

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

Appendix Detailed Results of an On-line Survey with 18-25 Year-olds

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April 2005

10th Anniversary
CPRN



10^e anniversaire
RCRPP

2005

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Prepared by Nandini Saxena

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Detailed Survey Results

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance that they would assign to a series of issue statements, by theme, and to rate each of the overall themes. Themes and issue statements reflect the key points that emerged from the Advisory Committee. Responses are presented in tables below.¹ To identify new common themes and issues, respondents were also given the opportunity to add other issues or themes they felt were important for young people to discuss. While 43% of respondents did provide comments, no new common themes emerged. Most added commentary elaborating on the themes and issues presented. The “Related Issues and Comments” presented under each thematic table, were identified by 3 to 7% of all survey respondents. Quotes have been provided for illustrative purposes.

Section 1: Ratings of Issue Statements by Theme and Related Comments

1. IDENTITY

| Issue Statement | More Important | Less Important |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| I believe that stable and supportive relationships with family and friends are very important to my sense of identity and self-confidence. | 88% | 12% |
| I am concerned about high rates of suicide in young people. What are the underlying causes and what can be done to address them? We need to get people talking about this issue instead of avoiding it. | 66% | 34% |
| I am concerned about feeling isolated or not respected - especially if I am not in the "mainstream" of society. How can I maintain my culture and enhance my identity and pride in who I am and where I come from? What do I need to help me develop pride and confidence in who I am. | 65% | 35% |
| I believe 18-25 is an age of transition. What do I have to help me make this transition? I am concerned that I don't have the support I need. | 64% | 36% |
| I am concerned that so much of my acceptance by my peers and older people is based on the possessions I have and the clothes that I wear. What happens if I can't afford them? | 45% | 55% |

Related Issues and Comments

¹ TakingITGlobal used a scale of 1-10 under all questions, where 1 was classified as most important, 2 as less important and so on. The Students Commission used a scale equivalent to the number of statements presented under each issue, plus a question which asked respondents for other issues. For example, under the issue of identity, The Students Commission used a scale of 1-6, where 1 was classified as most important. Scales from both organizations for each of the six issues were integrated: responses in the top half of each scale were classified as “more important” and responses in the bottom half of each scale were classified as “less important”. Statements within each of the tables have been presented from highest to lowest rating assigned by survey respondents, not according to the order they were presented in the on-line survey.

The need to define what their personal identity is and to better understand which values are most important to them was identified by survey respondents. A connected idea that participants referred to was the dominant influence played by the media in defining the identity of young people.

Other respondents commented on questions of national identity, voiced their view that a stronger Canadian identity is required, and questioned whether or not the Canadian mosaic works as well as it could.

In addition, several respondents identified racism and prejudice as issues that need to be addressed in order to better integrate different groups into society.

Quotes

“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?” (22 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

“A lot of youth question how authentic their identity is or if it is largely a product of the mass media and the system we've grown up in.” (19 year-old woman, British Columbia, TakingITGlobal survey)

“How can a youth in the care of a child welfare agency gain a sense of identity if they are moved from place to place with little opportunity for stable and supportive relationships, especially during the ages of transition of 18-25?” (24 year-old woman, Manitoba, TakingITGlobal survey)

“There is a very important national question regarding the First Nations, Quebec and this place we call Canada. Until we have sorted out sovereignty and established a fair and just society for these people, how can we possibly feel proud about being Canadian?” (24 year-old man, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

2. OPPORTUNITIES

| Issue Statement | More Important | Less Important |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| 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. | 91% | 9% |
| I am concerned about the lack of opportunity for good jobs. So many jobs are low-paying or part time. There are few opportunities to get ahead. | 84% | 16% |
| I am concerned about feeling isolated. I have to leave my community to get a job or go to school and go somewhere different, away from family and friends. | 47% | 53% |

Related Issues and Comments

Respondents noted the difficulty associated with transitioning from post-secondary education to work, and the need for better supports during this process. Examples mentioned include apprenticeships, internships and mentoring. Respondents recommended that post-secondary education be more focused on the development of practical, job-related skills, and clearly meet labour market demands.

