Foreword

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is proud to present this report, summarising over 8,500 young leaders’ perspectives on the key societal challenges of our times, and how technology could be deployed to address them. This report is part of the 5th ASEF Young Leaders Summit (ASEFYLS5) project, which primarily aims at creating people-to-people connections, but also fuels conversations with evidence-based intellectual inputs, such as this report.

It is clear that the world is transforming around us, and societies face numerous challenges, such as climate change, food crisis, infectious diseases and so on. We must work to keep up and embrace the changes, and young leaders in our society are the key stakeholders in finding solutions to adapt, mitigate, and improve our world.

Societal challenges have always been around, but there is a fundamental difference between the past and the present: the speed of change. It took thousands of years to shift from agricultural society to industrial society. It took another couple of centuries the industrial society to become information society. Now we are living in the Industry 4.0 era, but rapidly transitioning into Industry 5.0, or Society 5.0, as the Japanese Government refers to a future, where the virtual and physical world increasingly integrates, and technology is increasingly used to solve societal challenges.

Young Asian and European Leaders need to work together to address global challenges. In this report, we summarised their perspectives on two key questions:

1. What do young people perceive as the most significant societal challenges in Asia and Europe?
2. To what extent are young people aware of the risks and opportunities of leveraging technology to address societal challenges?

We hope the findings and recommendations in this report will inform individuals and organisations in the position of power, youth leaders and emerging young leaders working for the public good and societal development.

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Executive Director
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Introduction

As we stand on the threshold of Society 5.0, we require enlightened global citizens to help guide the way to a sustainable, technologically advanced future.

Society 5.0, characterised as a ‘human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems’ (Government of Japan, White Paper on Society 5.0), is more than a simple shift in digital infrastructure. It is a fundamental shift in the way we live, work, and communicate, fundamentally embedding technology into the fabric of our societies. Although these rapid transitions pose challenges, they also unlock unique opportunities for societal development and transformation.

Young adults, being digital natives and socially conscious advocates, are primed to navigate this transformation.

The current generation of young adults — aged between 14-33 in our context —, has been raised in a world where technology is omnipresent. Their perspectives, molded by a global outlook and digital adeptness, are instrumental for shaping a future where technology is seamlessly integrated into society for the greater good. However, their potential is yet to be fully harnessed in leadership roles and decision-making processes.

To empower young people as future global leaders in Society 5.0, we must delve into their experiences, perceptions, and aspirations.

This Report aims to illuminate the role of young people in this impending era of Society 5.0. Through a carefully designed survey, we have given a voice to young adults, seeking to understand how they envision their leadership journey in a world intricately linked with technology.

This Report captures the insights of over 8,000 young adults across the ASEF member countries in Asia and Europe, on their understanding of technology and its societal implications, their leadership experiences, and their aspirations for the future in Society 5.0. The observations and recommendations in this Report are intended to stimulate dialogue among those in influential roles - country leaders, academic institutions, organisations, and local communities - with the aim to pave the way for young people in leadership roles.

This Report provides a unique opportunity for those in power to hear directly from young people about their experiences, aspirations, and recommendations for navigating Society 5.0. The discussions ignited by this Report can address two foundational questions crucial for shaping a more sustainable, digitally integrated future:

→ How can societies within Society 5.0 benefit from the inclusion, support, and engagement of young people in technology-driven leadership roles?

→ How can those in positions of power support young people on their leadership journeys in a world increasingly defined by Society 5.0?
Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of an ASEF-wide survey, conducted from June to July 2023, and encapsulates the viewpoints of over 8,500 young adults from across 51 ASEF countries.

The report delves into youth’s understanding of technology and its societal implications, their leadership experiences, future aspirations, and their vision of how technology can navigate societal transformation. It further provides robust recommendations for individuals and institutions across societal sectors to facilitate a thorough understanding of technology, cultivate leadership skills, and inspire young adults towards leadership roles in an increasingly technology-driven world.

The insights within this report strive to ignite conversations among influential individuals within their countries, organisations, educational institutions, and communities.

We draw attention to seven pivotal insights from this year’s Report:

01 Youth identify climate change, education and healthcare, and poverty as the most pressing societal challenges:
The survey revealed that young adults across ASEF countries perceive climate change, social inequality, and public health as the three most pressing societal challenges. They expressed the need for informed leadership that can effectively leverage technology to address these issues.

02 Young adults identify technology as a double-edged sword:
While over 60% of respondents view technology as a crucial tool in solving societal problems, they concurrently recognise the risks and ethical considerations that come along with it.
03 **Technological settings enrich leadership experiences:**
Young adults engaged in volunteering or informal leadership roles within technology-centric environments reported enhanced engagement and confidence in their leadership abilities.

