

Role of Youth Survey

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1. Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of a larger process, building on months of reading and research of secondary materials, years of personal experiences meeting with and understanding the issues and perspectives of young people around the world.

This research seeks to demonstrate that globally, young people today have more power and potential to create change than any previous generation of youth. It seeks to discover the ways in which young people define themselves, how they are perceived by society, how they are best engaged in decision-making, and the role of technology in facilitating the shifting role of youth.

This report is based on a survey designed by Jennifer Corriero, based on five prevalent categories: *Defining Youth*, *Perceptions and Attitudes towards Youth*, *Youth Participation in Decision-Making*, *The Role of Technology*, and *Youth as Change Agents*. Conducted in partnership with an international NGO, TakingITGlobal (TIG), the electronic survey was promoted and filled out by over 1,400 respondents, after which qualitative and quantitative questions were separated, organized, grouped, and analyzed, with the assistance of a number of individuals. Finally, this report was created to communicate the values and trends underlying the statistics and statements of respondents from around the world.

The question of how youth is defined resulted in an interesting array of suggestions. Age led with over half of the responses, followed by suggestions that youth represents personality characteristics or outlooks on life. A young female in India suggests that youth are those who are “vivacious, full of energy” – people who “want to make a mark in life”. The idea of youth being a life stage between dependant and independent was another major grouping of responses, suggesting that youth are “starting to enjoy freedom for the first time”, according to a young man from Zimbabwe.

As the perceptions and attitudes towards youth were investigated, it was discovered that the majority of youth (62.3%) have a lot of reasons for hope for the future. In regions such as Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, a stronger sense of optimism could perhaps be attributed to the need for a positive outlook to survive in many of the developing countries in those regions. Consumer culture was consistently felt around the world to have too much influence of today’s youth, according to 76% of respondents. Education was seen as meaningful and important by 89% of survey participants, with 62.2% feeling that youth are not equipped with the skills they require for jobs.

Education, employment, friends, music and various social issues were stated as the top areas of concern and interest of youth within their communities. Sustainability only made it into the top 10 in Africa and Asia, suggesting that the rest of the world has yet to make sustainable living a priority, or even something that people are aware and confronted with as an important issue. Employment was in the top 3 in every region, and was first in South America, with many young people expressing concerns about

ensuring that they have the necessary skills and experiences to be employed in their field of interest at a sustainable wage.

As youth participation in decision-making was explored, it was discovered that the highest area of youth participation takes place within local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with national NGOs close behind. Youth were least involved with national governments, which in most countries have yet to engage in meaningful strategies to encourage or facilitate youth participation, evidenced by the low voter turnout rates amongst youth, especially in North America. As Jesse Ventura, governor of Minnesota put it once on CNN "Youth don't vote because they say politicians don't care about their issues. Politicians don't care about their issues because youth don't vote!"

It appears that NGOs have the best relationships with youth and thus are best positioned to meaningfully engage youth in various political processes. Respondents were very positive about the role of technology in transforming the role of youth in society and organizations. The majority see technology as an enabler for information to be shared and meaningful communication to be had. A variety of concerns were also brought up such as the digital divide, and how technology helps those who have access to it.

Many examples were highlighted discussing the various ways that young people have made a meaningful impact in their communities and how they would change or improve the world, their countries and the role of youth in their communities. Overall, the sample of youth in this survey uncovered an optimistic, forward-looking generation encompassing young of age and youth-minded individuals.

They are comfortable with and enabled by technological progress and change, interested in engaging in local and global decision-making, and they are already having significant impacts in their communities, countries, regions, and around the world. They want to be educated, they recognize gaps in their skills, and in many cases they can clearly identify the needs of not just themselves but of their peers. The sample was respectful of the wisdom of the elders that have led them to where they are, but also ready and willing for the challenges that await them as they mature and discover the complexities of our global ecosystem.

2. Introduction

Young people growing up today have far more power and potential to create change than any previous generation of youth growing up. Much of this shift is a direct result of the information revolution and access to opportunities that have been provided to people of all ages, especially to those growing up in the information age. This report will discuss prevalent demographic and political trends, the nature of youth in today's global information society, and will provide reflections on the changing roles and responsibilities of youth in this new setting. A discussion concerning youth as stakeholders will look at how traditional perceptions of the role of youth as passive citizens, students, employees, and consumers are actively challenged and questioned today. An empirical narrative providing background on my experiences most relevant to this trend, moreover, will be shared to provide personal context to this research. Lastly, the results and key findings from a survey conducted on the Role of Youth will be shared.

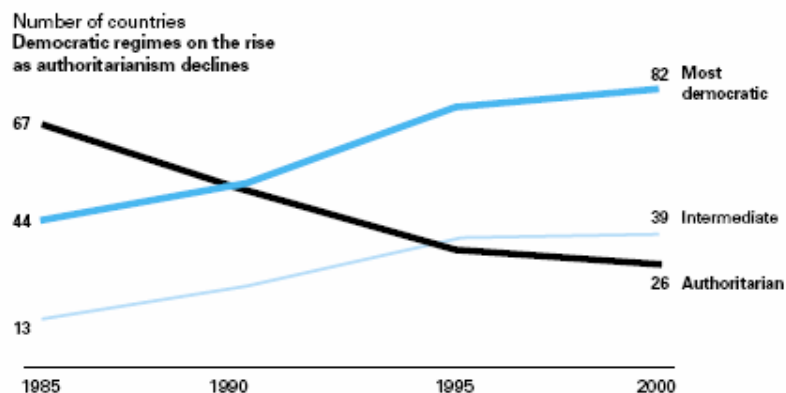
2.1 Demographic Force

Young people are also an ever-growing demographic force. According to UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), there are more than one billion people between the ages of 15 and 24 on the planet.¹ In the developing world, where 80 percent of young people can be found, youth comprise up to 70 percent of some nations' populations.² In the United States of America, the baby boom generations of the 1940s 1950s made possible the subsequent echo boom (those born between 1977 and 1997), of which today's young people are a substantial part – 80+ million strong³.

2.2 Democracy on the Rise

The transformation of many authoritarian states to democracies (as shown in figure 1 below) has further improved and provided the essential conditions and environment for young people to explore their interests, express themselves, take action on issues they care about, and access information.

FIGURE 2 THE WORLD IS BECOMING MORE DEMOCRATIC



Source: Polity IV 2002 as cited in UNDP's Human Development Report 2002.

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As a result of the Internet, population growth, and rise of democratic societies, a new paradigm in the role of young people is beginning to emerge, resulting in the recognition of youth as citizens, students, employees and consumers. As many as 620 million people have access to the World Wide Web and related information and communications technologies (ICTs) worldwide, with the majority of Internet users based in the non-English-speaking countries.⁵ English comprises 36.5 percent (230.6 million) of the world online population language, while the non-English-speaking world represents 63.9 percent (403.5 million).⁶ According to 2000 statistics from Forrester Research, 56 percent of 16-22 year-olds are online in the United States. They spend an average of 9 hours online, 38 percent more than the average wired adult and are involved in a wider variety of online activities compared to adults – 20 percent more.⁷ The same survey found the majority of Internet users in the United States to be in the 18-49 age-group (63 percent), with only 37 percent of users in the 50+ age-group.⁸

2.3 Culture of Leadership

The culture of leadership for much of the twentieth century was influenced, and modeled after, centralized structures of governance and rigid forms of authority. The onset of the Industrial Revolution unleashed a series of uncontested norms and universally-accepted orthodoxies that associated centralized management systems and constant decision-making with effective leadership. The social consequences of mass production and centralized management of many industries reduced the traditional family into solitary unit of production. As observed by one of the foremost theorists of management theory, Peter F. Drucker, the massive standardization of production methods and operating procedures ('machine bureaucracy') also served to loosen the some conventional familial characteristics, ultimately culminating into the "crisis of the family":

On the farm and in the artisan's workshop husband, wife, and children worked together. The factory, almost for the first time in history, took worker and work out of the home and moved them into the workplace, leaving family members behind -- whether spouses of adult factory workers or, especially in the early stages, parents of child factory workers.⁹

This centralized view of management in latter half of the past century, however, gradually conceded to more diffused and informal structures of governance; as more theorists and practitioners arrived at the common conclusion that "the better a business firm [organization] is organized, the more naturally decision rights gravitate to the spot where the best information is available about the specific decision that has to be made."¹⁰ The emergence, and mainstream influence of, the Internet in the past decade, moreover, has had a profound impact on the way a given society manages its daily affairs – socially, politically, and economically – bringing with it new, and never-before-heard-of industries, such as biotechnology and IT telecommunications.

Whereas we may make the case that the rigid structures of the industrial age had a number of indirect negative impacts on families as a result of its emphasis on

standardization and mass production, many believe that the information age, with its focus on integration and wide-scale distribution of information, has served the family by highlighting the importance of local communities and inter-cultural communication.¹¹

Under the centralized form of governance, and prior to the Information Revolution, those with the most power and experience effectively possessed a monopoly over access to sources of information, and, therefore, tended to act as leaders within their communities. The “decision rights” of the younger and more inexperienced people were virtually non-existent and often viewed as being connected to those of women and the less advantaged in the society.

