



Y7 Canadian Delegation (From left to right: Heather O’Watch, Sarah Rozon, Sydney Whiting, Pentcho Tchomakov)

**Y7 Japan 2023
Young Canadian Diplomats of Canada
June 4th, 2023**

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Overview

The Youth 7 (Y7) is the official youth engagement group of the G7 Summit. This year it was hosted in Japan and included both Tokyo and Hiroshima as host cities. The summit consisted of over 35 delegates representing their respective countries within the G7. These countries include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America, as well as the European Union. A delegate from each country was responsible for negotiating policy recommendations in one of the following five tracks: Economic Resilience, Digital Innovation and Transformation, Climate and Environment, Global Health and Happiness, and Peace and Security. The pre-negotiations were held virtually for two months before the in-person summit and included opportunities for each delegate to propose recommendations in their respective tracks. During the summit, delegates negotiated and collaborated on several policy recommendations in each track which culminated in the creation of the final Y7 communiqué.

Delegation Priorities

The mandate of our delegation was trifold: consultations, research, and relationship-building.

To broaden our understanding of the lived experiences of Canadian youth and ensure that Canadian youth voices were heard at the Y7, we conducted extensive consultations with youth organizations. These engagements informed both the content and priorities of our Y7 advocacy work. The decision to seek a community-informed approach was important for our delegation, as we recognize the need to deepen our understanding, promote inclusivity, and exercise allyship to inform our policy recommendations. Another important aspect of our consultation was the bilingual survey created by our delegation, which gathered over 700 responses from youth across the country. The survey contained questions on each of the five negotiation tracks and helped the delegation to clarify our priorities in advance of the summit.

Secondly, we conducted detailed research. This included reviewing government, academic, and gray literature, as well as holding consultations with sector experts. This research was essential to supplement our understanding of the current challenges facing Canadian youth, to inform our advocacy, and situate our recommendations in the national and G7 policy landscape.

Finally, our delegation prioritized relationship building, both with stakeholders and other Y7 delegations. Prior to the summit, this manifested as bilateral and multilateral meetings. During the summit itself, the entire Canadian delegation maintained strong relationships with other Y7 delegations. Following the official release of the G7 communiqué, some track delegations also met to discuss the impacts of the G7 communiqué and a strategy to move forward with the Y7 agenda; this post-summit Y7 engagement is a testament to the relational bonds built during the summit and their importance for ongoing advocacy.

Achievements

In preparation for the Y7 summit, our delegation had the privilege of engaging in meetings with high-level Canadian officials, who provided invaluable guidance and expertise. Firstly, we had the opportunity to gain insights from the former Canadian Ambassador to Japan, Jonathan T. Fried. This meeting was instrumental in contextualizing our policy goals within the broader Canada-Japan relationship. His expertise in diplomatic protocols, trade relations, and regional dynamics guided us in ensuring our policy proposals aligned with Canada's strategic interests.

Upon our arrival to Japan, we had the opportunity to consult with the Canadian Ambassador to Japan, Ian G. McKay, and his team at the Embassy of Canada to Japan. His deep knowledge of the summit host country and diplomatic experience proved essential in understanding the Japanese political atmosphere, negotiation dynamics, and cultural nuances, as well as fostering strong bilateral relations.



(Photo from the Embassy of Canada to Japan's Twitter)

Furthermore, upon our return to Canada, we met with David Morrison, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs at Global Affairs Canada and a G7 Sherpa, who played a pivotal role in coordinating Canada's participation at the G7 summit. In this meeting, we advocated for the recommendations of the Y7 communiqué in advance of the G7 Summit. In summary, these meetings provided us with a wealth of knowledge, strategic advice, and access to a network of seasoned diplomats, enhancing our representation of young Canadians in a complex global environment.

As previously mentioned, our delegation prioritized consultations with Canadian and Youth organizations to develop a robust perspective of their lived experiences and priorities. Key consultation groups of our delegation and their organizational mandates are outlined below.

Table 1: Consulted youth organizations and their corresponding organizational mandates

| Consultation Group | Organizational Mandate |
|--|---|
| Federation of Black Canadians (FBC) | As a Pan-Canadian body, FBC seeks to discuss the opportunities, contributions, and challenges that exist for people of African descent nationally. |
| Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP) | CCYP is focused on future-oriented solutions for youth, based on demand, to close gaps in the workforce and drive innovation in the labour market across Canada. |
| Dignity Network Canada | Dignity Network Canada is a group of civil society organizations across Canada involved in supporting the human rights of people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) globally. |
| Youthful Cities | Youthful Cities is a social enterprise that creates data-driven solutions to improve cities. They bring together young people to collect data, spark dialogue, generate insights, and work towards positive action. |
| 4-H Canada Youth Advisory Committee | 4-H empowers youth to be responsible, caring, and contributing leaders that affect positive change in the world around them. |
| Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security (CCYPS) | CCYPS fosters a collaborative space for Canadian young people and allies to share and exchange resources and opportunities to better engage in the United Nations' Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda. |
| Prime Ministers Youth Council (PMYC) | PMYC is a group of young Canadians who provide non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada on issues of importance to them and to Canadians. |
| Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) | CAF-FCA is a collaborative network that connects the apprenticeship community in Canada. They share insights and promising practices across trades, across sectors and across the country – supporting efforts to address barriers and encourage participation in apprenticeship training in all regions of Canada. |
| Ecology Action Centre | The Ecology Action Centre is an environmental organization in Nova Scotia that takes leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. |
| LCOY (Members of the 2022 Organizing Committee) | Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) is an event under the YOUNGO umbrella that works to build knowledge and understanding among a nation's youth on climate change, sustainable development, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. |

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was a key priority for this year's Y7 delegation. As representatives from across Canada, it is imperative that the delegation engages with both rural and urban youth to ensure that specific geographical issues and priorities are heard. Additionally, it was critical to engage with underrepresented groups whose voices matter in global policy, including Indigenous, Black, and LGBTQIA+2S communities. This year's delegation reached out to other underrepresented groups and those with diverse lived experiences and intersectionalities, however only received correspondence from the organizations outlined in **Table 1**. The delegation also created an online survey, which was offered in both French and English and included questions regarding demographics to capture a better understanding of the priorities of these communities. During the summit, every Canadian delegate prioritized inclusive language in their negotiation efforts for the final communique and collaborated with other delegations to provide insight into Canada's diverse cultural and geographic population.

Negotiations

Economic Resilience

There are three key themes that our Head Delegate, Sarah Rozon, advocated strongly for in the Economic Resilience track: employment accessibility, investments in education, and entrepreneurship. The youth survey identified that equitable access to employment was the most pressing economic concern for young Canadians; over 45% of respondents identified this as the most influential factor in their ability to achieve economic security. To address this, the Economic Resilience delegate strongly advocated for two main clauses regarding employment access.