04 **Youth Confidence in Tackling Societal Challenges:**
The majority of young adults are confident in their ability to address societal issues and achieve personal goals. This confidence, however, varies by region. According to our survey, there is a broad spectrum of views among young people about what constitutes the most pressing societal challenges. Despite this diversity of opinion, a consensus is clear: poverty, education and healthcare, and climate change are among the top concerns. This concurrence further indicates the varying levels of confidence among young adults, based on their regional and societal contexts.

05 **Personal values and technology perception are intertwined:**
Our findings emphasise that personal values shape young adults’ attitudes towards technology, with those aligning their personal values with their understanding and application of technology exhibiting higher levels of satisfaction and responsibility.

06 **Risks and Benefit Knowledge:**
Young adults exhibit a nuanced understanding of the risks and benefits associated with technology use, advocating for balanced and informed digital consumption.

07 **Advocacy for comprehensive technology awareness programmes:**
Respondents expressed the need for inclusive technology awareness programmes in educational systems to bridge the identified gap in comprehending the risks linked to utilising technology to address societal issues.

Through these insights, the report seeks to promote an environment where young leaders, with a comprehensive understanding of technology, can flourish. It illuminates the pathway towards fostering informed, responsible, and empathetic leaders capable of harnessing technology effectively to tackle societal challenges and contribute to the realisation of Society 5.0 – a human-centered society that harmonizes economic advancement with social problem resolution through the comprehensive integration of cyberspace and physical space.

"The majority of young adults are confident in their ability to address societal issues and achieve personal goals."
Context and Demography of the Research

Drawing on insights from over 8,500 young adults from 51 countries in Asia and Europe, this study aims to explore the following critical questions, which in turn shape our conclusions and recommendations:

Key Question 1: What do young people perceive as the most significant societal challenges, and how do they envision tackling them within the scope of Society 5.0?

Key Question 2: To what extent are young people cognisant of the risks and opportunities of leveraging technology to address societal challenges in the paradigm of Society 5.0?

Conclusions and Recommendations: What are the best methods to encourage and construct meaningful technological and leadership experiences for young individuals in the context of Society 5.0?

The report collates perspectives from young adults who engaged in an online survey. Their insights, accompanied by our recommendations, are intended as a call for action to both young individuals and current leaders in influential roles. Together, they possess the ability to shape an inclusive, technologically progressive, equitable, and impactful Society 5.0.

During our survey, we asked young adults across ASEF countries a crucial question: “Which societal challenges do you see as most pressing, and how might technology within Society 5.0 be harnessed to address them?” Participants, 23 years old on average, pinpointed key concerns like climate change, income inequality, mental health issues, political instability, and education. They suggested potential technological solutions and emphasised the importance of involving young adults in dialogues and decision-making processes.

Young adults, between the ages of 14 to 33, make up a significant fraction of the global working-age and voting-eligible population. Raised in a digitally advanced, globally interconnected world, they hold the necessary skills and experiences to confront global challenges. They have the potential to envision and bring about a more sustainable future.

However, despite this immense potential, young people continue to be significantly underrepresented in both formal and informal leadership roles, and even in the broader workforce. As the world recovers from the pandemic and stands on the brink of Society 5.0, it is the perfect time to reconsider the role of young people as societal leaders.

This study brings to focus the reasons why global leaders should take an active interest in engaging with their young citizens. Apart from other benefits, young adults represent a potentially impactful and often underestimated subset of the global population. Their unique set of skills and values are invaluable in societal leadership roles, especially in the context of Society 5.0.

With the significant changes brought about by the aftermath of COVID-19, we are presented with a unique opportunity to partner with young leaders. These changes have initiated a rethink of societal constructs about who a leader is and how they contribute to a sustainable future.
The survey incorporated a diverse demographic representation from 8,508 respondents, highlighted by the following features:

**RESPONDENTS BY GENDER**

- 50.5% Female (4,300)
- 49% Male (4,161)
- 0.5% Other (47)

**Average Age Of Respondents**
- 23.76 YEARS OLD

**ASEF Countries Represented**
- 51 COUNTRIES

**Active Volunteers**
- 68.65% OF RESPONDENTS

**Respondents By Profession**
- Undergraduates .............. 42.87%
- Professionals ................ 22.27%
- Graduate Students .......... 18.91%
- Jobseekers ..................... 04.60%
- Doctoral Students .......... 02.10%

**Respondents By Industry of Work**
- Business Corporate .......... 33.46%
- NGO / IO ..................... 19.63%
- Public Sector ............... 18.36%
- Startup ..................... 07.18%
- Freelance / Artist ........... 03.96%
- Social Sciences ............. 22.70%
- Engineering / Technology .... 21.49%
- Business / Management ...... 18.36%

European ASEF 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 the United Kingdom

Asian ASEF 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 Viet Nam
Key Question 1:
What do young people think the biggest societal challenges are? What can be done about them?