In many ways, this paradigm still persists today in the sense that young people are seen by many as having passive roles in society, such as the student who is there to learn rather than teach, the young employee who needs to do what he/she is told rather than provide a source of creative and innovative input, the consumer who is viewed as a target to influence rather than to truly support, the child who needs to learn how to ‘grow up’, and the citizen who is disengaged because he/she either cannot vote or is part of a population whose voice matters little. In addition, because young people (defined as those between the ages of 13-30) are at the frontlines of change from being dependent on older generations to being independent, they have been especially vulnerable to external influences and often lack a sense of empowerment because they suffer from the lack of essential resources, and limited involvement in decision-making.

2.4 A Shift in Power Dynamics

The emergence of the Internet and other ICTs (Information & Communication Technologies) has been a catalyst for change, especially within the context of shifting traditional power dynamics. Increasingly, leadership is based on effective networks of collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Transforming leadership strategies from what they were during much of the past century has, to state it mildly, a challenge for most organizations and companies. More inclusive methods of governance, be it in the corporate world or the bureaucracy of the state, have been implemented in order to encourage, or project the image of, socially responsible behaviour.¹² This transition, however, has almost been a foreign concept to youth growing up in the digital age.

The advent of the Internet offered an opportunity to young people – most of whom are much well-versed in using computers and digital devices than their parents’ generation – to develop new virtual interests, relatively unknown and foreign to previous generations. This new medium no longer involved complex and rigid forms of management and communication that were associated with previous power-centric models of governance. The diffusion of the hierarchies and power structures also meant the decentralization of information and the formation of simple, and easily-managed, networks of people, accessible at the click of the mouse worldwide.

In this new environment, sources of influence do not simply come from the top, but are inspired or affected by the views, ideas and perspectives of many stakeholders who are affected by the decisions being made. Governments and other formal decision-making bodies have been challenged to hold higher levels of transparency and accountability in order to gain institutional trust. Companies are increasingly interested in what their employees, customers and general public think about their business practices and increasingly aspire to become more socially responsible in order to address the needs and concerns of their stakeholders.¹³

Instantaneous access to information and online resources has enabled the 'common person' make a contribution to organizations and society at large, while being able to demand a greater level of participation and involvement in decision-making. More than ever, young people growing up with technology have the opportunity to empower themselves using their unprecedented access to real-time information and knowledge sources that can be attained through ever-expanding social networks, new alliances, businesses, protests and advocacy campaigns, and websites expressing divergent views and perspectives.

2.5 TakingITGlobal Online Community and Vision

The TakingITGlobal.org Online Community provides:

- A pathway to support local **action**
- A platform for the **voices** of young people to be heard
- A framework for **understand** global challenges and issues
- A connection to resources and **opportunities**
- A **network** of interesting, dynamic and diverse young people
- A virtual space to showcase cross-cultural perspectives and **expressions**.

In addition to engaging members of the online community, TakingITGlobal supports the needs of youth-led initiatives, educators and international organizations through its thematic, educational and organizational engagement strategies.

TakingITGlobal's 2010 Vision includes the following:

- To realize the potential of at least 5 million young people as leaders for the benefit of their local and global communities.
- To bridge the 'continuity gap' enhancing the effectiveness of youth action by connecting all major youth activities, events, programs and initiatives in a global network.
- To mainstream recognition that young people are key stakeholders in all national and international policy making.

- To produce the world's most comprehensive and powerful knowledge resource - pushing the boundaries of online community and technology as a tool for social empowerment.
- To instigate significant evolution in the present concepts of school-education by increasing global connection, meaningful use of ICT's (information, communication technologies) and inspiring student engagement.
- To demonstrate innovation, excellence, creativity and professionalism in the management of a new style of international organization that is entrepreneurial, technology-enhanced, and youth-driven.

2.6 Youth Are Becoming More Engaged as Key Stakeholders

When key stakeholders are brought together to share a vision for the future, it is critical to recognize that although most young people are unable to formally represent a business, government or non-profit institution as a key stakeholder, they do have the largest stake in the future and can often help to revive and refresh various perspectives being shared. "Youth participation often requires changes in the way adults perceive and deal with adolescents, since the rights of young people and their capacities to make decisions for themselves are often unrecognized and undervalued."¹⁴ Increasingly, institutions are recognizing the importance of bringing the voices of young people to the forefront. On a global level, there are numerous summits that have brought together various leaders and decision-makers and have included young people as a key stakeholder or 'major group'.

For example, as a participant at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa, I was part of what the United Nations considers to be a 'Major Group' within the overall process of the summit along with women, indigenous people, farmers, business etc. According to Agenda 21, involving each of the major groups in the decision-making process was recognized as being a "fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development"¹⁵ The Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development states that the process is inclusive of youth:

34. We are in agreement that this must be an inclusive process, involving all the major groups and Governments that participated in the historic Johannesburg

170. Promote and support youth participation in programmes and activities relating to sustainable development through, for example, supporting local youth councils or their equivalent, and by encouraging their establishment where they do not

By promoting, supporting and involving youth as a major group, a statement is made about the importance of recognizing youth as key stakeholders. At the recent World Summit on the Information Society Preparatory Meetings which have been held in

Geneva, Switzerland, the Youth Caucus is one of the strongest and most active groups, participating in the process alongside government, industry and other NGO groupings.

2.7 Youth as Engaged Citizens

On a national level, one of the basic conditions of a healthy democracy is having a population that votes. However, those under 18 are unable to participate – and not effectively inspired to vote once they're able to, which has been leading to a large decline in youth voter turnout. In the US, only 60% of eligible voters under 25 have registered, and only 24% of those eligible to vote and over 20 say they "always vote" during elections. At the same time, many young people are civically engaged in many other ways – 40% of U.S. youth 14-24 have volunteered, 38% have participated in a boycott, and 44% have done some type of fundraising for charity, all within the last year.¹⁶

There is a need to increase awareness and trust in political process, while also validating and supporting other forms of civic participation. There are a growing number of regional, national, and local youth councils and networks sprouting up due to interest, support, and demand. Increasingly, different youth councils are strengthening their efforts through forging more partnerships and raising their profile. An example of this is the European Youth Forum, 'a platform organization, it is the representative body for its members towards the institutions and partners active in the youth field. The 89 member organizations of the European Youth Forum represent a wide range of interests: student organizations, political organizations, organizations concerned with environmental protection, minorities, young rural organizations, conscripts organizations and many more. The European Youth Forum has member organizations including both national youth organizations and international youth organizations, drawn from throughout the European continent. The highest decision-making body is the General Assembly, which elects a Bureau made up of volunteers every two years. The Bureau meets monthly to assess political priorities, implement its work plan and advises the Secretariat in its work.'¹⁷ Increasingly, youth councils are being formed and strengthened in order to provide opportunities for young people to have a stronger voice.

2.8 From Student to Teacher

Due to the rapid revolution in Information and Communication Technologies over the last decade, young people growing up as these technologies evolved have become innately comfortable using them, and have become neighborhood authorities on computer technologies. As the education system began to introduce computers in the classroom, young people were often frustrated as they were forced to re-learn skills they already had developed, such as BASIC programming and keyboarding. Over time, students' expertise with technology has become accepted by teachers, and a variety of programs, such as Generation YES, have been developed to harness the skills and enthusiasm of students for technology to assist teachers in more meaningfully integrating it into the classroom.

Young people are also learning from a wide variety of sources, and are increasingly deriving knowledge from their peers and non-school sources. As Don Tapscott cites in his 1998 book "Growing Up Digital", many young people growing up in the late 80's and early 90's have learned basic skills from educational software like "Reader Rabbit" and video games. Thanks to online communication tools like ICQ, students are able to collaborate in real-time with their friends and peers across town or across the ocean, and share knowledge and ideas with each other. All told, this amounts to quite a challenge for the average teacher to cope with – a variety of students all with varying levels of technology access and external influences – as early as junior kindergarten!

Of course, to meet the needs of these wired students as they progressed through the school system, Universities began to experiment with online course delivery and some now offer complete degree programs using a combination of ICTs. The role of a teacher has also evolved in these situations to more of a mentor and coach as needed, versus needing to hand-hold students through courses, enabling them to provide maximum value in supporting the course content versus needing to focus on content delivery.

This generation of youth also enjoys sharing opinions – and teachers can't escape! Websites like RateYourTeacher.com and RateMyProfessor.com showcase the ratings of teachers by thousands of students, opening up the previously untouchable teacher relationship to transparent feedback and criticism by 'consumer' students.

2.9 Young Employees as a Source of Innovation

There are a variety of implications for human resource departments in companies and organizations as they begin to hire and integrate new talent into their workforce. Because there is a large population of youth who are entering the workforce and who carry a range of unique skills and perspectives (especially technology-related), the existing strategies that attempt to attract, retain and develop the next generation of talent need to adapt to a different set of needs, expectations and opportunities. Young employees, especially those doing internships, can provide an incredible source of innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and creative potential. In an organization where having many years of experience is valued, young people can be an overlooked, untapped resource.

In the context of trying to solve problems in new ways, it is important to engage those who have not yet been institutionalized and are unfamiliar with the way that things have always been done. It is critical for organizations to develop new strategies that can allow them to more meaningfully involve young people in both problem-solving and decision-making processes, in order to respond to the complex and evolving organizational challenges being faced. As it was mentioned above, the onset of the Information Revolution, coupled with the period of massive decentralization across-industries, had a profound impact on the way young people identify with the work environment. In the knowledge-based industries, rigid and strict structures of the past

are largely associated with inefficiency, and are largely thought of as counterproductive to personal development.