The first clause addresses the barriers for youth who hold learning certificates earned outside of post-secondary degree programs to access quality employment:

Increasing the credibility of informal learning certificates by standardizing their accreditation and connecting these certificate holders with paid apprenticeships via online or other platforms.

We heard from young Canadians that barriers to entry to post-secondary education are a key contributor to employment inaccessibility. By accrediting skills gained outside of formal learning environments, a more diverse population of young people can gain the qualifications needed to access meaningful employment.

Secondly, under a 'federal government as a model employer approach,' the Economic Resilience delegate strongly advocated for creating alternative employment pathways (beyond post-secondary degrees) for young people to get entry-level government jobs:

Encouraging competency-based hiring, beginning with entry-level opportunities in the public sector, to promote socio-economic mobility.

This is an actionable mechanism to move towards an equitable entry-level job market and can be used as a model for voluntary dissemination in the private sector.

The second highest concern for young Canadians, based on the survey, was access to investment opportunities. Our delegation also heard from several engagement groups on the importance of financial literacy and addressing urban and rural/remote disparities in education systems. The clause below aimed to highlight these two disparities to G7 leaders:

Modernizing curricula in alignment with the SDG 4 framework for education, with an emphasis on reducing regional disparities and promoting financial literacy.

Finally, young Canadians identified entrepreneurship as a key matter of importance in both the survey and consultations. To promote equitable youth entrepreneurship, the Economic Resilience delegate advocated for two key clauses. The first clause addresses the pervasive funding deficits for early-stage youth entrepreneurs, which is exacerbated for women and racialized individuals, and even further magnified for people at the intersection of these two demographics.

Increasing equitable and long-term access to funding and financial tools, assisted by the private sector, to further sector-diverse business support for young, minority, and social entrepreneurs.

Finally, we advocated for tools, mentorship, and access to resources for young entrepreneurs:

Advance entrepreneurial ecosystems through developing hubs that provide regional and global access to innovative technologies, best practice sharing, and diverse mentorship from corporate and cross-sectoral leaders, academic institutions, and training centers.

Digital Innovation and Transformation

Our delegate, Pentcho Tchomakov, conducted extensive research encompassing consultations, surveys, and thorough analysis to inform the recommendations put forth in this track. The research uncovered two key factors: firstly, the heightened awareness among younger generations, as highlighted by the Youth Council of Montreal and their collaboration with Open North, regarding challenges and risks associated with technology, including surveillance, data privacy, and ownership issues. Secondly, the strong desire of young people to actively participate in shaping the rules that govern their world, as evidenced by initiatives such as the "International Observatory on Participative Democracy - IOPD" and their focus on digital participative democracy for youth. By aligning these findings with the exponential growth in the data and AI sectors, we identified the need for a Universal Charter of Digital Rights by 2025 to provide holistic protection, particularly for youth, emphasizing a Tech For Good approach and safeguarding human agency. We championed explicit empowered consent, data erasure rights, collective data stewardship, and the establishment of a data-sharing framework for public interest research. Furthermore, we emphasized transparency,

accountability, and fairness in public-facing AI applications, calling for the creation of public registries, the adoption of benchmarks, model risk validation, and independent audits to ensure accountability and robustness.

By embodying Canada's middle power role, Pentcho also actively worked to bridge conflicts and facilitate consensus among the participating countries, even on aspects of the proposal that we were not initially advocating for. For example, there was a significant disagreement on whether to include specific mentions of technologies such as “ChatGPT” and “blockchain.” By engaging in constructive dialogue and leveraging our diplomatic influence, we sought common ground, fostered understanding, and successfully reached agreements that encompassed a broader range of perspectives. This included rewording certain phrases or generalizing statements such that each party at the negotiation table achieved their interests.

Climate and Environment

Our delegate Sydney Whiting undertook extensive research and consultations to inform the climate negotiations. She worked with Y7 colleagues on a variety of topics and issues, but as time wore on, the top priorities were: 1) acknowledgment and inclusion of rural communities, 2) a strong, united stance against new fossil fuel exploration, 3) rejection of ‘greenwashing’ in the communiqué text, and 4) diverse and inclusive language. The stance which was most difficult to negotiate with colleagues, and which we ultimately feel most proud to include, was:

“Commit to no new investment in the exploration or production of fossil fuels and to redirect investments into renewable energy projects, ensuring energy security and accessibility, whilst prioritizing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand.”

As discussed, our Y7 survey questions were informed by research and our delegate’s understanding of the climate crisis. When put to Canadian youth, their priorities proved to be quite similar. They emphasized the need for the implementation of circular economic principles (37.7%); investments in renewable energy (36.8%); investments in sustainable public infrastructure (34.8%); and expansions of green public spaces (32.3%). There was also support for nature-based solutions, greater respect for Indigenous knowledge, and the recognition of climate refugees. We were able to include most, if not all, of these priorities in the final communiqué. In particular, she advocated for the language of these clauses:

*“Embed the principles of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** in all climate policies and establish a Youth Engagement Group in the G7 Climate Club by **valuing intergenerational dialogue, decolonial frameworks, and youth inclusion.**”*

*“Ensure urban and rural planning and development — including the new construction and retrofit of infrastructure and housing, management of green and blue spaces, and disaster risk reduction — be sustainable and resilient by design, operate in accordance with circular economy principles, **and be centered in community-led engagement.**”*

Increased support for workers impacted by the energy transition was also highlighted, and as a key issue in many rural communities, she was keen to include the following language:

“...support workers within impacted sectors and prepare younger generations for green jobs through upskilling and reskilling opportunities.”

While the majority of Sydney’s research and advocacy was directed toward the Climate and Environment track, she did contribute to a strong stance on the condemnation of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the need for the full institution of the “Youth, Peace, and Security” agenda in matters of conflict resolution (of which, 25.1% of our survey respondents—the second highest ranking—asked for), and the protection of LGBTQIA+ rights as the ‘Peace and Security’ delegate as well. Specifically, she advocated for the following language:

“...We recognize the additional threats to security faced by members of the LGBTQIA+ community globally. We call for G7 countries to ensure their fundamental human rights through access to essential services and guarantees of personal safety.”

In the climate track, Sydney also advocated for the recognition and protection of climate refugees, which was a key ‘Peace and Security’ demand of Canadian youth from our survey (30.5% of respondents listed “accepting more refugees” as their key priority, making it the top response). The following language is included in the final communiqué:

“Recognize and protect climate refugees and internally displaced persons within national and international law, acknowledging threats to security posed by climate change and disasters.”