1.1. Understanding Youth Perspectives on Societal Challenges

To understand the issues that young people perceive to be of utmost importance today, the survey questions were crafted to align with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants were asked to rank a diverse range of societal challenges in order of urgency, encompassing options such as poverty, education, gender equality, and climate change, among others. These choices were not limited to but included issues highlighted in SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The survey thus aims to capture how young people in ASEF countries prioritise a comprehensive spectrum of societal challenges as defined by the broader international framework of the SDGs.

From the analysis of responses, the data suggests that poverty is viewed as the most urgent societal challenge by young adults across ASEF countries. This aligns with the global reality that despite progress made, poverty still affects a significant portion of the global population, underlining the necessity for targeted solutions. The second most commonly ranked challenge was education and healthcare, a testament to the centrality of these aspects in the well-being and progress of any society.

Interestingly, the societal challenges related to discrimination - including racism and gender equality - while recognised as issues, did not rank as highly as poverty and education. This could potentially reflect that immediate survival and welfare needs often take precedence, particularly in societies where the struggle for basic needs is still very real. It is also indicative of the reality that systemic issues of discrimination are often more deeply rooted and difficult to grasp and address.

Climate change and sustainable consumption were also identified as significant issues by young respondents, reflecting a growing global awareness of the imminent threat of environmental degradation and the need for sustainable lifestyles.

In terms of regional differences, a distinct pattern emerged from the data. Young people in Asia were more inclined to regard education and healthcare as urgent societal challenges, whereas in Europe, the focus shifted more toward poverty and climate change. These disparities might hint at differing priorities or experiences between young people in these two regions. For instance, the issue of meaningful work elicited greater concern among young respondents in Asia than among their European counterparts. This suggests that the state of employment and job satisfaction might be perceived differently across these regions, possibly due to variations in social and economic development, cultural values, or the effectiveness of public policies. Such differences underline the need for solutions that are sensitive to the unique socio-economic realities of each region.
Looking at the distribution of rankings for each societal challenge, presented in the word cloud below, it is evident that there is a wide spectrum of views among young people about what constitutes the most pressing societal challenges. However, the consensus is clear that poverty, education and healthcare, and climate change are among the top concerns.

Figure 1.1.1. Societal Challenges Ranked by Urgency Among Youth

1.2. Actions to Counter Societal Challenges

Across both Asia and Europe, young people are keenly aware of the societal challenges they face. Their perspectives on how to address these challenges indicate a broad understanding of the multifaceted nature of these issues and a strong commitment to action.

When asked about the individual and communal actions that could be taken to address societal challenges and create a positive impact, the majority of young respondents endorsed a broad range of proactive measures.

In Asia, the leading action, chosen by 14.8% of respondents, was “educate oneself and others”, emphasising the importance they assign to knowledge and learning in dealing with societal challenges. This was followed by “volunteer time and resources” (13.8%), reflecting a readiness among young Asians to personally invest in tackling societal issues. “Building and strengthening communities” (12.8%) and “advocating for positive change” (11.9%) were also popular choices, highlighting their recognition of the value of unity and advocacy.

European respondents exhibited similar attitudes. The most chosen action was “educate oneself and others” (13.5%), closely followed by “volunteer time and resources” (13.0%). Like their Asian counterparts, young Europeans acknowledge the transformative power of education and volunteering. Additionally, actions such as “engaging in respectful dialogue” (11.8%), “building and strengthening communities” (11.7%), and “advocating for positive change” (11.3%) were prominent choices, indicating an appreciation for discourse, community, and advocacy.
Interestingly, the distribution of actions across both continents reflects a keen understanding among youth of the multifaceted approach required to address societal challenges. The emphasis on education, community building, respectful dialogue, and advocacy across both Asia and Europe illustrates a shared vision for tackling these issues. The readiness to volunteer time and resources underscores their commitment to translating these ideas into action. The collective inclination towards these strategies indicates a highly engaged and proactive young population keen on driving positive change.

**Figure 1.2.1. Distribution of Preferred Actions for Addressing Societal Challenges**

1.3. Government Progress: Young Adults’ Evaluation

To explore young adults’ perspectives on the effectiveness of government action against societal challenges, participants were presented with a scale reflecting varying degrees of progress, ranging from ‘no progress at all’ to ‘significant progress.’ The distribution of these responses presents a thought-provoking picture.

The largest proportion of respondents, 41.4% overall, felt their governments were making ‘little progress.’ Disaggregating this data by region, this sentiment was shared by 41.6% of Asian respondents and 39.2% of European respondents.

There was a noticeable proportion, 11.4% overall, who believed there was ‘no progress at all’ in their respective governments’ attempts to address societal challenges. This viewpoint was marginally more prevalent in Asia (11.5%) compared to Europe (10.7%).

