BRITISH COUNCIL

GENERATION RISING

The global priorities of 11,000 aspiring young leaders

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About us

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

About Future Leaders Connect

Future Leaders Connect is the British Council's new global network for emerging policy leaders, enabling outstanding young leaders from around the world to develop their policy expertise, make valuable connections and discuss major global policy challenges with key leaders and influencers.

Launched in 2017, for the first year the scheme was open to young people aged 18-35 from 11 countries around the world: Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia, the UK and the USA. Participating emerging leaders will be supported by the British Council to join a long-term peer network that will help unleash their potential to lead positive change in their countries.

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FOREWORD

Sir Ciarán Devane
Chief Executive, British Council

Tomorrow's leaders will have to work in a very different way from their predecessors. In this era of rapid globalisation, national challenges increasingly spill over borders – and will impact future generations.

Global warming, migration and international terrorism are just a few pressing examples – and they are not disappearing any time soon.

In this context, it is encouraging that thousands of aspiring policymakers from around the world who we surveyed have consistently called for international action on cross-border issues, with education and sustainability featuring as their top two priorities for global change.

These 18 to 35 year-olds applied for our Future Leaders Connect initiative, which aims to identify and connect the leaders of tomorrow – those who will be at the forefront of future global change. Through this experience, the opportunities and insights they will gain will help to support them in their careers, create a network of mutual influence and unleash their potential.

We received almost 11,000 applications from the 11 countries invited to take part in the first year of Future Leaders Connect. From these the top 50 were selected to come to the UK for an immersive programme of advanced policy and leadership training and experience. But we believe the information gathered from all the applicants offers a rare opportunity to learn about this generation of leaders: their ideas, aspirations and concerns for the future. We are also pleased to be planning a global network for all of the young people who applied with an online training and development offer.

As well as giving their views on key global challenges, we also asked about young policy leaders' views about the characteristics of leaders and leadership that they admire. Particularly worth noting is the fact that the most highly valued leadership quality across the 11 countries is 'collaboration and teamwork'. The traditional military metaphor of leadership – the individual leader demonstrating personal courage by heading towards danger and attempting to inspire others to do the same – is beginning to look very outdated.

I think that is an encouraging development, and it tells us a great deal about changing perceptions of effective leaders.

New and uncertain times demand new models of leadership and longer-term priorities. I hope this publication offers a glimpse of what young policymakers want that future leadership to look like, and some of the qualities of those who will bring it about.

Fig. 1 Future Leaders Connect applicant countries

INTRODUCTION

Future Leaders Connect is the British Council's new global network for emerging policy leaders. It enables outstanding young leaders from around the world to develop their policy expertise, make valuable connections and discuss major contemporary global challenges with key leaders and influencers.

Launched in 2017, for the first year the scheme was open to young people aged 18-35 from 11 countries around the world: Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia, the UK and the USA. Participating emerging leaders will be supported by the British Council to join a long-term peer network that will help unleash their potential to make positive change in their countries.

The British Council received almost 11,000 applications for the first year of Future Leaders Connect. As part of the application process, the aspiring leaders were asked a range of questions about their vision and priorities for global change, and what good leadership means to them, providing a blue-print for the skills and characteristics that these young people hope to see from those who lead them now and in the future.

This publication summarises the insights gained from three aspects of the application data: the visions for global change of aspiring policy leaders, their perceptions and expectations of effective leadership, and their views of their own skills and opportunities for development as leaders.