Global Health and Happiness

Our delegate Heather O’Watch strongly advocated for three aspects, including the Global Health and Happiness preamble in the Communiqué, the transformational tools and wellbeing clause, and as well as the equity and access clause.

It was critical that the Global Health and Happiness track name the respected communities that are often underrepresented between global health policy and where inequities drive health disparities for marginalized groups. Young Canadians expressed within the survey and through our consultations that there is a disproportionate gap between health policy and accessible services for individuals who identify from Indigenous, Racialized and/or other underrepresented groups in Canada, whereas solutions include systemic change to institutions and society. This is reflected in the following clause:

Achieving health equity requires dismantling the institutional and societal disparities that disproportionately affect underrepresented groups, particularly youth and including but not limited to women, LGBTQIA+, racialized, rural, indigenous, and persons with disabilities.

Within the transformational tools and wellbeing clause, our delegate Heather advocated for the strengthening of national mental health strategies based on the insight received from consultations and survey responses regarding the mental health crisis amongst young people in Canada:

Creating or strengthening respective national mental health strategies to build on the 2021/22 G7 Communiqué. Each strategy must increase funding to (1) pursue de-stigmatization, (2) expand access to timely therapy and wider support, and (3) address root causes.

Lastly, we advocated equity and access to health and care. Our delegate Heather felt strongly about leading negotiations on this priority. Young Canadians expressed concern for the exhausted healthcare systems across our provinces created in part because of the global COVID-19 pandemic and chronic underfunding that existed prior to the pandemic. Healthcare professionals are becoming exhausted, and burnout is increasing across the workforce. Additionally, in an act of solidarity with other G7 countries, we advocated for the need to implement, practice, and sustain safe and accessible healthcare for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. It was critical to include the need to address this issue within the following clause:

Providing financial and legal support to tackle the critical state of our exhausted and underfunded healthcare services and workforce; strengthening legal implementation to ensure anti-discrimination in access to healthcare notably for LGBTQIA+; and equitably distributing human, technological, and monetary resources.



Official Photo of the Y7 2023 Delegation (Second front row, far right: Sarah Rozon; Third row, far right: Heather O'Watch, Pentcho Tchomakov, Sydney Whiting)



Canadian Delegation in Hiroshima, Japan

Advice and Recommendations for Future Delegates

Role of Surveying Canadian Youth in creating data-driven policy recommendations

Creating data-driven policies to further youth-oriented agendas is crucial to ensure effective decision-making and address the needs and aspirations of young people. In Canada, the utilization of existing youth databases, such as the ones provided by Youthful Cities and Statistics Canada, plays a significant role in providing insights into the demographics, challenges, and priorities of the youth population. By leveraging this data, our delegation gained valuable information on issues such as education, employment, mental health, and social inclusion, enabling us to develop evidence-based arguments and policy recommendations.

However, in recognizing the dynamic nature of youth perspectives and the need for comprehensive data, we also conducted our own survey, particularly to dive deeper into the topics of this year's summit. This approach allowed us to directly engage with young people, capturing their diverse voices and experiences. By designing a youth-specific survey, we were able to delve deeper into their opinions, concerns, and ideas for targeted policy improvements. This grassroots approach complements information from existing databases, providing a more holistic understanding of youth realities and aspirations. Integrating both existing data and survey results enabled our delegation to craft policies that are responsive, inclusive, and impactful, empowering young people to actively participate in shaping their own futures.

Formal Training on Negotiation and Mediation by MBBi

The training on negotiation and mediation provided by the Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI) organization was immensely valuable to our delegation. This training equipped us with essential skills to navigate complex diplomatic discussions and foster productive dialogue. Through MBBi's guidance, we learned effective communication techniques, active listening, and the art of finding common ground amidst diverse perspectives. For instance, during the summit, we encountered a contentious issue regarding climate change commitments. By applying the consensus-building skills learned in the training, we facilitated a series of structured discussions that allowed all parties to express their concerns and propose potential solutions. Through patient engagement and respectful dialogue, we were able to reach a common agreement that addressed the interests and concerns of all participating countries. This example highlights the practical significance of negotiation and mediation training in achieving successful outcomes at international summits like the G7.

Investing Time in Understanding the Host Country’s Political Landscape and Cultural Norms

Researching the local political atmosphere of the host country (in this case, Japan) is of utmost importance for delegates participating in the Y7 summit. Failing to do so can lead to significant challenges during the high points of the negotiation cycle. In our case, without a thorough understanding of Japan's political landscape, cultural nuances, and policy priorities, delegates risked misinterpreting social cues and norms, which can create roadblocks in collaboration and negotiation.

Furthermore, a lack of research may result in advocating for uninformed positions, overlooking key local challenges, or failing to address pressing regional issues effectively. In the case of Japan, this included but was not limited to a) the aging population and low birth rate, b) the lack of entrepreneurial activity, and c) the difficult balancing act of supporting rural areas vs. large metropolitan areas. Luckily, we visited the Canadian Embassy to Japan prior to the Summit, where the diplomats and the Ambassador of Canada to Japan provided a summarized and condensed outlook of the topics above. For future delegations, we strongly suggest connecting with policy experts and/or analysts at GAC who specialize in the host country ahead of the summit.

Finally, Japan's hierarchical structure and emphasis on consensus-building and harmony require a nuanced approach to negotiation. Without this understanding, delegates may inadvertently engage in unproductive action. Comprehensive research is crucial to navigating the host country's political atmosphere, fostering meaningful dialogue, and forging successful collaborations to address global challenges effectively.

Consultation and Engagement

As previously discussed, our delegation conducted extensive consultations to develop an informed perspective on youth lived experiences in Canada. We began coordinating consultations early in the Y7 process, and we strongly suggest that future delegations take a similar approach since it can take several months to secure group consultations. Given the short timeline from delegation selection until the summit (4 months in our case), we recommend continuing this approach in the future.

Another valuable approach that our delegation undertook was to engage with existing youth groups, outlined in **Table 1**, where members are selected for their expertise, passions, and lived experience. This enabled us to efficiently collect a wide array of insights and opinions. A strong asset of our delegation was our geographic diversity, with delegates coming from Nova Scotia/Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. In future years, maintaining the focus on regional diversity in consultations, regardless of the geographic makeup of the delegation itself, would be beneficial to ensure that policy recommendations are geographically inclusive. We also recognize the benefit of reaching beyond our personal connections and individual communities. As a result, we made an intentional effort to reach out to organizations that represented and advocated for communities with whom we didn't personally have a connection. We encourage future delegations to continue this pattern of inclusivity and equity.