Despite the seemingly negative undertone, there were some respondents who perceived their governments as making strides in the right direction. A total of 10.2% overall felt their governments were making ‘significant progress.’ This sentiment had slightly higher representation among Asian respondents (10.3%) compared to their European counterparts (9.4%).
Meanwhile, ‘moderate progress’ was perceived by 36.1% of young adults across ASEF countries, with 35.7% in Asia and a higher proportion of 40.3% in Europe echoing this sentiment.

Overall, these findings underscore a general perception of insufficient governmental action in tackling societal challenges across ASEF countries. This perception appears more pronounced among young adults in Asia compared to those in Europe.

The area chart below visually demonstrates the distribution of respondents’ sentiments towards their respective government’s progress in tackling societal challenges. We see that a substantial area under both curves is concentrated around ‘little progress,’ reflecting the majority sentiment in both Asia and Europe. However, the Europe curve shows a slightly wider area under ‘moderate progress,’ suggesting a relatively more optimistic outlook among European respondents.

*Figure 1.3.1. Respondents’ Sentiments on Government Progress in Tackling Societal Challenges*
1.4. Confidence in Youth Leadership

When examining confidence in the ability to lead in addressing societal challenges, a considerable 78.5% of all respondents rated their confidence as an 8 or higher on a scale from 1 to 10. However, this confidence demonstrates variability when analysed from a continental perspective.

In Asia, the percentage of young people who feel ‘extremely confident’ or ‘very confident’ exceeds that of Europe, with 81.6% of respondents expressing high levels of confidence. Specifically, 49.9% considered themselves ‘very confident’ and an additional 31.7% felt ‘extremely confident’.

On the other hand, in Europe, the corresponding figures reveal a moderate difference. Here, 44.9% of respondents described themselves as ‘very confident’, and 20.5% as ‘extremely confident’. This totals to 65.5% of European respondents expressing high confidence levels, a figure that, although lower than Asia, still represents a significant majority.

However, it is interesting to note that Europe has a higher proportion of ‘moderately confident’ respondents at 23.2%, compared to Asia’s 14.4%. These findings indicate a generally high, albeit regionally variable, level of confidence among young people in their capability to tackle societal challenges.

As depicted in the chart, there is a prominent level of confidence (an 8 or higher on a scale from 1 to 10) among a vast majority (78.5%) of respondents from both continents. Notably, the chart reflects the regional variability of this confidence, highlighting the divergent perceptions between the Asian and European respondents. It is crucial to note that while a greater percentage of Asian respondents express high levels of confidence (81.6%), European respondents still portray a significant majority of high confidence levels (65.5%).

![Figure 1.4.1. Confidence Levels Among Respondents from Asia and Europe in the Ability of Young Leaders to Address Societal Challenges](image-url)
1.5. Youth Optimism Amidst Societal Challenges

Discussing optimism of youth towards the future, amidst societal challenges, the outlook appears generally positive across ASEF countries. Remarkably, 80.9% of young people chose a score of 7 or above on a scale of 1 to 10. Asia displayed a more skewed distribution towards optimism with 26.7% of respondents choosing “8” and 22.6% opting for “10 – very pessimistic”. Europe showed a broader spread, with “7” being the most common choice–, selected by 31% of respondents.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the presence of a subset of the young population that perceives these challenges as significantly daunting, represented by the 2.3% in Asia who selected “1 – very pessimistic”. This sentiment was slightly less common in Europe, accounting for only 1.1% of responses.

Overall, this information underscores the general trend of optimism among youth in the ASEF countries, while also highlighting the need for further action to address the fears and concerns of those who are less hopeful about the future.

The violin plot below highlights that the distribution of optimism scores leans towards higher values in Asia and Europe, reinforcing the general trend of optimism among the youth in the ASEF countries. The wider spread of values in Europe, compared to the skewed distribution towards higher optimism in Asia, aligns with the observation that ‘7’ was the most common choice in Europe, while ‘8’ and ‘10’ were most popular in Asia. The slight thickness at the lower end of the violin plot further visualises the subset of the population who have a more pessimistic outlook on the future.

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Figure 1.5.1. Optimism Scores in Asia and Europe Amidst Societal Challenges
1.6. Confidence in Achieving Personal Goals Amidst Societal Challenges

When considering the confidence of young people in achieving their personal goals and aspirations despite societal challenges, a significant pattern of optimism emerges. An overwhelming 78.2% of respondents in Asia selected an 8 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10, with a notable 33.0% choosing “10 - very confident”. This echoes a resilient belief in their potential to succeed amidst societal challenges.

However, in Europe, while the same trend is observable, the distribution is slightly different. Here, the most common choice is “8”, chosen by 29.8% of respondents. Although fewer respondents chose “10 - very confident” compared to Asia, the combined percentage of those who selected 8 or higher is still substantial at 68.8%, underlining a considerable degree of confidence among European youth as well.