Having grown up with this mindset, young peoples' perceptions toward decision-making and effective problem-solving are mainly derived from their experiences in the digital world, where interaction and inclusion of perspectives are essential, if not required, for achieving common goals. Therefore, in dealing with this new technologically-empowered demographic, new knowledge-based industries will have to reinvent many of the old approaches toward this new generation. This, in fact, means that they (industries) would have to appeal to their knowledge-workers "by satisfying their values, and by giving them social recognition and social power" which they have grown accustomed to.¹⁸

2.10 The Interactive Consumer

Due to the nature of the Internet as a medium which allows for and is based upon networks and interactions, young consumers have the opportunity to be creators of media and content rather than simply consume what is produced for them.

"Broadcast technology, like television, is hierarchical. It depends upon a top-down distribution system. Someone somewhere decides what will be broadcast and our role is limited to what we choose or do not choose to watch. There is no direct feedback from the viewer to the broadcaster...The internet depends upon a distributed, or shared, delivery system rather than a hierarchical one. The distributed, or shared, power is at the heart of the culture of interaction."¹⁹ (p79)

Due to the nature of the medium that young people are enabled by, they are able to demand a greater level of information, interactivity and involvement when it comes to products, services and the overall customer experience. Shopping comparison websites such as MySimon.com and BuyBuddy.com allow for intelligent and informed purchasing decisions to be made based on product-reviews and price comparisons. As a result, consumers are more empowered and can make more informed purchasing decisions. The Internet has provided other opportunities for consumers to be empowered by providing a vehicle for complaints to be expressed to large numbers of people. An example of this includes websites that are developed to discuss how a particular company 'sucks'. Many URL's have been purchased that say CompanyNameSucks.com and provide an avenue for disgruntled customers to share their complaints and concerns.

Over half (55%) of survey respondents report boycotting a company or product at some point in their life, with 38 percent saying they have used their stick as a consumer in the past 12 months. And boycotting — buying a product or service because they like the social or political values of the company which produces it — is only slightly less prevalent. Just under half (45%) report having done so at some point in their life, while 35 percent have used the consumer carrot in the past 12 months.²⁰ Bad experiences for unhappy customers can quickly become devastating experiences for a company's image. This demonstrates that consumers have the opportunity to become more engaged and influential through the opportunities for interaction that

the Internet provides. Because 85% of teens in Canada have Internet access and are online for over 9 hours per week²¹, young people are especially in a position to become empowered consumers, as they frequently and simultaneously combine the process of learning, working, and play/entertainment, allowing them to constantly observe and share opinions and best practices.

2.11 The Need for a Holistic Perspective on Youth as Stakeholders

While looking through various reports, studies, books and other secondary sources – all of which offer a variety of insights related to the interests, needs and experiences of young people, a clear research gap became evident. Much of the research that exists on young people does not involve a global perspective, and often focuses on youth in the context of consumers in order to support business decisions, or youth who are ‘at risk’ and are a segment of the population vulnerable to a variety of social problems. Rarely are youth examined in the context of having the potential to be agents of change, problem-solvers, or leaders of the information society.

In addition, major studies do not involve youth in the process of survey design, which can affect the potential bias of the research. In trying to examine if and how the role of young people has changed as a result of technology, the need for a unique study involving youth leaders and influencers from around the world who have access to technology became clear.

3. Role of Youth Survey: Objectives

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how the role of young people is currently perceived and how it has changed over the last 100 years, a survey was designed to explore the following:

Defining Youth

- How is 'youth' defined? Are notions of 'youth' associated with positive or negative connotations? What are key differences between the perceptions of youth vs. perceptions of adults?

Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Youth

- Is this generation of youth perceived to be enabled and engaged or disadvantaged and disengaged? Are they optimistic or pessimistic about the future? What other perceptions and attitudes towards youth exist and are there regional differences?

Participation in Decision-Making

- How important is it for young people to be involved in decision-making? What is the current perceived level of youth participation in decision-making on local, national and global levels?

The Role of Technology

- Has technology played a role in transforming the role of youth in society at large and within different organizations and institutions? What impact has technology had in transforming the role of youth?

Youth As Change Agents

- Are there interesting examples of young people having a meaningful impact in their communities? If so, what factors appear to enable this to take place? What are the hopes and ideals held by today's generation of youth leaders? What recommendations can be offered in terms of the conditions that must exist for youth to become leaders?

4. Role of Youth Survey: Methodology

The following is an Overview of the Survey Questions:

Demographic Information: for people to fill out their gender, date of birth, city, country, educational background, employment status, volunteer status and Internet usage.

Defining Youth: open-ended questions about what images and phrases come to mind when they hear the word 'youth' and 'adult' and a question asking how youth is defined.

Key Issues and Interests: participants were asked to identify the key issues and interests of youth in their community. They had to select from drop-down lists and rank the top 3 in order of priority. *Words included: Arts, Business/Entrepreneurship, Community, Education, Employment, Environment, Friends, Fundraising, Globalization, Health, HIV and AIDS, Human Rights, Leadership, Media, Music, Peace, Political Action, Religion, Romance, Sports, Sustainable Development, Technology, Travel, Volunteering, War.*

Attitudinal Characteristics: respondents were asked to rate 14 statements related to whether or not people agreed or disagreed with statements about youth on a scale of 1-5. Statements explored whether or not youth are perceived to be motivated, connected to opportunities, knowledgeable, inspired, informed, skilled, interested in being involved, focused, influenced by consumer culture, supported or lacking support from adults, optimistic or pessimistic. Additional questions about education and age were asked.

Role of Youth - Today: participants were asked to give their opinion on the role of youth in their community. *They had to select from drop-down lists and rank the top 3 in order of priority.* *Words included: Students, Workers, Members, Mentors, Trend-Setters, Activists, Citizens, Victims, Leaders, Criminals, Technologists, Volunteers, Artists, Role Models, Soldiers, Children, Innovators, Peace-keepers, Consumers, Trouble-makers, Employees, Entrepreneurs*

Participation in Decision-Making: a question about the importance of being able to participate in decision-making was asked (on a scale of 1-5). The second part of this question asked how involved young people are in decision-making on local, national and global levels for Business, Government and Non-Profit Organizations.

Meaningful Impact: participants were asked to identify an example of how a youth within their community was effective at having a meaningful impact.

Role of Youth – Historically: respondents were asked to identify whether or not the role of youth has changed over the past 100 years, and if so, has it been positive or negative. The response was based on a scale of 1-5. They then explained their response.

Impact of Technology: respondents were asked to identify whether or not technology impacted youth in their community, and if so, if the impact has been

positive or negative. They were given a scale of 1-5 and were then asked to explain their answer.

Creating Change: A series of open-ended questions were asked about how survey respondents would create change in the world, their country, and the role of youth in their community, along with what conditions need to exist for youth to become leaders

4.1 Promotion of Survey

On December 23, 2002, the survey was sent out to over 15,000 people from over 190 countries. There were a variety of ways in which the survey was promoted. An automated, personalized e-mail was sent out to all members of the TakingITGlobal online community (which included over 13,000 people from over 190 countries at the time). The e-mail explained that as a 'valued member of TakingITGlobal', they were invited to participate in an 'online survey to help determine their view on the role of youth in society'.

The e-mail stated that it would take approximately 10 minutes to complete and that all of the information shared would be kept confidential and anonymous (meaning that their name would not be used without their permission). Although the survey was completely voluntary, an incentive for participating included having their name entered into a draw to win TIG t-shirts and mouse pads. In addition, each survey respondent would receive a free electronic copy of the final results once compiled. All survey participants were given until January 21st 2003 (approximately 4 weeks) to fill out the survey. In order to avoid an overwhelming amount of replies to the e-mail, the letter was signed from TakingITGlobal's Research Team as opposed to coming from a specific individual.

A modified version of the e-mail invitation to participate in the Role of Youth Survey was created and sent out to all of the organizations listed in the TakingITGlobal organizations database (over 1,000), along with youth mailing lists for various organizations and youth caucuses, and other personal networks. People were invited to pass the information along and invite others to participate in the survey. In order to maintain high levels of integrity, survey participants did not need to become a member of TakingITGlobal in order to fill out the survey, and did not need to fill out their name. If they were interested in receiving a copy of the final results, they were invited to provide their e-mail address.

It is important to note that due to the nature of how the survey was promoted, all survey respondents have access to the Internet and are connected to existing networks that attract youth who are engaged. Thus, there exists some bias in the sample of survey respondents. In addition, there was no age restriction in order to participate which means that people of all ages were invited to fill out the survey, which was done for the purposes of comparison between different age groups.

The views, opinions and perspectives that have emerged as a result of the survey findings are not a representation of international youth in its entirety, but rather, a reflection from a targeted sample of engaged youth who have some access to the Internet and are able to read and write English. With this in mind, based on the goals and objectives of this study, it is an appropriate audience to survey as the focus is on trying to better understand the views and perspectives of youth who have access to technology. If there were greater resources available for this study, an offline component would exist and the survey would also be made available in multiple languages. This may be something to consider as a follow-up opportunity in the future.

Once the survey responses were sent in through the online survey application, Martin Kuplens-Ewart exported the compiled responses into various files for analysis. The quantitative responses were sent in SPSS format for graphs and frequency tables to be generated. The extensive qualitative responses were formatted and printed in charts and tables.