> " Leadership means a way of life, of improving the environment, of achieving better social conditions of growth.
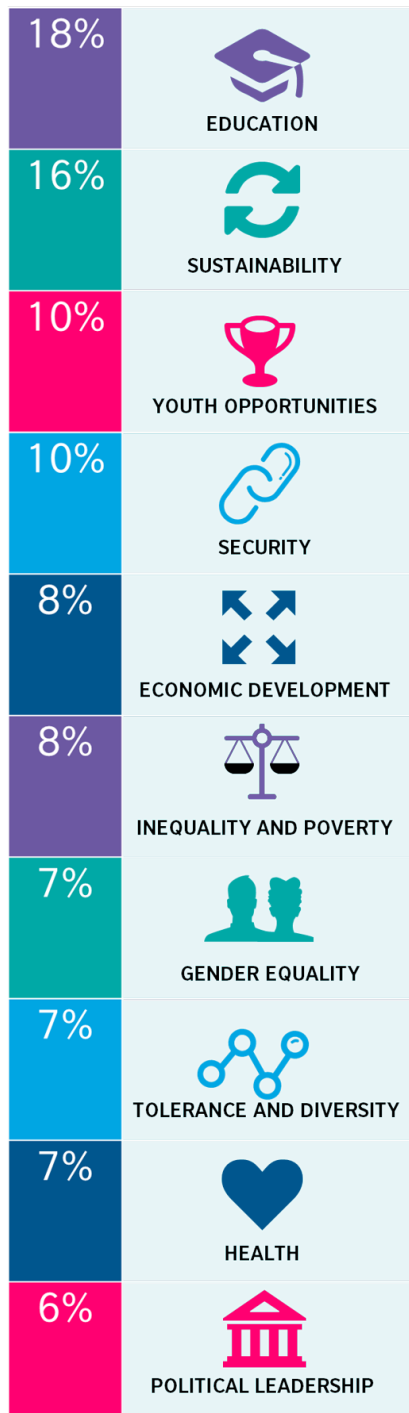>
> - Response from Mexico

> " Good leadership means being able to communicate effectively and being able to listen to different views including opposite ideas to yours. A good leader should be flexible to accommodate all people within a group.
>
> - Response from Egypt

Fig. 2 Top ten policy priorities across all global responses

18%	**EDUCATION**
16%	**SUSTAINABILITY**
10%	**YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES**
10%	**SECURITY**
8%	**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
8%	**INEQUALITY AND POVERTY**
7%	**GENDER EQUALITY**
7%	**TOLERANCE AND DIVERSITY**
7%	**HEALTH**
6%	**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**

GLOBAL PRIORITIES FOR POLICY CHANGE

Applicants to Future Leaders Connect were challenged with the task of setting out a compelling vision for the future - one that identifies the most pressing global challenge and sets out their proposed solution.

Their responses spanned 29 themes, but particularly striking is the similarity in global priorities of emerging leaders across all of the participating countries. 'Education' and 'sustainability, climate change and the environment' were both among the top five priorities across all countries. 'Addressing poverty and inequality', and 'promoting gender equality' were both top ten issues in ten of 11 countries. 'Economic development' and 'tolerance and diversity' were in the top ten themes for nine countries, whilst 'conflict resolution and peace', and 'transnational co-operation' featured in eight countries as a top ten priority.

Education was the most prominent global vision, featuring in 18 per cent of applications and falling in the top three themes for ten of the 11 countries. Of these responses, many referred to the need for better education provision for children and young people, but a notable proportion (12 per cent of all visions relating to education) specifically referred to education for girls and women – particularly in responses from Pakistan and Nigeria. Literacy accounted for another eight per cent and was particularly cited by participants in Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan and Morocco. The other major sub-category identified in responses was education around entrepreneurship and skills.
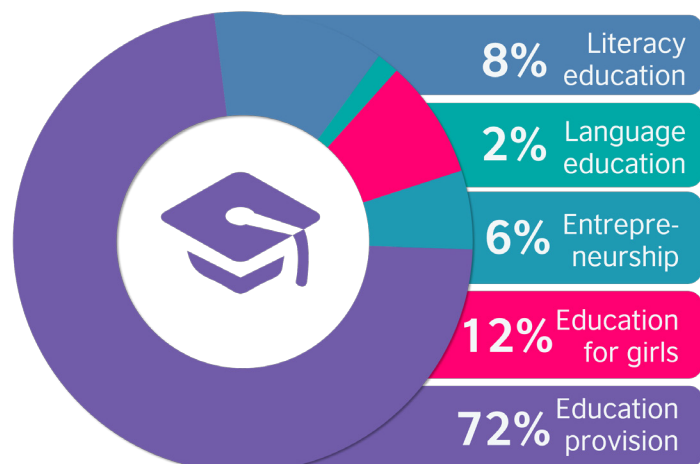
8% Literacy education

