



In focus

Our experts' analysis of the top 10 trends shows just how complex they are, but there are some that require special attention. To identify the gaps in our collective knowledge, we asked our Survey respondents to name the challenges they feel they know the least about.

When we were designing the Survey on the Global Agenda, we didn't just want to focus on what respondents knew. We also wanted to seek out those areas where they weren't so comfortable, enabling us to map not just their collective expertise, but also the issues and challenges they feel they could know more about.

Top of that list was the issue of intensifying cyber threats (page 16), followed by the expanding middle class in Asia (page 24) and the growing importance of megacities (page 26). **Jonathan Zittrain**, Professor of Law

and Computer Science at Harvard University, a founder of the Berkman Centre for Internet and Society, and a Member of the Global Agenda Council on the Future of the Internet, was not surprised that cyber threats had ranked so highly.

"I don't think the security of our online world lacks visibility," he says. Virtually everyone with an internet connection has some understanding of the cyber threats we face, but Zittrain speculates that the lack of understanding reported by Survey respondents could be a reflection on our

current inability to deal with cyber threats on a national and institutional level.

"This is a globally visible problem, but it's something that authorities currently don't know a thing about," he explains. "The only way to change that is by installing technically savvy people in the upper ranks of government. You can pass laws at the normal speed of passing laws, but cyber threats change so fast that the normal pace of legislation can't keep up."

Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, and a Member of the Global Agenda Council on China, agrees enthusiastically that there are "shocking levels of ignorance" about the expansion of Asia's middle class. Reflecting on this gulf of understanding, he singles out the one-way flow of education that has prevailed over the last 20 years.

"I think there are about 180,000 Chinese students studying in America today and something like 120,000 Indian students. But how many Western students travel to Asia to study? I don't know the numbers, but they are incredibly low." In Mahbubani's opinion, it's time to reverse that flow.

And he says the process has already started. "For many years Australia has welcomed hundreds of thousands of

Asian students to study in its universities, but now Australia wants to send some of its young people to study abroad with us. They have realized that the time has come for Australians to learn from Asia. It's time for a two-way street of learning."

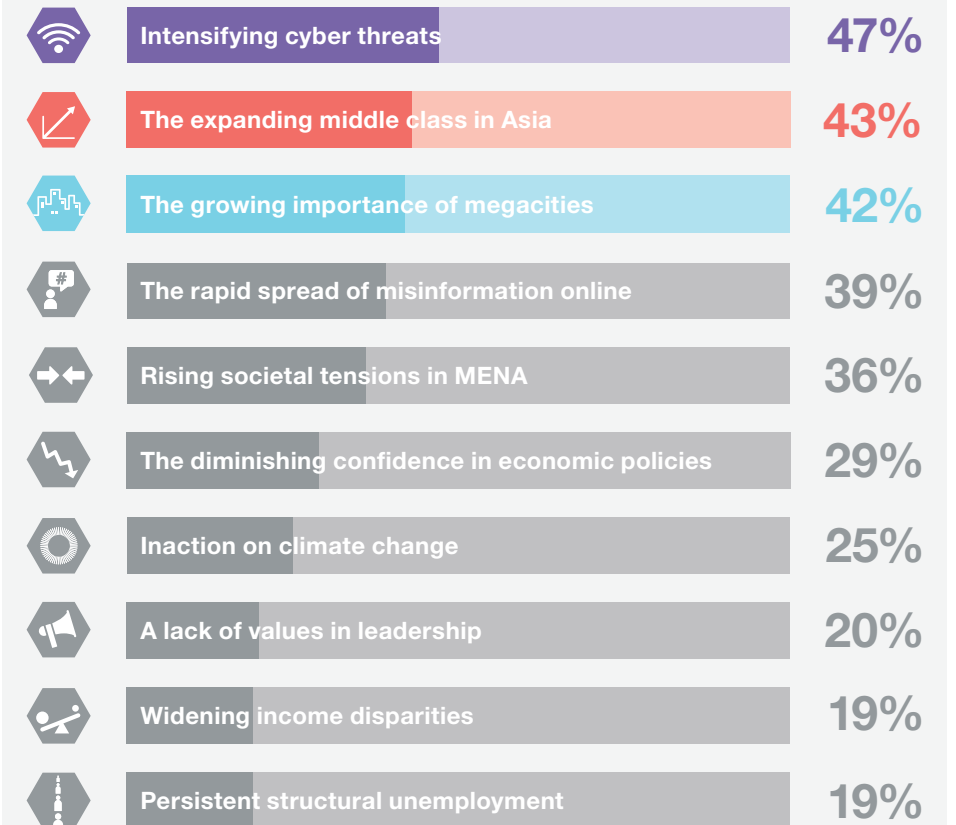
Finally, **Geoffrey West**, Distinguished Professor at the Santa Fe Institute and Chair of the Global Agenda Council on Complex Systems, says that there's still much work to be done when it comes to understanding the rise of megacities.

"To say we don't understand megacities presupposes that we do understand ordinary cities, and I would say that's far from true," he notes. While he and his colleagues have been working on ways to scientifically understand the make-up of cities, West says that megacities introduce a whole new level of complexity because of the resources they consume, both in their construction and their day-to-day life.

"It's a global sustainability question," he explains. "Is there enough out there that we can lay our hands on quick enough to keep up with the flux of people being drawn into these cities and relocated within them, trying to eke out jobs and move up the hierarchy? It has awkwardly become the ambition of everybody to be middle class and to have all the benefits associated with that. Is there enough out there to sustain that? It's a huge issue." ■

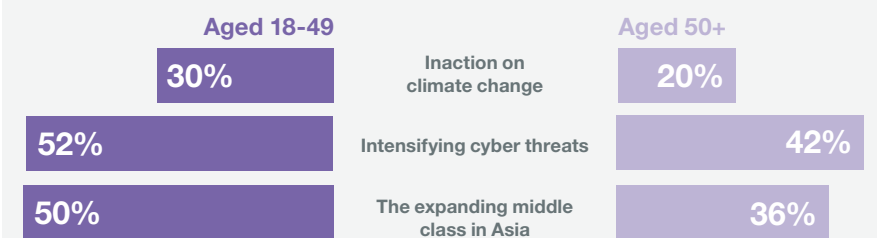
Inside the data

Percentage of respondents who reported limited knowledge of the trends



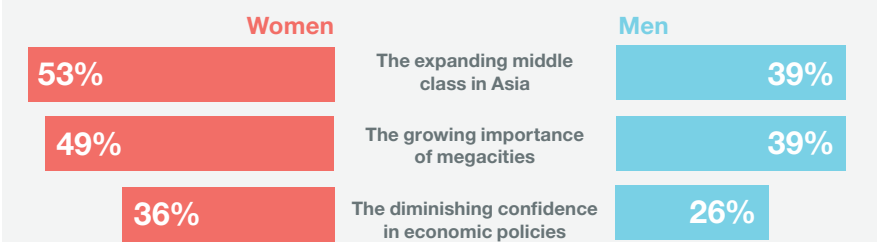
Source: Survey on the Global Agenda 2013

Top three trends for which younger people report more limited knowledge



Source: Survey on the Global Agenda 2013

Top three trends for which more women than men report limited knowledge



Source: Survey on the Global Agenda 2013