

ASEM Youth Report

For Young People, By Young People:

Insights into Young Adults' Leadership Experiences
and Aspirations in ASEM Countries



A collaboration between the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)
and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)[®]



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Note. This Report is a collaboration between the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). The Report aims to contribute to a better understanding of the status of youth leadership across Asia and Europe and provides recommendations how meaningful leadership experiences and opportunities for youth can be better designed and supported. The data presented in this Report is based on an ASEM-wide youth survey which ASEF conducted online between February and July 2021. The analysis of the data and results presented do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), or the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL).

Introduction

At this pivotal moment in history, the world needs ethical global citizens to shape a sustainable future.

The past 18 months have brought a host of societally impactful events. From global pandemics to economic unrest, local and national communities around the world have experienced wave after wave of life-changing incidents. Everything society knew about work, life, and the future has been called into question. Along with numerous challenges to overcome, this global disruption has also created an unprecedented opportunity to change.

Young adults possess the global mindset to spur widespread, global change.

Many young adults (defined here as 18-30 years of age) are digital natives and socially minded advocates, some of whom may be transitioning to more independent lifestyles in school, work, and home. Being raised in a more digitally connected, globally minded world, they bring unique perspectives, skills, and experiences that can help shape the post-COVID-19 world for the better. Despite this great potential, young people remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making conversations.

If countries want to engage young people as future global leaders, they must first learn about their experiences.

This Report is a collaboration among the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)[®], and numerous supporting partners. Its goal is simple: provide insight into young people's current, future, and potential role as societal leaders. Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, this Report utilised multiple approaches to solicit input from young people—to listen to how they want to be supported on their leadership journeys.

This Report is a publication of the 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4), the official youth event of the 13th ASEM¹ Summit hosted by Government of Cambodia in November 2021. Through an ASEM-wide survey conducted between February to July 2021, it highlights input solicited from 13,676 young adults in the 51 ASEM countries on their leadership experiences and aspirations for the future. The statements and recommendations in this Report are meant to stimulate dialogue among those who might create space for young people in leadership, whether they serve as senior leaders of countries, academic institutions, organisations, and local communities. The Report also provides those in positions of power with a unique opportunity: to hear from young people about their leadership experiences, aspirations, and recommendations for a post-COVID-19 world. Conversations sparked in response to this Report can help to address two foundational questions for developing a more sustainable future:

1. The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation bringing together the 27 European Union member states, 3 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.

How could societies benefit if young people felt included, supported, and engaged in leadership roles?

How can those in positions of power support young people on their leadership development journeys?



Foreword from Asia

In the midst of the chaos that the COVID-19 pandemic created and all the disruptions that permeated all corners of the world, the time to include youth in the highest level of decision-making has never been more ripe. Youth are ready to lead and build back a better post-pandemic world, but that can not be done by any group or nation alone; it requires a collective action imbued with moral fortitude, resilience, and an outward looking mindset.

The world now faces many multifaceted challenges that span across all sectors. From education and healthcare to climate change and access to decent work, young people and vulnerable groups are being left behind. From personal experience in life and in leadership, I have come to the realisation that good leadership results stem not from our own doing but from the collective efforts of those around you. It is within our abilities to bring out the best in others that will prove our leadership abilities when important issues are on the line. This is not an easy task; it is one that requires resilience, strength, and a great deal of humility. The world simply cannot wait any longer with youth on the sidelines. The global challenges that we face are too complex and we need them to shine through.

Simply speaking, an effort to make societies more equal is no longer sufficient. Instead, we need to make it both more equal and equitable. Inclusivity must strike at the core of our national agendas. Humanity is now faced with extraordinary challenges in one of the most unprecedented periods the world has ever seen. Therefore, I urge all relevant stakeholders to bring more youth to be a part of key decision-making processes.

As stated in the Report, one of the key drivers for youths' quest for leadership opportunities is the potential to add value to their communities and ultimately make the world a better place. Nearly two thirds of the respondents in the Report indicated that their respective countries would benefit more if young people are in more leadership roles. However, just over 50% responded that young people are currently playing an important role in their country's leadership. Clearly, there is a gap in our understanding of young people, and it is a clear indication that there is a lack of access to resources for them as well as attention that youth receive in their country's development. Furthermore, young people are craving opportunities to lead and showcase their leadership capabilities, and many want to shape the world into a better place and provide positive impact to their communities.

I, personally, believe that we can create more platforms that will empower youth to take action. We need to celebrate and promote more success stories of how youth lives have been transformed to become leaders in their community. Furthermore, leaders should foster more value-added experiences for young people, experiences that incorporate the values of equality, dignity, truth,

integrity, empathy, and compassion. By ensuring that these values are taught in whatever they do, young people will grow up to be more empathetic in their leadership approach. Social inclusion and meaningful engagement must be at the heart of what we do. The development gap between the haves and the have-nots in the world today is of great disappointment despite the great progress we have made towards globalisation, industrialisation and the technological advancements.

Despite all the challenges, I am still deeply optimistic for the future, and I hope that our senior leaders will continue to listen to youth and help bring their agendas into policymaking. Diversity and social inclusion are the bedrock of a strong nation. For too long, young people have suffered from mental health related issues, digital divide, social barriers, lack of confidence, and lack of access to proper healthcare. The world has seen so many families torn apart due to deep polarisation of socioeconomic status and conflicting political views.

Therefore, I strongly urge people from all socioeconomic class to come together as one and try to work out our differences and unite on our common values. Let us give youth more time and opportunities to enhance and sharpen their leadership skills. It is only through nurturing a culture of dialogue rooted on mutual respect and reciprocity that will we be able to reverse the damage that has been done to the societal unity we have worked so hard for. We must come again together as one people of this planet to care for each other.

I would like to emphasize a message of hope and optimism. All young people deserve the basic necessities in life and must be entitled to education and training for a lifetime of success. I believe in the power of youth to unlock their greatest potential and in their power to shape our future, but that requires us to channel more resources for them. We can still act, but the time to act is now; otherwise, I am afraid that our time might be running out. My hope is that, by acknowledging that we really do owe to each other to protect and serve each other, we will come to a full realisation that this planet is the only one we have to protect. We must share together the burdens, the risks, and the opportunities in a more inclusive manner, harnessing everyone's talents and bring the best out of each and everyone.

In conclusion, I would like to end with an old Cambodian proverb that says that when the water is cold the fish will gather. Simply meaning, when we come together as one without heated tension, we can unite in the cold water to get important work done. The fish reflect the role of youths in our societies, because we depend on them to solve tomorrow's most pressing problems and provide

today's innovation and creativity.

I am confident that this Report will provide direction to the future of Asia-Europe relations and bring the young people of our region ever closer. The delegates of the ASEF Young Leaders Summit remain committed to support all youth around the world to make our regions more responsive and resilient than ever before.

Visal Chourn
Program Manager, SHE Investments
Cambodia



Foreword from Europe

Leadership came to my life unexpectedly, without formal recognition or big titles, without even recognising it myself. I have been volunteering for almost 10 years now and the leadership and self-development opportunities have been plentiful during that time. In that moment, they always seemed as just another fun and ambitious project to tackle and only through later reflection I have realised that they made me a young leader. More importantly, they made an impact on other people. My experience is not unique. It is actually quite common amongst young people participating in youth organisations or volunteering.

I came to know about the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS) a few years ago. At that time, I didn't consider myself a leader, and, hence, I didn't consider myself the target group. It was only last year, when I had finished being in the board of AEGEE-Europe, one of the biggest interdisciplinary youth organisations in Europe, that I felt like I might be a part of the target group of the ASEF Young Leaders Summit. The ASEFYLS's learning programme on leadership, which I took part of this year, made me reflect and look back on my experiences and on how I have been a young leader for years. As is explained in this Report, leadership is a part of life, and it is likely that most people have experienced being a leader at least once in their life.

Leadership, for me, is not about a title or about formal recognition. Youth leadership is very often not recognised and comes in the form of volunteering or activism. As the Report exemplifies, young people do want to be leaders, and they want to make an impact on their community or society at large. They are global thinkers and they are willing to make an effort to bring about change. Unfortunately, being willing and motivated is not always enough. I was lucky enough to have the opportunities and the privilege to be able to volunteer, but many young people do not get the chance.

43% of the young people who participated in the survey which serves as a basis for this Report are in a financial state where they are either barely making ends meet or cannot make ends meet. Is it really possible to expect young people to grab onto the opportunities for leadership and spend their time volunteering – which seems to be one of the most strongly related factors connecting current young leaders – if they are financially so unstable? Many of the projects that I have been involved in have been targeted towards young people and we always tried to address all young people. However, from project to project, from year to year, I saw that there is a huge portion of young people who never get a chance to participate. Young people who have to work to pay for their education or for the roof over their head do not have time to give away for free to participate in a leadership opportunity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly not helped either. Many of these young people who work to sustain themselves depend on jobs from the catering and hospitality sector. This sector has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic, leaving these young people in an even more complicated situation, not to mention the psychological burden this has brought.

The Report also signifies the importance of peer connections and adult mentorship in becoming a leader. There are clearly many barriers for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, be it due to an economical reason or belonging to an ethnic, sexual or disability minority. As said before, willingness and motivation only get you so far without the necessary support system around. This is why we need more opportunities, more support and more safe spaces for all young people to be heard. As the slogan of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states: leave no one behind.

Even though I have experienced the privilege of participating in many leadership opportunities, I often felt as if the encouragement of youth participation was merely a show created to give an illusion of inclusion. It was as if young people were asked to speak up. Sadly, at the moment when the event was over, the speeches finished and the doors closed, the memory of what had been agreed upon disappeared. Even worse, the ideas and suggestions of youth were patronisingly considered “cute” and naïve and discarded without even giving them a consideration just because they did not easily fit into the pre-existing boxes.

Not involving young people in leadership is a huge potential loss of innovation, efforts and engagement, as the Report states. Even more, by not allowing young people to be involved, this takes away their right to decide upon their own future. Young people know what is best for them and they need to be heard. It is very important for young people to speak up on the topics that matter for them and to choose what are their priorities. Thus, leadership opportunities should not be dictated and limited by older people to fit into the pre-existing structures and be there just to tick some boxes. For true sustainable development, we need innovation, inclusivity, and a space to safely express all those new ideas.

ASEF has done a remarkable job gathering opinions and perspectives of young people from diverse backgrounds to make this Report. Now, we need to take the next step and bring these voices into action to create meaningful, authentic opportunities for young people not only to be heard, but for their ideas to be paid attention to, to be considered and to be brought into action.

Hanna Alajõe

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First and foremost, ASEF and CCL are grateful to the 13,676 young people between 18 – 30 years old from 51 Asian and Europe countries. They participated in our ASEM-wide survey on youth leadership and shared with us their voices. Their answers – personal aspirations and experiences on opportunities and barriers of youth leadership– form the basis of this Report and allowed us to garner a comprehensive overview of youth leadership in both regions. We were happy to get to know some of the contributors to the survey as participants of the 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4), a ten-month long leadership programme on the topic “Sustainable Development in a post-COVID-19 World”. Their names are listed in the Annex.

We would also like to sincerely thank the participants of the ASEM Youth Report Focus Groups and Interviews for their time and crucial in-depth insights into youth leadership across different societal sectors.

The participants were, in alphabetical order by surname: Ms Hanna Alajõe, Mr Akos Baumgartner, Mr Panagiotis Chatzimichail, Mr Yik Wai Chee, Ms Ruxandra Burghilea, Mr Martin Hammerbauer, Mr Lauri Heikkinen, Ms Charlotte Heystek, Ms Audrey Hoffmann, Ms Nur Syahirah Khanum, Mr Yosea Kurnianto, Ms Federica Lorusso, Ms Lamia Mohsin, Ms Selvy Irianti W Namenti, Ms Sokneang Sam, Mr Leo Stakovic, Ms Lucija Tajer, Ms Kaliane Tea, Mr Chandara Tith, Ms Valeria Torotenkova. A special thank you goes to Mr Álvaro González Pérez, who developed the methodology of the Focus Group consultations and interviews and analysed the outcomes.

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Council of Malta, the Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines, the Portuguese National Youth Council, the National Youth Council of Russia, the National Youth Council of Slovenia, the Spanish Youth Council, the Swiss National Youth Council, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the International Association of Political Science Students (IAPSS) and the ASEAN Youth Organisation (AYO).

This Report reflects the strong partnership between ASEF's Education Department and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) and showcases both their teams' great commitment towards youth leadership, namely: Ms Leonie Nagarajan, Director of ASEF's Education Department, Ms Freya Chow-Paul, Coordinator of ASEF's Youth Programmes and Dr Stephanie Wormington, Manager, Leadership Analytics and Strategic Research at CCL. Their tireless efforts in conceptualising the content, coordinating the outreach across 51 countries and driving the research, resulted in this unique publication.

ASEF would also like to acknowledge the other members of its Education Department, Mr James Chan, Mr Quentin Fayet, Mr Miguel Pangalangan, Ms Jyoti Rahaman, Ms Angie Toh and Ms Reka Tozsa for their team support over the past year during the preparation process of this Report.