2% Language education

6% Entrepreneurship

12% Education for girls

72% Education provision

Fig. 3 Breakdown of 1895 visions on 'Education' by sub-themes

> " Education is the most important resource a country can offer. It's not only important for a career and a good lifestyle, but also it is what contributes morally to the population. A good education is important for all to make the right life choices.
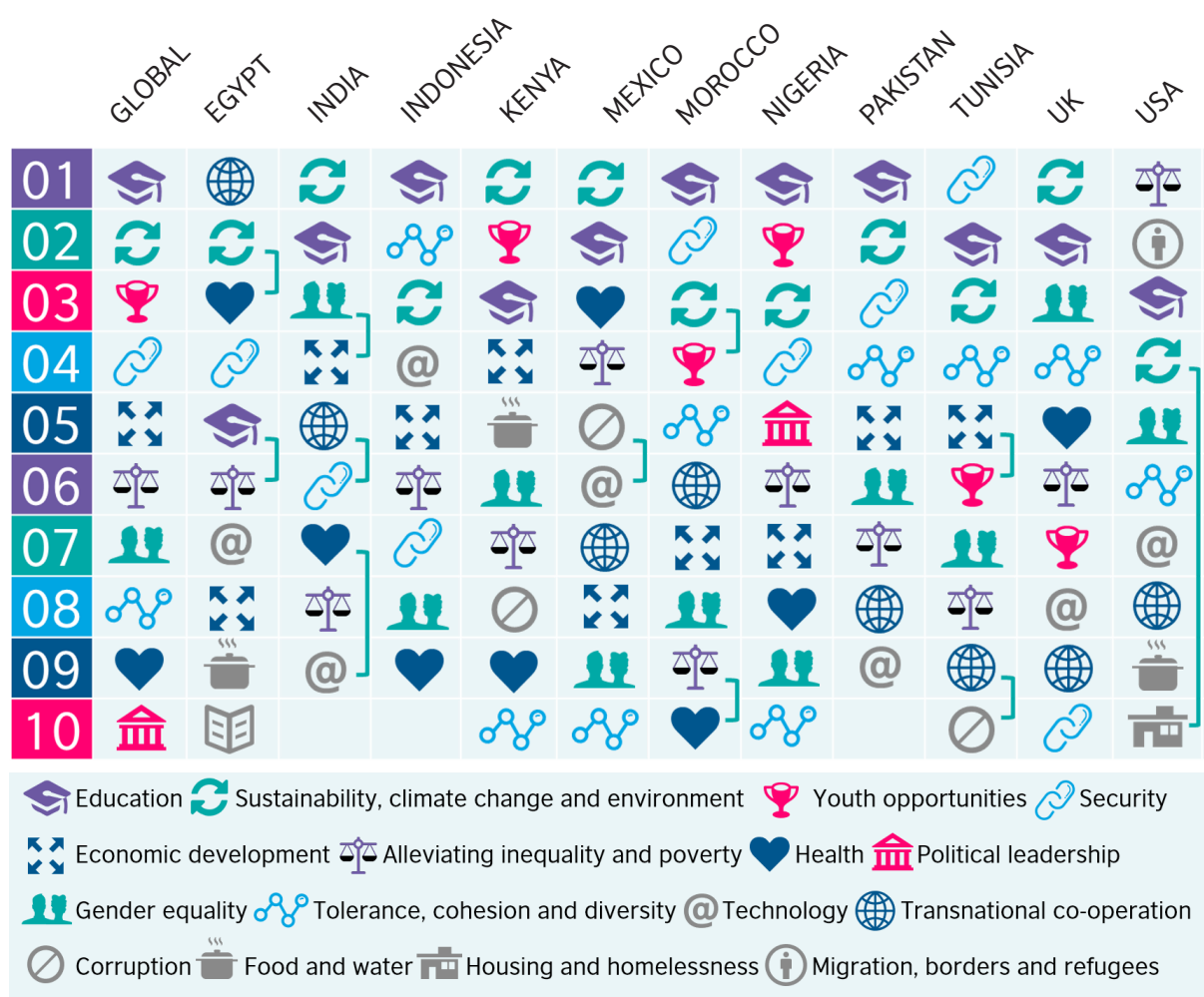>
> - Response from India

