



One Young World 2025 Plenary Challenges





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Introduction

It gives us immense pleasure to introduce the five plenary challenges for the 2025 One Young World Summit in Munich.

The reason why One Young World continues to be such a powerful force for change is because we are driven and inspired by our global community of young leaders. This is why our Global Consultation Process (GCP) is such an important tool in the development of our plenary challenges, and we are hugely grateful to the fifteen hundred young leaders from 150 countries who took part in this year's consultation.

The results of this year's GCP demonstrate clearly the concerns of our next generation of leaders. From their thoughts on existential threats, to the development of AI, from their opinions on the state of human rights to the performance of international institutions to prevent war, the data from this survey provides us with an invaluable insight into the minds of tomorrow's leaders.

After careful analysis of the data from this year's GCP we have settled on the five plenary themes for this year's Summit, namely the Circular Economy, Anti-Hate, Responsible Tech, Education and Peace and Security.

We hope you enjoy reading more about our plenary challenges for the 2025 Summit and we look forward to seeing you in Munich.



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The Plenary Challenges

1. The Circular Economy

How can we accelerate the shift to circular systems to tackle the Climate Crisis?

2. Anti-Hate

What actions are needed to tackle hate in society?

3. Responsible Tech

How can we use AI and other new technologies responsibly?

4. Education

How can we spread and accelerate access to education for all?

5. Peace and Security

How can young leaders drive global cooperation for a safer world?

Key findings of the 2024/25 Global Consultation Process

20% of young leaders believe nuclear war is the biggest threat facing humanity (up nearly 6 percentage points from last year).

24% of young leaders believe AI is a benefit to society and we shouldn't hinder its development at all (Up14 percentage points from last year)

31% of respondents were concerned that AI will replace their jobs in 5 years time

2.5 The average score when respondents were asked on a scale of 1-5 how well do you think your employer is prepared for the AI revolution?'

50% of young leaders were more optimistic for peace in their region, a 20 percentage point increase compared to last year.

44% of young leaders have experienced some degree of climate related anxiety, with 19% saying it has had a direct impact on their mental health.

2.8 The average score when respondents were asked, on a scale of 1-5 how do you rate the response of business leaders to the Climate Crisis?'

36% of respondents said they were affected by poor air quality every day.

57% of young leaders believed that capitalism still had the potential to be a force for good in the world.

31% of respondents believed social media was a main cause of deteriorating mental health among young people.

The Circular Economy

How can we accelerate the shift to circular systems to tackle the Climate Crisis?

The concept of circularity and the circular economy represents a transformative shift in how societies produce, consume, and manage resources. Unlike the traditional linear economy, which follows a take, make, dispose model, the circular economy is designed to minimise waste and make the most of resources. By keeping materials in use for as long as possible, extracting maximum value from them, and recovering and regenerating products and materials at the end of their lifecycle, circularity offers a sustainable alternative to resource-intensive practices. Globally, its adoption is growing, but challenges remain.

Despite increased awareness, global circularity has declined from 9.1% in 2018 to just 7.2% in 2023. Over the past six years, the world consumed over half a trillion tonnes of materials, nearly matching the consumption of the entire 20th century. This has contributed to breaching six of nine planetary boundaries, including climate change and biodiversity loss, emphasising the urgency of transitioning to sustainable systems [1][2].

Economically, the circular economy shows significant promise. Globally, it employs over 2.2 million people, with 125,000 new jobs created in 2024 alone. The industry is also attracting major investment, with over 9,200 funding rounds and 41,000 patents registered worldwide. Projections suggest the circular economy market will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.1% between 2023 and 2033, with some segments, such as the digital circular economy, growing even faster at a CAGR of 24.4% between 2024 and 2031 [2][3].

While the concept holds immense potential, implementation remains challenging. The drop in global circularity rates suggests a gap between commitment and action. Innovative policies, public education, and stronger regulations, particularly on waste management and recycling, are critical to overcoming these barriers. At the same time, digital tools and technologies are poised to accelerate circular practices, driving innovation and efficiency in resource use [3].

The data from One Young World's Global Consultation gave an interesting insight into the comprehension of the Circular Economy from young leaders. When asked how confident they were in their understanding of the circular economy, just over a third (35%) said very confident, while almost a quarter (24%) said they had little to no understanding of it.

