

# Thermoelectric Properties of $Y_2CX_2$ ( $X= F, Cl, Br, I$ and $O$ ) Monolayers: A First-Principles Boltzmann Transport Study

Shirin Amirian<sup>1</sup>, Negin Fatahi<sup>1\*</sup>, Mosayeb Naseri<sup>2</sup>, Borhan Arghavani Nia<sup>1</sup>

1.Department of Physics, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran

2.Department of Chemistry, Department of Physics and Astronomy, CMS – Center for Molecular Simulation, IQST – Institute for Quantum Science and Technology, Quantum Alberta, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2N 1N4

Email addresses: n60.fatahi@iau.ac.ir

## Abstract

In this research, the thermoelectric properties of two-dimensional  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X= F, Cl, Br, I$ , and  $O$ ) structures have been investigated using semi-classical Boltzmann theory within the constant relaxation time approximation (CRTA) framework. These structures have been previously validated for structural, thermodynamic, dynamic, and mechanical stability, and their electronic, optical, and photovoltaic properties have been reported. In this study, key thermoelectric parameters were calculated and analyzed in the temperature range of 0 to 1000 K. Based on the obtained results,  $Y_2CCl_2$  and  $Y_2CF_2$  structures exhibit the highest thermoelectric performance with ZT values of approximately 0.578 and 0.410 at 300 K, respectively, demonstrating competitive performance compared to well-known materials such as  $MoS_2$  (0.11),  $Ti_3C_2T_x$  (0.22), and  $Bi_2Te_3$  (0.80). The comprehensive analysis of these results highlights the high potential of the  $Y_2CX_2$  family of MXenes for converting thermal energy into electricity, particularly at high temperatures.

**Keywords:** Thermoelectric properties, MXenes, Seebeck coefficient, Power factor, Figure of merit, Boltzmann transport theory

## 1. Introduction

Rising global energy requirement and the urgent need to reduce reliance on nonrenewable resources have stimulated interest in thermoelectric technologies capable of directly converting heat into electricity [1]. The performance of thermoelectric materials is characterized by the dimensionless figure of merit (ZT), which depends on the Seebeck coefficient (S), electrical conductivity ( $\sigma$ ) and total thermal conductivity ( $\kappa$ ). Simultaneous optimization of these interdependent quantities remains an important challenge for achieving high-efficiency thermoelectric [2].

In recent years, two-dimensional materials have offered new prospects for enhancing thermoelectric performance owing to their unique properties [3]. In particular, MXenes with the general formula  $M_{n+1}X_nT_x$  have attracted considerable attention due to their structural stability, high electrical conductivity and surface engineering tunability [4].

Theoretical and experimental studies have demonstrated that modifying the surface functional groups of MXenes with  $-O$ ,  $-F$ ,  $-OH$  and  $-Cl$  can significantly alter their

thermoelectric properties. For instance, Sarikurt et al. reported that  $Ti_2CO_2$  and  $Zr_2CO_2$  MXenes can achieve a figure of merit of up to  $ZT \approx 1.1$  in the presence of appropriate surface groups [5]. Furthermore, Karmakar and Saha Dasgupta, based on theoretical calculations, predicted that bimetallic MXenes such as  $Ti-Mo-C_2F_2$  could reach a ZT value of approximately 3.1 at around 800 K [6]. In addition, Bandar et al. conducted a comprehensive review outlining the prospects and challenges of MXene materials for thermoelectric applications [7].

The specific family  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X= F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) represents an emerging class of MXenes. In our previous work, we investigated the structural, dynamical and mechanical stability of these monolayers [8]. In the present study, by systematically evaluating the thermoelectric properties of all five terminations using semiclassical Boltzmann transport theory within the constant relaxation time approximation (CRTA) over a broad temperature range (0–1000 K) complements that investigation. Finally, we compare the computed transport coefficients with representative 2D thermoelectric materials to highlight the potential