4.2 Analysis of Survey Results

The process of analyzing the survey data was far more extensive, complex, lengthy and overwhelming than what was initially expected. A variety of people were involved as part of the research team in order to assist in the initial process of compiling, reviewing and making sense of various sections of the survey. A special thanks goes to Noor Alibhai, Jacob Bleakley, Hugh Switzer and Huss Banai who were all part of the research team at TakingITGlobal.

Much of their involvement was in the initial phase of reviewing the thousands of responses which were given for the various qualitative questions. They helped sort responses into various categories and tallied up similar responses in order to generate graphs which provide a glimpse at the nature of the responses. Once initial pie charts were generated, the results were discussed as a team and I was able to continue further analysis.

The following is an overall break-down of the data analysis process:

➤ Phase 1 – PowerPoint Presentation Including Initial Graphs

The program used to analyze the quantitative survey results was the SPSS Educational Version. After an initial tutorial session with Joseph Amati who has a lot of experience in working with SPSS, a 44 page PowerPoint presentation was put together with support from Noor, which included graphs for each of the survey questions. The deck of slides was presented to advisors for feedback. The key learning was that all the labels which included N/A or 0 as the description needed to either be removed or modified. In most cases, the information provided by this column was one that reduced the quality and overall effectiveness of the graphs. This decision meant that all the graphs needed to be regenerated. Various other lessons were learned including analysis of frequency tables.

➤ **Phase 2 – Regional and Age Break-Down of Graphs**

After a great deal of experimentation and technical support from Martin at TIG, appropriate labels were modified and new forms of categorization was implemented within the survey file to allow the data to be sorted by region and age. Graphs were regenerated for each of the questions in order to include the appropriate break-down. All of the new graphs compiled were put together in a Final Results word document.

Since Microsoft Word and SPSS are not entirely compatible, a lot of time was wasted in regenerating and reformatting new graphs for the final results document. In addition, certain graphs involved greater levels of complexity. Those questions which asked survey respondents to rank words on order of priority involved three sets of data which had to be added up in Excel prior to being able to generate the graph. Appropriate steps were taken to generate these graphs for global and regional responses.

➤ **Phase 3 – Qualitative Results Initial Categorization of Responses**

In total, the survey involved over 10 open-ended qualitative questions which each had their set of over 1,000 responses per question. The overwhelming amount of data collected through these questions involved extensive hours of interpretation and results compilation. The first phase of this process involved a team of researchers from TakingITGlobal tackling a specific question and developing different categories for the responses based on frequent responses.

The categories established are quite subjective and as different people were involved in the process, certain categories were modified. Initially, a larger 'other or inapplicable' section existed for the various categories. A second review of questions involved breaking-down the 'other' responses into further sub-categories in attempt to further identify key patterns and occurrences.

In addition to categorizing responses and generating pie graphs in Excel to reflect the overall responses, a series of summaries were created for each of the qualitative questions. Each summary included a description of the category identified and a general overview of the responses that were placed in the category. Beneath the description included a few selected quotes which offered a general idea of the types of responses included within the identified category.

A variety of challenges were encountered throughout this process, including the fact that many responses could have easily been placed in multiple categories. To adequately deal with this challenge, in the final tally, they were often placed in both categories and the total number increased. In the final graphs, the 'other' category has been removed from the pie chart in order to leave room for smaller categories which emerged from the initial other category. Rather than view the final pie charts as conclusive or statistically accurate, it is important to see them from the perspective of general categories of responses from highest to lowest frequency.

➤ **Phase 4 – Advice, Suggestions and Feedback from Advisors**

The compiled graphs for quantitative results and qualitative survey results summary pages became the first version of the Final Results document which was 60 pages. This document was then shared with a variety of advisors including Robert Bernard and Shelly Smith from D*CODE, a strategy and market research firm based in Toronto. A variety of suggestions and recommendation were provided by D*CODE in order to strengthen the overall impact of the survey results.

Many lessons were learned through the feedback shared. Some of the advice was integrated; however after then speaking to my academic advisor, I was able to distinguish which changes were most appropriate to make for the purposes of my final report. One of the suggestions made included grouping the age categories differently in order to have fewer categories. The suggested age groupings include 14-19, 20-24, 25-30 and 31+. This proposed grouping addresses a few issues. Since there is a very small sample under the age of 14, it eliminates their responses from the results. Since youth is defined as up to the age of 31 and there are a smaller number of respondents over the age of 31, it helps to create one category of 'adult' for the purposes of comparison. This change was not made due to time constraints and in order to avoid over-simplifying the results.

Another suggestion included removing the 'neutral' responses from graphs and clumping the 'somewhat' and 'very' categories together. Although this would have helped to provide clearer contrast between how the responses were weighted, it would have also reduced opportunities of noticing situations where many people were 'neutral', which is an observation in itself. In reviewing the charts which identify the top issues and concerns of youth, D*CODE suggested that it would be helpful to have them listed from the highest to lowest priority.

Additional tables were created which identify the top 10 issues in each region in order of highest to lowest. In addition, percentages were added on existing bar graphs. Another major distinction was made between what was necessary to include in the results compared to the discussion about the results. The results of the survey are presented in the order that the questions were asked. Each graph includes a brief description. The discussion of the results is categorized in a way that makes the most overall sense, especially in terms of the flow. In addition, only the most interesting patterns, trends and observations are highlighted in the discussion about the results.

➤ **Phase 5 – In-Depth Reflection and Analysis of Qualitative Responses**

The amount of qualitative responses meant that several 'passes' at reviewing the data were necessary. Members of the research team who were initially involved with analyzing particular questions were involved in a discussion about the results and each had an opportunity to present their findings to one another in front of an audience of other TakingITGlobal staff members.

As a group, general patterns and trends were discussed and further areas of exploration were identified. After that, I spent quite some time re-reading and reviewing all of the raw qualitative results along with survey summaries. I tried to extract patterns and conclusions from the categories of responses, to better explain the impact of the data. A variety of new charts and summaries were developed for questions based on an additional review through the various responses to qualitative questions. These were then shared with a few other groups of people for feedback.

➤ **Phase 6 – Written Descriptions for All Graphs Presented in Final Results**

After evaluating the many graphs included in the report, I looked through the data in greater detail and produced written descriptions to accompany the graphs, both to provide additional information and insight, but also to help the reader more quickly discover the wealth of data each chart had to communicate. Throughout this process, certain graphs were regenerated in order to further improve the quality of labels, the ability to view responses from both age and regional break-downs, and to include percentages where appropriate on selected graphs.

➤ **Phase 7 – Review Final Results for Key Findings**

With the final compilation of updated graphs, descriptions and survey response summaries, a comprehensive overview of the Final Results document took place. With the editing assistance of Hussein Banai and Michael Furdyk, this final report was created.

4.3 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Region: The Role of Youth Survey involved a total sample of 1443 respondents from 126 countries. The majority of respondents reside in North America (29.2%) and Africa (27.4%). There were 16.9% of respondents from Asia and the Middle East, 14.3% of respondents from Europe, 7.1% from Oceania and 4.3% from South and Central America.

Gender: A higher number of respondents were male (58.7%) compared to female (38.7%). There were notably more female respondents compared to male respondents in North America and Oceania, whereas in Africa, there were a greater number of male participants. This may be because it is less culturally appropriate for women to have access to computers in Africa.

Age: A larger number of survey respondents were under the age of 30 (75%) compared to those who are age 30 and over (25%). This is likely because the survey was about youth and was promoted throughout many networks that are specifically intended to connect youth. The average age (mean) of the sample was 26 years old.

Employment Status: The majority of survey respondents are currently employed (63.7%), while 36.4% are unemployed. Many of those who identified themselves as unemployed are in the under 25 age-group, while those with a job are mainly in the 26 and up age category.

Volunteer Status: There was a relatively even number of respondents who identify themselves as volunteers (53%) compared to non-volunteers (47%). There were more volunteers in the under 30 age category compared to the 31 and up age category.

Educational Status and Background: Only 40% of the respondents identify themselves as students compared to 59% of respondents who are not currently students. There are a higher number of respondents who identify themselves as students in the 16-20 age category. The survey sample is fairly educated in the sense that they are literate, they are able to speak and write in English (many also speak other languages fluently), and a large number of respondents have completed primary and secondary education. 55.2% of respondents have completed or are attending University or College and 20.9% of respondents have completed or are pursuing Post Graduate Studies.

Online Activity: All survey respondents have basic access to the Internet, whether it be through an Internet café, library, school, work or home computer. 46% of the respondents stated that they are online between 1-10 hours per week. 22.9% of respondents are online between 11-20 hours and 24.5% are online for more than 21 hours each week. When asked what they do online, the key reoccurring themes involved communication, research & information searching (including working on projects and employment), music, games & entertainment.

The following is a summary of the major online activities respondents are involved in:

- **Communication:**
Almost every response made reference to checking e-mail, if not instant messaging and/or chat room use.
- **Research and information:**
Most users identified reading various newspapers, searching background information on their interests and using online information resources to aid completion of their work and/or homework as frequent uses.
- **Work – on projects, employment:**
Work was often cited as NGO involvement, general employment and the development and maintenance of personal web-pages.
- **Music, games and entertainment:**
On-line time is shared among downloading music, playing games and generally related to any other media/entertainment purposes.

5. Defining Youth

In looking at how the concept 'youth' is defined, there are different notions and interpretations that can be grouped into three major areas. The most common conceptions present youth in the context of having bountiful energy, a sense of leadership, curiosity and vision for the future. "Period of the life when we are still dreaming;" said a 30-year-old male, Skopje, Macedonia. Just over half of the survey respondents expressed that 'youth' is defined by the **age** of a person; with most of the respondents in the 13-30 age-group.