Priorities for policy change by country

	GLOBAL	EGYPT	INDIA	INDONESIA	KENYA	MEXICO	MOROCCO	NIGERIA	PAKISTAN	TUNISIA	UK	USA
01												
02												
03												
04												
05												
06												
07												
08												
09												
10												

Legend:
- Education
- Sustainability, climate change and environment
- Youth opportunities
- Security
- Economic development
- Alleviating inequality and poverty
- Health
- Political leadership
- Gender equality
- Tolerance, cohesion and diversity
- Technology
- Transnational co-operation
- Corruption
- Food and water
- Housing and homelessness
- Migration, borders and refugees

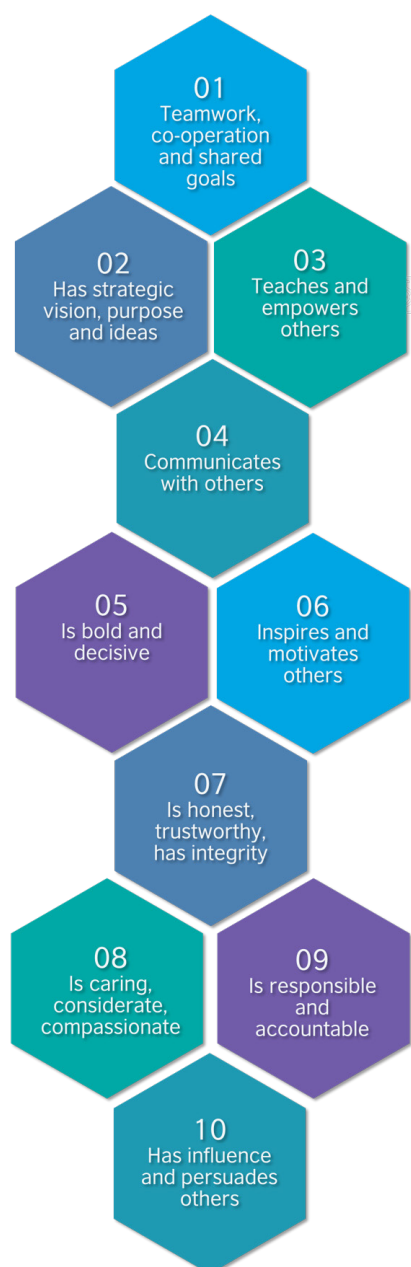**Fig. 4 Priorities for policy change by country**

'Sustainability, climate change and the environment' was the second most frequently chosen issue. It featured in 16 per cent of all the participants' visions for change, encompassing the threat of climate change and ideas around sustainable and renewable energy solutions. Given the huge impacts that climate change is likely have on future societies and their leaders this should come as no surprise. Decisions made today, such as the next steps with implementing the 2016 Paris Agreement on Climate Change will have an immense impact on the extent of the challenges leaders of the future will face.

Although there was variation in how highly each theme was prioritised in each country, fittingly for this globalised generation it is notable that only three per cent of responses were based on issues outside of the 29 themes identified as most important. In a world where social, economic, and environmental challenges increasingly transcend national boundaries, the alignment of priorities for aspiring future leaders is encouraging and suggests huge potential for collaborative responses to major shared challenges.

There were, however, some notable differences between countries. 'Youth opportunities' – the need to build capacity and participation amongst young people – was a top ten priority in five countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia and the UK), perhaps reflecting demographic trends and the key challenges facing young people in these places. In Kenya, Nigeria and Tunisia, the median population age is between 18 and 21 with youth unemployment proportionately higher than in many other parts of the world, whilst in the UK, millennials are frequently cited as the first generation to be less well off than their parents[1].

Responses relating to health were more likely to specifically cite the prevention of disease (including HIV and AIDS) in Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan. 'Addressing corruption' featured more prominently in Kenya, Mexico and Tunisia, whilst priorities relating to 'rural and agriculture' in India, and 'human rights' in Egypt, were disproportionately higher than in other countries.

EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Fig.5 Most frequently mentioned characteristics of a good leader across all global responses

01 Teamwork, co-operation and shared goals

02 Has strategic vision, purpose and ideas

03 Teaches and empowers others

04 Communicates with others

05 Is bold and decisive

06 Inspires and motivates others

07 Is honest, trustworthy, has integrity

08 Is caring, considerate, compassionate

09 Is responsible and accountable

10 Has influence and persuades others

Future Leaders Connect applicants were asked to define the characteristics that they saw as being important to 'good leadership'. Nineteen groupings of characteristics were identified from responses, relating to three broader categories: 'hard' skills or technical functions of leadership; personal qualities or traits; and behavioural competencies demonstrated through a leader's interactions with others.

There was a striking degree of agreement between participants with priorities being notably similar. In all 11 countries, 'working with a team' – including mentions of teamwork, co-operation and shared goals – was the most frequently mentioned characteristic. Definitions of good leadership which specifically mentioned the need for a leader to have or to articulate a 'vision and strategic purpose' featured in the top three for every country. The need for leaders to teach, empower and support others to learn resonated across all countries. In contrast, definitions based on the knowledge and experience of a leader, and 'hard skills' such as management and professional skills, were given a lower priority.

A recent review on different theories of leadership, commissioned by the British Council from the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership to inform the design of Future Leaders Connect, emphasised a growing trend in the academic literature focusing upon team-oriented, inclusive concepts of leadership in contrast to top-down, command-and-control models[2]. The perspectives of Future Leaders Connect applicants support these concepts and further underscore the need for a leader to motivate and cultivate shared purpose among team members. The review also noted that 'good' leadership should ultimately be defined in relation to the external context in which leaders are expected to navigate. The emphasis from respondents on the role of a leader to have a strategic vision and purpose supports this recommendation.

These new findings not only show that collaborative leadership is more highly valued by these aspiring young leaders than other approaches; it also shows that for many, it is impossible to separate the concept of leadership from a leader's relationship with others. Perhaps surprisingly, young people from younger democracies also define leadership in this way despite having grown up in a more hierarchical or autocratic political climate. The emphasis on teamwork and collaboration also explains why other skills which are conducive to good teamwork – for example communication and inclusivity – were also frequently mentioned.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the role of a leader to teach and support others gives us an interesting insight into the learning expectations of young leaders, who clearly value opportunities to learn from other leaders, and perhaps suggests that they see their role as potential future leaders with a responsibility to 'give back'.
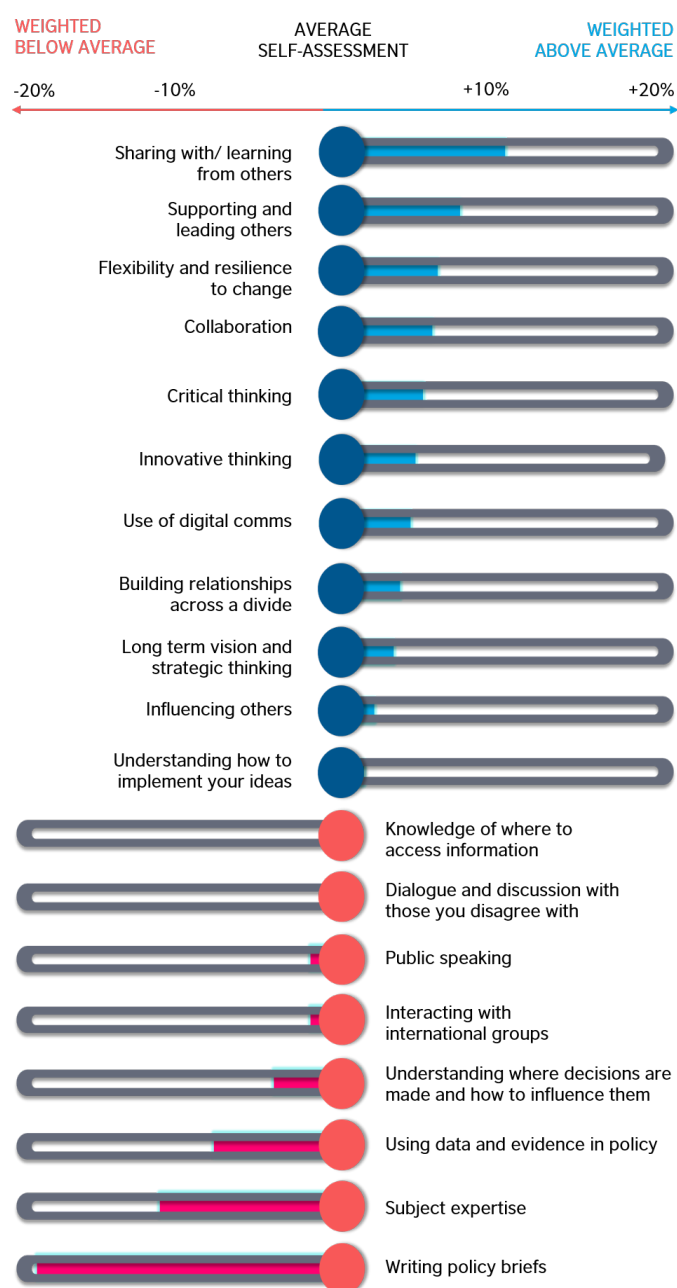
CONFIDENCE IN PERSONAL SKILLS