The presence of less confident individuals should not be overlooked. The percentage of respondents in Asia who chose “1 - not confident at all” was 0.55%, with a similar but smaller proportion in Europe at 0.22%. These figures suggest a small but important minority of young people who feel less assured about overcoming societal challenges to achieve their goals.

The violin chart below showcases a pronounced skew towards higher values in both regions, especially Asia, indicating a substantial degree of optimism. Interestingly, this optimism seems stronger in Asia, given the thickness of the plot around ‘10 - very confident’. Nonetheless, Europe also exhibits a notable concentration around ‘8’, suggesting a prevalent trend of confidence. The thin tails at the lower end of the plot underscore the presence of a minority of young individuals who feel less confident in achieving their goals amidst societal challenges.

![Violin Chart]

Figure 1.6.1. Confidence Levels of Respondents in Asia and Europe in Achieving Personal Goals Amidst Societal Challenges

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you in achieving your goals and aspirations despite societal challenges?
1.7. Summary of Findings from Key Question 1

The survey results reveal an intriguing contrast among young adults across Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) countries. Despite expressing some skepticism about governmental initiatives aimed at addressing societal issues, these individuals possess a powerful belief in their own capabilities to effect change. This strong sense of self-efficacy is evident in their readiness to grapple with societal challenges directly, despite any institutional shortcomings or roadblocks they may encounter. It is clear that this cohort of young people, spanning both millennials and Gen Z, carry a profound sense of personal responsibility and a readiness to contribute meaningfully to their societies.

These young adults assign high importance to education, indicating a firm understanding of its role as a catalyst for individual and societal transformation. Their emphasis on education signals a commitment to arming themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge to enact change. Furthermore, the value they place on community building underlines their awareness of the collective power needed to tackle societal challenges. This focus underscores their belief in unity, collaboration, and harnessing diverse voices to effect significant societal transformations.

Advocacy, another key priority for these young adults, reflects their recognition of the vital role of policy-making and public discourse in societal progress. Their willingness to take up causes, using their voices to influence decisions and shape public opinion, illustrates their active engagement rather than passive observation. Significantly, their resilient optimism, maintained despite acknowledging the enormity of the challenges they face, speaks to their enduring determination. This positive outlook portrays a generation not just prepared to face Society 5.0’s challenges but committed to molding a future that embodies their vision of a better world. Their resilience and commitment paint an inspiring picture of a generation poised to drive positive societal change.
Key Question 2:
How Aware are Young People of Risks and Opportunities in Using Technology to Solve Societal Challenges?

2.1. The Significance of Technology in Addressing Societal Challenges

Upon evaluating the importance of technology, specifically as a tool for confronting societal issues among young adults, the findings significantly underline the critical role technology plays. Roughly 88% of those surveyed assigned high value to technology, selecting ‘Very Important’ as their response. This number signifies a widespread recognition among the young adults in Asia and Europe regarding the indispensable function of technology in addressing a variety of societal issues.

However, it is interesting to note some regional differences in this sentiment. When we compare the responses from Asia and Europe, we find slight variations. About 87.9% of young adults from Asia and 81.7% of those from Europe considered technology’s role as ‘Very Important’.

These findings suggest that although the overall sentiment among youth is overwhelmingly in favor of the importance of technology in societal transformation, the degree of this belief slightly varies depending on the geographical region. The Asian youth showed a slightly stronger belief in technology’s importance compared to their European counterparts. The graph below clearly demonstrates the broad consensus among ASEF youth on the pivotal role of technology for societal transformation.

Figure 2.1.1. Regional Variation in Youth Sentiment on the Role of Technology in Societal Transformation
2.2. Awareness of Technology Being Used to Address Societal Challenges

When examining the awareness levels of young people about technology’s role in addressing societal challenges within their countries, a diverse picture emerges. As shown in the graph below, a significant 44.8% of young adults reported daily instances of technology being deployed to address these challenges, with this number being higher in Asia (45.8%) compared to Europe (29.8%). Contrastingly, around one-fifth (20.5% in Asia and 25.6% in Europe) of the participants rarely witnessed such instances, thereby underlining the need for improved communication and increased public awareness regarding the role of technology in solving societal issues.

Analysing the responses from different countries, we see different perspectives on how technology is addressing societal issues:

**Mongolia:**
→ “In Mongolia, technology has been increasingly utilized to address societal challenges and promote sustainable development. One notable example is the application of digital platforms to enhance access to education in remote areas... Another example is the use of technology to improve healthcare services, particularly in rural and underserved areas... Moreover, technology has been employed to address environmental challenges in Mongolia...”