The next major interpretation of how youth are defined was expressed through various personality characteristics and **outlooks** on life. "Vivacious, full of energy, want to make a mark in life, impulsive and one who are not scared to take risks;" said a 19-year-old female, Pune, India. Many descriptions shared by survey respondents clearly define 'youth' in a positive and idealistic light. The third major category defining youth focuses on the particular **life stage** that people are situated in while in transition from being dependents to being independent. "A person who is starting to enjoy freedom for the first time...;" said a 26-year-old male, Harare, Zimbabwe. A key theme that is frequently repeated throughout this stage of transition is the freedom and lack of constraints that exist compared to older adults who are weighed down by greater responsibilities and societal pressures.

Societal institutions develop various mechanisms to train and nurture the development of young people who are at a life stage that allows them to be open-minded, free-spirited, creative and imaginative. There exists a clear correlation between the social conditioning of young people who need to prepare to become adults and the aspirations of adults to re-connect with their 'youthful creative energy' in an age where creativity and innovation are highly valued and a scarce resource in large bureaucratic institutions.

However, there is both a strong contrast and a connection that exists between notions of 'youth' and 'adult'. A common thread is that both involve age as part of the definition. The following chart highlights the contrast that exists between the most frequent expressions that emerged in response to the questions 'What words, images and phrases come to mind when you hear the word 'youth' and then asked the same question for 'adult':

Associations with the word 'Youth'	Associations with the word 'Adult'
Lack wisdom, need guidance	Caregivers, Standard Setters
Dreamers, Visionary, Hope for the Future	Critical, Dream-Killers, Few Idealists
Freedom, Experimentation, Playfulness	Burdened, Busy, Responsibilities
Open-Minded, Flexible, Innovative	Rigid-Thinking, Stuck, Conservative
Rebellious, Free-spirited	Professional and traditional
Innocence, Naïve, Potential	Greedy, Corrupt, Selfish
Disadvantaged, Vulnerable, Unheard Voice	Decision-Makers, Positions of Authority

In reflecting on the nature of the responses to this question, it is important to note that the overall perceptions of 'adults' are negative compared to perceptions of 'youth.' This bias may exist as a result of the sample size which involved 75% of people under the age of 30. It is possible if more adults were surveyed, especially those adults who are less involved and connected to youth networks, there may have been more negative categories for youth.

It is also important to keep in mind that certain words and phrases can have both a positive and negative interpretation. For example, depending on the context of the situation, being rebellious can be seen as something that involves creating trouble or struggling towards positive change. Being a dreamer may imply that one has a strong sense of imagination while at the same time, having the potential of being caught up in a fantasy which is never actualized.

A variety of the characteristics which describe adults involve ideals which youth often aspire towards attaining such as being a decision-maker or someone in a position of authority. These are perceived attitudes however there may be more instances where adults feel powerless and that they are not in a position to make decisions. This may help to explain the sense that people have of 'adults' being busy and burdened with responsibilities.

Overall, there appears to be an interesting generational relationship and potential communication gap that exists which involves both tension and aspiration. The survey results suggest that 'youth' can be a great source of energy, vision, hope and potential, while at the same time being vulnerable, voiceless and rebellious. The results also demonstrate that although 'adults' can be conservative, critical and rigid in their thinking, ultimately, they are relied on as care-givers, decision-makers and sources of knowledge and authority. The challenge for youth is to find their voice and become empowered without losing their sense of spirit and optimism. The challenge for adults is in finding ways to handle increasing amounts of responsibility and power in a way that doesn't exclude, ignore or disengage youth, while also reconnecting their own sense of youth.

While exploring and more deeply understanding the role of young people in the context of today's society, it is important to note that generational barriers have existed and persisted throughout the course of history. It is possible that this generation of youth will have greater opportunities to empower themselves to have a voice as a result of the many forums which are emerging, however it is also clear that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in order to allow for positive intergenerational partnership.

When we asked the survey respondents to identify the role that they saw youth having within their communities, the most common response across all regions was youth having the role of the student. This makes sense for a variety of reasons. Those participating in the survey are either currently students or have graduated and feel that since a great deal of time as a young person is spent on learning, whether it be in school or in other contexts such as the home or workplace, it is appropriate that the

role of youth involves being a student. One participant commented that youth need to “do their job which is going to school, and learning while their minds are fresh and can still remember, for the future.” ~ Male, 12, North America In trying to identify how to segment different age groups of youth, based on this survey response, it might make sense to group people according to educational experiences. For example, middle school, high school, post-secondary etc.

The following table provides a breakdown of each region and how respondents in those regions have identified the role of youth. This ‘top 10’ list, based on selections from a dropdown menu in the survey question will be used for the regional analysis:

Role of Youth - for Each Region											
Africa	%	North America	%	South America	%	Asia	%	Europe	%	Oceania	%
Students	20.5	Students	27	Students	24	Students	19	Students	26	Students	24
Activists	9.9	Consumers	8.8	Workers	9.1	Activists	9.1	Consumers	11	Consumers	8.7
Victims	7.9	Citizens	6.9	Consumers	9.1	Volunteers	8.2	Citizens	8.4	Citizens	8.3
Volunteers	7.6	Workers	6	Citizens	7.3	Leaders	8	Members	6.5	Members	7.6
Citizens	6.8	Activists	5.7	Activists	7.3	Workers	6	Innovators	6.1	Activists	7.2
Workers	6.6	TrendSetters	5.3	Innovators	5.5	Citizens	6	Activists	5.8	Workers	6.5
Members	5.2	Leaders	4.8	Leaders	5.5	Consumers	5.2	Workers	5.4	Innovators	5.1
Leaders	5	Innovators	4.5	Volunteers	5.5	Trend-setters	4	Trend-setters	4.7	Leaders	5.1
Innovators	3.5	Volunteers	3.8	Trend-setters	3.6	Members	4	Troublemaker	3.9	Troublemaker	5.1
Entrepreneurs	2.6	Employees	3.7	Entrepreneurs	3	Entrepreneurs	3.7	Children	3.9	Trend-setters	4.3

Many similarities exist in the respondents’ statements from North America, Europe and Oceania responded to the question about how they see the role of youth. After selecting students as their first choice, they then identified youth as consumers, followed by youth as citizens. Considering the fact that each of these regions are primarily comprised of developed nations which are heavily influenced by mass media, advertising and overall consumer culture, it is interesting to see that these influences have affected the perceived role that youth have as consumers.

Since many developed nations in Western-Europe, North America and Oceania have strong economies and have established democracies as the form of governance for their countries, it is interesting to note that people from these regions feel that youth have the role of being citizens, ahead of roles such as workers or activists. In Africa, Asia and the Middle East, respondents interpreted the role of young people as activists right after students. This may suggest that there are or have been many struggles and battles that youth have had to fight for as activists, and that these societies are less influenced by consumer culture compared to the other regions. Another commonality between these regions is that volunteers are ranked higher compared to all other regions.

This may be due to the lack of meaningful employment opportunities for youth, along with the willingness that youth have to contribute to the development of their communities. In addition African respondents seeing youth as activists, they are the only region to express that youth have the role as victims. 7.9% of respondents from

Africa identify youth as victims, whereas 'victims' doesn't appear in the top 10 list for any other regions. This is a striking point and can likely be explained through the hardships and struggles that young African youth face in terms of poverty, malnutrition and the spread of diseases such as HIV AIDS. It is important to keep in mind that the survey questions were asked in English which may not have been the first language of many survey respondents. This may have affected how people interpreted the meanings of different words such as 'consumer' or 'volunteer'.

In Latin America, respondents have identified youth as workers right next to students, which is then followed by youth as consumers, citizens and activists. Aside from youth being recognized as workers, this pattern is similar to North America, Europe and Oceania. Another point of interest is that youth are only identified as entrepreneurs in Africa, South America and Asia within the top 10 list. This may be as a result of the fact that in many developing countries, youth need to be more resourceful and entrepreneurial in order to survive and help support their families.

In using the top 10 lists of how various regions have identified the role of youth, a variety of interesting patterns and perspectives can be noted. Youth are identified as trendsetters in all regions except for Africa. Youth are identified as leaders in all regions except for Europe. Youth are identified as innovators in all regions except for Asia and are particularly high in Europe. Youth are identified as volunteers in all regions except for Europe and Oceania. Youth are only identified as employees in the top 10 list for North America. Youth are identified as students, consumers, activists, citizens across all regions. Youth are only identified as troublemakers in the top 10 lists for Europe and Oceania. In looking through the response in the 'other' category, the most common responses include youth having the role as 'artists'. This was not in the drop-down list.

In reflecting upon the different patterns that have emerged from these responses, it is fair to say that although there are regional trends, there are also many regional differences. Overall, youth are identified as initially having roles that are generally shaped and defined by the needs and expectations of society (i.e. student, consumer, worker, citizen), the data also suggests that youth are also taking on roles that they actively shape and define such as innovators, leaders, trend-setters and activists.

6. Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Youth

Optimism

When asked if youth have a lot of reasons for hope for the future, a majority of respondents (62.3%) believe that they do. Although the overall tone of the response is optimistic, there is still the remaining 40% who either disagree, or are neutral. Those who did not express optimism, may be discouraged by the direction that societal problems are headed towards. Those who express optimism, may believe that the future is headed in a positive direction and that it might be possible for them to have a role in shaping such a future. It is also possible that those who are living in the most difficult conditions are more optimistic, likely because they need to be in order to survive. Respondents from Africa, Asia and the Middle East have a stronger sense of optimism compared to other regions, especially Europe.