WEIGHTED BELOW AVERAGE   AVERAGE SELF-ASSESSMENT   **WEIGHTED ABOVE AVERAGE**

-20%   -10%   +10%   +20%

Sharing with/ learning from others

Supporting and leading others

Flexibility and resilience to change

Collaboration

Critical thinking

Innovative thinking

Use of digital comms

Building relationships across a divide

Long term vision and strategic thinking

Influencing others

Understanding how to implement your ideas

Knowledge of where to access information

Dialogue and discussion with those you disagree with

Public speaking

Interacting with international groups

Understanding where decisions are made and how to influence them

Using data and evidence in policy

Subject expertise

Writing policy briefs

Fig. 6 Percentage deviation from average self-assessment score across all global responses

Applicants were also asked to assess their own skills across 19 areas relating to communicating and influencing others, policy and advocacy, and innovation and analysis. Whilst of course self-assessments may not be accurate representations of actual ability, comparing each individual's average self-assessment score to their score on each area provided an indication of respondents' confidence in some areas in comparison to others.

Once again, the top ten most confident skills are markedly consistent, as are the three least confident skills. In ten of the 11 countries, applicants were most confident with regards to sharing and learning from others. Other interpersonal skills such as collaboration and supporting or leading others were also ranked highly. In eight of the countries, the 'ability to put new skills into practice' was scored highly.

The weakest skills are identified as 'writing policy briefs', 'subject expertise' and 'using data and evidence in policy', which likely reflects the career stage of many of these young respondents. In a similar vein, 'access to influential people or organisations' was consistently ranked the lowest across countries in terms of personal opportunities.

For organisations seeking to support and nurture the leaders of tomorrow, these insights are helpful. It is notable that the qualities these young people expect from leaders – collaborating, leading others, and sharing, for example – are those in which they are most confident themselves.

However, this is not to say that technical skills are less important – these young leaders will need support in developing the tools required to deliver the change that they envision on a global scale. Leadership programmes in these countries will need to incorporate training in the use of data and evidence, as well as guidance on where and how policy decisions are made at the global and national level. They will need to support young leaders with how to present their policy ideas and analysis in writing and orally.

CONCLUSION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MIGRATION   LITERACY   **EDUCATION** GIRLS

SUSTAINABILITY

CLIMATE CHANGE   TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

ENVIRONMENT   YOUTH   PEACE   REFUGEES

TOLERANCE   INEQUALITY   SECURITY

POVERTY   RIGHTS   FOOD AND WATER

COHESION   HEALTH

DIVERSITY   POLITICAL LEADERSHIP   GENDER EQUALITY

Fig. 7 Most frequently mentioned priorities for global change

This snapshot into the priorities and perspectives of almost 11,000 aspiring future leaders provides important insight into the shape of future global policy leadership. It is encouraging that, across the world, young people who aspire to be the next generation of leaders have what appear to be extremely coherent and aligned priorities for global change. Furthermore, their highest priorities – education and the environment – are those which look beyond immediate challenges and have long-term implications for the generations to come.