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01 Executive Summary



This Report is an outcome of the 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4), the official youth event of the 13th ASEM Summit hosted by Government of Cambodia in November 2021. Through an ASEM-wide survey conducted between February to July 2021, it highlights input solicited from 13,676 young adults in the 51 ASEM countries on their leadership experiences and aspirations for the future and provides recommendations for individuals and institutions across all societal sectors on how to design and support better leadership opportunities for youth.

Among numerous findings summarised in this Report, five key insights are highlighted below:

- 01 Most young people are interested and engaged in holding leadership roles.** More than three-quarters (86%) of young people surveyed either currently held a leadership role (40%) or aspired to hold one within the next five years (46%), with similar proportions in European and Asian countries. Only 14% indicated that they did not plan to pursue a leadership role.
- 02 There is potential for countries to further involve young citizens in leadership.** Nearly two-thirds (62%) of young people surveyed believed that young people had opportunities to be a leader in their country, with closer to

half (53%) agreeing that those opportunities were equally available to all young people. By contrast, over one-quarter (28%) of those surveyed disagreed that young people had equitable opportunities to serve as a leader. On average, young people in Asian countries perceived greater youth involvement in leadership.

- 03 Young people view leadership as a means to make a societal impact.** When asked to share their top reasons for becoming a leader, more than 90% of young adults surveyed named at least one reason related to helping others in their community (e.g., be a role model for my community) and society more broadly (e.g., learn things that will help me make a positive impact in the world). These patterns held across European and Asian countries. Current leaders also cited desires to empower their peers and address societal challenges (e.g., climate change) among their key reasons for pursuing a leadership role. By contrast, fewer young people selected values that involved directly impacting their family (e.g., please my parents) or developing their own interests and social connections (e.g., make new friends), although several focus group participants from Asian countries emphasised the importance of family.
- 04 Young people experience personal, interpersonal, and societal barriers to being a leader.** All leaders in interviews and focus groups were able to name at least three major factors that prevented young people in their country from pursuing leadership positions. They cited lack of confidence, role models, financial security, and opportunities for meaningful engagement or gatekeeping as common barriers for potential leaders. They also mentioned bias against young people and “youth washing” as obstacles to aspiring leaders’ engagement.
- 05 Senior leaders can support young leaders by providing authentic encouragement, meaningful informal leadership opportunities (e.g., volunteering), and deep connections with young leaders.** Current leaders were more than five times more likely to volunteer than aspiring leaders. Current leaders were also more likely to have connections with other peer leaders and have received encouragement from an adult than those who were not currently leaders, with focus group participants emphasising the importance of sustained mentoring. These differences, coupled with recommendations from current leaders, point toward potential avenues for supporting aspiring leaders.



02 For Young People, By Young People: Insights into Young Adults' Leadership Experiences and Aspirations in ASEM Countries

Drawing from the perspectives of more than 13,600 young adults in 51 countries, this Report explores two key questions to inform conclusions and recommendations:

Key Question 1: How are young people engaging with leadership across ASEM countries?

Key Question 2: What are the incentives and disincentives for young people to take part in leadership?

Conclusions and Recommendations: What are promising ways to incentivise and design meaningful leadership experiences for young people?

The Report shares insights from the young people who responded to interviews, focus groups, and surveys. These insights, and the recommendations they support, serve as a call to action for both young people and established leaders in positions of power. Together, they have the collective power to create a future that is inclusive, equitable, and impactful. Imagine what could happen if leaders of all age ranges and positions banded together as global citizens to shape a more sustainable tomorrow.

“If you could give one recommendation on how your country can support more young adults engaging in leadership, what would it be?”

This was the final question current leaders interviewed in this Report responded to in focus groups and interviews. The 20 participating leaders—all between 18 and 30 years old and residing in ASEM countries—held leadership roles ranging from national youth council president to project manager. They lived in different parts of the world, held leadership roles in different work or life sectors, and had served in their leadership roles for different amounts of time. Among the sundry recommendations provided, one message resonated across conversations: listen to young people and give them meaningful opportunities to contribute. The following report is an attempt to heed that advice.

Young adults (defined as 18-30 years of age) constitute a growing percentage of the working-aged, voting-eligible, global population. According to the Global Youth Index Survey, a 2019 survey of 25,000 young people across 25 countries, young people constitute 50% of the world population. Whether they spend their time as students, employees, family members, or community volunteers, young people hold vast potential to envision a more sustainable future and take steps towards making that future a reality. As a generation raised in a more digitally advanced and globally connected world, young people possess useful skills and experiences to address the most pressing global challenges. They may also hold aspirations for a more inclusive and equitable future. Together, young adults’ experiences and expectations make them ideal candidates to lead the world toward a more sustainable future.

Despite this great potential for change, young people continue to be underrepresented in both formal and informal leadership roles and even the world of work more broadly. The Global Youth Index Survey indicated that 1 out of 5 young people are not involved in education, employment, or training. A lack of youth representation may be particularly striking within certain geographic locations and social groups. For example, 75% of young people who are not involved in education or work are women. As the world considers what a sustainable future might look like in the aftermath of COVID-19, now is an opportune time to reimagine what young people’s role as societal leaders could and should involve.

**Listen to young people
and give them meaningful
opportunities to contribute.**

Why Young Adults? Why Now?

With many areas to focus their efforts and attention, why should global leaders be concerned with engaging with their 18-30 year old citizens? Among other benefits, young adults represent a potentially impactful and often underestimated subset of the global population. As one focus group participant articulated:



“Young adults are often underestimated. They have little trust [from more established leaders] due to their young age and lack of experience. This perpetuates a “vicious cycle” of not having opportunities to gain experience and never being experienced enough to [counteract] stereotypes.”

Federica Lorusso
ASEFYLS4 Youth Representative
Italy

Gen Z and Millennials represent an increasingly large portion of the workforce, voting populace, and global population. In addition, young adults bring a unique and valuable set of skills and values that could benefit them in societal leadership roles. In a 2012 survey conducted by CCL, employers cited comfort with technology, global awareness, and service-oriented leadership as some of the qualities that excited them most about the next generation (Van Velsor & Wright, 2012). When young adults make the decision to avoid societal or professional leadership roles, there is an enormous potential loss of innovation, effort, and engagement.

The current state of the world also presents a unique opportunity to engage and partner with young leaders. The aftermath of COVID-19 has precipitated shifts in how many perceive their work, civic engagement, and global citizenship. As evidence, organisations embracing hybrid and remote work models, young

adults are leaving their current jobs in record numbers as part of the “Great Resignation,” and new virtual platforms are facilitating cross-global collaboration and connection more than ever before. Unprecedented changes set the stage for revisiting and challenging societal scripts about who is a leader and how they contribute to a sustainable future.

Guiding Principles and Assumptions

From its inception to developing this report, the current collaboration was grounded in four guiding principles that influenced the study design, data collection, and final interpretation presented in this report. These principles include:

Any efforts to support young leaders must be informed by and designed for young adults. Identifying supports for young adults’ leadership without including young people in the conversation creates a risk for omitting important perspectives at best and unintentionally causing harm at worst. The design of the study and this Report puts young people’s voices at the center: from authoring the forward to providing feedback on synthesized recommendations, young leaders are spotlighted throughout the report. All recommendations are guided by survey, interview, and focus group responses. Young leaders were also quoted and cited, with permission throughout the Report.

Leadership is defined by an individual, not their job title. Traditionally, leaders have been defined by a formal title or position. This form is grounded in the belief that everyone can be a leader and that leadership takes many different forms. In fact, the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)[®] defines leadership as “a social process that enables individuals to work together to achieve results.” To reflect this belief, young people were asked to define leadership for themselves. As such, leadership positions might reflect formal or informal roles in a variety of work or life domains. Surveys and focus groups were also designed to gather feedback on how young people define leadership right now, including the key characteristics of an ethical leader and exemplars of ethical leaders in Europe and Asia.

A global perspective is critical for understanding leadership. As a conservative estimate, more than 26,000 articles have been published on leadership development in the past several decades. However, a large portion of studies have focused on Western-born leaders in formally defined positions. Representing approximately

60% of the world's GDP, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) provides near full coverage of European and Asian countries. Focusing on young people from ASEM's 51 countries represents an important and often overlooked subsection of current and future global leaders. The goals of this project also align with ASEM's intent to serve as an informal forum for cross-country dialogue and collaboration.

Soliciting input through different methods provides a multifaceted, rich portrait of young adults' experience. Too often, studies rely solely on surveys or interviews and focus groups to learn more about a topic. Because they provide different types of insights, there is enormous potential in combining survey and interviews to learn more about an area of interest. This collaboration leveraged the benefits of a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews or focus groups to draft a rich portrait of young adults' leadership experiences. Collecting surveys from more than 13,600 young people offered insights from a sizeable number of young people in different locations. Their responses allowed us to answer questions about the broader state of young people's leadership engagement, leadership development experiences, and reasons for wanting to pursue leadership. Interviews and focus groups, on the other hand, afforded an opportunity to hear about current leaders' experiences and opinions in greater details. Interview and focus group conversations resulted in rich conversations about opportunities to become a leader, key barriers to young people's leadership, and recommendations on supporting young leaders.



About the Research

Young people were invited to share their experiences through three virtual mediums:

- 01 Survey:** All applicants for ASEF's 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) were invited to complete a 15-minute survey as part of their application form in early 2021. The survey was later extended to a broader audience and shared out through both partners' social media channels and youth organisation connections. Surveys were intended to gain perspectives from many young adults on their experiences and perspectives.
- 02 Focus Groups:** Current leaders were invited to share their reflections and experiences in a group of their peers in similar leadership spaces and geographic locations. These 60-minute sessions, conducted via Zoom, brought together leaders serving in four different areas of societal impact: European youth organisations, Asian youth organisations, European 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) participants, and Asian 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) participants. Focus groups centred around ethical leadership, leadership experiences (opportunities and motivations to lead), and recommendations for supporting future leaders.
- 03 Interviews:** Several current leaders were invited to share their experiences and recommendations in one-on-one interviews. These 60-minute sessions invited leaders from non-profit and for-profit sectors to share their leadership experiences, perceptions of youth leadership, and recommendations for aspiring young leaders.

Results were examined for the overall sample, as well as by geographic region (European and Asian countries that are partners of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process).

European ASEM Countries

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

Asian ASEM Countries

Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Survey Sample

Countries

51

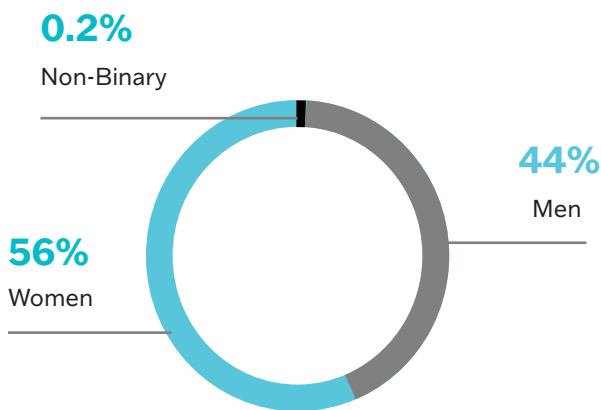
Sample Size

13,656 Youth

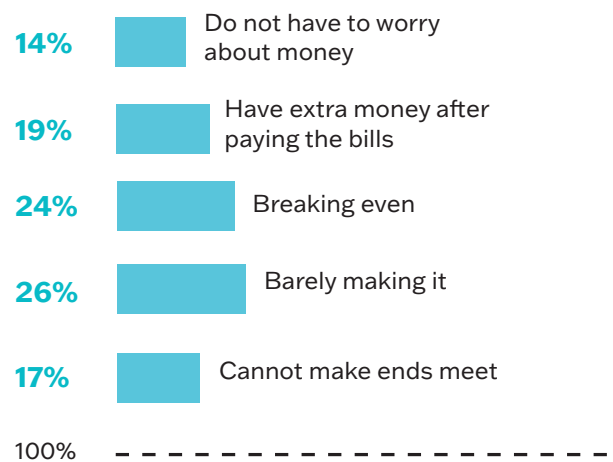
Age

18-30

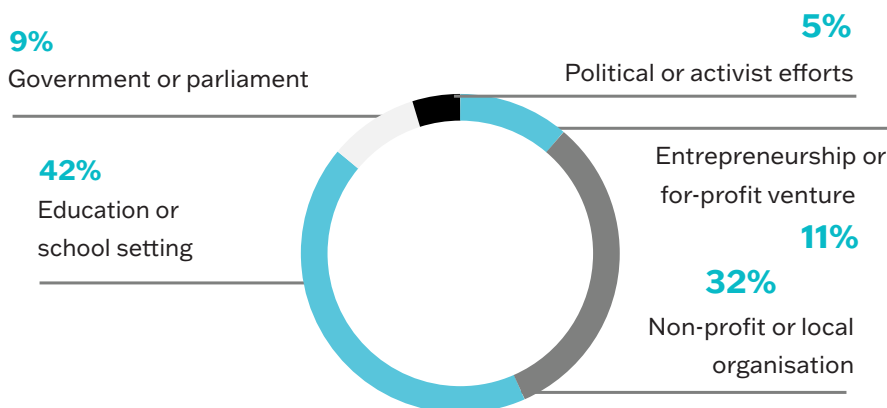
Gender Identity



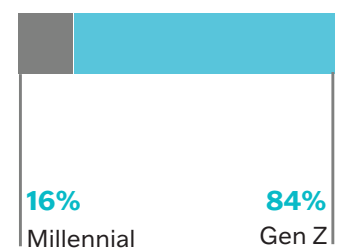
Financial security



Industry Sector (for Current Leaders)



Generational Status



The sample of respondents for each country is proportionate to its percentage of youth population.