Survey participants identified the need for greater access to post-secondary education, and indicated that government should prioritize quality education on their policy agenda. This reinforces the strong level of importance that respondents assigned to the first statement above, “I am concerned about the lack of opportunity to get a good education and the implications this has for our future”.

Another issue respondents raised was the lack of opportunity experienced by certain population groups, because of discrimination and other barriers. Participants referred to the challenges that foreign students, foreign-trained professionals, people with disabilities, young people who live in rural areas, and young women face in accessing opportunity.

Quotes

“Nos universités mettent de plus en plus d'emphase sur le prestige (marketing) que sur l'amélioration de la qualité de l'enseignement. Recevons-nous vraiment la formation nécessaire pour entrer sur le marché du travail?” (22 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

“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?” (20 year-old woman, Ontario, The Students Commission survey)

“For young people to enter university there has to be assurance that it will be worth the investment. While in university, confidence should be instilled in students with a greater presence of employers actively searching for new employees. As a university student preparing to graduate with good marks, it is a little unsettling to think that I am now going to have to take it to the company, as opposed to the companies showing interest in me and my friends for the effort we have put forward over the past four years.” (21 year-old man, Ontario, The Students Commission survey)

“I am concerned about the ability to find a job when you are handicapped because of a disease like MS (multiple sclerosis) even though you have a good education.” (25-year-old man, Quebec, TakingITGlobal survey)

3. OUR NATURAL AND URBAN WORLD

| Issue Statement | More Important | Less Important |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| 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. | 92% | 8% |
| I am concerned about governments and corporations acting in a responsible way toward the environment, both in Canada and around the world. | 91% | 9% |
| I am concerned about my built environment. I want it to be clean, accessible, safe and enjoyable. | 80% | 20% |

Related Issues and Comments

Survey respondents noted that individuals should act on their environmental beliefs and that these actions be encouraged and supported. Respondents referred to the need to support youth involvement in environmental protection initiatives, integrate sustainable development ideals into schools and provide relevant information to consumers so that both young people and adults can make environmentally sound choices.

Concern was expressed about Canada's cities, specifically about the rate of urban sprawl and the need for smart city planning which includes green spaces and access to nature.

Respondents expressed their concern for environmental sustainability, and the negative impacts that behaviours and consumption patterns of this generation will have on the environment in future generations.

Quotes

“City expansion is crippling the farming industry's best land in Ontario. We need smarter cities with city planning which is reflective of the 21st century. The value placed on large, energy hogging homes and cars is unnecessary and there need to be more government incentives for cleaner cars and energy efficient houses (although steps taken so far deserve accolades).”
(21 year-old man, Ontario, The Students Commission survey)

“A blatant misunderstanding of the environment and environmental issues is exhibited among young people. Helping the environment can be as simple as recycling empty bottles and cans, and yet on a daily basis I see young people throwing these items into trash bins. The question that needs to be asked is WHY these young people aren't concerned about their environment, and how this can be changed.” (18 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

“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.” (23 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

4. HEALTH

| Issue Statement | More important | Less important |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| 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. | 83% | 17% |
| I am concerned about mental health of people my age. Our lives are in such a rapid state of change and instability that many people find it difficult to cope. | 80% | 20% |
| I am concerned about my ability to pay for health care if I get sick or injured. I am no longer covered by my parents' health insurance and I certainly can't afford it myself. | 74% | 26% |

Related Issues and Comments

A number of respondents expressed the view that more holistic and preventative approaches are required to improve our health, and that individuals should be encouraged to make healthy choices in regards to, for example, exercise, food, and sexuality.

Another comment, voiced by several respondents, was the need to reform the public health care system and ensure that it is of high-quality and sustainable.