In looking at whether or not youth are considered to be motivated, 62.3% of respondents agree that youth are motivated. Although this is not a strikingly high percentage, it is still one that expresses a sense of optimism. The question about whether or not youth are inspired is one that involved a very neutral response. There were 46% of people who agreed that youth lack inspiration and 41% who disagree. The rest were neutral. In Africa, there were more respondents who strongly agree that youth lack inspiration compared to all other regions in this response category.

Although there were a bit more people who think youth are not inspired, the overall impression was generally even. When people responded to this question, they likely had different types of youth in mind. This response may simply be telling us that some youth are inspired while others are not. It could also mean that it is difficult to be able to confirm whether or not youth have or lack inspiration as inspiration is something which can come and go, or that the question was too ambiguous in this case.

Influences

A high number of survey respondents (76%) feel that youth are too influenced by consumer culture. This feeling was consistent across all regions. More people gave a neutral response rather than disagree with the statement that 'youth are too influenced by consumer culture'. Only 12% of the respondents disagree that youth are too influenced by consumer culture. This response relates to how people responded to the question about the role that young people play. Youth as consumers was a frequent response, especially regions of the world which are more economically developed.

An additional influence identified was the importance of education. When respondents were asked school is meaningful and important to attend, an overwhelming number of people (89%) expressed that they agreed with this statement. After discussing this high response rate with different colleagues, people felt that the question may have been worded a bit too strongly. It would have been interesting to know if there is a difference between the perception of school as being

meaningful and the perception of school as being important. Regardless, there is clearly high value placed on education by these respondents which means that schools are large influencers to many.

In further studies, it might be interesting to explore a variety of influences and which are most pervasive. For example, family, friends, religious institutions etc. Also, to more deeply understand how the media affects this generation. What media sources and mediums are most influential to which audiences from which regions? How are youth informed about the things that they know? What are the different ways that they influence others? What is the level of upward influence that they have with older generations and what is the level of downward influence with younger generations?

Needs and Barriers

In trying to better understand and identify the perceived needs that young people have, along with the barriers that they may face, it is evident through the results of the survey that they need skills, knowledge, support, connection to opportunities and access to information. When asked if youth have all the skills they need for jobs, 62.2% of respondents said no. Since there are many types of jobs that exist which require a different set of skills, there are obviously many types of jobs that youth do have the skills for. The overall goal of this question was to better understand whether or not people perceived youth to be prepared for the jobs that they applied for and the overall response was no.

A smaller percentage of respondents feel that youth lack access to information (53.3%) compared to youth lacking the skills they need for jobs. Although this still makes up the majority, it is a low number which may be attributed to the access to information that youth are now provided with through the Internet. Many of the respondents (58%) also agreed that youth are not connected to opportunities. This was observed across different regions. Those age 35 and up felt most strongly about youth not being connected to opportunities.

In thinking more deeply about this question, it might be interesting to uncover how young people view opportunities compared to how older people identify opportunities. In addition, it would be useful to know how opportunities might be able to be made more available and accessible to youth. For those who feel that youth are connected to opportunities, what are the factors that affect this?

Generally speaking, respondents felt that youth lack support from adults (64.2% of people agreed with this statement). It would be useful to understand why respondents feel that youth lack support from adults and to better understand what support is needed.

Another survey question which evoked a very mixed response between those that agree, disagree and feel neutral, is how respondents felt about whether or not youth are focused. Only 27% of people agree that youth are focused, and 28% of people disagree. The remaining 24% of people felt neutral about the statement. Perhaps the

response to this question was affected by the level of ambiguity in the nature of the question. What does it mean to be focused? Which youth are being referred to? If one fluctuates from being focused to being unfocused, are they considered to be focused or unfocused? Based on how people responded to the question about how to define youth, one of the reoccurring defining words involved youth being confused. The response to this question might be a reflection of this sentiment. From a regional perspective, a larger number of people from Africa strongly agree that youth are very focused compared to other regions.

In looking at whether or not respondents feel that their age is an advantage or disadvantage when trying to apply for a job or affect change, there are very clear indications that the younger the age, the more that people feel like they are at a disadvantage as a result of their age. This feeling may exist not as a result of age alone, but as part of a larger context that comes with being younger.

For example, when young people are applying for a job, especially straight out of school, they have less experience and therefore require a greater amount of training and investment from the perspective of the employer, therefore when applying for a job, youth are at a disadvantage because they do not have an extensive range of experiences, and skill-sets which are developed as a result of experiences. One of the qualities that young people with less experience can offer to institutions is a fresh perspective and 'outlook' which can add different value.

7. Issues of Importance

When asked to identify the top key issues and interests of youth within their community, survey respondents clearly identified education (15.5%), employment (13%), friends (10.2%) and music (4.6%) as the overall top areas of concern and interest. Since the question was asked in a way that broke down various social issues into their own categories, it does not appear in the top listed areas of interest and concern.

When all of the various social issues including: Environment, Health, Sustainable Development, Political Action, Globalization, HIV & AIDS, Peace, Human Rights, Community, Volunteering, War/Conflict, Religion and Fundraising, the overall 'social issues' category appears at the top of the list as demonstrated in Figure 3.1 in the Final Results document. From a global perspective, it is interesting to look at the breakdown in interests when key categories are grouped together in order to help identify the top priorities. From a regional perspective, it is useful to look at the top priorities in the order of how respondents selected them, without grouping categories together. Below is a table that illustrates the top 10 issues and interests of youth which have been identified by respondents from each region:

Top 10 Issues for Each Region - Key Issues

Africa	%	North America	%	South America	%	Asia	%	Europe	%	Oceania	%
Education	22	Education	17	Employment	19	Education	20	Friends	17	Friends	18
Employment	19	Friends	17	Education	15	Employment	15	Education	14	Employment	17
Business	7.6	Employment	12	Friends	9.1	Friends	8.5	Employment	12	Education	14
HIV/AIDS	5.8	Music	7.3	Business	5.2	Business	6.2	Music	7.6	Music	6.3
Friends	4.7	Romance	4.6	Sports	5.2	Leadership	4.6	Romance	4.4	Sports	5.5
Health	4.5	Sports	3.8	Arts	3.9	Environment	4.4	Travel	3.5	Other	4.3
Sustainability	4.5	Other	3.4	Leadership	3.9	Globalization	3.6	Peace	3.2	Environment	3.9
Sports	3.2	Technology	2.7	Music	3.2	Music	3.3	Business	3	Romance	3.5
Music	3.1	Community	2.7	Politics	3.2	Sustainability	3.3	Media	2.7	Health	3.1
Technology	2.8	Arts	2	Globalization	3.2	Peace	3	Health	2.5	Leadership	2.8

Education

The top identified area of interest and concern for youth in Africa, Asia and North America is Education. It is ranked as the second priority from those in South America and Europe, and third in Oceania. Based on survey respondents identifying the primary role of young people as students, it makes sense that education is pointed out as a key area of importance.

Employment

In South America, Employment is identified as the top priority. Across all other regions, it is among the top 3 areas of interest and concern for youth. There are many aspects of employment which are likely in the minds of those who have identified this area as important. In drawing upon the Framework for Action which was launched at

the Youth Employment Summit in September 2002, there are 6 E's which provide a great context in which to understand how the issue of employment is relevant to young people. The first 'E' is about **employability**. Young people are concerned about ensuring that they have the necessary skills and experiences to allow them to be employed in their field of interest. The other key youth employment challenges include: **employment creation, equity (equal opportunity), entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability and empowerment**. Each of these provide insight into the types of experiences and concerns that young people have as it relates to employment or unemployment around the world.

Friends

In both Europe and Oceania, the key expressed interest of youth is friends, with North America identified friends as the second top interest. Among all categories, 'Friends' is among the top 3 priorities, aside from Africa where it is listed fifth.

Social Issues

There are a variety of social issues which are important to young people. Respondents from both North America and Europe have the least number of social issues listed in their top 10 list of key interests and concerns. In Africa, HIV AIDS appears as one of the top priorities being ranked fourth, whereas HIV AIDS is not even listed in the top 10 for any of the other regions. Globalization appears in Africa, Asia, and South America. Perhaps this is a result of the negative impact that globalization has had in each of these regions. Sustainable Development appears in the top 10 list for Africa, Asia and Oceania and Political Action is among the top 10 for South America, but not for any other regions.

Overall, the top 5 identified social issues of interest include: Environment, Health, Sustainable Development, Political Action and Globalization. For future survey's it might be more beneficial to group social action into one categories so people can assess how social action overall ranks as an area of interest and concern compared to employment or education. The challenge in doing that is that in many instances, employment and/or education or the absence of it may viewed as social issues in themselves.

Entertainment

Based on the survey results, music is by far the top form of entertainment that is of interest to youth comprising 4.6% of the responses. Questions about how people most enjoy listening to music (whether it is through the radio, television, tape recorder, CD or mp3's) would be another interesting follow-up question to ask and compare regionally. Other key identified forms of entertainment include sports (3%), technology (2.2%) and media (1.6%). It would be very interesting to further explore these areas regionally. For example, which sports are most enjoyed, which forms of technology and media?