**Myanmar:**
→ “In Myanmar, mobile banking and digital payment solutions have gained popularity in recent years... Access to quality education is a challenge in Myanmar, especially in rural areas. Educational technology (EdTech) platforms like Chate Sat provide online learning resources and interactive study materials to students across the country...”

**Vietnam:**
→ “Our project in Vietnam focuses on the development of a comprehensive healthcare ecosystem for senior citizens, and we have recognised the growing potential of technology in this field... The application utilizes a quick scanning and motion analysis feature to accurately measure the range of motion and provide real-time feedback... By integrating technology into our healthcare ecosystem for senior citizens, we are not only promoting physical fitness and well-being but also fostering a sense of empowerment and independence among the elderly population...”

**Sweden:**
→ “If I had to choose one example of how technology is being used to address societal challenges in my country of Sweden, then I would say that the most recent example that comes to mind is the implementation of AI in the education of students to provide equal opportunities towards education...”

**Austria:**
→ “Austrian cities are implementing smart city solutions to enhance sustainability, energy efficiency, and citizen well-being. This includes smart energy grids, intelligent waste management systems, smart lighting, and sensors for data collection to improve urban planning and resource allocation...”

**Greece:**
→ “In Greece, the public administration has embraced digital transformation to streamline citizen and business access to public services. The establishment of a single digital portal serves as a one-stop-shop where citizens and businesses can effortlessly and promptly access a myriad of digital public services. The initiative not only simplifies bureaucratic processes but also catalyzes an efficient and transparent governance model.”
2.3. Knowledge about Risks and Benefits Associated with Using Technology to Address Societal Challenges

The survey further delved into young adults’ understanding regarding the potential risks and benefits associated with using technology to address societal challenges. The data showed a noteworthy dispersion in the knowledge of risks associated with technology usage. Approximately 41.5% of respondents rated their awareness at 7 or above on the scale.

Taking a closer look at the data, among Asian respondents, 13.3% stated they had “A little” knowledge about the risks, while 27.8% claimed they knew “A lot”. The majority, 57.5%, acknowledged having “Some” knowledge, and only a minimal 1.4% confessed to knowing “Nothing at all”. In Europe, the distribution was more balanced, with 19.2% admitting to having “A little” knowledge, 24.1% boasting “A lot”, and a significant 54.6% confirming they had “Some” knowledge. Only a very small portion, 2.2%, claimed to know “Nothing at all”.

On the flip side, the awareness of potential benefits was more prominently recognised, with a significant 59.3% of all participants rating their knowledge at 8 or higher. This suggests a generally higher level of awareness about the benefits compared to the risks. Among the respondents from Asia, 50.8% believed they knew “A lot” about the benefits, 43.8% said they had “Some” knowledge, while only 5.1% and 0.4% admitted to knowing “A little” and “Nothing at all”, respectively. In Europe, the majority (52.8%) reported having “Some” knowledge about the benefits, 32.3% stated they knew “A lot”, 13.6% knew “A little”, and only a minimal 1.3% acknowledged knowing “Nothing at all”.

These findings are illustrated in the form of graphs presented below, providing a visual demonstration of the distribution of knowledge regarding the risks and benefits associated with using technology to solve societal challenges.
The different levels of knowledge about the risks and benefits of technology use can have significant implications for how technology is adopted and used to address societal challenges. The higher awareness of benefits could lead to increased acceptance and use of technology. However, the relatively lower knowledge about risks suggests the need for more education and information dissemination on the potential dangers. This could help ensure that technology is utilised in a balanced, responsible, and ethical way, while effectively mitigating any associated risks. Moreover, policymakers and stakeholders may need to address these gaps in awareness to ensure effective and safe use of technology.

**Figure 2.3.1. Distribution of Youth Awareness Regarding the Risks of Technology in Addressing Societal Challenges**

**Figure 2.3.2. Distribution of Youth Awareness Regarding the Benefits of Technology in Addressing Societal Challenges**
2.4. Attitudes Toward the Drawbacks and Advantages of Using Technology to Address Societal Challenges

Participants in the survey presented a range of opinions regarding the possible benefits and drawbacks of using technology to address societal issues. On the positive side, areas such as ‘Increased Innovation and Creativity’, ‘Increased Accessibility and Inclusivity’, and ‘Greater Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing’ emerged as significant advantages. These areas accounted for 12.85%, 12.58%, and 11.85% of the responses, respectively.

Conversely, participants expressed concerns that revolved around ‘Data Privacy and Security Issues’ and ‘Reduced Human Interaction and Empathy’, which formed 14.98% and 12.91% of the responses, respectively. The regional comparison data showed interesting variations. For example, in Asia, ‘Increased Innovation and Creativity’ topped the list of advantages with 12.89% of responses. European participants, on the other hand, put ‘Greater Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing’ at the forefront with 12.55% of responses.