Quotes

"More should be done to encourage active lifestyles. Flexibility at work and reduced workloads would give additional time for physical leisure activities. Also, the built environment should be designed to encourage physical activity, notably through the improvement of facilities for active transportation (walking, cycling, skateboarding, etc). Financial measures should be put in place to dissuade sedentary behaviour (fees for car use, no more free parking for employees, etc) and encourage physical activity (transit passes for employees, health care reductions for those who engage in active transportation, etc)." (24 year-old woman, Quebec, TakingITGlobal survey)

"I am concerned with the lack of health education for my peers and younger generations in key topics such as nutrition, exercise and sexuality." (23 year-old woman, Alberta, TakingITGlobal survey)

"I am concerned about the growing shortage of doctors and increased wait times for standard medical procedures (i.e. pregnant women getting an ultrasound)." (23 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

5. INJUSTICE

| Issue Statement | More Important | Less Important |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| I am concerned about the poverty that I see around me and that exists throughout the world. | 93% | 7% |
| I have more connection to what is happening in the rest of the world than generations before me and what happens elsewhere can directly affect me or my friends. I am concerned about what Canadian governments and Canadian companies are doing in other parts of the world as well as what other governments and corporations are doing. | 87% | 13% |
| I am concerned about how challenging it is for people new to Canada to fit in with Canadian "norms". We talk about being a diverse and open country, yet there are still many barriers to making this statement a reality. | 74% | 26% |

Related Issues and Comments

Survey respondents commented that young people need to become more involved at home and abroad to address injustice. Respondents felt that educational programs are required to inform young people about injustice, and that opportunities should be provided for young people to take part in social justice initiatives.

Quotes

"Young people should be involved in helping the poor and hungry, both in our country and others. ..." (20 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

"Not only poverty, but the lack of respect for human rights practised in some other countries sickens me. Youth need more awareness and opportunities to be involved with organizations such as Amnesty International." (23 year-old man, Saskatchewan, TakingITGlobal survey)

6. BECOMING ACTIVE CITIZENS

| Issue Statement | More Important | Less Important |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| 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. | 85% | 15% |
| I am concerned that many people over 18, who are not in post-secondary education have few or no institutional supports provided through schools, health insurance, organized recreational and cultural activities. Until I am in the "system" of more permanent work or school, there is no government department that supports me, no union that speaks for my rights and no formal system to let me have my say in decisions that are important to me. | 81% | 19% |

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Many older people often stereotype people my age as being poor decision makers, not responsible or not capable of doing many things. Yet, I am expected to take on the same responsibilities as someone much older and more securely established to provide for myself, to vote knowledgably and to contribute to my community. | 73% | 27% |
| Technology provides both a barrier and an opportunity. Older people expect that everyone under 30 knows everything there is to know about computers. This imposes unrealistic expectations and limits opportunities for training. At the same time, older generations do not understand how most people my age use technology and that it has so fundamentally changed our society, how and why we interact with each other and how we see the world. | 68% | 32% |

Related Issues and Comments

Under the last theme, becoming active citizens, survey respondents could answer three questions.

1. What other questions regarding becoming active citizens need to be asked of and discussed by young people?

Survey respondents thought that further discussion is required about youth incentives to become active citizens. Specific incentives were mentioned, including youth platforms in political party mandates and discussion of youth issues in election campaigns. In addition, survey respondents referred to the need to make voting count, to expand political participation beyond just voting once every four years, and a need for greater mutual respect between young people and politicians. Reference was also made to the lack of incentives for youth to become involved, and that governments are not interested in the kinds of issues that young people are interested in.

“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)

“... If the government does not address issues which pertain to our psychological stage of development then they cease to exist in our minds.” (20 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

2. What do I have at my disposal to help me be an active citizen and contribute meaningfully? What are the barriers to my participation?

No common themes emerged in response to either of these questions. Under the first question, a couple of the responses made reference to volunteer opportunities and young people’s networks. Under the second, a barrier identified was the need to overcome poverty and make an income.