In our consultations we recognize the room for improvement in the number of consultations we conducted. With time and capacity constraints, this was a challenge on our end, and we encourage future delegates to exercise time management and task coordination to increase consultations and dialogue. We also recommend future delegates draft and release the survey as soon as possible on all social media platforms and promote it in cycles.

Additionally, our experience was that the context of the host country is highly relevant in the negotiations. It would have been beneficial for our delegation to meet with Canadian Foreign Service experts earlier in the process to get a more well-rounded sense of the country's context prior to arriving at the summit.

Negotiations

One of the most important elements that led to our success as a delegation was our strong relationship-building leading up to and during the summit. Through one-on-one meetings, bilateral delegation meetings, and weekly negotiations, the delegation made an active effort to build strong relationships with the other Y7 delegations. Throughout the summit itself, this sense of trust and fellowship built over multiple months was critical to effectively navigating tensions in the negotiations. The Canadian delegation took strong positions on regional disparities in education, employment accessibility, health inequities, climate justice, digital rights, and data security. Our willingness to collaborate and foster our relational strengths enabled the delegation to navigate negotiation challenges. Therefore, in addition to the formal meetings, our delegation also made a concentrated effort to get to know our Y7 colleagues on a personal level. Throughout the Summit, during small pockets of unstructured time, we often spent it with the teams. Not only did this make for stronger friendships, but it also made for better team building and more personable negotiations.

Communications

Our communications strategy was focused on three key areas: a youth survey, an active social media campaign during the summit, and community outreach.

Early on, after researching our respective policy areas, we each drafted a set of questions to create the survey and gain better insight from the Canadian youth perspective. The final product was available in both English and French, and we received 700+ responses, with representation according to region, age, and other demographic factors. It was important for us to include demographic factors regarding ethnicity and if respondents identified as living with a disability or as LGBTQIA2S+. One of our earliest consultations provided us with insight into the lack of data that results in the homogenization of unique individual lived experiences. Our effort to understand young Canadians and their unique lived experiences required us to develop more specific questions to prevent this from occurring.

The circulation of the survey on YDC socials—and to the Prime Minister’s Youth Council and other community groups—likely helped us reach such a varied group of young people. For example, we received strong regional representation (Annex, Survey 1.1), heard from a high percentage of Indigenous people (Survey 1.2) and accounted for both rural and urban perspectives (Survey 1.3).

For each policy area, we asked two closed questions and one open-ended question, which allowed for greater individualized input without making the process cumbersome for the respondent. Overall, we expected that the survey would take about 10 minutes to complete. We were pleased with the number of responses we received, and each of us considered this information as we drafted our policy positions in negotiations.

During the Summit, our focus shifted to social media. Each day, we shared highlights from our delegate experiences, links to additional information, and fun photos from our time in Japan. While we were able to reach a fair audience, management of the socials during the Summit was difficult.

Sydney served as both our team’s Communications Coordinator and as the delegate responsible for the additional Peace and Security Track, which meant that free time during the Summit was often dedicated to the Peace and Security negotiations. With little time for content creation, our social media strategy was not fully implemented, but rather, we chose to prioritize strong representation on the Peace track instead.

Our advice for those assuming next year’s Communications Coordinator role would be:

- Set modest, reasonable expectations and budget for personal time in your summit schedule.
- Make and distribute templates to your colleagues well in advance, especially for Instagram, to make things like takeovers easier for everyone.
- Ask the YDC Executive if you can share the login details with your delegation, and if so, we’d recommend delegating certain days people will post content. Our team had planned to do this, but the busy Summit days overshadowed this idea.
- We found it easier to post on non-negotiation days. Depending on your schedule during the Summit, you will be able to tell when the Canadian audiences will find your activities more interesting. In the end, we posted a lot more when we visited cultural sites or participated in group activities rather than during our meetings. Accounting for this in the posting schedule will help!
- Establish an ongoing relationship with the Communications representative from the YDC Executive and find a platform (Slack, WhatsApp, email, etc.) that works for both of you.
- Designate two separate people on the team to coordinate the Communication Strategy and take on extra delegation responsibilities, especially a second track.
- Draft a media release to be distributed across media platforms for garnering potential communications outcomes of interviews, radio interviews, and print media.
- Diversity and Inclusion should be prioritized by continuing to consult with organizations and groups that represent Canada’s diverse communities and fostering those relationships throughout the delegation experience. This can help strengthen engagement experience and survey outcomes to benefit the overall communique.

Strategy for Post-Summit Advocacy

Our delegation adopted a tri-fold approach to Post-Summit Advocacy: reciprocity with stakeholders, media publications, and diplomatic advocacy.

The insights that our delegation gained from consultations with Canadian youth groups were invaluable to shaping our policy recommendations and the final Y7 Communiqué. We are deeply grateful to these groups for offering their time and expertise to our delegation. Our delegation strongly believes in reciprocity. As a result, we reached out to consulted groups after the summit to provide targeted insights into how their consultation shaped the final communiqué. It is our hope that many of these engagements—whether old or new to the YDC community—can lead to ongoing advocacy efforts and knowledge-sharing.

Additionally, our delegation continues to use the media as a tool to promote the Y7 communiqué. This occurred both through circulating the communiqué and reflections through delegates' personal social media, publishing an upcoming op-ed in a political outlet, and conducting delegate media engagements. The Global Health and Happiness Delegate, Heather O'Watch, was featured on CBC Saskatchewan prior to her arrival at the Y7 and then featured on a live radio interview post-summit. Additionally, the Economic Resilience Delegate, Sarah Rozon, will be featured in an upcoming episode of *the Aspect*, a podcast on youth and sustainability, alongside her Y7 colleagues from Italy and the UK, to discuss the communiqué and their Y7 experience.

Finally, we met with G7 leaders, most notably with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs at Global Affairs Canada and G7 Sherpa, David Morrison, who played a pivotal role in coordinating Canada's participation in the summit, to advocate for the recommendations in our final communiqué.

Many of the Y7 delegations continue to communicate and discuss further actions and support regarding the priorities of the Y7 communiqué and global youth. These conversations provide supplemental benefits to delegation experience and networking.

Personal Reflections

Sarah Rozon - Coming from an engineering background, I equated professional respectability with technical proficiency. To shift this internalized paradigm at the Y7, I made a conscious effort to lead with my humanity rather than factual knowledge. Paradoxically, I found that this strengthened my credibility as a delegate rather than diminished it. For me, the Y7 Summit galvanized the importance of leading with vulnerability, compassion, and integrity, especially in high-level professional spaces. This experience also made me even more conscious of the importance of diverse lived experiences in forming robust, inclusive policy recommendations.