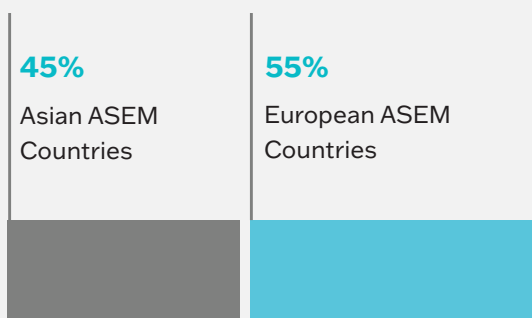
Only for two countries, the final sample included fewer responses (India (total:479 responses) and China (total:115 responses)).

Focus Group and Interview Sample

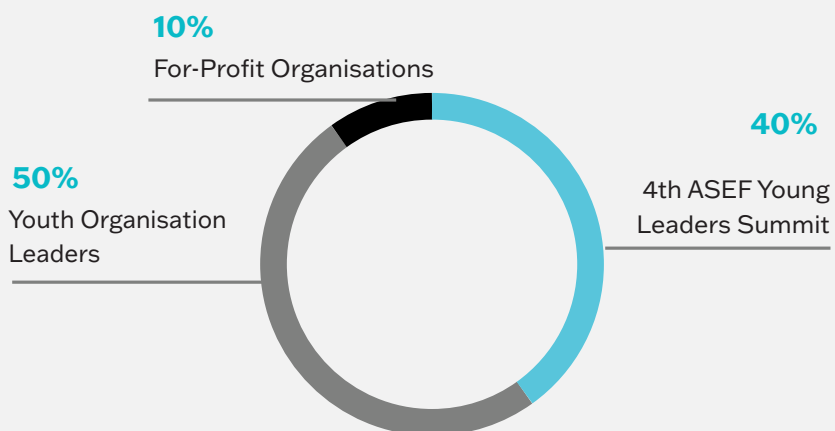
Sample Size

20 Current leaders

Region of Residence



Area of Leadership



03 Key Question 1: How are young people engaging with leadership across ASEM countries?

What does leadership mean to young adults?

To understand young adults' conceptualisation of leadership in the present, participants were asked to define leadership and the characteristics of a good leader. They selected from amongst a list of 44 traits that were associated with leadership at one point in time, ranging from appearance (e.g., tall, attractive) and traits (e.g., clever, creative) to interaction styles (e.g., domineering, inspiring) and capabilities (e.g., high technical ability, competent). Based on the most frequently selected characteristics, survey responses suggest that young people define good leaders by their commitment and ability to successfully enact change. Young adults listed being disciplined, hardworking, creative, capable, and knowledgeable as the top five characteristics of a good leader. These characteristics collectively emphasise that being a good leader involves both possessing the skills to reach a desirable outcome (capable, knowledgeable) and the ability to develop those skills (disciplined, hardworking).

For many, good leadership also involves a creative approach to leading. Interestingly, the most commonly cited characteristics of a good leader were factors that can be developed over time and are not intrinsic to a person. By contrast, the five least frequently selected characteristics of a good leader were related to a more authoritarian outlook on the concept (domineering, manipulative, pushy) and physical characteristics historically associated with leaders (tall, masculine).



Young people define good leaders by their commitment and ability to successfully enact change.



What Are the Most Important Characteristics of a Good Leader?

Responses from Survey Participants

Top 5 Most Frequently Mentioned Characteristics of a Good Leader

- 01 Disciplined
- 02 Hardworking
- 03 Creative
- 04 Capable
- 05 Knowledgeable

Bottom 5 Least Frequently Mentioned Characteristics of a Good Leader

- 01 Domineering
- 02 Manipulative
- 03 Pushy
- 04 Tall
- 05 Masculine



Interestingly, most frequently mentioned characteristics related to supporting others (sympathetic, compassionate, inspiring) fell towards the middle of the list.

In interviews and focus groups, current leaders responded to a slightly different question and described the top characteristics of an ethical leader. Their responses are summarised in the following word cloud.

What are the Top Characteristics of an Ethical Leader?

Responses from Interview and Focus Group Participants



These leaders reinforced some top characteristics identified in surveys, including being knowledgeable and open-minded. They also emphasised the importance of maintaining a growth-oriented approach to leadership. Rather than treat feedback as threatening, several leaders emphasised learning as an opportunity for individual and group growth. For example, one leader explained that:



“An ethical leader is open to feedback and accepting mistakes and kind enough to give compliments and feedback to his/her people, members, or employees. He/she knows how to turn a negative feedback into a positive result which will help others to learn, grow, and improve.”

Ms Sokneang Sam
ASEFYLS4 Youth Representative
Cambodia

Current leaders also emphasised the importance of inspiring others as an ethical leader. For some, inspiring leadership took shape as leading by example: embodying integrity, cultivating selflessness, and exemplifying values-based leadership. For others, inspiring leadership was reflected in how leaders treated others: conveying empathy, transparency, and emotional intelligence. Effective communication was described as critical for developing the trust and buy-in needed for meaningful change, particularly when collaborating with more established leaders.

Focus: Who is the face of ethical leadership?

Given the importance of ethical leadership for shaping a more sustainable future, young people were asked to share examples of an ethical leader in both Europe and Asia. When reviewing all valid responses, three themes became apparent.

Not all young people can identify an ethical leader. More than 1000 respondents indicated that they could not name an ethical European (1463 responses) or Asian leader (1136 responses). Their responses ranged from apologetic (e.g., “I could not think of anyone. Sorry!”) to neutral (e.g., “I don’t know”) to hostile (e.g., “Honestly at this point I don’t know any leader that inspired me”).

Political and activist figures may be salient leadership examples. Among the most frequently mentioned ethical leaders, the majority held or currently hold a political office. Many of these figures were leaders of countries (such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel), international organisations (such as President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen), or political parties (such as Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng). Young people also mentioned leaders engaged in philanthropic and activist efforts, such as Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg and Founder of Stop Wasting Food’s Selina Juul. Only one of the top 10 ethical leaders mentioned—President and CEO of Sony Corporation’s Kenechiro Yoshida—worked in the for-profit sector.

The frequency of political figures on this list may be due to the public-facing nature of their work and press coverage they receive. Government officials may also be salient leaders given their potential for influencing societal issues.



Prakriti Sharma
ASEFYLS4 Youth Representative
India

“An ethical leader is one who recognises their responsibility as a global citizen and their power to affect change. We as young leaders are not afraid to hold the world, and each other, accountable for our misdirections. Ethical leadership will flourish when given a platform and visibility for the outcomes of our actions. We are present, willing and capable to create a story of equitable, inclusive and sustainable growth that will change the story of the world.”

When thinking of ethical leaders, young adults’ examples span geographic boundaries. In this survey, young people were asked to name one ethical leader in Europe and another ethical leader in Asia. However, many survey respondents identified the same leaders as examples in both Europe and Asia or listed a European-based leader as an example for Asia and vice versa. Young people also frequently named leaders from outside of ASEM countries in their list of ethical leaders. The frequency with which leaders outside of ASEM countries were listed may serve as an indication that young people are more likely to think globally when seeking out examples of ethical leaders, as opposed to limiting their frame of reference to a particular continent.

What motivates young people to lead?

Beyond learning more about young adults’ schema of good leadership, it is critical to understand why young people choose to pursue (or not) leadership roles. Intentionally connecting leadership opportunities to personally held goals sets the stage for meaningful, long-term engagement. Motives for many areas of life, including a desire to lead, are often thought to be influenced by an individual’s culture and upbringing. For example, researchers

have examined how people's individual motives differ across countries that focus more on independence (doing well for oneself; often associated with Western countries) or interdependence (doing good for others; often associated with Eastern countries). According to research, individuals who live in more interdependent countries may focus more on an ability to help their family, elders, and community. Individuals who live in more independent countries, conversely, may focus on self-improvement or fulfilling their own interests. This dichotomy, however, may be challenged as the world becomes increasingly connected and young people view themselves as global citizens.

For the current survey, young people selected the top 5 most influential reasons to become a leader from among a list of 24 well-researched options that represent more independent, interdependent, and helping motivations.

What Motivates Young People to Lead?

Responses from Survey Participants:

Top 5 Most Frequently Mentioned Reasons to be a Leader

- 01 Be a role model for my community
- 02 Make a contribution to society
- 03 Learn things that will help me make a positive impact in the world
- 04 Expand my understanding of the world
- 05 Help others

Bottom 5 Least Frequently Mentioned Reasons to be a Leader

- 01 Please my parents
- 02 Make new friends
- 03 Learn more about my interests
- 04 Help my family
- 05 Make my family proud



Interestingly, young people from European and Asian ASEM countries named three of the same top reasons to be a leader, with the other top reasons being similar and focusing on broader positive impact. They also held four of the same least frequently mentioned reasons to become a leader in common. Although preliminary, this may indicate a more global (rather than geographically specific) set of reasons driving young people to consider pursuing leadership positions. Of course, it is worth noting that the reasons selected least frequently may still be important to many people. As an example, two focus group participants residing in Asian countries noted the importance of supporting their family as incentive to become a leader. With that said, it is still useful to notice patterns in which reasons were selected most and least often across survey respondents.

Perhaps aligned with a global mindset, young leaders value opportunities for societal impact. They are focused on global and community-level impact more so than individual or family-level influence. Young adults recognise the potential for large-scale and lasting change in contrast to more immediate or personal gains (e.g., forging new social connections, developing personal interests). These themes were confirmed in interviews and focus groups, where current leaders described the reasons, they pursued a leadership role. Whether driven by specific social issues or a general desire to give back, most leaders mentioned a desire to have a broader positive effect on the world. These leaders also felt confident that young people had a critical role to play in shaping a better future. As one leader stated:



Lauri Heikkinen
ASEFYLS4 Youth Representative
Finland

“The best way to change things is to get involved... Make leadership opportunities available for young people. Include young people in decision-making processes. Taking into account that, whatever they are doing, whatever organisation they might be involved in, young people have a role to play, and youth need to be present not just because it makes it look good, but because you might be dealing with the leaders of the future who will shape policies. It’s important to get them involved and consult them from the very start so they have confidence whatever opportunities might come in the future.”

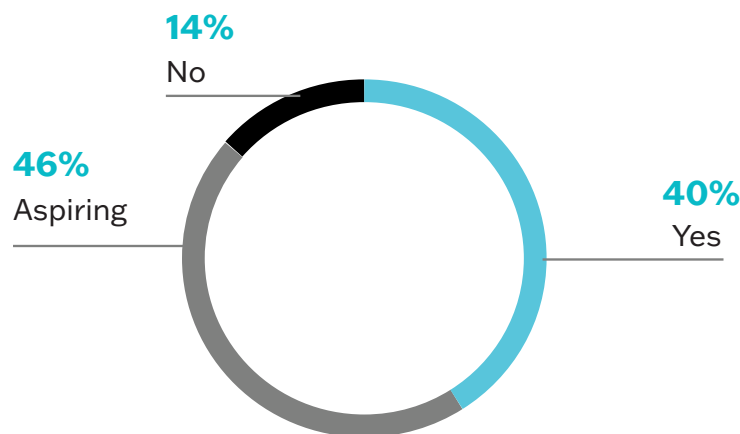
Are young adults engaged in formal and informal leadership roles?

To understand the current state of young adults' leadership, all survey respondents indicated whether they currently held a leadership role or planned to pursue a leadership position in the future. To acknowledge the many different forms that leadership might take—particularly in the midst of COVID-19—young adults were prompted to define a leadership position for themselves; the survey did not provide an explicit definition of what constitutes a leadership position.

Responses suggested that most young professionals are interested and engaged in leadership. Across the sample, 40% of respondents reported that they currently held a leadership role. Most of these current leaders held roles in education or school settings (42%), followed by non-profit or local organisations (32%). The remaining leaders held positions in entrepreneurship or for-profit ventures (11%), government or parliament (9%), and political or activist efforts (5%).

Are you currently in a leadership role?

