

# **On-line Survey with 18-25 Year-olds: What Matters to Them?**

## **Overview and Key Findings of Survey Results**

**Nandini Saxena  
Public Involvement Network**

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Prepared by Nandini Saxena

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## Introduction

The on-line survey forms part of a larger CPRN project, to engage young Canadians aged 18-25 in a national conversation on policy issues of importance to them.<sup>1</sup> To help guide the project, CPRN struck an Advisory Committee with a diversity of young leaders and individuals who work with young people. As an initial step at its first meeting, held in December 2004, the Committee identified policy ideas they felt were important and interesting to young people, drawing on their experiences as young adults or their work with young adults. CPRN then synthesized and grouped their ideas under the following six broad themes:

1. Identity
2. Opportunities
3. Our Natural and Urban World
4. Health
5. Injustice
6. Becoming Active Citizens

Responding to the Committee's recommendation to test their ideas with a group of young people aged 18-25, an on-line survey was designed to: (1) find out to what extent the proposed themes and related issue statements resonate with young people, and (2) explore which other common themes and issues of interest they would identify. The Students Commission and TakingITGlobal provided support to CPRN on the development of the survey and hosted the survey on their Web sites. (Both organizations are represented on the Advisory Committee).

## Key Findings

Respondents rated "becoming active citizens" most highly as "more important" at 87%. This was closely followed by 84% of survey respondents rating "health" as "more important". The last four themes were rated as follows:

- 81% rated "opportunities" as "more important";
- 79% rated "injustice" as "more important",
- 74% rated "our natural and urban world" as "more important"; and
- "identity" was rated by 65% of survey respondents as being "more important".

The following table presents the top-rated issue statements that participants felt were "more important" within each theme, and the percentage rating that participants assigned to each issue statement as being "more important". In the right-hand column, participants' comments and questions on each of the six themes are provided.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the broader project, please see page 4.

Top-Rated Issue Statement by Theme	Ratings	Participant Comment by Theme
<p><b>Identity</b>            “I believe that stable and supportive relationships with family and friends are very important to my sense of identity and self-confidence.”</p>	88%	<p><i>“How can we instil a sense of self worth/self confidence in young people that will free them to explore their own identities and uniqueness?”</i>            (22 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>            “I am concerned about the lack of opportunity to get a good education and the implications this has for our future. Tuition rates in colleges and universities are so high, and competition to get accepted into schools is so great that many young people cannot pursue an education. And many who do get in have a huge debt burden to deal with after graduation.”</p>	91%	<p><i>“What is the government doing to help more young people afford university? Why do corporations get tax cuts while funding for post-secondary education goes down?”</i>            (20 year-old woman, Ontario, The Students Commission survey)</p>
<p><b>Our Natural and Urban World</b>            “I am concerned about protecting our natural world, having clean air and clean water and taking care of those species that can't speak for themselves, including our future generations.”</p>	92%	<p><i>“I am concerned that sustainable development is not integrated into the Canadian school curriculum. I want all youth to be aware of their impact on the environment so that they can make informed choices about their behavioural and consumption habits.”</i>            (23 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)</p>
<p><b>Health</b>            “I am concerned about healthy, sexual activity for me and my peers. They are such a part of our lives and yet there are so many STD's out there.”</p>	83%	<p><i>“I am concerned with the lack of health education for my peers and younger generations in key topics such as nutrition, exercise and sexuality.”</i>            (23 year-old woman, Alberta, TakingITGlobal survey)</p>
<p><b>Injustice</b>            “I am concerned about the poverty that I see around me and that exists throughout the world.”</p>	93%	<p><i>“Young people should be involved in helping the poor and hungry, both in our country and others. ...”</i>            (20 year-old woman, Ontario,</p>

Top-Rated Issue Statement by Theme	Ratings	Participant Comment by Theme
		TakingITGlobal survey)
<p><b>Becoming Active Citizens</b>            “In the most recent elections, the only issue about young adults was our declining voter participation. If people are serious about re-engaging youth in the democratic process and reversing the decline, we need to look at the issues that underlie our disengagement and take action to address them.”</p>	85%	<p>“Are we taken seriously? ... The criticism received about our voting records say one thing: give us something to vote for that will affect us young Canadians.”            (24 year-old man, Newfoundland, TakingITGlobal survey)</p>

For detailed information about the on-line survey results, please see the Appendix – *Detailed Results of an On-line Survey with 18-25 Year-olds* – also available on the CPRN Web site.

**Project Background**

In celebration of its tenth anniversary, CPRN is planning a project to bring the voices of young adults into Canada’s national conversation about policy issues of importance to them. The low turnout of young Canadians in elections is a prime example. Engaging young Canadians on what kind of Canada they want promises to shed important light on how to develop more responsive policies and political processes. The broad theme of the project is: what kind of Canada do young people want and what roles do they want to play in realizing that vision. This is a critical issue as many young Canadians are disaffected from the political process.

It is anticipated that the project will bring together a group of 18-25 year-olds with decision makers from the public, private and community sectors to explore and articulate a broad action strategy for engaging young people in Canadian society. Key issues that emerge will be highlighted in a series of discussion papers.

**Methodology and Outreach**

The survey asked participants to rate the level of importance that they would give to each of the six themes, and to a series of issue statements under each theme, as well as identify other themes of importance to them. In addition to hosting the survey on their Web sites, The Students Commission and TakingITGlobal advised and collaborated on the development and design of the survey, sent email notifications to their networks about the survey, and tabulated the data. Other Advisory Committee members forwarded the survey to their networks. We thank them all for their support. CPRN provided a link from its Web site to the survey on both organizations’ Web sites, and did the qualitative analysis of survey respondents’ written comments.

The survey results have been used to help inform the overall framing and policy content of the project. Further testing of the overall framing and policy content will continue with other groups of young people aged 18-25 as the project progresses.

## **Limitations of Study**

On-line survey respondents were self-selecting. In addition, only 202 young people aged 18-25 responded to the on-line survey. As such, they did not form a representative sample of the population between the ages of 18-25. However, the results do provide insight into the views and perspectives of young Canadians.

## **The Survey Respondents**

Of those 202 respondents, 40% of the participants were women and 60% were men. Sixteen percent of the respondents came from rural areas, and 26% self-identified as members of a minority group. The majority of survey respondents, 59%, came from Ontario. For further details about the demographic profile of survey respondents, please refer to the Appendix in the *Detailed Results of an On-line Survey with 18-25 Year-olds*.