As the Economic Resilience delegate, I negotiated a range of intersectional issues involving finance, human rights, education, and sustainability. I found that my broad background of personal and professional experiences was highly beneficial to engage with these topics holistically. As compounding crises like climate change, socio-economic instability, pandemics, and conflict arise, I believe that interdisciplinary knowledge will become increasingly crucial to engage with these crises systemically. This experience was a valuable reminder to me (and perhaps an offering to any future YDC delegates) to continue to nurture a broad range of interests and curiosities to effectively engage with complex policy topics.

In the context of the summit, one of the most valuable things that I learned is the central role of curiosity in effective negotiations. When strong positions arose for parties in my track, engaging with the position from a place of curiosity was critical to understand the delegate's underlying interest. At the heart of this interest was generally a strong desire to improve the lives and conditions for young people in their country. Curiosity expands our field of understanding, which in turn creates empathy and shifts the tone of the negotiations from adversarial to collaborative. By engaging with curiosity, the group could align more effectively on a path forward at the most critical points in the negotiations.

As a youth advocate, I also struggled to understand the most effective balance between idealism and operationalization. Idealism is often used as a diminishing term in reference to youth, inferring a lack of understanding or immaturity. In contrast, I believe that the "idealistic" view of young people is often clear-sighted and hopeful. On the other hand, I wanted to put forth recommendations that could be operationalized by G7 governments. The challenge is that actionable measures tend to be incremental changes to address systemic challenges. While I did not strike a perfect balance in managing these polarities, I settled on the following approach, which may be helpful to other young leaders in policy spaces:

Where possible, develop actionable solutions that are within the sphere of influence of the decision-makers you are engaging with. However, some of the most pressing global issues do not have a single actionable solution; as a result, do not let the absence of an immediate solution preclude you from highlighting this issue to decision-makers.

In the context of relationships, I was deeply grateful to work alongside a delegation of young Canadians from across the country with diverse lived experiences. I appreciate the humour, care, and fellowship of these delegates, and I am very proud of the way we represented young Canadians on the G7 stage. I am also grateful to Young Diplomats of Canada for the opportunity to advocate for young Canadians, to meet the incredible other Y7 delegates and to experience international consensus building first-hand. While I am unsure of the impact that our communiqué made on G7 leaders, this experience solidified the power of youth vision and advocacy for me. I am hopeful that the relationships built and the communiqué developed at the Y7 will build on the momentum required for the deep systems change that our world needs.

Pentcho Tchomakov - As an atypical delegate with a technical academic and professional background, particularly in the field of engineering in the AI and data privacy space, I brought a unique perspective to the table, especially in my negotiation track, Digital Innovation and Transformation. In preparation for the summit, I devised my approach to compensate for my lack of formal experience in policy making and leverage my domain knowledge with a strong emphasis on personal relationships. This ultimately proved to be a winning strategy to get our points across (as a delegation) and for the inclusion of most, if not all, the recommendations I had prepared for my track to promote Canada's Youth priorities in the Digital space.

While past Y7 delegations had emphasized developing personal connections prior to the summit, I had unfortunately not been able to connect with all the delegates of my track before the start of the summit - at least not more than an initial introductory call. Arriving in Tokyo for the Y7 Summit, I knew that I should first and foremost emphasize human relations to establish a good personal and working relationship with all delegates - including ones not within my track - to elevate our trust from "negotiating parties" to "partners" or even friends. This included taking time to connect with delegates at each favourable occasion: in transit, over coffee at breakfast, late-night chats, and even pre-summit touring to visit Tokyo. Of course, developing a relationship is not a "one-and-done" action: it requires continuous investment and nurturing beyond the first contact to achieve an appropriate trust level. In my track, ultimately in tough moments of negotiations, it allowed me to be a force of reconciliation and a key factor for the adoption of a communiqué that reached the interests of each party and gained the respect of the sherpas along the process.

Beyond the human aspects of the process, as a delegate with a strong technical background in engineering and the field of AI, I brought a unique perspective to the table, especially in the Digital Innovation and Transformation track, in fact beyond what I initially expected. In fact, it allowed me, and other delegates, to elevate the discussions about our recommendations and ensure that we remain true to the possibilities of action of public policy upon technology players (public and private). Initially, I had worried that my lack of formal background in policymaking would be a disadvantage - one which I compensated with additional in-depth research and commitment, but ultimately it was a key necessity for us to convey the needs of Canadian Youth while also grounding our communiqué in technical soundness. Ultimately, my technical background enabled me to propose and negotiate novel recommendations that call for world leaders to accelerate the regulation of fast-developing digital technologies. With my technical expertise, I was able to comprehend the complexities and potential impacts of these technologies, allowing me to advocate for forward-thinking policies that strike a balance between innovation and responsible governance. Drawing on my knowledge, I articulated the need for proactive regulations that address emerging challenges in areas such as data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and ethical AI deployment. It served as an asset in presenting evidence-based arguments, building credibility, and influencing decision-makers to recognize the urgency of regulatory action in the digital realm.

Finally, I will take this opportunity to formulate a recommendation to future delegates and individuals interested in making a career in policy-making, especially in technical fields: a formal background and proper experience in the field speaks to lengths about your understanding of the theoretical and practical challenges and will be a key factor to a successful career going forward.

Sydney Whiting - It was a great honour to serve as the Canadian representative for Climate and Environment, as well as Peace and Security, at the 2023 Y7 Summit. Above all else, I came away from the experience with so many valuable lessons learned, opportunities, and new friends.

Initially, I applied to the Y7 delegation because it offered an opportunity to combine my budding interests in diplomacy and policy with an ongoing passion for environmental activism. The experiences that followed—from presenting at the UN University in Tokyo to co-writing the communique with dozens of other young, motivated activists—were incredible. I grew my skills in communications, mediation and negotiation techniques, and cross-cultural engagement, all of which will help me in my future career.

I also felt a unique sense of pride in representing Canada at this forum. Growing up in Alberta, I have always felt closer to an ‘Albertan’ identity—one which, at times, is mired in conservative traditions that don’t reflect my own beliefs. And from a climate perspective, especially in recent years, Albertans are perceived to have isolated themselves in conversations regarding our environment, oil sands, and economic interests. Regardless of differences, however, I think this frustration is misplaced and should not undermine the pride and responsibility of being a proud Canadian. At the Y7, any hints of geographical or social differences were dropped, and we were able to represent—to the best of our abilities—the rich diversity of Canadian youth interests.

That is not to say, however, that my experiences in the Prairies did not influence my perspective as a Y7 delegate. Key items of ongoing climate discussions—like workers’ rights, rural revitalization and planning, and the importance of equity in the phaseout of fossil fuels—were important for me to highlight in the negotiations. Taken together, my regional and national identities provided unique perspectives on the Climate track.