Responses from Survey Participants



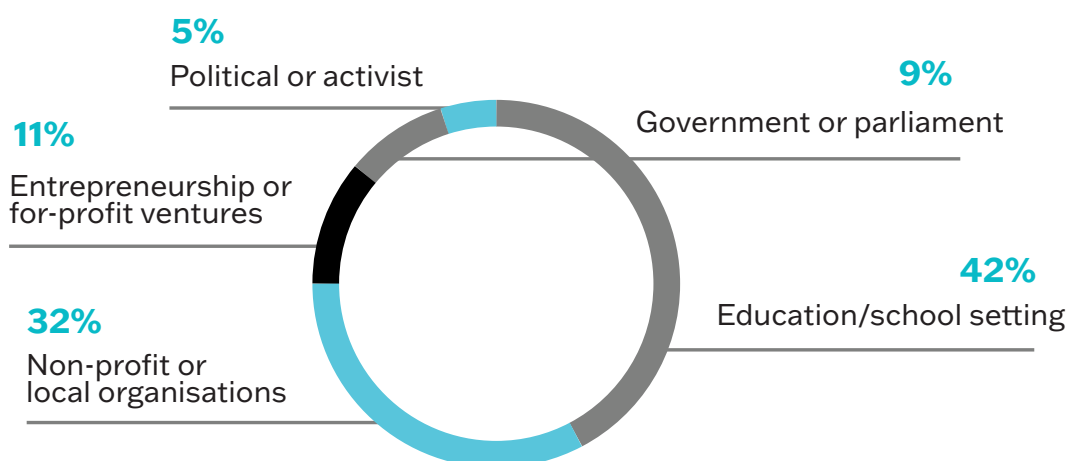
Interestingly, this pattern partially mirrors a similar data collection with young people in G20 countries conducted in 2020 by CCL; in that sample, only 10% of young leaders served in government (7%) and political or activist domains (3%), with a smaller but still sizeable proportion (23%) of leaders serving in education or school settings. Although the large proportion of current leaders in education and non-profit spaces may partially be due to the avenues through which young people were invited for this Report (i.e., ASEF, CCL, and their affiliate partners), the responses still suggest that only a small percentage of current leaders serve in government and political or activist fields where societal decisions around policy can be made.

Coupled with responses from young leaders in focus groups and interviews, this is an indication that there are more opportunities for young people’s leadership, voice, and contributions in for-profit, government, and political domains.

Of those young adults who did not currently hold a leadership role, 77% (46% of overall sample) reported they would like to lead in the future. Among these aspiring leaders, more than half (61%) planned to pursue a leadership role within the next five years. The remaining aspiring leaders planned to pursue a leadership role within the next 6 (19%) or 12 months (20%). The final 14% of survey respondents—referred to in this Report as non-leaders— did not intend to pursue a leadership role in the future. Taken together, findings indicated that more than three-quarters (86%) of young adults who completed the survey are either currently engaged or plan to pursue a leadership role.

Industry sector for current leader

Responses from Survey Participants



Young people from European (40%) and Asian countries (41%) were equally likely to currently hold a leadership position. For those who did not hold a leadership role, more young people from European countries were aspiring leaders and more young people from Asian countries were uninterested in leading. This finding indicates that young leadership may not differ significantly by region, and that young people from both European and Asian countries are both involved or interested in holding some sort of leadership position.

Do current young leaders feel empowered in their roles?

Not all young adults in leadership roles feel empowered. To truly pave the way for a more sustainable future, young people need to believe that they have agency, voice, and impact as leaders. When empowered, young people can contribute their unique perspectives influence critical conversations.

We asked current leaders from the survey to share insights into how empowered they feel in their present roles. Almost unanimously, most current leaders report feeling empowered frequently or almost all of the time. This finding held equally for current leaders from European and Asian countries.

One focus group participant summarised the importance of being empowered as a leader:



“To become a leader, it’s necessary to be heard. Something that I also need to feel, looking at the actions that follow. I need trust and support whenever needed, while making sure that I get the tools I need and that I act within a safe space.”

Panagiotis Chatzimichail
Board Member
European Youth Forum

However, Interview and focus group participants emphasised the importance of creating leadership opportunities where young people could experience true empowerment, as opposed to performative opportunities. Several participants called out the importance of avoiding tokenism with leaders from traditionally marginalised groups. Focus group participants from both Europe and Asia also underlined the importance of avoiding youth washing as a whole, where young people are included in high-visibility ways to add

credibility without any actual agency or authentic opportunities for impact. What may begin as a genuine desire to include those who do not usually have access to leadership roles can quickly escalate into a “check the box” activity; in those situations—when young people cannot see or feel the impact of their actions—they may respond by withdrawing from opportunities that feels like investing meaningless energy. Intergenerational mistrust may also lead young adults to believe that, even when they raise their voice, they may not be listened to.

Focus group participants from both Europe and Asia also underlined the importance of avoiding youth washing, where young people are included in high-visibility ways to add credibility without any actual agency or authentic opportunities for impact.

Do young people perceive opportunities to lead?

Beyond their personal leadership engagement, young adults hold views on youth's general role in societal leadership. To capture norms around young people's leadership, young people answered questions about the opportunities, encouragement, and empowerment available to young people. These questions focused on different levels of young people's involvement in leadership, including:

Encouragement: Are young people encouraged to be involved in leadership?

Opportunities: Are young people provided with opportunities to be a leader?

Empowerment: Are young people included and have a voice in important decision-making conversations?

Equitable Access: Do young people have opportunities to be a leader regardless of their job, gender, sexual orientation, age, race, or ethnic background?

It was important to ask about young people's involvement from different angles to determine whether young people are included as leaders in name or idea only, or if they have an opportunity to truly be involved and make a difference. Being encouraged but not given opportunities to lead may result in frustration among young people. Having opportunities without empowerment can lead to performative representation, where young people are invited into conversations but unable to contribute in meaningful ways. Finally, opportunities and empowerment without equitable access can indicate a loss of potential as important voices and viewpoints are excluded from leadership conversations,

Based on responses from surveys and focus groups, young adults more often recognise encouragement than tangible opportunities for people in their age group to serve as leaders. Several focus group and interview participants indicated that they pursued a leadership position in response to an opportunity to lead. However, multiple participants also named lack of opportunities—or equitable access to opportunities—as among the most important factors that prevent young adults in their country from engaging in leadership roles. One representative quote from a young leader in Malaysia underscores messages raised by many current leaders.

Young adults more often recognize encouragement than tangible opportunities for people in their age group to serve as leaders.



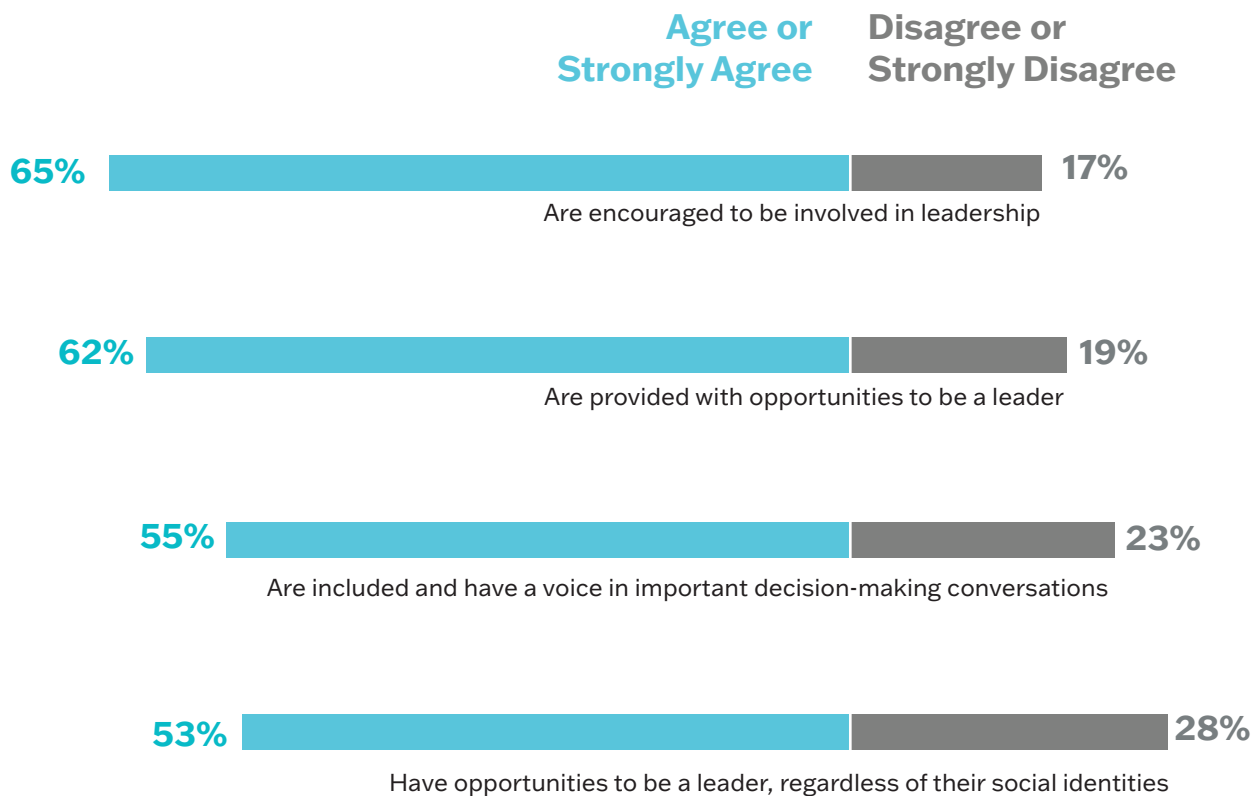
Yik Wai Chee
ASEFYLS4 Youth Representative
Malaysia

“There are not enough leadership programmes/ opportunities for capacity building outside politics [in my country]. If we want to train leadership among youth, what are the platforms for that? You can’t jump into an organisation and just expect to become a leader.”

Survey respondents were equally divided in their perceptions of young people’s role as societal leaders. Below are the percentage of people who disagreed or agreed with each statement. Important to note is how the percentages shift across questions. As questions ask about deeper levels of involvement (i.e., opportunities versus encouragement, empowerment versus opportunities), fewer young people agree that young people play a role in their country’s leadership. This pattern indicates an opportunity for greater contribution by young leaders.

What role do young people play in leadership?

Responses from Survey Participants



Note: percentage of responses not displayed here represent individuals who responded “neither agree nor disagree” to each question.

When considering regional differences, young people in Asian countries tended to have a more favourable view of young people’s leadership. They reported higher perceived encouragement, opportunities, empowerment, and equitable access than young people in European countries. Explanations behind these differences have yet to be explored, possibly in a follow-up study including more in-depth focus groups and questions focusing more explicitly on the integration of younger generations into societal leadership.



04 Key Question 2: What are the incentives and disincentives for young people to take part in leadership?

Young adults who responded to surveys in this Report expressed a high level of interest, engagement, and appreciation of opportunities to lead. Despite this enthusiasm for young leadership, 60% of young people who completed the survey do not currently hold a leadership role. What perspectives, experiences, or affordances might predict leadership engagement? Young people shared insights into some of the most important experiences and perceptions that might influence their leadership engagement and empowerment. Questions from the survey, interviews, and focus groups explicitly centred around topics that research has identified as critical for civic engagement and leadership development.

The following section summarises young peoples' general experiences and identifies the most salient predictors of leadership engagement. Understanding the underlying factors that predict leadership engagement can inform established leaders, organisations, and countries in their attempts to support young professionals' leadership journeys.

What does leadership look like? Early development opportunities

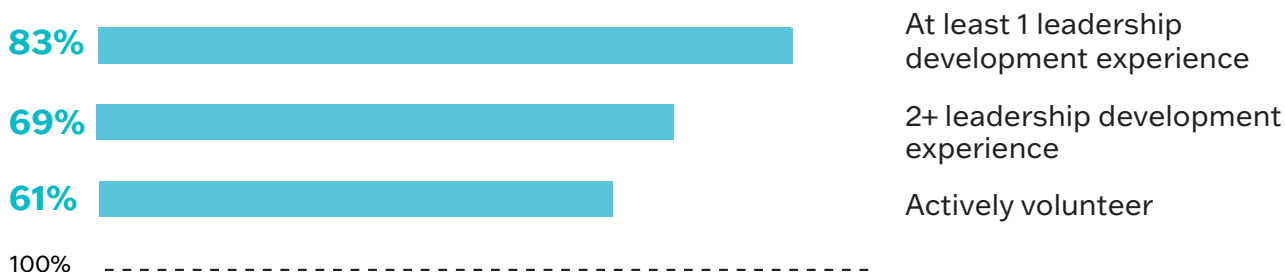
For decades, research has emphasised the importance of early experiences for young people believing they can become a leader. In a 2012 CCL survey, more than 95% of global leaders believed that leadership development should begin before age 21; a full half (50%) of the sample advocated for leadership development that began before age 10 (Van Velsor & Wright, 2012).