Most encouraging is that these young people consistently choose collaboration over coercion when it comes to 'good' leadership. Despite the mixed political responses that globalisation has provoked worldwide, this particular audience is united in its preference for the constructive approaches of teamwork, dialogue and co-operation – approaches that bring people together, rather than keep them apart. This has strong implications for the future of global and local policy, workplace models, and citizen participation – just a few areas where legitimacy and trust are crucial.

What does this mean for leaders, both current and aspiring? Perhaps it suggests that to engage this generation, leadership style should be cooperative and communicative, be unafraid to demonstrate clear vision and purpose, and focus on empowering those around them. Interventions to support and empower emerging leaders might wish to harness this collaborative spirit, but also focus skills development around areas such as use of data and evidence, identifying where power lies and how to achieve change, subject expertise and international opportunities.

The fact that these applicants both identify as 'leaders' and share a positive vision for the future of global policymaking is an encouraging sign of things to come. It will be their generation that are at the forefront of responding to many of the current and future global challenges, and having a shared analysis of these issues and a joint vision for the future is a great place to start.

"
Leadership for me is the ability to capture the hearts and minds of a group of people and leading them with a vision that they understand and act on… someone who is a team player, who takes the time to understand the motivations of the group of people which they are trying to lead.

- Response from the UK

> **"** Leadership is the ability to see a problem and be the solution. So many people are willing to talk about problems, but not many can see the problem or challenge and rise to it. It takes a leader to truly see a problem as a challenge and want to drive toward solving it. It is being open and authentic, helping to lift others up and working towards a common mission.
>
> - Response from Nigeria

> **"** Leadership is an ability to lead, facilitate, listen, elaborate an issue, empower and encourage other people in common goals. Good leadership is a person who is able to become an example for others, is able to take an initiative in doing something and has good facilitating skills.
>
> - Response from Indonesia

References

[1] Ipsos MORI (2017) *Millennial myths and realities*
[2] University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (2017) *Global Definitions of Leadership and Theories of Leadership Development: Literature Review*

Methodology

The analysis of 10,755 responses was conducted by a research team at Common Vision (CoVi) using the below methodology.

Global vision thematic analysis: Common Vision conducted an inductive analysis of an open text question (limit 500 words) put to all the applicants of the Future Leaders Connect Programme: 'Please tell us about one major global change you would like to see over the next five years. How will this impact your country?' A preliminary inductive analysis identified 29 themes. All responses were then manually coded, seeking to identify the main thematic substance of the statement – what the respondent saw as the most important area to address through global change – rather than all mentions of a keyword or where an issue was mentioned contextually. Multiple themes were applied to some responses which mentioned two or more main themes. Themes were calculated per country and globally on a non-weighted basis.

Perceptions of leadership keyword analysis: Common Vision conducted an inductive analysis using responses to the open text question (limit 400 words), 'What does leadership mean to you? What are the characteristics of "good leadership" or "bad leadership"?' Using the 1,000 most frequently used keywords in each of the country samples, a manual analysis identified 19 keyword 'groupings' each consisting of approximately 20 indicative words. Mentions of indicative words (removing duplicate mentions of the same word within one response) were calculated per country.

Confidence in personal skills and opportunities: The programme application process included a set of questions asking applicants to provide a self-assessment on 19 pre-defined skills areas, answering on a scale of 1 (no or little skill) to 5 (very skilled in this area). Candidates were assured their responses would not comprise part of their application. Self-assessment scores on each category were weighted in relation to each individual's average score, in order to indicate confidence on each skillset in relation to overall confidence.

Acknowledgements

covi

[ˈcom-mon visˈion]

About Common Vision

Common Vision (CoVi) is an independent think tank with a mission to inspire civic engagement and policy understanding amongst the millennial generation. Our core team has expertise in research techniques as well as extensive experience of convening discussion and digital engagement. We extend our in-house capabilities with crowdsourced deliberative policymaking methods which draw on the wisdom and agency of civil society.

www.covi.org.uk

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