The fears were echoed across regions with ‘Data Privacy and Security Issues’ reigning as the primary concern in both Asia (14.98%) and Europe (15.20%). Below are detailed graphs illustrating these differences more clearly.

This data underlines the necessity of considering these diverse viewpoints when creating policies and strategies for the implementation of technology in solving societal issues. Recognising and addressing these attitudes can facilitate not only the effectiveness of the solutions but also their acceptance across different regions.
What do you think are the potential drawbacks of using technology to address societal challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drawback</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unintended negative consequences</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>10.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undermining human agency &amp; Autonomy</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>6.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced human interaction &amp; empathy</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>12.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transparency &amp; accountability</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>9.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exacerbation of societal inequalities</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical concerns</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>10.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on technology</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>11.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data privacy &amp; security issues</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>14.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost and access barriers</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias &amp; discrimination in algorithms &amp; data</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>8.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.4.1. Perceived Drawbacks of Using Technology to Address Societal Challenges: A Regional Comparison

What do you think are the potential benefits of using technology to address societal challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable solutions for the environment</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid response to emergencies</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New business &amp; job opportunities</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>11.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased innovation &amp; creativity</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>12.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased accessibility &amp; inclusivity</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>12.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved quality of life</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater collaboration &amp; knowledge-sharing</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>11.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced data collection &amp; analysis</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>10.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost savings and resource optimisation</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>10.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.4.2. Perceived Benefits of Using Technology to Address Societal Challenges: A Regional Comparison
2.5. Readiness to Use Technology to Address Societal Challenges

When asked about what they believe would make them feel better prepared to use technology to tackle societal challenges, young adults from both Asia and Europe have highlighted some key areas.

Across Asia and Europe, respondents most frequently highlighted the need for more education and training. In Asia, this need was highlighted by a notable 17.14% of respondents, while in Europe, the figure stood at a significant 18.32%. This reinforces the pivotal role that quality education and skills development play in preparing young individuals to effectively utilise technology for societal benefits.

The second crucial element identified by respondents was improved access to technology and connectivity. A considerable 14.01% of Asian respondents and 11.67% of European respondents considered this as a primary factor for better preparation, emphasising the digital divide that persists and needs urgent attention.

Increasing the awareness of successful solutions was another key factor, with an impressive 13.19% of Asian and 13.15% of European respondents voicing this need. This highlights the importance of disseminating information about successful technological interventions and best practices in addressing societal issues.

Other vital aspects included encouraging cross-sector collaboration, providing financial incentives and support, addressing issues related to bias and discrimination, establishing ethical guidelines, and ensuring more resources and support. These factors, although varied, underline the multifaceted approach required to equip young adults with the tools, understanding, and confidence to harness technology for societal betterment.

![Figure 2.5.1. Key Factors for Better Preparedness in Utilising Technology for Societal Challenges: A Cross-Continental Analysis](image-url)
2.6. Future Perspectives on Societal Challenges

The sentiments expressed by survey participants regarding their feelings about the future in light of societal challenges were represented through a word cloud, providing a vivid snapshot of a complex emotional landscape. Predominantly, feelings of ‘hope’, ‘optimism’, and ‘confidence’, which garnered 13.39%, 12.79%, and 10.07% of the responses respectively, denote an overarching positive perspective. This strong tilt towards positivity, clearly visible in the word cloud, signals a collective readiness for transformation and an inherent belief in potential for progress, despite the challenges. Words like ‘determined’ and ‘motivated’, also prominent in the word cloud and comprising 4.20% and 9.78% respectively, further reveal an underlying drive and resolve. These sentiments suggest that participants are not only hopeful but prepared to actively shape the future.

Yet, the word cloud also reflects how this optimism and readiness for action are tempered by a palpable sense of caution and apprehension. Words such as ‘anxious’, ‘concerned’, and ‘cautious’ contributed to 1.09%, 3.50%, and 4.33% of the responses respectively, underscoring the recognition of the complexity and magnitude of the challenges that lie ahead. This nuanced blend of sentiments could be a catalyst, potentially encouraging individuals to seek out more information and become more involved, while also acknowledging the risk of feelings of overwhelm or disengagement.

Negative sentiments like ‘overwhelmed’, ‘fearful’, and ‘pessimistic’, although less prevalent in the word cloud, carry significant implications. These feelings reflect a portion of the young adults that perceives future societal challenges as daunting, if not intimidating. It is crucial for policymakers, educators, and leaders to assuage these feelings through reassurance, education, and by fostering a sense of community and resilience. Ultimately, acknowledging and addressing these emotional responses should be as pivotal as addressing the practical aspects of societal issues, considering that emotions significantly influence engagement, collaboration, and the overall effectiveness of solutions.