Survey respondents indicated whether they had participated in a range of leadership experience, defined as any opportunity where they have had a chance to exhibit leadership behaviours or observe others in leadership roles. Findings revealed that most young professionals have participated in some sort of leadership development. More than three-quarters (83%) of young adults surveyed had participated in at least one leadership development experience, with over two-thirds (69%) indicating that they had participated in two or more experiences. After volunteering, formal development opportunities—including formal training and formal internships—were the most frequently mentioned development opportunities. Young adults also indicated that they

participated in more informal development experiences, including informal internships, apprenticeships, and informal training programmes.

Young professionals who have participated in leadership development

Responses from Survey Participants



Young adults can also engage in leadership through informal, unpaid opportunities. As part of the survey, respondents indicated whether they were actively involved in any sort of volunteer opportunity. Volunteer activities could take place within any association or network, including social, cultural, political, and environmental involvement. More than half (61%) of respondents reported being active volunteers. Young people in European countries were more likely to be active volunteers (71%) than young people in Asian countries (60%). Many focus group and interview participants identified early development opportunities as an entry point to leadership, with examples ranging from volunteering in a Non-Governmental Organisations to holding a student government office. Leaders also underscored early development opportunities as a means to become a more confident and experienced leader.

Do others believe young people can lead? Adult support and mentoring

Leadership development experts also emphasise the importance of adult support in shaping young people's decisions to become a leader. Similar to leadership experiences, most young people who completed the survey received supportive messages about leadership from at least one adult (i.e., parent, teacher, mentor, or coach). The majority of young adults in this sample had an adult who:

- Encouraged them to be involved in leadership activities (82%)
- Told them it was important to develop leadership skills (83%)
- Told them they could become a leader (76%)

Interestingly, more young people from Asian countries reported receiving encouragement from an adult than young people in European countries. More Asians also reported that an adult told them it was important to develop leadership skills. However, European and Asian youth were equally likely to have an adult who told them they could become a leader.

Several focus group participants emphasised the importance of receiving authentic support from important adults or mentors, as well as young people with experience in the field or organisation they aimed to get involved in. They also identified the responsibility of current young leaders to provide that support for future leaders. As one current leader shared:

“In order to be a leader, you must have a proper support, a proper mentorship or a proper role model right next to you. That kind of support might come from your parent(s) or guardian(s) or any other member of your family, it might come from your teacher, professor, youthworker or even your employer. For a future leader, it is crucial he/she takes in all the right values and qualities of their mentor(s) and then implements them and more importantly shares them with future leaders to come.”



Leo Stakovic
President
Croatian Youth Network

Do they know other young leaders? Peer connections and role models

Even more so than adults, peers can play a critical role in influencing young people's decisions to engage in leadership roles. Peer leaders have the potential to inspire leadership engagement both directly (e.g., encouragement) and indirectly (e.g., serve as role model), particularly if young people know them personally. As articulated by a focus group participant, being connected to other peer leaders may offer critical support and amplify young individuals' potential for societal impact:



Ruxandra Burghilea
Secretary General
Romanian Youth Council

“I think the first important element that enables one to be a leader is to build strong collaborative relations with young leaders across the world, and to meet regularly with them, in order to exchange ideas, courses of action, methods and experiences... Often, young representatives lead a limited circle of individuals, and their actions fail to reach those who are not part of an organisation. The effects of leadership should be felt throughout the youth sector and bring benefits to all those whose lives can be improved.”

We asked survey participants to indicate the number of young people they know personally in five different sectors: government or parliament, entrepreneurship, non-profit or local organisations, political or activist efforts, and education or school settings. Responses suggest that many young people personally know at least one young person in a leadership role. Across sectors, fewer than one-third (10-31%) of young people did not personally know a young leader. The majority of survey participants (30-36%) indicated that they knew 2-4 young leaders in at least one domain. Respondents were most likely to know at least one young leader in education (90%), for-profit (85%), and non-profit areas (83%) compared to political/activist (78%) and government (69%) fields. In general, young people in European countries were more likely to know a young leader in government; young people in Asian countries knew more young leaders in for-profit and education sectors.

What prevents them from leading? Psychological safety and financial security

Even when they are invested and confident in pursuing a leadership role, young people may experience barriers to becoming a leader. Two particularly salient deterrents to young leaders' leadership are psychological safety and financial security. In fact, a similar recent study with young residents in G20 countries identified psychological safety and financial security as two of the most important predictors of whether young people held leadership roles and whether current leaders reported feeling empowered.

One element of psychological safety is the extent to which young people feel it is safe to take risks without fear of repercussion. When young professionals feel high psychological safety, they are willing to take risks, share ideas, ask questions, give and receive feedback, admit mistakes, and ask for help—all critical behaviours for effective, empowered leadership. By contrast, young professionals who perceive low psychological safety are less likely to take risks or ask others for help and guidance. Low psychological safety may take the form of self-doubt, imposter syndrome, or general disengagement.

The survey also included questions about whether young adults felt it was safe to take risks in a leadership role in their country. Their responses indicated that some—but not all—young people view risk-taking as safe for leaders. Exactly one-half (50%) of respondents agreed that leaders should be safe to take risks, while 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Interestingly, psychological safety perceptions did not meaningfully differ by gender, generation, or leadership status. Psychological safety also did not differ between European and Asian countries.

Financial security—the extent to which individuals believe they can afford their daily living expenses—could also dampen young adults' desire to lead. Financial

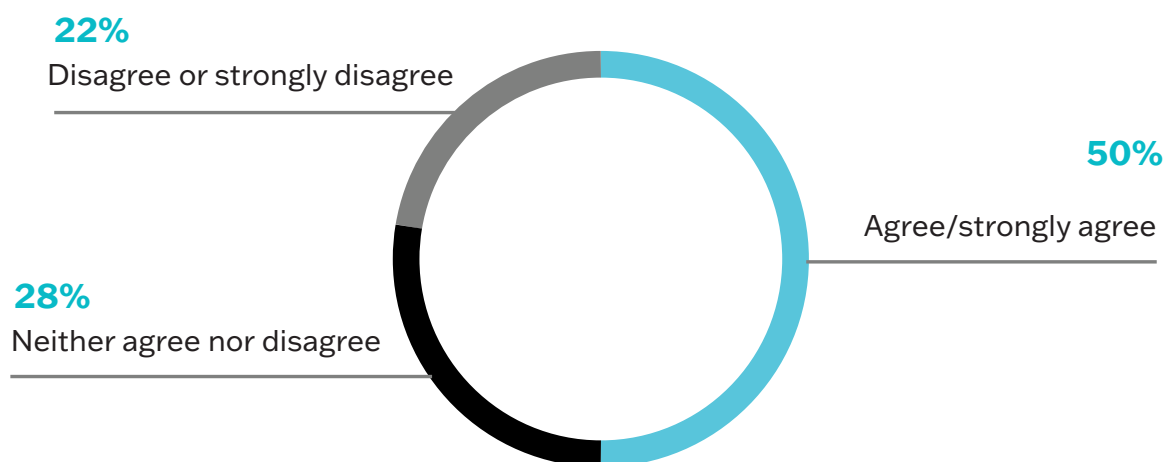
matters and factors that coincide with lower socioeconomic status (e.g., lack of access to educational opportunities) were emphasised in focus groups as some of the most significant barriers to youth leadership.

Interestingly, survey participants represented a range of financial security. Nearly half of young people reported lower financial security, with 17% indicating they cannot make ends meet and 26% indicating that they are barely making it. Nearly one-quarter (24%) reported that they are breaking even. The remaining third reported greater financial stability; 19% have extra money after paying the bills and 14% did not have to worry about money. Although this represents a variety of financial security statuses among survey respondents, it is also worth considering how these percentages compare to the overall financial security of young people across ASEM countries.

Two particularly salient deterrents to young leaders' leadership are psychological safety and financial security.

Is it safe to take risks in a leadership role?

Responses from Survey Participants



What matters most to young people when choosing to lead?

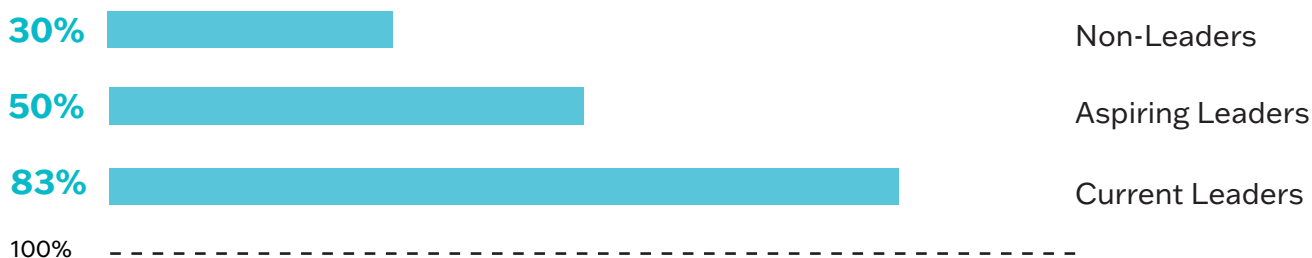
By definition, current, aspiring, and non-leaders differ in their actual and intended engagement in leadership. Which—if any—of the incentives or disincentives described above might differ across groups? One way to address this question is to compare responses among these three groups of leaders, controlling for country, gender, and generational status. This approach yielded the following insights.

Current leaders volunteer more. The study clearly highlights a strong link between leadership and volunteering. Nearly 83% of current leaders reported actively volunteering, compared to 50% of aspiring leaders and 30% of non-leaders. Among current leaders, those who volunteer reported higher levels of empowerment; on average, volunteers reported higher agreement with their ability to make joint decisions, participate in decision-making conversations, positively impact their organisation, and have their voice be heard.

There may be numerous reasons to explain why this pattern would emerge. Volunteering may serve as an informal, low-stakes opportunity to develop the skills and confidence needed to be an effective leader. Volunteering may also provide avenue for positive societal impact, a main driving force for young people to pursue leadership roles. Volunteering and leadership engagement or empowerment might both be driven by a third factor, such as excess free time or access to valuable opportunities. Although analyses accounted for financial security, the underlying reason driving the connection between leadership and volunteering is unclear. However, the fact that there is a sizable difference between current, aspiring, and non-leaders volunteer involvement may inform recommendations for supporting young leaders.

Which leaders volunteer more?

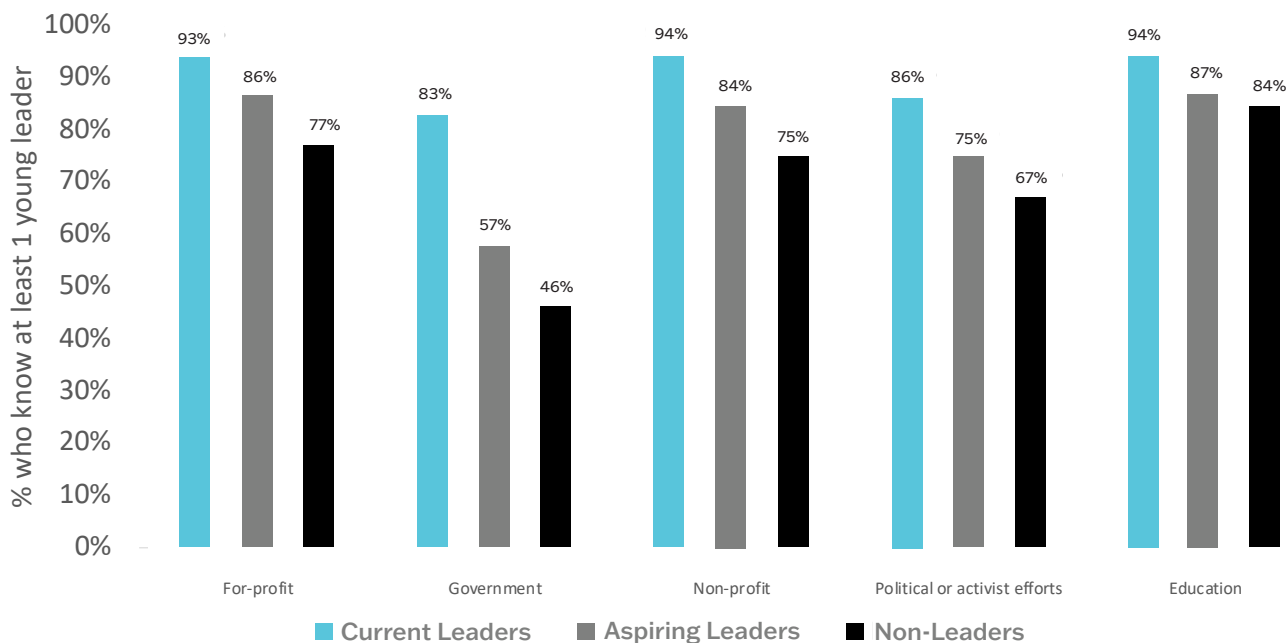
Responses from Survey Participants



Volunteering may serve as an informal, low-stakes opportunity to develop the skills and confidence needed to be an effective leader. Volunteering may also provide avenue for positive societal impact, a main driving force for young people to pursue leadership roles.