As the youngest delegate at the Y7 Summit, I also had considerably less education or professional experience than my colleagues. At first, in the early meetings with the Canadian team, I felt a bit displaced and underqualified. But as time wore on, the spaces felt less exclusive. The Canadians—with whom I built wonderful relationships over time—were welcoming, understanding, and patient. Colleagues in the Climate and Environment track acted similarly. We collectively understood the importance of diverse perspectives and the value of blending formal and lived experiences, and I genuinely felt as though my ideas were taken seriously. I strived to carry myself with professionalism and grace and was met by an incredible community of people doing the same.

This experience, if nothing else, taught me that passion and perseverance can propel you into unique spaces. I was also reminded of the worthiness of young people in providing insight and feedback on these complex, global issues.

If you are considering applying, I would highly encourage you to do so. Canadian representation on the world stage is so important, and your insights (regardless of the length of your resume!) are incredibly valuable in a shared vision for a better, more equitable future.

Heather O'Watch - As a young Indigenous woman from Saskatchewan, I recognize the intersectionalities of both my identities and how it informs my advocacy. My reasoning for pursuing the YDC delegation was to participate in spaces that traditionally are not accessible nor expressed for Indigenous women, particularly in the policy realm of global work. My pursuit of the YDC experience also included the means to empower other Indigenous youth to participate in future delegations. Indigenous women such as myself are pursuing careers in public policy to develop and create transformative change in ways that excel and restore our roles within societies, including Canada. When selected as a Y7 delegate, I was tremendously grateful and understood my responsibilities to honour and maintain balance for both as a representative of Indigenous youth and Saskatchewan youth. The Y7 has far fewer Indigenous delegates and Saskatchewan alumni, this seems to be across the board for several global advocacy spaces not limited to YDC, and I am extremely impressed with the support that YDC has given me throughout my delegation, including my delegate team. In times of isolation, both prior to and during the summit, I was supported by my fellow team members and strongly believe that having built rapport with the team became an important step to the overall experience on an interpersonal and advocacy level.

During the summit, I noticed that my knowledge, lived experience, and worldview became a critical component, in part, being few global delegates that identified as racialized and came from a predominantly rural geographical location. In this sense, being able to share my knowledge and experiences helped inform the work and language within the communiqué.

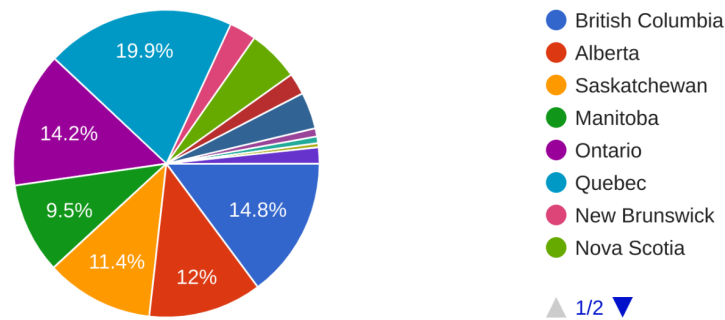
Looking back on this, although this was a positive outcome, requires fundamental changes across G7 youth organizers in bringing more diverse perspectives into the realm of the Y7 to avoid tokenism and or continued underrepresentation. My hope for future delegations, especially those coming from Indigenous communities and rural spaces, is that they lead with authenticity and continue to take space in places where we are not traditionally reflected. My hope for organizations that bring youth to this global space is that they make fundamental changes to policies and practices that support recruitment and future delegates in a safe and meaningful manner that ultimately benefit all.

Appendix: Youth Survey Results

Survey Demographic Data 1.1

In which Province or Territory do you currently live?

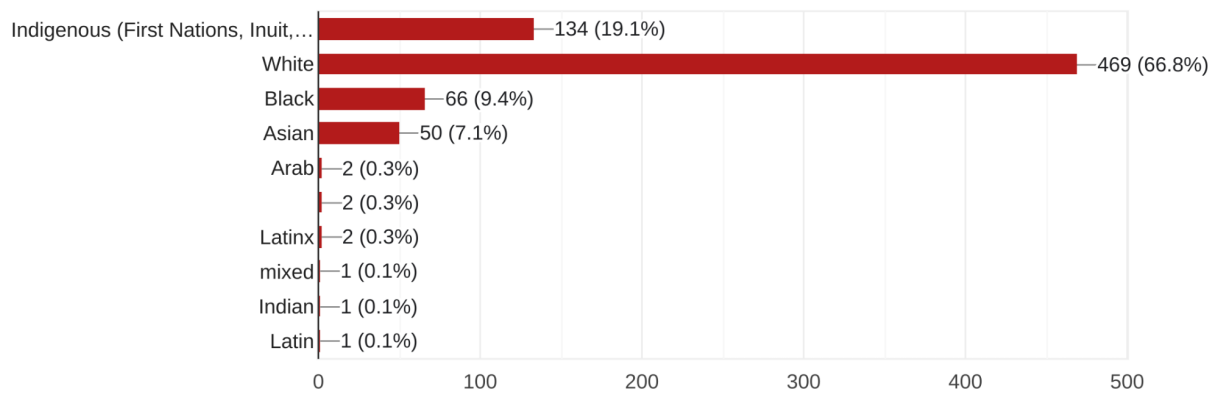
702 responses



Survey Demographic Data 1.2

How would describe your ethnicity? (select more than one if applicable)

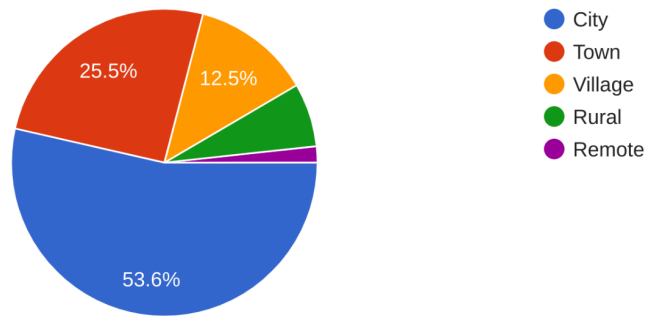
702 responses



Survey Demographic Data 1.3

Which of the following best describes the area where you live?

