What Change Do We Want to See in the World?

Exploring Public Responses Through a Literature-Informed Overview

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Abstract

What changes do people want to see in the world, and how do these aspirations connect to broader social challenges? This working paper explores responses collected during a public engagement activity organised by Loudly Labs at King's College Circle, University of Toronto, on October 14, 2026. Participants were invited to respond to a simple question: *"What change do you want to see in the world?"* The final transcription contains 20 entries, ranging from environmental care and climate change to gender equality, peace, healthcare, public services, and happiness.

Rather than treating the responses as representative public opinion, this paper uses them as a starting point for a literature-informed exploration of several interconnected themes. Existing research and international frameworks provide context for understanding why these issues matter and how they relate to wider questions of social well-being, public institutions, and collective action. The activity offers an initial snapshot of the changes people chose to express, while also raising questions about how public engagement can help communities articulate their priorities.

1. Introduction: A Question About Change

Many of the world's most persistent challenges are interconnected. Environmental sustainability affects communities and public health; gender-based violence raises questions about safety, equality, and justice; and access to healthcare and public services influences people's opportunities to participate fully in society.

Yet discussions about global challenges often begin with institutions, policies, and statistics. Public engagement offers another starting point: asking people what they believe needs to change.

On October 14, 2026, Loudly Labs conducted a public engagement activity at King's College Circle on the University of Toronto's St. George campus. The communal board invited people to answer one open-ended question: *"What change do you want to see in the world?"*

The responses were short, direct, and varied. Some identified broad aspirations, such as world peace and happiness, while others pointed towards specific concerns, including non-fragmented healthcare, free public transport, and an end to domestic violence.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these responses in conversation with existing literature. It does not attempt to measure how common particular views are or explain why individual participants selected them. Instead, it considers how the ideas expressed on the board connect to wider discussions about environmental sustainability, equality, peace, civic participation, public services, and well-being.

2. Themes Emerging from the Activity

The 20 recorded entries can be organised into five connected themes. These groupings provide a useful framework for discussion without assuming that every response has only one possible interpretation.

2.1 Environmental sustainability and shared futures

The responses *“environmental care,” “climate change,”* and *“environmental protections”* express concern for the environment and the conditions in which future generations will live. Although closely related, they emphasise different aspects of the issue: care suggests a responsibility towards the natural world, climate change identifies a major global challenge, and environmental protections point towards the need for safeguards.

2.2 Gender equality, safety, and social justice

The entries *“a better world for all girls,” “no humiliation,” “no femicide,” “no racism,” “no domestic violence,”* and *“women’s rights”* concern dignity, equality, safety, and freedom from discrimination or violence. They bring together interpersonal experiences and broader social conditions, while highlighting different forms of exclusion and harm.

2.3 Peace, poverty, and social conditions

The responses *“world peace,” “peace and love,” “no poverty,”* and *“Agri-peace”* were grouped under this theme. The first two express aspirations for peaceful relationships, while the third points to material deprivation. The wording *“Agri-peace”* is retained as transcribed, but its intended meaning is unclear and should be checked against the original board before the paper is finalised.

2.4 Healthcare, public services, and institutional accountability

The entries *“non-fragmented healthcare,” “abortion care,” “free public transport,”* and *“end corruption”* concern the systems through which people access services and rely on institutions. They differ in subject matter, but each raises questions about how public systems are organised, governed, and made accessible.

2.5 Youth participation and personal well-being

The responses *“more youth civic engagement”* and *“happiness”* bring attention to two further dimensions of social life: the ability to participate in collective decision-making and the broader aspiration to live well. Although they operate at different levels, both extend the discussion beyond the absence of specific social problems towards the conditions that can support meaningful lives.

These themes provide the starting point for the literature review that follows. They should be understood as an interpretive organisation of the recorded responses, not as a ranking of participants’ priorities.