Current leaders know more young people in leadership positions. The chart below depicts the percentage of current, aspiring, and non-leaders who know at least one young leader in different professional and community sectors. Across domains, a larger percent of current leaders knows at least one peer leader than aspiring leaders, who are more likely to know at least one young leader compared to non-leaders. The discrepancy varies across domains, with less pronounced differences in the education space and more substantial differences in government and political or activist realms. Whereas it is natural for young people in leadership circles to hold a larger network of peers in leadership position, this also risks promoting gatekeeping structures in which young people without proper access to the right contacts and information will need to break an extra glass-ceiling at the time of accessing a leadership role.



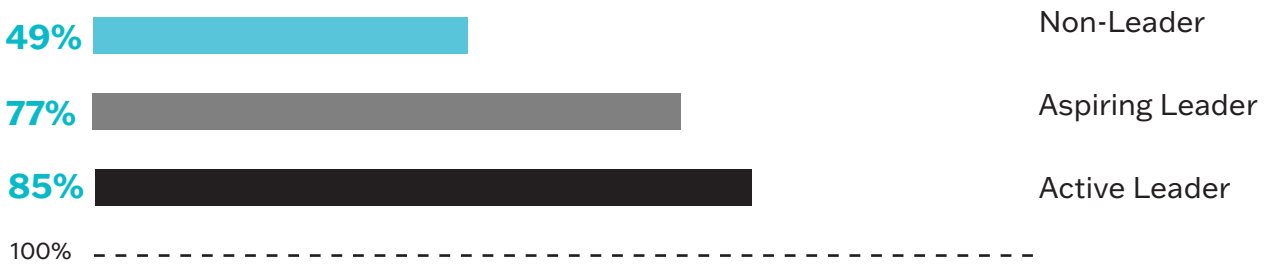
Once again, there are many possible explanations for why these differences occur. Current leaders may have more opportunities to connect with peer leaders as a function of their own leadership position. By contrast, knowing peers in leadership may provide the encouragement, connections, and access needed to step into a leadership role. Finally, an unrelated variable (e.g., social capital) could be influencing both leadership engagement and exposure to peer leaders. Given its association with leadership, peer connections provide another avenue for supporting current and potential leaders.

Current and aspiring leaders receive more adult support. Compared to current and aspiring leaders, non-leaders were much less likely to receive encouragement or support from an adult with respect to leadership. Most **non-leaders** had at least one adult tell them it was important to develop leadership skills (62%) and be involved in leadership activities (58%). However, only 49% were explicitly told they could become a leader. Compare that to the experiences of current and **aspiring leaders**, the overwhelming majority of whom were encouraged to develop leadership skills (88%, 84%), engage in development activities (89%, 84%), and told they could become a leader (85%, 77%). Of note, current and aspiring leaders differ most with how likely they were to directly hear that they could become a leader. Validation from others—particularly important authority figures—can meaningfully influence children’s confidence and leadership trajectories. Validation as an adult is also impactful and serves as a high-impact and low-effort lever for change.

Overall amount of adult support

Responses from Survey Participants

Told by at least one adult to they could become a leader.



Overall amount of adult support

Responses from Survey Participants

Encouraged by at least one adult to develop leadership skills



Overall amount of adult support

Responses from Survey Participants

Told by at least one adult to engage in leadership activities



Leadership status and empowerment are not consistently associated with financial security or psychological safety. In a 2020 study with young adults in G20 countries, financial security and psychological safety were the two strongest correlates of whether someone held a leadership role and whether current leaders reported feeling empowered. Current leaders—particularly leaders who reported high levels of empowerment in their position—reported higher overall levels of financial security and psychological safety. Aspiring leaders, in turn, reported greater financial security and psychological safety than non-leaders.

Results from the current sample of participants did not replicate these findings. Current, aspiring, and non-leaders reported nearly identical levels of psychological safety; of note, all three groups reported average endorsement of psychological safety, indicating that they neither agree nor disagree that it is safe to take risks in a leadership role. Although focus group and interview participants raised some concerns related to psychological safety (e.g., imposter syndrome), psychological safety did not emerge as a consistent theme within the conversations. Of note, this finding could have been, in part, an artifact of how young people were recruited for this Report (through ASEF, CCL, and their affiliate institutions).

By contrast, numerous focus group participants named financial security as a salient barrier to young people’s leadership. Whether by limiting access to resources and opportunities or raising competing demands for young people’s time, current leaders in interviews and focus groups perceived financial security as a key barrier to leadership. Results from the survey, however, paint a less straightforward interpretation of how financial security and leadership are connected. In line with prior findings, non-leaders are most likely to report low financial security (i.e., they cannot make ends meet or are barely getting by). Patterns for current and aspiring leaders, however, are less straightforward; aspiring leaders are more likely than change to either be barely making it (an indication of lower financial security) or not having to worry about money (an indication of the highest financial security). Current leaders, by contrast, are more likely to be breaking even or have extra money after paying the bills (an indication of moderate financial security). Given these inconsistencies, future information gathering would be helpful. One possible explanation is that the global pandemic and recent global changes might be impacting what opportunities are available to young people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Current leaders are more likely to be men and Millennials. As a final step, this Report considered whether young adults with different social identities were more likely to be current, aspiring, or non-leaders. Findings indicate some differences by gender identity and generational status that merit consideration. With respect to gender identity, individuals who identified as men were more likely to currently hold a leadership position. However, those who identified as women were more likely to aspire to lead in the future. Men, women, and those who identified as non-binary were

equally likely to not be interested in a leadership role. As suggested by interview and focus group members, women’s underrepresentation in leadership may be a function of inequitable opportunities for women to lead in traditionally male-dominated professional or political spheres. Consider one current leader’s explanation of gender differences in promotion and leadership opportunities:



“Not a lot of young women in the Netherlands have leadership opportunities. They do get passed over faster on promotions, not necessarily just in leadership roles. They are judged differently than their male peers.”

Charlotte Heystek
Communications Advisor and Team Leader
Acceleration Plan

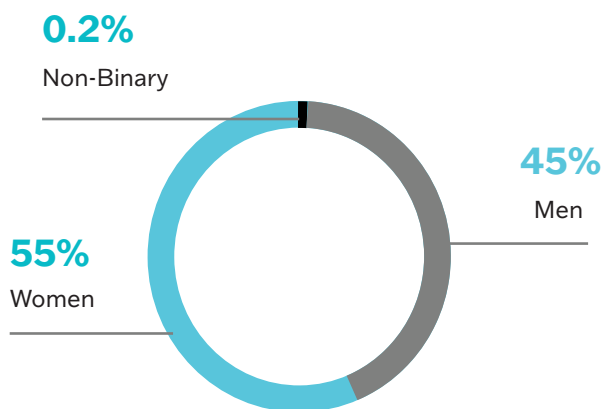
Focus group participants mentioned several other social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation) that might similarly impact an individual’s opportunities or encouragement to step into a leadership role.

With respect to generational status, Millennials (young adults born before 1996) were more likely to currently hold a leadership role. By contrast, Gen Z (young adults born during or after 1996) were more likely to indicate that they were uninterested in pursuing a leadership position. Before drawing conclusions about generational differences, it is important to note that the survey sample was predominately comprised of Gen Z and current or aspiring leaders. Results described here indicate that—among the 14% of respondents who were uninterested in holding a leadership role—a greater proportion belong to Gen Z than would be expected by chance. Findings, however, do not indicate that Gen Z are uninterested or unengaged in leadership.

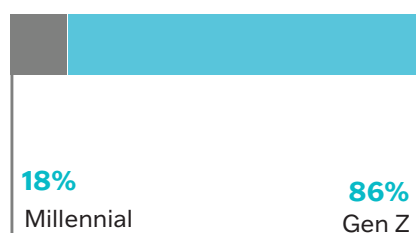
05 Spotlight: Asian ASEM Countries

Includes young people from the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

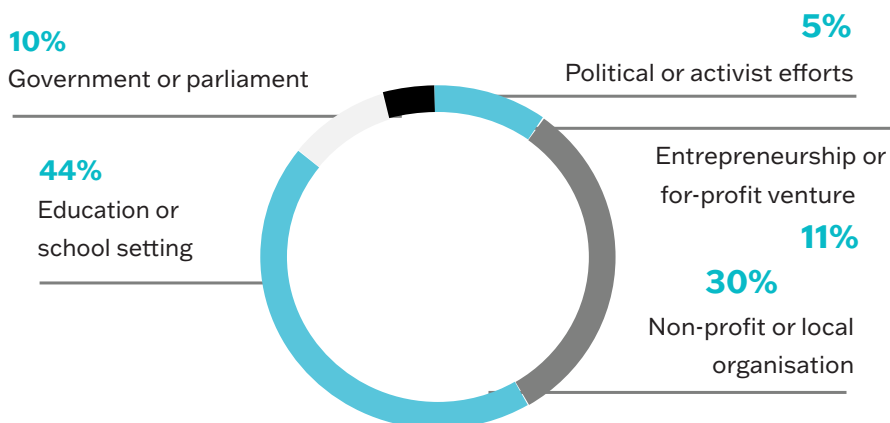
Gender Identity



Generational Status



Industry Sector (for Current Leaders)



What Motivates Young People to Lead?

Responses from Survey Participants:

Top 5 Most Frequently Mentioned Reasons to be a Leader

- 01 Be a role model for my community
- 02 Make a contribution to society
- 03 Learn things that will help me make a positive impact in the world
- 04 Expand my understanding of the world
- 05 Help others

Bottom 5 Least Frequently Mentioned Reasons to be a Leader

- 01 Please my parents
- 02 Make new friends
- 03 Learn more about my interests
- 04 Help my family
- 05 Make my family proud



Leadership Status

- Current leaders: 40%
- Aspiring leaders: 45%
- Non-leaders: 15%

60%

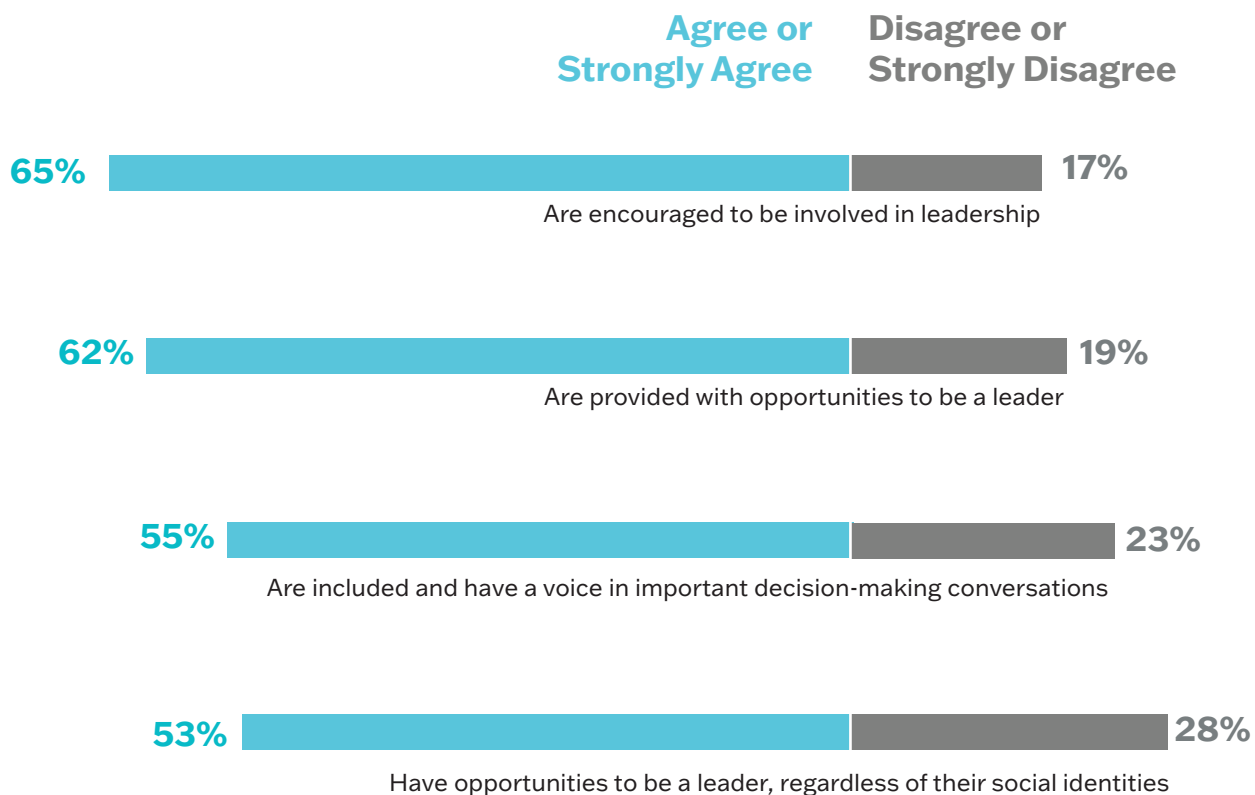
Active Volunteers

Peer connections

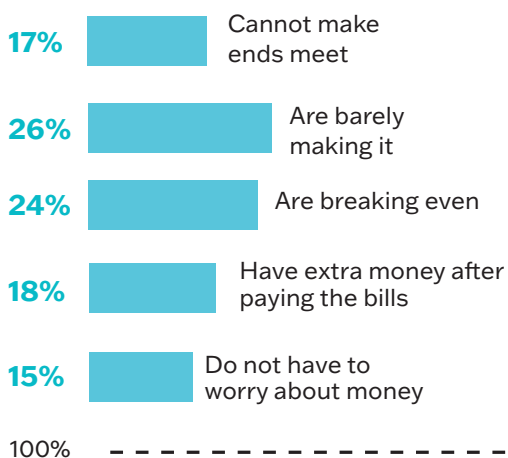
Young people know at least one person in a leadership role in the following areas:

- Entrepreneurship or for-profit ventures: 86%
- Government or parliament: 71%
- Non-profit or local organisations: 84%
- Political or activist efforts: 79%
- Education or school setting: 91%

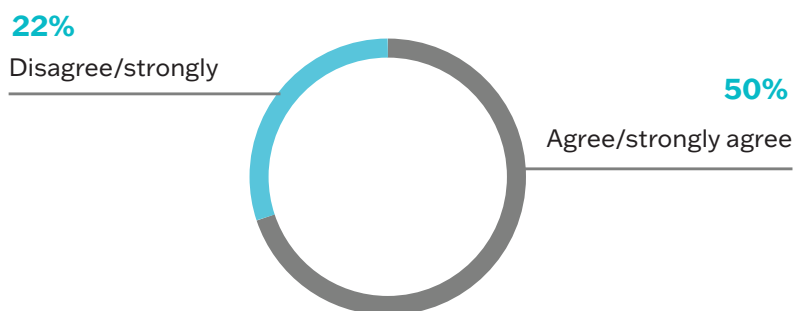
Young People’s Role in Leadership



Financial security



Psychological safety



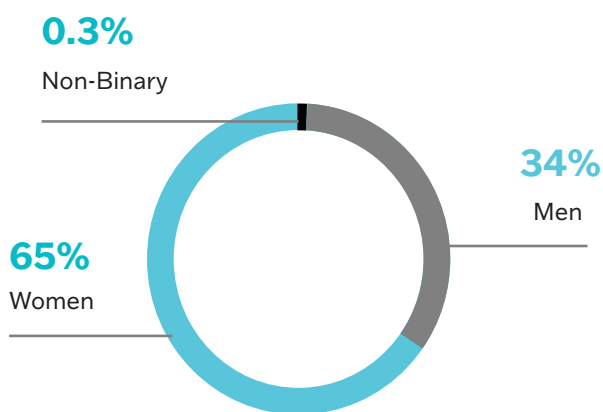
Note: Percentage of responses not displayed here represent individuals who responded “neither agree nor disagree”



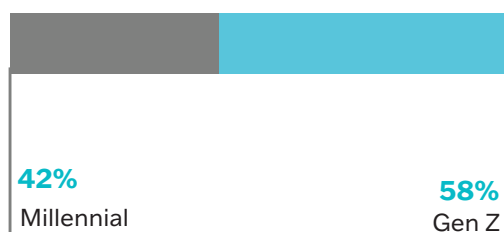
06 Spotlight: European ASEM Countries

Includes young people from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

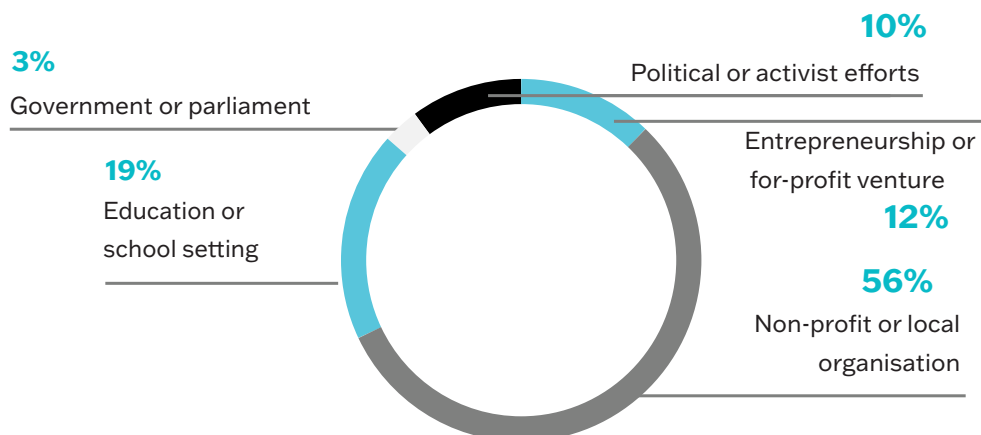
Gender Identity



Generational Status



Industry Sector (for Current Leaders)



What Motivates Young People to Lead?

Responses from Survey Participants:

Top 5 Most Frequently Mentioned Reasons to be a Leader

- 01 Make a contribution to society
- 02 Learn things that will help me make a positive impact in the world
- 03 Expand my understanding of the world
- 04 Gain skills that I can use in a job that helps others
- 05 Give back to my community

Bottom 5 Least Frequently Mentioned Reasons to be a Leader

- 01 Please my parents
- 02 Help my family out
- 03 Make my family proud
- 04 Make a lot of money
- 05 Make new friends



Leadership Status

- Current leaders: 41%
- Aspiring leaders: 50%
- Non-leaders: 9%

Peer connections

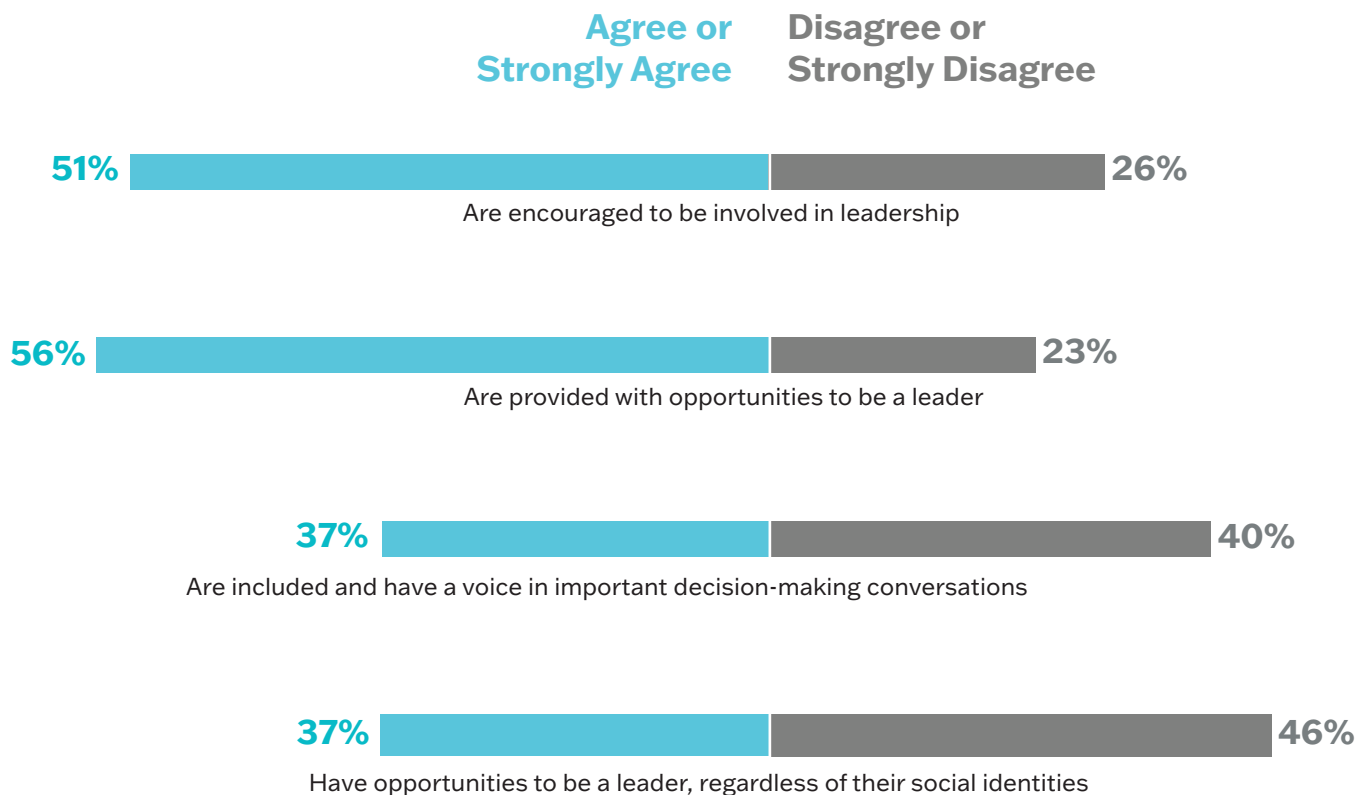
Young people know at least one person in a leadership role in the following areas:

- Entrepreneurship or for-profit ventures: 80%
- Government or parliament: 48%
- Non-profit or local organisations: 84%
- Political or activist efforts: 80%
- Education or school setting: 78%

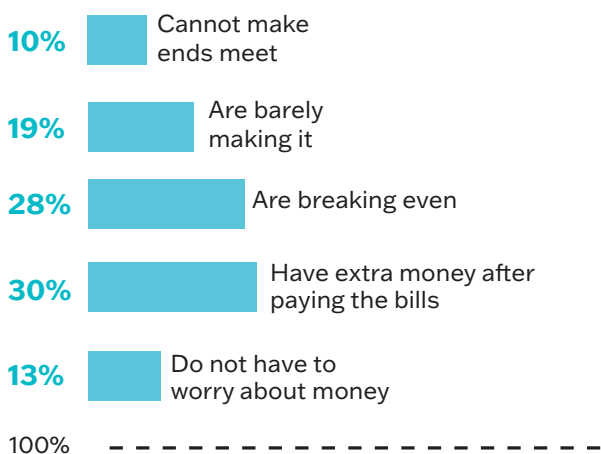
71%

Active Volunteers

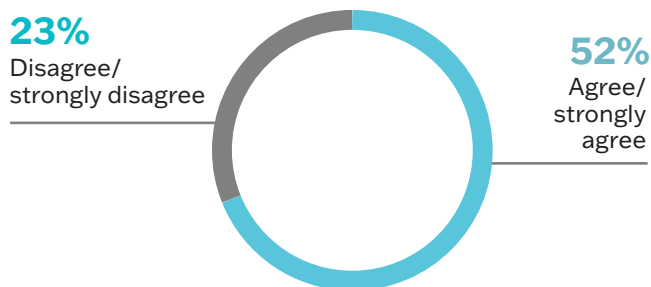
Young People’s Role in Leadership



Financial



Psychological Safety



Note: Percentage of responses not displayed here represent individuals who responded “neither agree nor disagree”

07 Conclusion and Recommendations: What are promising ways to incentivise and design meaningful leadership experiences?

In the midst of continued global instability, disruption, and change, it is more critical than ever to develop global citizens who will be responsible for creating a sustainable future. This Report spurred from a desire to listen to a critical force in developing that sustainable future: young adults. Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, this Report sought to summarise what Gen Z and Millennial citizens in ASEM countries imagine when they envision what societal leadership might look like in a post-COVID-19 world.

Responses from more than 13,600 young adults in 51 European and Asian countries provide valuable sight lines into the state of young people's leadership, including current levels of engagement and empowerment. Findings also speak to factors that may (and may not) be important for supporting young adults in their leadership development journeys. Most importantly, this Report provided a platform for young adults to speak to how they want to be supported by their countries in the future.

The insights in this Report are intended to spur conversations among those in positions of power in their countries, organisations and educational institutions, and communities on how best to support young people seeking to engage in leadership positions. With this goal in mind, the Report concludes with two sets of recommendations for those who seek to support young leaders. The first set of recommendations are starting points guided by results from this collaboration and leadership development research. The remaining list of recommendations are offered by the leaders who participated in interviews and focus groups. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but instead prompt conversations and inform action in developing healthy, sustainable contexts where young leaders can thrive.

Recommendations informed by findings

- 01 Systematically develop and provide informal leadership experiences.** One distinguishing factor between current, aspiring, and non-leaders was whether they were currently engaged in volunteer activities. Volunteering provides a low-pressure, high value means to positively impact society while developing the necessary skills and confidence to be an effective leader. Based on focus group and interview feedback, volunteering may serve as an opportunity for young people to pursue new leadership roles.

Consider the informal opportunities currently available to young people in your community. To what extent are they designed to support young people's access to leadership positions and empowerment—where young leaders are able to be heard, influence decision-making, and make a positive impact? Are opportunities open to young people from different backgrounds and professional spheres? Finally, are young people in your community aware that these opportunities exist?

When examining current opportunities and designing new ones, it can be helpful to remember that experiences will be most impactful for young leaders if offered early (so they can develop and practice leadership skills), frequently (so they can have a consistent impact on decisions), consistently (so their voices are represented in all sectors and on all issues), and authentically (so they feel genuinely invited to participate).