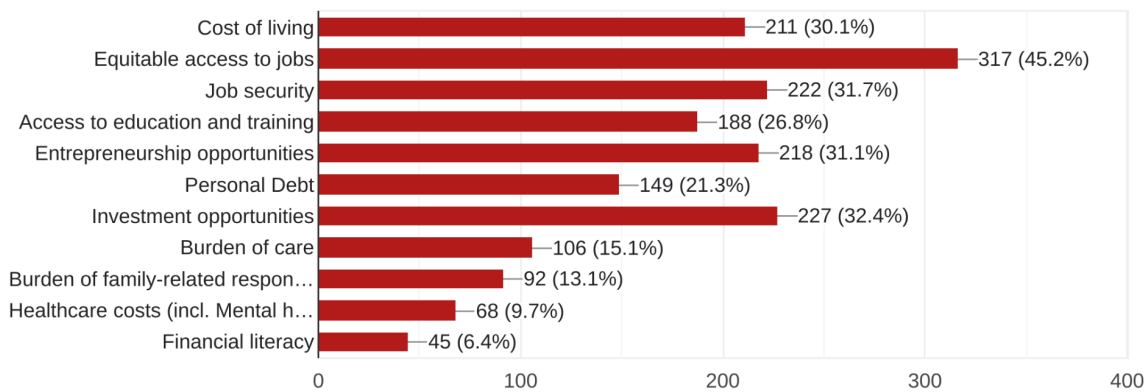
702 responses



Economic Resilience Survey Data

Which factors are most influential on your ability to achieve economic security in your present life?
(Select up to 3)

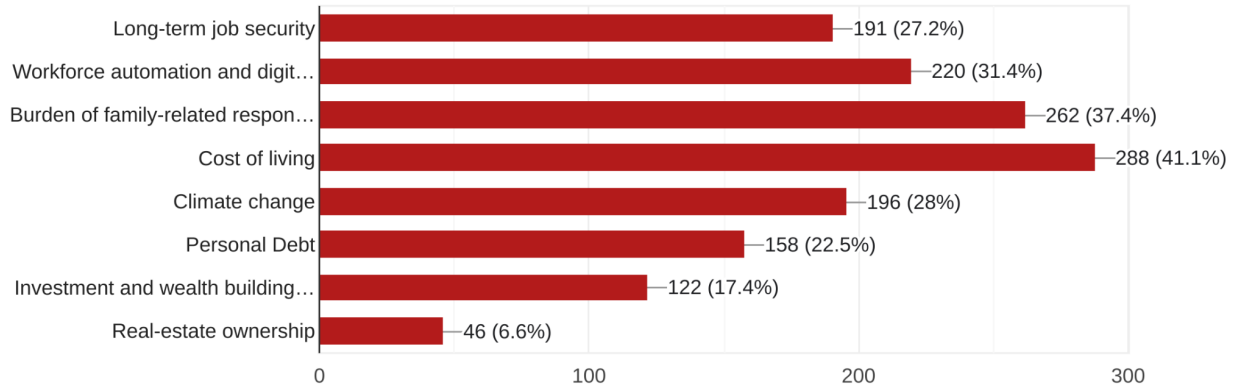
701 responses



Climate and Environment Survey Data

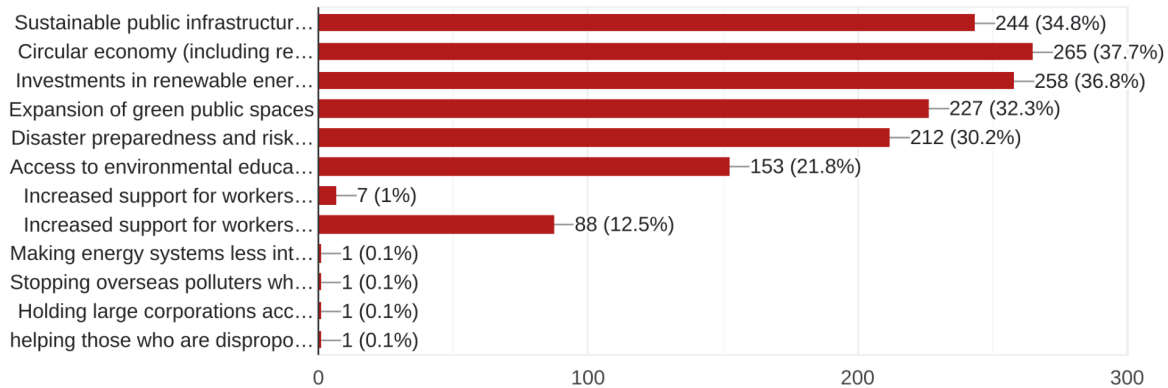
Which economic factors are most influential on your ability to achieve economic security in the future? (Select up to 2)

701 responses



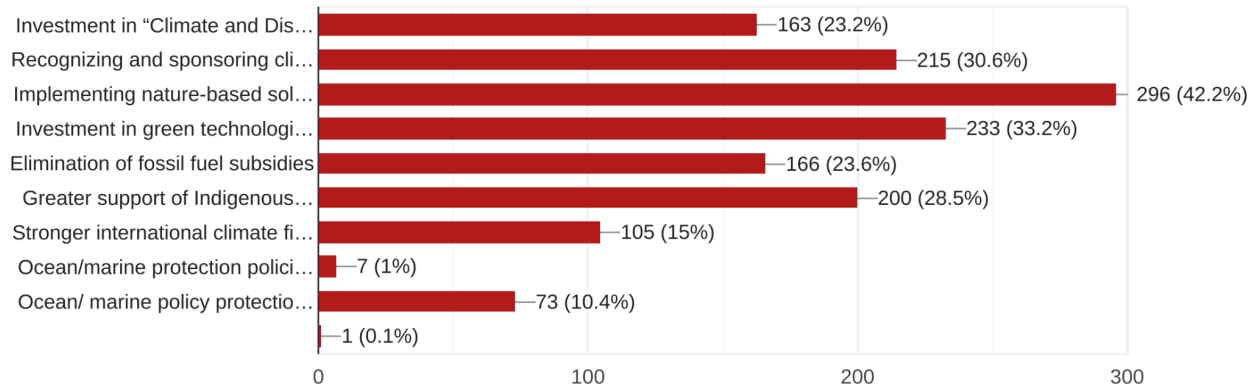
Which of the following climate policies are most important to you? (Select up to two)

702 responses



Which of the following do you believe should be a government priority on climate? (Select up to two)