3. Literature Review: Connecting Public Aspirations to Wider Research

3.1 Environmental sustainability as a collective responsibility

Climate change is not only an environmental issue; it also has implications for human health, livelihoods, infrastructure, and inequality. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023) identifies human activities as the principal cause of observed global warming and emphasises the need for rapid, sustained emissions reductions alongside adaptation.

The board responses about environmental care, climate change, and environmental protections can be understood within this wider context. Together, they point towards concern for the relationship between people and the natural systems on which communities depend. Their wording, however, does not establish whether participants were thinking about climate policy, conservation, pollution, or another environmental issue.

This distinction matters because environmental sustainability encompasses several related but different challenges. Climate change requires changes in energy systems, production, consumption, and infrastructure, while environmental protection can also involve biodiversity, ecosystems, and the management of local environments. The responses therefore offer a broad entry point into environmental concerns rather than a detailed account of participants’ proposed solutions.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a wider framework for connecting environmental concerns with sustainable communities and human well-being. The relevance of this framework lies in its recognition that environmental conditions, social needs, and economic systems cannot be considered entirely in isolation.

3.2 Gender equality, violence, and dignity

The responses concerning girls’ futures, women’s rights, femicide, domestic violence, racism, and humiliation raise questions about the conditions required for people to live safely and with dignity.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2026) identifies violence against women as a major public health and human rights concern. Its global estimates indicate that approximately one in three women experiences physical and/or sexual intimate-partner violence or non-partner

sexual violence during her lifetime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Women (2024) also documented the scale of gender-related killings of women and girls, estimating that approximately 51,100 were killed by intimate partners or other family members in 2023.

These findings help explain why responses such as *“no domestic violence”* and *“no femicide”* relate to issues extending beyond individual behaviour. Preventing violence also involves social norms, institutional responses, access to support, and accountability. The aspiration for a better world for all girls similarly invites consideration of the wider conditions that affect safety, opportunity, and participation.

The response *“no racism”* broadens this discussion to discrimination beyond gender-based violence. Although racism and gender-based violence are distinct issues, both raise questions about unequal treatment, social exclusion, and the ability of people to participate in society without discrimination.

The entry *“no humiliation”* adds a related concern about dignity. Its precise meaning cannot be established from the wording alone, but it can be considered alongside wider discussions of respectful treatment and social inclusion. These connections should not obscure the differences between the responses: preventing violence, addressing racism, advancing women’s rights, and protecting dignity require different forms of understanding and action.

3.3 Peace, poverty, and inclusive societies

The aspirations for world peace and peace and love express a broad desire for more peaceful relationships. The response concerning poverty, meanwhile, points to a material dimension of social well-being.

Peace is not simply the absence of open conflict. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 connects peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice and effective, accountable institutions. This framework highlights the relationship between safety, fairness, and the institutions through which social disputes and public concerns are addressed (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], n.d.-b).

Poverty raises a different but related set of questions. It can restrict access to essential resources and opportunities, while responses to poverty may involve social protection, employment, education, healthcare, and public policy. Placing peace and poverty within the same broad theme does not mean that they are interchangeable. Rather, it highlights the range of conditions that can shape whether people experience security and opportunity in their daily lives.

3.4 Healthcare, public services, and accountable institutions

The responses about non-fragmented healthcare, abortion care, free public transport, and corruption bring attention to systems that shape everyday life.

Integrated, people-centred healthcare is an important theme in international health policy. The WHO (2016) has emphasised the value of health services organised around people’s needs and coordinated across settings, rather than operating as disconnected parts. In this

context, the phrase *“non-fragmented healthcare”* can be understood as expressing an interest in more connected services. The board response does not, however, reveal which aspects of healthcare coordination the participant had in mind.

The response *“abortion care”* identifies a specific area of healthcare. The WHO’s *Abortion Care Guideline* (2022) addresses clinical care as well as the service-delivery and policy considerations relevant to quality abortion care. This literature provides context for the response without allowing us to infer the participant’s personal experiences, motivations, or preferred policies.

Free public transport introduces a question of accessibility in urban life. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 11 includes a commitment to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems. The response can be considered within this wider discussion of mobility and access, although the board itself does not establish whether the participant was concerned primarily with affordability, environmental impact, or another issue (UNDESA, n.d.-a).