8. Participation in Decision-Making

There is a strong sense of interest that youth have in being involved. When asked if people agree or disagree to the statement that 'youth do not care about being involved', 60% of the respondents disagreed. Of that 60%, there were 50% of people who strongly disagreed with the statement, which implies the respondents feel youth do care about youth being involved. In addition to having a strong interest in involvement, there was a clear perspective that it is very important for youth to be involved in decision-making.

When asked how important it is for youth to be able to participate in decision-making, 83% of respondents said that it was important. Of those who think it is important for youth to be involved in decision-making, 87% thought that it was very important. This is a strikingly strong response, especially in comparison to the nature of responses for all other questions in this survey. With such a large number of people feeling so strongly about the importance of youth participation in decision-making, it would be helpful to better understand what youth interpret the different forms of decision-making as being. Why is youth participation in decision-making important? Who gains from this process?

In looking at current levels of youth participation in decision-making, respondents were less optimistic. Survey participants expressed that there are currently low levels of youth involvement in decision-making persisted across Business and Government in local, national and international levels. On the other hand, there were more positive signs of youth having some level of involvement in decision-making with non-profit organizations, especially on local and national levels. Since young people often make up a large part of the volunteer staff within various non-profit organizations, it is more likely that they are able to become more involved in decision-making within these institutions.

The highest level of involvement in participation was with local non-profit, non-governmental organizations. 59% of survey respondents feel that they youth are involved in this form of decision-making. Interestingly, respondents felt that youth are least involved in decision-making with national governments and business compared to all other categories. There were 68% of respondents who said that youth are not involved in government related decision-making on a national level.

When the question about whether or not youth should be involved in decision-making was asked, it would have also been useful to ask if youth should be involved in all levels of decision-making, or only in environments where decisions are being made that directly affect them. In addition, it would be interesting to further understand what factors need to exist in order for youth to become more active participants in decision-making. A survey question did ask about the necessary conditions for youth to become leaders, but there may be a difference between youth as leaders and youth as participants in decision-making processes.

In looking at some of the work carried out by the Global Youth Action Network, a very useful framework in looking at levels of youth participation in decision-making has been identified:

1. Manipulation is an adult initiated approach. Adults run the program after initiating the idea while the young people don't understand the issues being dealt with or the actions taking place. Adults pretend that the youth are viable part in the organization, yet the young people are not being consulted or given a chance to feedback.

2. Decoration is similar to manipulation in that it is an adult initiated approach omitting the input of the young. The young people are existent, though, in the program but still have no say while adults are not pretending that youth are initiators.

3. Tokenism is described as an adult initiated and run approach in which young people seem to have a "voice", but no choice about the subject. They are not given a chance to form an opinion

4. Assigned but Informed is defined as an adult initiated approach, but this time young people understand the intentions and plans of the adults. Though they are not given planning privileges, they know what's going on and are given opportunity to volunteer and play a meaningful role in the organization.

5. Young People Consulted and Informed is described as projects initiated by adults, yet open to sharing information with youth so much that their opinions are treated seriously.

6. Adult-Initiated Shared Decisions with Young People describes the level in which youth are considered true participants.

7. Young Person-Initiated and Directed are seen as those young members who design, implement, and manage their own projects without the help of adult participation.

8. Young Person-Initiated, Shared Decision with Adults are defined as older youth involving adults in their pre-planned and managed project.

The Global Youth Action Network's team based in Brazil, led by Jonah Wittkamper, is looking at developing something called the 'Youth Participation Index'. This is aimed at developing various 'participation indicators' in order to better understand the current situation, promote further research, and identify key areas around how young people need to be supported in order to participate in decision-making. The initial model that the index is based on refers to the Global Youth Action Networks 5-level model of youth participation and organizing:

- 1) Raising awareness of social and environmental problems
- 2) Action to solve problems
- 3) Network of information and resources
- 4) Collaboration of groups
- 5) Participation in formal, permanent structures of decision-making

This model and framework serve as a great starting point when thinking about questions related to the current level of youth participation in decision-making.

9. Factors Influencing the Changing Role of Youth

Technology has served as a powerful force in transforming the role of youth throughout time. 81% of the survey respondents stated that technology has had a positive effect on how the role of youth has changed over the past 100 years. When asked what factors influence this change or lack of change, a variety of different factors were identified. The following table provides an overview of the major factors and outcomes that were identified in the various survey responses:

Factor Influencing Change	Result / Outcome
Technology - Access to information	More knowledgeable
Technology – ability to communicate	Open-minded, exposed to different views
Technology – access to opportunities	Diverse range of experiences and skills
Rise in democracies	Greater amount of freedom and choice
Lowering voting age to 18	Increased civic participation
Demographics – large population	Greater concern for youth involvement
Access to education	Higher literacy rate, better able to participate
Social movements	More rights, privileges & voice
Rise in consumerism	Materialistic and self-centered
Increased life expectancy	Married and having children at older age
Increased migration	More contact with foreign cultures
Increased divorce rate	Broken families, more independent
Youth-led organizations	Meaningful engagement
Increased entrepreneurship	Economic empowerment
Stakeholder inclusion in decision-making	Youth are being recognized as stakeholders

As a result of the level of access, opportunities and modes of communication that technology provides, this sample of youth are more knowledgeable, skilled, and open-minded. As a result of the increase in countries that have transformed their governance structures into democracies, especially from dictatorships, there is a greater amount of freedom and choice that this generation of youth is growing up with (in certain countries). Many social movements which have struggled to ensure basic human rights were established and respected which range from women's movements to child labour movements; this generation of youth is growing up with more rights and privileges. These rights and privileges also involve the right to education, which has led to higher literacy rates among this generation of youth.

We might propose that the rise in consumerism has led to a more materialistic and self-centered generation and increased migration as a result of increased forms of transportation such as the train, plane and automobile have led to increased contact between people of different cultures, therefore greater cross-cultural interaction. With various technological innovations and improvements in vaccinations and other forms of health care, there has been an increased life expectancy, especially in developed nations, which has also meant that the more people are getting married and having children at a later age. In addition, family structures are being transformed as there

has been an increase in divorce rates. With the rise of youth-led organizations and initiatives, there are now greater opportunities for meaningful youth engagement and with the rise in entrepreneurship; there is greater potential for economic empowerment.

Finally, with corporations and other institutions increasingly recognizing that they need to be transparent and are accountable to all stakeholders who are impacted by their activities, young people are growing up in a time where their opportunity to be recognized and engaged as key stakeholders in all forms of decision-making is increasingly possible and desirable. It is important to note that each of the statements outlined above are merely reflections of how the survey respondents answered this question. Future research could involve a deeper exploration of each of the areas. Various statistics could be gathered from different regions of the world to help illustrate the points, and test whether or not they held true in different contexts. An initial set of questions for further exploration have been prepared to assist in this process.

Technology is understood as having an overall positive impact on youth within various communities around the world. When survey respondents were asked how technology has impacted youth in their community, 85% of people said that the impact was positive. Seeing as all of the survey respondents have access to the Internet, this response may have been biased by the sample, however even if it is only a reflection of how those with access to technology feel, it is important to note that the feeling is positive. There are a variety of ways in which technology has had an impact in various communities. In the qualitative responses to this question, a key theme that emerged was that technology has involved the proliferation of certain values which include:

- Convenience & Flexibility
- Entrepreneurial spirit and initiative
- Informal, interactive participation
- Freedom of Expression
- Empowerment for powerless
- Open to other cultures & sharing ideas
- Overcoming barriers (Geographic, Economic, Cultural)
- Untapped Potential

Whether or not these values or ideal are actualized as a result of technology is not what is in question. This simply expresses that various notions that come with new technologies. In addition to highlighting these values, a series of positive and negative impacts were identified and have been categorized into the following key groupings:

TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENALBER	[explanation]
Communications & Connectivity	Reach beyond community, belongingness
Access to Opportunities	Job or volunteer related,
Information & Knowledge	Able to make more informed choices,
Learning (more available)	Distance education,
Activism (more effective)	Outlet to implement change
Sparked sense of wonder & curiosity	Questions answered through click of button
Awareness of broader issues	International news, less national bias
Personal Development	Ability to develop new skills
Modernization of agriculture	Reduced drudgery
Access to medicine, transportation etc	Increased life-expectancy and mobility

By far, access to information, communications, research and knowledge were the greatest impacts of technology in respondents' communities. As a result, personal changes have been facilitated; increasing global awareness and computer literacy, and opportunities available in local and global communities have increased.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS	[explanation]
Pornography & Obscene language	Over-exposure
Decreased reliance on personal interaction	Weakens relationships
Mis-information & Information overload	Leads to feelings of powerlessness
Provoked consumerism	Through ads, satisfaction through objects
Increased laziness	Less fit and physically active
Time waster, addictive	Through games, online gambling, etc
Digital Divide	Only helps those with access

Considering the high frequency of responses that highlighted the overall positive impact that technology has had, there are quite a few key areas of concerns that people have as a result of the impact the information communications technologies has had on youth. A very serious concern that emerged from the responses was the fact that technology is only able to support and enable those who have access. As a result, it increases the gap between the rich and the poor.

"It has only impacted those who have access to it. the internet is a wealth of information, but only to students with access. It is clear in the vast difference of technological interns in my office. Some know how to use computers, some do not even know how to use a word processor. There are vast inequities appearing."