In conclusion, the circular economy represents a vital pathway to achieving environmental sustainability and economic growth. However, its success will depend on collaborative global efforts, policy advancements, and the alignment of industry practices with sustainable principles.

References:

1. [The Circularity Gap Report 2024](#)
2. [StartUs Insights – Circular Economy](#)
3. [UNEP – Circular Economy Indicators](#)

Anti-Hate

What actions are needed to tackle hate in society?

Hate and hate-related crimes have been rising globally, underscoring deepening societal divisions and the persistence of prejudice. Statistics from various regions reveal the growing scale of this issue and its disproportionate impact on minority groups.

In the United States, hate crimes reached an unprecedented high in 2023, with 11,862 incidents reported by the FBI. This represents a significant increase from previous years. Among these crimes, anti-Black hate incidents remained the most frequent, while anti-Jewish hate crimes surged by 63%, totalling 1,832 incidents. Anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes also saw a notable rise, increasing from 2,391 in 2022 to 2,557 in 2023 [1][2].

The United Kingdom experienced a similar trend. In the year ending March 2024, police recorded 145,214 hate crimes, marking a 5% increase from the previous year. Racially motivated hate crimes accounted for 70% of the total, followed by offences targeting sexual orientation (16%) and religion (7%) [3]. Despite robust legal protections, this data highlights the ongoing prevalence of discrimination.

In Canada, hate crimes rose by 27% in 2021 compared to the previous year, with anti-Asian incidents particularly prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic. This upward trend persisted into 2023, reflecting enduring challenges in addressing racial discrimination [4]. Similarly, in Australia, reports highlighted increased hate offences targeting Asian and Indigenous communities, illustrating global patterns of racial prejudice [4].

The rise in hate crimes is driven by various factors, including political polarisation, the spread of divisive ideologies on social media, and international conflicts. Social media platforms have faced criticism for failing to effectively moderate hate speech, which often emboldens perpetrators [2].

When it comes to marginalised groups of people, the One Young world Community remained sceptical about how well their political leaders were rooting out systemic inequalities and injustices. For example, when asked to score their government on their approach to achieving racial, gender and LGBTQ+ equality, governments worldwide scored 2.8, 2.8 and 2.1 respectively.

Set against this backdrop of increasing levels of hatred, what should be the response of governments and societies worldwide? What can be done in communities to foster greater levels of tolerance between different cultures, ethnicities, religions and worldviews? What should be our approach to social media and big tech, which has proved to be a breeding ground for hate? All in all, what actions are needed to tackle hate in society?

References:

1. [FBI Hate Crime Statistics 2023](#)
2. [Leadership Conference Education Fund: Cause for Concern 2024](#)
3. [UK Hate Crime Statistics 2024 - GOV.UK](#)
4. [Canadian Anti-Hate Network](#)

Responsible Tech

How can we use AI and other new technologies responsibly?

At the 2024 One Young World Summit in Montreal, Godfather of AI, Yoshua Bengio, announced that he believed generative artificial intelligence had now passed the Turing Test - the point at which machine learning and behaviour became indistinguishable from that of a human being.

Moreover, not only is the power of this technology increasing, more and more, AI is having an impact on our thoughts, actions and behaviours. For example, by the end of 2025, it is expected that 95% of consumer interactions will be assisted by AI and 65% of all businesses (including 99% of the Fortune 500) will be using AI to perform at least one function.[1]

According to the One Young World community, the response to this vast expansion of generative AI was mixed. Almost a third of respondents were concerned that AI would replace their jobs in five years time, an increase of seven percentage points from last year.

However, one of the biggest changes in opinion was in young leader's attitude to AI regulation. Almost a quarter (24%) believed that there should be no external regulation in the development of AI, an increase of nearly 14 percentage points compared to last year. Whilst the number of respondents who thought AI should be banned increased marginally from one to two percent, the biggest drop was in those believing that the tech industry and government need to develop AI safeguards jointly.

Furthermore, the One Young World community felt that both businesses and educational organisations needed to do more to prepare young people for the AI revolution. When asked to rate how well their education prepared them for the technology of today, the average score was 2.3 out of five. This score increased only marginally to 2.5 when respondents were asked how well they thought their workplace was upskilling their workforce to respond to the AI revolution.

But it is not just employment and skills where young leaders were concerned, many flagged the increasingly negative role of social media in affecting people's mental health. When asked to pick from a range of factors which are detrimentally affecting people's mental well being, social media came out at the fourth most picked answer.