![Figure 2.6.1. Emotional Landscape of Youth Regarding Future Societal Challenges](image-url)
2.7. Summary of Findings from Key Question 2

The results from Key Question 2 provide compelling evidence that the youth in ASEF countries appreciate the significant role that technology can play in overcoming societal challenges. This shows a progressive mindset and opens up immense possibilities for leveraging technological solutions to resolve pressing issues in various domains such as healthcare, education, environmental conservation, and more.

However, while this foundational understanding is an encouraging sign, the data also uncovers a crucial gap. There is a discernible need for heightened awareness and additional resources to promote the efficient and fair utilisation of technology. Despite the recognised importance of technology, the effective application of it requires a well-rounded understanding of not only the benefits but also the risks and ethical considerations. Young people need access to comprehensive educational resources to cultivate a holistic understanding of these aspects.

The uneven distribution of technology and digital literacy skills can lead to inequities in the societal benefits derived from technological advances. Therefore, ensuring equitable use is just as important as maximising efficiency. Policymakers, educators, and technology developers should work to ensure that resources and opportunities related to technology are accessible across various socio-economic strata.

In the final analysis, recognising and addressing these gaps in awareness, resources, and equitable access becomes a central aspect of fully exploiting technology’s potential as an instrument for societal transformation. The youth are not just passive recipients of technology but are active participants in shaping the future. Hence, equipping them with the right resources and knowledge can set the stage for a more inclusive and sustainable future where technology is harnessed for the greater good.

Policymakers, educators, and technology developers should work to ensure that resources and opportunities related to technology are accessible across various socio-economic strata.
Conclusion and Recommendations:

Advancing Comprehensive Technological Understanding and Nurturing Leadership for Society 5.0 Amid Societal Challenges

In the face of rapid technological evolution and persistent global challenges, cultivating a generation of informed global citizens and capable leaders is of paramount importance. This report is part of the 5th ASEF Young Leaders Summit and ASEF’s our intent to listen and learn from young adults - the driving force in shaping a sustainable, technologically advanced future.

The findings are derived from a survey targeted towards Gen Z and Millennial citizens across the 51 ASEF countries, focusing on their perceptions of technology’s role in societal transformation and their understanding of its risks and benefits in a rapidly changing world. The focus lies in their perspectives on technology’s role in societal transformation—Society 5.0, defined by the Japanese Cabinet Office as “A human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space.”

From more than 8,500 young adults across 51 European and Asian countries, the input gathered offers invaluable insights into their understanding of technology, its societal implications, their current engagement levels, and the elements crucial for their knowledge acquisition and leadership development. Most importantly, this report gives a voice to young adults to shape how they anticipate future support from their countries.

The insights within this report strive to ignite conversations among influential individuals within their countries, organisations, educational institutions, and communities, shedding light on the best ways to empower aspiring young leaders. Building on our research into technological understanding and leadership development, we put forward recommendations to bolster young leaders. These recommendations, though not exhaustive, are aimed to stimulate dialogues and inform actions fostering environments conducive for the growth of young leaders.
Recommendations derived from our findings:

→ **Advocate for incorporating technology awareness programmes in educational curricula:** Our data identifies a gap in understanding the risks inherent in utilising technology to address societal challenges. Schools should integrate comprehensive technology awareness programmes to instruct students about the potential risks, ethical considerations, and benefits. Such programmes can help groom a generation of tech-literate leaders capable of responsibly leveraging technology for societal advantage.

→ **Promote volunteering and informal leadership roles within technology-centric contexts:** The data underscores volunteering’s significant role in fostering leadership skills. Considering technology’s pivotal role in societal transformation, it is crucial to inspire young people to volunteer in tech-focused initiatives, allowing them to develop leadership skills while gaining practical understanding of technology’s potential and limitations.

→ **Establish platforms for young adults to connect and learn from peers:** The importance of peer-to-peer interactions in leadership development is highlighted in our report. By creating platforms where young adults can connect, share, and learn from their peers’ experiences with technology, we can cultivate a community of young leaders equipped with shared knowledge and experiences.

→ **Encourage environments linking personal values with the understanding and application of technology:** The data emphasises the importance of personal values in shaping young adults’ views on technology. Opportunities that allow young people to link their understanding and use of technology with their personal values can augment their engagement, satisfaction, and instil a sense of responsibility for the societal implications of technology use.

To conclude, our objective should be to promote a comprehensive understanding of technology, encourage leadership development in tech-centric roles, and foster environments that motivate young adults to assume leadership responsibilities. These leaders will have an informed, responsible, and empathetic understanding of the societal implications of technology, necessary to address key societal challenges as discussed in our first key question. In doing so, they will be well-equipped to navigate the complex dynamics of global leadership, discern between a leader and an ethical leader, and manage diverse and competing values and expectations, all while steering towards the realisation of Society 5.0.
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