~Female, 29, United States

This concern is commonly characterized by the 'Digital Divide'. In keeping the effects of the digital divide in mind, it is imperative that future survey's and studies on the role of youth involve the participation and voices of those who do not have access to the Internet. This will not only allow for new voices to be heard, but for solutions to be shared and explored in order to work towards addressing concerns of access.

10. Youth as Agents of Change

Despite the fact that young people often see their age as a disadvantage in many types of situations, they are also influential and are often able to distinguish themselves and powerful agents of change. When asked to respond to the statement 'I feel that my age is a disadvantage when trying to influence change', 49.8% of survey respondents agree and 35% disagree. A very clear and interesting pattern was evident in the graphs which group respondents in various age ranges. The youngest age group (age 15 and under), most strongly agreed with the statement that their age is a disadvantage, and as each age range increased, respondents expressed that their age was less of a barrier.

When asked to provide examples of how young people have had a meaningful impact in their community, a range of responses emerged and can be summarized through the following list:

TOP 10 - Ways That Young People Have a Meaningful Impact in their Community:

1. They are founders and initiators of projects, clubs, groups and organizations
2. They are lobbyists, involved in decision-making through political processes
3. They promote awareness of social and environmental issues
4. They share their ideas and issues of concern at conferences, forums and summits
5. They are trainers, mentors, coaches and tutors
6. They express themselves through visual, dramatic and musical arts
7. They create their own media through newsletters, websites and radio stations
8. They are organizers of petitions, campaigns and peaceful protests
9. They are entrepreneurs creating businesses and jobs
10. They are volunteers and fundraisers for charities

The above list provides an insightful glimpse at the many ways in which young people are having a positive impact in their communities. This list is something that can also be applied to a variety of different contexts including existing 'guides' on how to take action as a young person who wants to make a difference, and forum's that are interested in understanding if and how young people are able to have a positive impact.

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH HAVING AN EFFECTIVE, MEANINGFUL IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY	<i>[Quote from Survey]</i>
Started an Initiative / Group / Club / Non-Profit Organization / Network / Coalition / Project / Association / Movement /	"In Cambodia had many youth create club and NGO by themselves." ~ 587 "I started a community action project nationally, which is spreading, this allows young people to meet in rural and urban sectors, identify their problems, build their potentials to solve that, develop and manage that by them selves." ~ 201
Community Garden	"A group of 9-14 year old children and 3 adults designed

	created and maintained a community garden - the produce from the garden goes to underprivileged families in the neighborhood." ~778
Volunteering (picking up trash, working in soup kitchens or at nursing homes helping the elderly, helping disabled etc)	young people in our community is one of the most active sector in terms of volunteerism. The youth is one of the organized group ever ready to be involved and to participate to community development. ~824
Fundraising for a cause	"A group of students at my high school have formed an organization called Victims of War that fundraises year round for various charitable organizations." ~936
Political Process Involvement / Position in Parliament / Youth Councils (local, national, regional) / Site on Committee / Youth Ambassador / Delegate /	"A group of child/youth ambassadors influenced the government to provide funding for a Hong Kong Children's Council" ~ 125
Lobbying for issues of importance to youth	"Young people in Cambridge were able to lobby to get the city council to lower the voting age to 17 for local elections" ~745 "Skaters became pro-active in wanting a skate park, so much so they made a video, took their view points into local council, fundraised and eventually after many years plans have been passed for a skate park." ~ 756
Campaign / Rallies / Protest (Non-Violent)	"The youth is always the first ones to shout at a demonstration and in Greece, for example, on November 11th 1976 it was the students who gave their lives against nato, junta and the they wanted democracy. Thanks to them that Greece is a democratic country. ~324
Celebration (of special days that promote youth)	"The Kenya Global Youth Service Day(GYSD) 2002 Team made a mark of the year! During the celebrations in April, the Team in the spirit of making the world a better place for all humanity had a joint project with the Disabled Children's Home." ~ 846
Conferences / Forums / Summits	"At a recent conference we held called Speak Out - where young people were able to provide input into the issues that effect them the most - and develop action plans around these. This was in partnership with Government and Non Government welfare Service Providers." ~92
Peer-To-Peer Awareness and Educational Programs (related to health, human rights and environmental issues)	"A youth which survived Cancer spoke publicly about the impact of smoking in public spaces and he influenced the vote to ban cigarettes from all public spaces in his community" ~784
Training (technology)	"By training over 500 other youths in the use and application of Information and Communication Technology free of charge and encouraging the other youths that are taught to do the same, so as to reduce the rate of ICT illiteracy in Africa." ~554
Mentoring / Guidance / Tutoring / Coaching (sports)	"...telling the kids about what life is like at uni and kind of providing ourselves as role models since few graduates at this high school ever go on to tertiary studies." ~354
Artistic Expression (mural project, monologue/play, visual	"The youth of our town painted our squash club with what Ngaruawahia means to them and their culture. It

arts, music festival)	showed all the different people and religions that are within our town." ~134
Culture	"One youth from high school had the initiative to start a cultural awareness day for the community. She not only made the day successful, but also made it occur every year thus far. ~346
Youth Media (youth TV show, newsletter/paper, radio station)	"People and especially the youth have been effective participate in the youth ngo's and exactly participating in the public debate, in the tv special programs." ~191
Student Council	"I am the Co-president of my school's Student's Council, and I helped organize a leadership camp which positively showed youth they have opportunities to lead in many aspects of life." 1192
Successful Entrepreneurs	"Youth in Mexico, all the time are starting a new business, therefore there are many companies with a young president." ~768
Consumer Behaviour	"As powerful consumer group they decide what's in the stores. ~615
Simple Acts of Kindness	"All around me, I've seen young people doing good to help one another. We can all have a meaningful impact on one another, even in simple things." ~674
No Impact (approx 7%)	"Unfortunately the youth within my community are not given the chance to influence change." ~882

When asked what they would change about the world, their country, or their community, respondents provided a variety of different perspectives on the issues that they were most interested in. On a global level, the focus was jointly on attitudes and the issue of peace and unity, which especially affects those from Africa and the Middle East on a daily basis. 'Opportunities for youth' was a theme between global and national change, whereas on a local level responses were more specific – Structural Support, Encouragement, and Understanding.

Changing attitudes was common to both global and local, while on a national level concerns were, as would be expected, centering on governmental and regional issues. These included a desire for more responsive and democratic leadership and a crackdown on corruption in leadership, equality of classes and races, higher quality education and lower illiteracy rates, and national unity and pride, with a focus on a broader global outlook.

As they discussed the conditions that need to exist for youth to become leaders, a third of respondents believe that infrastructure is critical to enable youth to achieve leadership capability. Being valued and included placed highly alongside personal conditions, and mentorship was also a visible concern with several of participants suggesting its value. Some suggested that "Youth can become leaders in any situation or conditions" as a male from Australia put it, "It may be hard to be a leader in a tyrannical and brutal regime, but it is equally difficult to be a leader in an apathetic, affluent society." Although many would doubt the validity of the comparison, the suggested importance of being valued and included obviously could provide more encouragement to youth in certain societal situations.

11. Conclusion

The importance of this research has already been commented on. In meetings with the senior marketing staff of a major technology company, comments were made that this type of globally reaching evaluation of youth values, perspectives, and needs is needed and is currently not available in one holistic form. A summary of results and an excerpt from this final report will be shared with the over 1,000 people from over 100 countries who contributed to the survey, and will likely incorporate it into their work, use it to better understand youth as stakeholders, and even use it to assist them in getting support for their vision. It will also be shared at this year's World Summit on the Information Society, as well as numerous other relevant forums, perhaps even next year's World Economic Forum.

For young people, this survey should help them recognize their uniqueness and the power and potential they have to create change and become influencers on their own. The research showed that there are concerns about the overwhelming impact of consumerism, yet young people have a great opportunity to create alternative channels of media to provide more custom, less commercial messages to their peers, and this is already starting to happen.

Young people can also use the Internet more effectively, to not just communicate with friends but also to discover a wealth of opportunities offered up by International NGOs that strive to engage youth in their decision-making. This ranges from scholarships offered to attend conferences, to youth advisory boards, to grants, internships, and awards. In the future, one of the major subjects to discover is the idea of influence. How much influence do young people globally really have?

Current studies show a high rate of influence in household purchasing, but how far does it extend beyond that? And in less consumer-oriented contexts, what else do they influence? Also, how are young people influenced by their siblings and peers, by their parents, by external influences? Learning more about this issue may provide further insight into their behavior.

It was suggested by many respondents that to increase participation, we could do two things. First, have the survey translated into the core languages of French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian, to enable non-English speakers to share their perspectives. Secondly, recognizing the issue of access, and enabling those with access to print, distribute, collect, and send in 'offline' replies from those without access to the Internet, or those who could not spend the needed time online to complete the survey.

Other factors to investigate include how youth participation in decision-making was and is increased in various regions or amongst various groups of youth – what happened that increased their interest or awareness of such opportunities? Also, looking into what transforms one's perspective of the role of youth. How is this shaped? Why do certain respondents feel so differently than others, even in the same regions?

If this research were to be done again, the number of qualitative questions would be reduced to lighten workload; the amount of time required to summarize, group, understand, and analyze the responses was greatly underestimated. Also, an offline version would be developed that could be e-mailed in or mailed in later to allow those with limited online time to more fully complete the survey or complete the survey at all.

A challenge exists for many institutions to create an environment that enables youth to become more actively engaged in ways that best help to serve, shape and contribute to their societies.

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