowo 3%
06	Abraham Lincoln 3%	Winston Churchill 3%	Benito Juarez 2%	Kofi Annan 2%	Winston Churchill 3%	Lee Kuan Yew 2%	Abraham Lincoln 3%	Winston Churchill 3%
07	Winston Churchill 2%	Tommy Douglas 3%	Simone de Beauvoir 2%	Barack Obama 2%	Habib Bourguiba 2%	Alexander the Great 2%	Mahatma Gandhi 3%	Nnamdi Azikiwe 2%
08	Margaret Thatcher 1%	Barack Obama 2%	Emiliano Zapata 2%	Steve Jobs 2%	Vladimir Lenin 1%	Abraham Lincoln 1%	Kofi Annan 2%	Mahatma Gandhi 2%
09	Kofi Annan 1%	Viola Desmond 2%	Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz 1%	Winston Churchill 1%	Alexander the Great 1%	George Washington 1%	Winston Churchill 1%	Bill Clinton 2%
10	Alexander the Great 1%	Margaret Thatcher 1%	Alejandro Magno 1%	Tim Cook 1%	George Washington 1%	Queen Elizabeth II 1%	Queen Elizabeth II 1%	Donald Trump 1%



India	Pakistan	Indonesia	Poland	UK
Mahatma Gandhi 19%	Prophet Muhammad 22%	Soekarno 18%	Margaret Thatcher 7%	Nelson Mandela 15%
Nelson Mandela 10%	Muhammad Ali Jinnah 20%	Prophet Muhammad 12%	Nelson Mandela 6%	Martin Luther King 4%
Abraham Lincoln 3%	Nelson Mandela 12%	Nelson Mandela 7%	Martin Luther King 5%	Barack Obama 3%
Mother Teresa 3%	Imran Khan 6%	Mahatma Gandhi 7%	Mahatma Gandhi 5%	Mahatma Gandhi 3%
Martin Luther King 2%	Abraham Lincoln 6%	Abraham Lincoln 7%	Pope John Paul II 5%	Emmeline Pankhurst 2%
Indira Gandhi 2%	Abdul Sattar Edhi 6%	Barack Obama 6%	Winston Churchill 4%	Clement Attlee 2%
APJ Abdul Kalam 2%	Benazir Bhutto 5%	Joko Widodo 6%	Napoleon Bonaparte 3%	Winston Churchill 1%
Jawaharlal Nehru 1%	Winston Churchill 5%	Martin Luther King 6%	Barack Obama 3%	Abraham Lincoln 1%
Winston Churchill 1%	Martin Luther King 5%	Winston Churchill 4%	Dalai Lama 1%	Kofi Annan 1%
Margaret Thatcher 1%	Allama Iqbal 4%	Margaret Thatcher 3%	Alexander the Great 1%	Mother Teresa 1%

This year, applicants were also asked to name the leader they most admired throughout the course of history. This has unearthed some surprising similarities between countries, with Alexander the Great featuring in the top ten historical leaders in three of our 12 countries: Tunisia, Egypt and Poland. Abraham Lincoln was another popular choice, with all countries apart from Poland and Mexico placing him in their top ten selection. Nelson Mandela was the most admired leader across the broadest range of countries, taking first place in six of our 12 surveyed countries. Martin Luther King was the most popular second choice (three out of 12 countries), with the Prophet Muhammad also featuring in second place in two countries – and first in both Morocco and Pakistan.

Winston Churchill was the most admired UK leader, appearing in the top ten in all 12 countries. Margaret Thatcher was considered the most admired leader among our Polish applicants, receiving seven per cent of the vote.

# CONCLUSION

The main focus of approximately 42,500 young leaders applying for Future Leaders Connect in 2017, 2018 and 2019 has been access to education, youth opportunities, sustainability, climate change and the environment, with an increasing focus on skills and education for entrepreneurship, which has risen in importance for our applicants over this three-year period. This reveals a clear set of priorities for this generation of young leaders across a broad geographical range: with 12 countries represented across four continents, the similarities between young people in these contexts are far more striking than their differences. Young leaders may find opportunities and hope in the discovery that their global peers share their priorities in spite of seemingly different local contexts.

## Methodology

Respondents were self-identified future policy leaders, meaning that these results are not necessarily representative of what the general youth populations perceive to be priorities. Applicants were aged 18–35 and were required to have IELTS level 6 to participate in the programme. Applications in 2019 came from 12 of the 13 participating countries: as noted in the introduction, data from the USA is not included here as they did not run an open application process for the programme. Numbers of applications received by country (in descending order) were: Nigeria (7,142), Indonesia (2,715), Pakistan (1845), Kenya (875), India (643), the UK (438), Egypt (372), Mexico (352), Morocco (289), Tunisia (199), Canada (196) and Poland (87).

Applications were promoted through websites, social media and youth networks, with the profile of the programme further raised using press, television and radio.

In two countries (Egypt and the USA) applications were promoted through particular networks and nominated.

As has been mentioned, Nigeria accounted for the largest number of applications (47 per cent of our global applicants), suggesting that there is high demand among young people for leadership development opportunities, interest in policy issues and opportunities to engage with the UK policymaking context.

To allow for the varying number of applications by country, the data in this report has been weighted to provide a representative global picture of views when aggregated across countries. The weighting gives equal importance to responses from each of the countries regardless of the number of applications received.





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