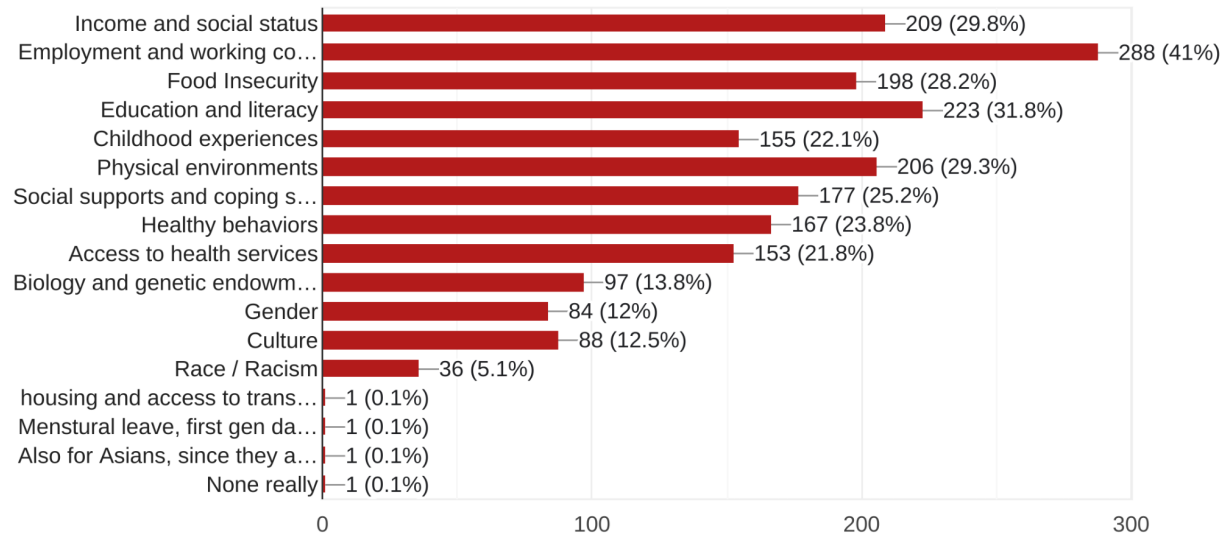
702 responses



Global Health and Happiness Survey Data

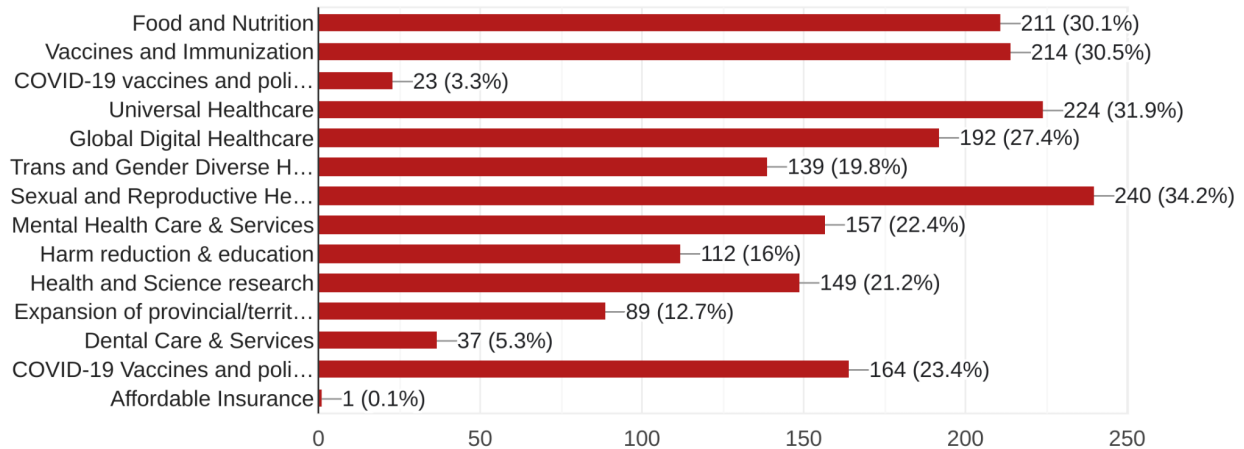
Socioeconomic Influences on Health* Which social determinant of health would you consider plays a role in your daily life? (Select as many that apply) *As defined by Canada Public Health

702 responses



Which of the following do you think should be a priority for our governments in 2023? (Select up to three)

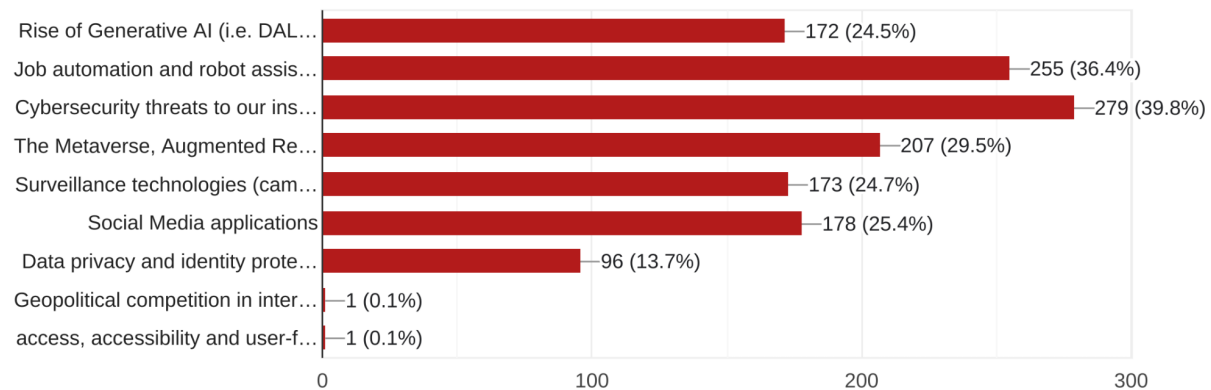
702 responses



Digital Transformation Survey Data

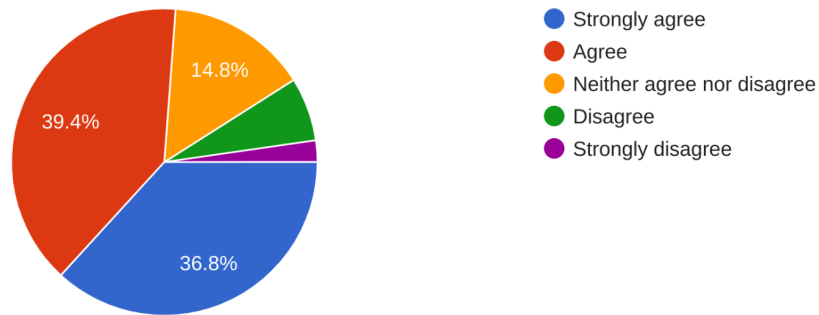
Which are your primary curiosities in terms of digital technology trends? (Select up to 2)

701 responses



In the context of the two themes identified above, do you think that current regulations are strong enough to protect user safety?

701 responses



Peace and Security Survey Data

In the context of Youth, Peace, and Security, which of the following initiatives do you feel are most pressing?

702 responses