“I believe that if the government took the time to invest in my future, I would take the time to listen to them and go to the voting polls. ... I can barely scratch by everyday because I am living in poverty trying to get my self through school ... [and] tuition is too high... Why should we care about them if they don't care about us?” (21 year-old woman, British Columbia, The Students Commission survey)

3. What other issues do you feel are of great importance for discussion among young people that you don’t see in any of these themes above. Please note them below.

Again, under this question, no common themes emerged. However, a range of themes were raised: the high cost of post-secondary education; the need for politicians to focus on issues relevant to young people if they want to engage with young people; gay lesbian and bisexual issues; and other topics including drug addiction and homelessness.

“As a student, I'd just like to ... emphasize the need to stop the meteoric rise of tuition fees. At my university tuition fees have jumped almost 30% in the last two years. This practise of raising tuition fees is obviously not sustainable. If the government wants to engage youth in elections, start looking at the things they care about, like tuition fees and education. Too many times candidates have lied on these two issues and thus they have tainted the youth voting pool. Politicians should consider our everyday preoccupations, consider the fact that some of us can't pay for nutritious food because our money goes to school.” (20 year-old woman, British Columbia, The Students Commission survey)

Section 2: Ratings of Themes and Related Comments

| Theme | More Important | Less Important |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Becoming Active Citizens | 87% | 13% |
| Health | 84% | 16% |
| Opportunities | 81% | 19% |
| Injustice | 79% | 21% |
| Our Natural and Urban World | 74% | 26% |
| Identity | 65% | 35% |

Following the rating of the six overall themes, respondents were asked if they had additional themes that they felt would be important to explore more deeply with young people. No common themes emerged under this question. Instead, a range of themes were identified including: the high costs of post-secondary education; Canada’s role internationally, human rights and world peace; educational institutions to teach skills applicable to the new economy; financial stresses; and other issues including school bullying, teen depression and relationships.

“Financial trouble (high tuition, not enough jobs [that are] high paying), education affordable for a very select few.” (18 year-old woman, Ontario, TakingITGlobal survey)

“Education. Teach young Canadians how to manage personal finances, to better understand debt management. ... Young Canadians need to be better prepared to face the challenges in today’s changing economy.” (24 year-old man, Newfoundland, TakingITGlobal survey)

Participant Demographics

| Category | On-line Survey Respondents % |
|---|------------------------------|
| Gender | |
| Female | 40 |
| Male | 60 |
| Trans gendered | 0 |
| No Response | 0 |
| Total | 100 |
| Rural/ urban | |
| Rural | 16 |
| Urban | 83 |
| No Response | 1 |
| Total | 100 |
| Member of a minority group | |
| Yes | 26 |
| No | 70 |
| No Response | 4 |
| Total | 100 |
| Aboriginal, First Nation or Inuit | |
| Yes | 3 |
| No | 94 |
| No Response | 3 |
| Total | 100 |
| Completion of high school | |
| Yes | 92 |
| No | 6 |
| No response | 2 |
| Total | 100 |
| Currently enrolled in post secondary education² | |
| Yes | 61 |
| No | 37 |
| No response | 2 |
| Total | 100 |
| Completion of post secondary education | |
| Yes | 51 |
| No | 48 |
| No response | 1 |
| Total | 100 |
| Currently employed | |

² Post secondary education includes college, university and trade school.

| Category | On-line Survey Respondents % |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Yes | 61 |
| No | 38 |
| No response | 1 |
| Total | 100 |
| If yes, full time or part-time? | |
| Full-time | 29 |
| Part-time | 32 |
| No response | 39 |
| Total | 100 |
| Regions | |
| Maritimes | 10 |
| Quebec | 8 |
| Ontario | 59 |
| Prairies | 9 |
| British Columbia | 12 |
| North | 0 |
| No response | 2 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: Participant demographic data: The Students Commission and TakingITGlobal