- 02 Invest in infrastructure to help young professionals connect.** Current, aspiring, and non-leaders also differed in the extent to which they were personally connected to peer leaders. Peer connections provide young leaders with advice, encouragement, and social capital that will support them on their leadership journey. However, some new leaders find it difficult to meet new peers—or, in some cases, even don't know where to begin in forming connections.

Consider current or potential opportunities to help young adults connect with peer leaders. Does infrastructure already exist to facilitate peer-to-peer connections? If so, can young leaders easily access it, and do they know it exists? Does it provide opportunities for young leaders to develop lasting professional connections? Also consider platforms that can help young adults see and learn from their peers. Are there opportunities for newer leaders to gain visibility and share their experiences?

When considering infrastructure, it can be helpful to keep in mind that networking opportunities will be most impactful for young leaders if they

are low effort (so they don't experience unnecessary barriers to use), meaningful (so they can forge lasting connections), and equitable (so all leaders, not just some leaders, can engage).

03 Create environments that encourage young leaders to explore, connect, and embrace their personal values. In keeping with being a global citizen, young adults in the survey and focus group samples expressed a desire to help their community and society. Providing opportunities that allow young people to connect their work or leadership to their values creates fertile ground for deep engagement, satisfaction, and growth.

Consider how values play a role in your current culture. Are missions and guiding values highlighted in environment where young people might lead (such as an organisation or political group)? Do young people know why their work is meaningful? Do young people have time to reflect, share, and connect leadership tasks to their personally held values? Might there be additional opportunities for young people to find meaning as leaders?

When reflecting on values, it can be helpful to recall that value-based activities are most likely to be effective for young adults if they are personal (so they can identify their own value versus being told why to value a task), frequent (so values remain top of mind), and specific (so they can create a solid, concrete connection instead of a vague or abstract tie).

Systematically develop and provide informal leadership experiences.

Invest in infrastructure to help young professionals connect.

Create environments that encourage young leaders to explore, connect, and embrace their personal values.

Recommendations from Young Leaders

During the focus groups and interviews, several crucial recommendations were made by young Asian and European leaders to pave the way forward for youth leadership. The following table highlights some of the main recommendations, their underlying rationales & objectives, as well as concrete examples on how to implement them. The recommendations are listed in descending order of how often they were mentioned.

Recommendations	Objectives	Means of implementation
Use education to prepare future leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create equitable opportunities • Build confidence • Set expectations • Learn to be a global citizen • Understand what leadership is • Underscore importance of civic engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free online leadership courses • Civic and political engagement courses • Leadership for credit • Mentoring and shadowing
Create spaces where young people can truly lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build confidence • Gain experience and skills • Find diverse role models • Develop peer connections • Offer safe spaces to develop their voices and opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer youth networks and organisations • Informal volunteer opportunities • Youth clubs (e.g., school council, public debate)



Recommendations	Objectives	Means of implementation
Incentivise youth involvement for young people and organisations or governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce burden of fitting in leadership on top of other work • Create infrastructure • Encourage sustained involvement • Convey value of leading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship programmes • Take reliefs/financial supports • Participation incentives • Formal “youth leader” positions
Challenge young people to take action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge beliefs that no opportunities exist • Build confidence • Support buy-in/ investment • Engender empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found a leadership club • Informal shadowing • Early expectations to develop leadership skills
Create opportunities for feedback to governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide youth voice • Create safe opportunities to share dissenting ideas • Encourage civic engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth government representative • Confidential feedback outlets
Remove unnecessary barriers to leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create equitable opportunities • Engage young people who do not yet have experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not require formal leadership experience or education • Provide sufficient financial compensation
Amplify and value young voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear important perspectives • Support empowerment • Recognise expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit young people for their ideas • Forums for public policy

08 Annexes

List of Participants of the 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4)

Kelsey Gray, Australia; Ian Mann, Australia; Nicholas Pentney, Australia; James Tait, Australia; Arthur Lau, Australia; Patrizia Fink, Austria; Valerie-Sophie Schoenberg, Austria; Sandra Wohlauf, Austria; Asif Amer, Bangladesh; Abdullah Ar Rafee, Bangladesh; Zannat Ghani, Bangladesh; Lamia Mohsin, Bangladesh; Rubina Akter, Bangladesh; Nicolas Vande Kerckhove, Belgium; Maxim Vandekerckhove, Belgium; Laurence Van den Abbeele, Belgium; Nadia Binti Hj Aji, Brunei Darussalam; Siti Firdaus, Brunei Darussalam; Roberta Guevska, Bulgaria; Kostadina Zlatunova, Bulgaria; Dolphie Bou, Cambodia; Pirun Chan, Cambodia; Dechkunn Chhay, Cambodia; Chhiv Ing Chhoun, Cambodia; Rathany Chhum, Cambodia; Vanndasambath Chhuon, Cambodia; Visal Chourn, Cambodia; Lyhour Hak, Cambodia; Rithmonich Heng, Cambodia; Keolydeth Hun, Cambodia; Tepmonyneath Kin, Cambodia; Sopheavy Koy, Cambodia; Sivgech Lo, Cambodia; Chan Oudom Meatra, Cambodia; Huy Teang Meng, Cambodia; Lim Nich, Cambodia; Sokneang Sam, Cambodia; Por Seak Cambodia; Meas Sothyro, Cambodia; Muong Sovanponnarith, Cambodia; Setthikun Sun, Cambodia; Nguonlim Tan, Cambodia; Rachna Thim, Cambodia; Kyhok Yeh, Cambodia; Yet Yoeum, Cambodia; Mao Hak, Cambodia; Kaliane Tea, Cambodia; Chandara Tith, Cambodia; Vongmonasekar Vuthy, Cambodia; Dean Chen, China; Nan Hao, China; Matko Sanjin Jovanović, Croatia; Eleonora Lai, Croatia; Kaja Pavlinić, Croatia; Svea Kučinić, Croatia; Charalampos Christodoulou, Cyprus; Alexandros Geordiadis, Cyprus; Ludmila Filipová, Czech Republic; Martin Simacek, Czech Republic; Martin Hammerbauer, Czech Republic; Dennis Nielsen, Denmark; Monika Margrethe Skadborg, Denmark; Danna Zhang, Denmark; Hanna Alajõe, Estonia; Aivar Kamal, Estonia; Lembe Kullamaa, Estonia; Lauri Heikkinen, Finland; Laura Lakka, Finland; Otto Lilja, Finland; Elliott Boumrar, France; Audrey Hoffmann, France; Kevin Kok Heang, France; Pavlo Stergard, France; Stephanie Veith, Germany; Janik Weigel, Germany; Ioannis Batas, Greece; Viktoria Datsi, Greece; Anna Porichi, Greece; Ákos Baumgartner, Hungary; Borbála Ivicsics, Hungary; Virág Kemecei, Hungary; Nikhil Dadheech, India; Rashmeet Kaur, India; Aashraya SETH, India; Mayank Sharma, India; Prakriti Sharma, India; Alvin Adityo, Indonesia; Amelinda Agus, Indonesia; Yosua Andree, Indonesia; Ross Boyd, Ireland; Scott Byrne, Ireland; Joni Hendrick, Ireland; Martina Chiaraluce, Italy; Agnese Cigliano, Italy; Federica Lorusso, Italy; Stefano Torresi, Italy; Yukari Kayama, Japan; Makito Tsuru, Japan; Kohei Yamada, Japan; Tomas Akynov, Kazakhstan; Aruzhan Otegenova, Kazakhstan; Shangyoon Park, Korea; Eunkyung Son, Korea; Pakham Changvisommid, Lao PDR; Anoudeth Phanvilay, Lao PDR; Sounilanh Sienmaneesam, Lao PDR; Anna Plaudiņa, Latvia; Eliza Semkina, Latvia; Zane Skujina, Latvia; Gustavs Upmanis, Latvia; Laura Alčiauskaitė, Lithuania; Aleksandra Golovliova, Lithuania; Aiša Loginova, Lithuania; Ieva Urbonaitė, Lithuania; Maurice Gajan, Luxembourg; Marleen Krausch,

Luxembourg; Yik Wai Chee, Malaysia; Jonathan Dason, Malaysia; Nur Syahirah Khanum Mohamed Fuad, Malaysia; Carmen Yong, Malaysia; Maria Anne Fsadni, Malta; Lisa Zammit, Malta; Munkhjiguur Bayarsaikhan, Mongolia; Myagmarsuren Orosoo, Mongolia; Htet Maw, Myanmar; Pyae Naing, Myanmar; Bartimeüs Heuts, Netherlands; Helen Nagelhout, Netherlands; Ankie Petersen, Netherlands; Lila Madden, New Zealand; Taylor McLaren, New Zealand; Pratibha Singh, New Zealand; Nora Berlin, Norway; Olivia Hynne, Norway; Einar Michel, Norway; Sinan Charania, Pakistan; Zara Shafique, Pakistan; Syeda Eesha Zainab, Pakistan; Ans Khurram, Pakistan; Juanquine Carlo Castro, Philippines; Daryl Magno, Philippines; Kathryn Patricia Reyes, Philippines; Francis Josef Gasgonia, Philippines; Piotr Dzikowski, Poland; Franciszek Ploch, Poland; Dorota Smólska, Poland; Joao Pedro Dos Santos Duarte, Portugal; Carolina de Albuquerque, Portugal; Tiago Filipe Sousa Gonçalves, Portugal; George Mihai Constantinescu, Romania; Raluca Dumitrescu, Romania; Valeriia Chernogorodova, Russian Federation; Olesya Dovgalyuk, Russian Federation; Ruben Gazanchian, Russian Federation; Sneha Manimurugan, Singapore; Wei Ching Ong, Singapore; Su Chen Teh, Singapore; Katarína Blišáková, Slovakia; Michaela Knoskova, Slovakia; Živa Jakšič Ivačić, Slovenia; Tea Martinović, Slovenia; Ana Udovic, Slovenia; Tadej Uršič, Slovenia; Ander Martinez Alonso, Spain; Aleix Pérez, Spain; Jorge Solozabal Zapata, Spain; Ruth Vera Delgado, Spain; Yosra Ali, Sweden; Geronimo Fager Clemente, Sweden; Vipul Gahlawat, Sweden; Emanuel Aegerter, Switzerland; Miranda Bilger, Switzerland; Alicia Joho, Switzerland; Elischa Link, Switzerland; Voradon Lerdrat, Thailand; Sarulchana Viriyataveekul, Thailand; Sinem Ishlek, United Kingdom; Christopher Pike, United Kingdom; Isabelle Ward, United Kingdom; Anh Nguyen, Viet Nam; Hong Bao Nguyen, Viet Nam; Trang Nguyen, Viet Nam

The Organisers



Asia-Europe Meeting

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation bringing together the 27 European Union member states, 3 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. The ASEM dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between our two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.

www.aseminfoboard.org



Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, economy, sustainable development, public health and media. ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

www.asef.org



Center for Creative Leadership

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is a top-ranked, global provider of leadership development. By leveraging the power of leadership to drive results that matter most to clients, CCL transforms individual leaders, teams, organizations and society. Our array of cutting-edge solutions is steeped in extensive research and experience gained from working with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels. Ranked among the world's top five providers of executive education by Financial Times and in the top 10 by Bloomberg BusinessWeek, CCL has offices in Greensboro, N.C.; Colorado Springs, Colo.; San Diego, Calif.; Brussels, Belgium; Moscow; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Johannesburg, South Africa; Singapore; Gurgaon, India; and Shanghai, China.

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About the 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4)



The ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS) is ASEM's official youth platform that connects young people with the Heads of States and Governments from 51 Asian & European countries and the political Leaders of the EU & the ASEAN Secretariat.

The 4th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS4) was a 10-month long youth leadership programme and the official youth event of the 13th ASEM Summit (ASEM13), hosted by the Government of Cambodia in November 2021. The ASEFYLS4 focused on 'Sustainable Development in a post-COVID-19 World' and incorporated 3 spheres for youth leadership: 1) self-leadership (you), 2) team leadership (we) and 3) societal leadership (all).

The 4th edition was a hybrid project with collaborative elements taking place virtually, in Cambodia, as well as across ASEM countries. It addressed 4 thematic areas:

SDG3: Good Health & Wellbeing – Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

SDG4: Quality Education – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

SDG8: Decent Work & Economic Growth – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

SDG13: Climate Action – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact

A key programme element were the Leadership in Action projects, designed and implemented by ASEFYLS4 participants. Addressing one of the above listed SDGs, the Leadership in Action projects encouraged the participants to demonstrate the youth's role in driving Sustainable Development and to collaborate & volunteer on meaningful community projects with an Asia-Europe twist.

The ASEFYLS4 was organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Ministry of Foreign and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia (MFAIC), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Kingdom of Cambodia (MOEYS), the Ministry of Commerce of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the Ministry of Tourism the Kingdom of Cambodia. Project project partners included the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia (UYFC), the College of Europe in Natolin, and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL).



ASEF's contribution is made possible with the financial support of the European Union