With this in mind, what can we do to make sure that AI and other new technologies are developed in a socially responsible manner, which not only seeks to protect humanity, but ensures that vulnerable members of society are not detrimentally affected?

References:

1. <https://www.demandsage.com/artificial-intelligence-statistics/>

Education

How can we spread and accelerate access to education for all?

Access to education is a fundamental human right, yet millions of young people worldwide are denied this opportunity due to poverty, gender inequality, and disability. Despite global initiatives and advancements, significant disparities persist, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Children from poor households are disproportionately affected by barriers to education. In fragile and conflict-affected areas, 103 million school-aged children were out of school in 2024, three times the global average for non-attending children [1]. In low-income countries, primary school completion rates remain around 70%, significantly lower than in wealthier nations [2]. Economic insecurity often forces children to abandon education in favour of work or survival.

Girls face unique challenges in accessing education, with 119 million girls denied schooling globally as of 2024. This is despite progress in enrolment rates over the years [3]. Barriers include socio-cultural norms, early marriage, and gender-based violence. The gender gap is particularly stark in Sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly 40% of adolescent girls are out of school compared to 34% of boys [3][4]. Educating girls has been linked to economic prosperity, better public health outcomes, and social stability, yet these benefits remain unrealised in many regions.

Children with disabilities face some of the steepest obstacles. In low-income countries, only 10% of children with disabilities attend school, and the rate is even lower for secondary and tertiary education [2]. For children with learning difficulties, the challenges are compounded by inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and stigma. These barriers highlight the need for inclusive education systems that cater to diverse needs.

Many of these concerns were identified in the Global Consultation Process. When respondents were asked if they felt their country's education system was accommodating of those with disabilities just over half (56%) agreed. This number dropped sharply however, when respondents were questioned about how well their countries' education system responded to those with neurodiverse ways of learning. Just 42% of respondents believed this to be the case.

Efforts to address these inequalities include initiatives by organisations like Save the Children and the Global Partnership for Education. These efforts focus on inclusive policies, gender-sensitive schooling, and increased funding for education in marginalised communities [3][4]. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in areas affected by conflict and instability, where access to education is the most fragile.

References:

1. [Save the Children. *Children in Conflict and Fragile States: A Review \(2024\)*.](#)
2. [UNESCO. *Education Access and Equity Report 2024*.](#)
3. [Global Partnership for Education. *Girls' Education: The Path to Progress \(2024\)*.](#)
4. [Save the Children. *Education in Crisis: Ensuring Equity and Access \(2024\)*.](#)

Peace and Security

How can young leaders drive global cooperation for a safer world?

For the first time ever in a One Young World Global Consultation Process, when respondents were asked about which was the biggest existential threat facing humanity, the Climate Crisis polled below 50%. This mirrors the striking news from the Bulletin of Atomic Sciences which set the 2025 Doomsday Clock at 89 seconds to midnight. [1]

Given that the Summit is taking place in Munich with the city's strong ties to both peace and defence, we felt it essential that security formed an integral part of this plenary. Moreover, we felt it equally important that the Plenary focused on putting young leaders at the forefront of global cooperation.

What's more this decision was backed up by key findings from the Global Consultation Process. For example, there was an increased confidence in the ability of international organisations to prevent the ultimate catastrophe of a nuclear war. Almost two thirds, (65%) had confidence in organisations such as the UN in this area, an increase of more than six percentage points from last year.

Similarly, there was a significant increase in the number of respondents who were optimistic for peace in their region, with half (50%) claiming to be more optimistic compared to this time last year. This figure was up a staggering 19.4 percentage points compared to when the same question was asked in the 2024 survey. Furthermore when it came to matters surrounding military intervention to protect human rights, the top choice for the vast majority of respondents was 'UN peacekeepers'.

Likewise, confidence in world leaders to uphold human rights in areas of conflict had also significantly improved from last year's figures. In the 2024 Global Consultation Process, more than half 54% said they did not have faith in global leadership to uphold human rights, this figure now sits at 36%. The percentage who said they do have confidence sits at 55%, an increase of more than 20 percentage points.

These statistics clearly show that young people are increasingly confident in the institutions which are designed to promote global peace, security and co-operation. The question now remains how can we leverage young leaders to be at the forefront of international cooperation, to build a safer, more peaceful world?

References:

1. BBC <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvqmkdz0297o>