Finally, *“end corruption”* directs attention towards institutional conduct and accountability. Corruption can undermine trust in public institutions and interfere with the fair delivery of services. Its appearance alongside healthcare and transport does not establish a direct connection between corruption and those specific services; rather, it shows that the responses included both service-related concerns and broader institutional aspirations.

Taken together, these entries illustrate how calls for change may concern not only individual behaviour but also the organisation, accessibility, and accountability of public systems.

3.5 Youth civic engagement and well-being

The response *“more youth civic engagement”* raises the question of how young people participate in decisions and activities that affect their communities.

The United Nations’ *World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement* (UNDESA, 2016) explores young people’s participation in civic and political life and the conditions that enable or constrain it. Manning and Edwards (2014), in a systematic review of civic education for young people, found that the relationship between civic education and political participation is complex; effects vary by outcome and the available evidence does not justify treating every form of civic education as equally effective.

These discussions suggest that youth engagement involves more than inviting young people to express opinions. Meaningful participation also depends on opportunities to contribute, access information, develop skills, and have a voice in relevant processes. The board response does not tell us what form of engagement the participant wanted, but it offers a starting point for considering how public participation can be supported.

The entry *“happiness”* adds an individual dimension to these wider social concerns. Well-being is influenced by multiple factors, including health, relationships, security, material conditions, and the surrounding social environment. The word itself does not identify which of these factors mattered to the participant. Nevertheless, its presence is a useful reminder

that aspirations for change are not limited to the prevention of harm or the reform of institutions; they can also concern the positive experience of living well.

4. Discussion: What the Themes Invite Us to Consider

The communal board brought together a range of aspirations, from environmental protection and peace to healthcare access, gender equality, civic engagement, and happiness. The responses were brief, but their range offers a useful starting point for considering how people express ideas about social change in a public setting.

One notable feature is the movement between broad ideals and specific concerns. World peace and happiness describe expansive aspirations, while non-fragmented healthcare and free public transport identify more concrete areas of public life. Responses about domestic violence, femicide, and racism name particular forms of harm or inequality. These differences show why a single question about change can produce statements that operate at different levels: personal, social, and institutional.

The literature also highlights connections across the themes. Environmental conditions influence human well-being; violence and discrimination raise questions about safety and justice; and healthcare and transport systems shape access to essential services and opportunities. These relationships do not mean that all the issues can be addressed through the same interventions. They instead suggest that public aspirations often sit within wider systems of social, environmental, and institutional conditions.

Youth civic engagement offers a further connection to the activity itself. Inviting people to express their views creates an opportunity for participation, but the collection of responses is only one part of a broader engagement process. Further conversations could explore what participants meant by their statements, which changes they considered most urgent, and what actions they believed could help bring those changes about.

The activity should be understood as an exploratory snapshot rather than a representative survey. The responses cannot establish how widespread these views are, whether participants shared the same meanings, or which concerns they would prioritise in a different setting. Their value lies in opening a discussion that can be developed through further engagement and considered alongside existing literature.

5. Conclusion

The responses collected during the Loudly Labs public engagement activity illustrate several ways people express their hopes for change. Environmental sustainability, gender equality and safety, peace and social conditions, public services, youth participation, and personal well-being all appeared in the recorded entries.

Existing literature helps place these concerns within wider discussions about climate change, violence prevention, inclusive institutions, healthcare systems, public accessibility, and civic participation. At the same time, the short responses remind us that a stated aspiration is not the same as a detailed explanation of a problem or a proposed solution.

The next step is not to assume what participants meant, but to create opportunities to explore their ideas further. Follow-up questions, additional public engagement, and closer discussion of possible responses could help clarify which issues people want to address and how they understand meaningful change.

Ultimately, the activity provides a starting point for a broader conversation: how can public engagement connect the changes people hope to see with the knowledge, institutions, and collective efforts that can help bring them about?

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