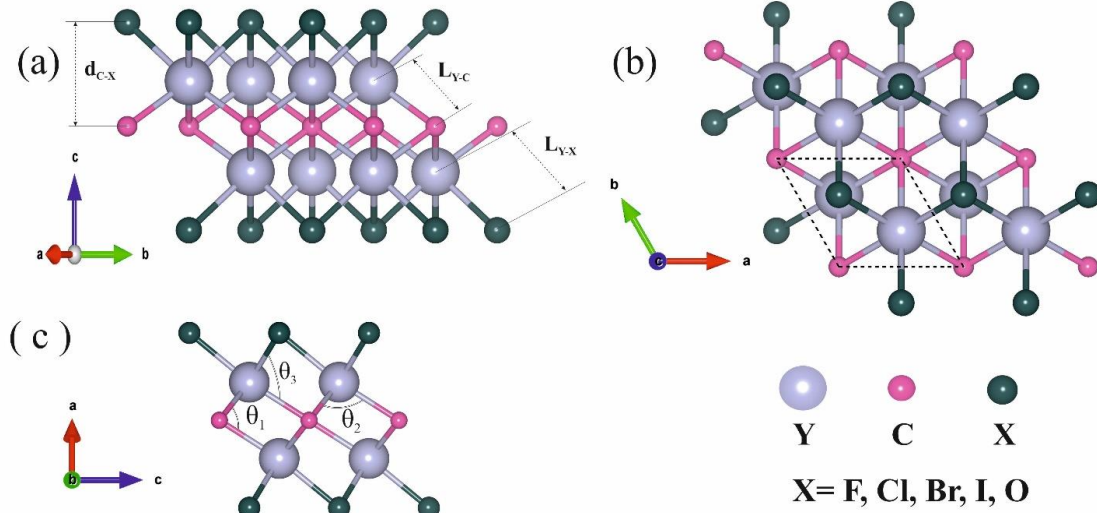


Figure 1: Top and side views of the atomic geometric configurations of monolayer  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X = F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ).

advantages and limitations of  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers.

## 2. Computational Methodology

In our earlier publication [8], we performed first-principles calculations on the  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X = F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) MXene family to investigate their structural stability, phonon and mechanical properties, as well as their electronic, optical and photovoltaic behaviors. To avoid redundancy, only a brief overview is provided here and the atomic configuration of  $Y_2CO_2$  (which was not included previously) is illustrated in Figure 1.

The phonon spectrum and electronic band structure, along with the total density of states (TDOS) of the monolayer metallic  $Y_2CO_2$  in its ground state calculated using the PBE, mBJ and HSE06 approaches as well as the table of structural parameters and elastic constants, together with the angular dependence plots of Young's modulus and Poisson's ratio for the two-dimensional  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X = F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) nanostructures, are included in the Supplementary Information (Figures S1 and S2 and Tables S1 and S2).

In this manuscript, we extend our previous work by calculating and analyzing the thermoelectric performance of these previously verified stable monolayers. The computational setup, including the exchange–correlation functional, plane-wave cutoff energy and k-point sampling, is identical to that used in Ref. [8], ensuring consistency between the two studies.

The thermoelectric transport coefficients were computed using the BoltzTraP2 code [10], which interpolates the electronic band energies and solves the semiclassical Boltzmann transport equations within the constant

relaxation time approximation (CRTA). Although related theoretical investigations on  $Y_2C$ -based MXenes have been reported [8, 9], the thermoelectric behavior of the fully terminated  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers is explored here for the first time.

Within this framework, we evaluated the Seebeck coefficient ( $S$ ), electrical conductivity ( $\sigma/\tau$ ), electronic thermal conductivity scaled by relaxation time ( $\kappa_e/\tau$ ) and derived quantities such as the power factor ( $\sigma S^2$ ) and the thermoelectric figure of merit ( $ZT$ ). All calculations were performed for temperatures ranging from 0 to 1000 K and for chemical potentials around the Fermi level to probe the intrinsic transport behavior.

The thermoelectric transport coefficients were calculated using semiclassical Boltzmann transport theory within the constant relaxation time approximation (CRTA), as implemented in the BoltzTraP2 code [10]. In this framework, the electrical conductivity tensor  $\sigma_{\alpha\beta}$ , Seebeck coefficient  $S_{\alpha\beta}$  and electronic thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{\alpha\beta}^{el}$  are expressed as follows:

$$\sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon) = \frac{e^2}{N} \sum_{i,k} \tau v_{\alpha}(i,j) \frac{\delta(\varepsilon - \varepsilon_{i,k})}{d\varepsilon} \quad (1)$$

$$\sigma_{\alpha\beta}(T, \mu) = \frac{1}{\Omega} \int \sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon) \left[ -\frac{\partial f_0(T, \varepsilon, \mu)}{\partial \varepsilon} \right] \partial \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

$$S_{\alpha\beta}(T, \mu) = \frac{1}{eT\sigma_{\alpha\beta}\Omega} \int \sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon - \mu) \left[ -\frac{\partial f_0(T, \varepsilon, \mu)}{\partial \varepsilon} \right] \partial \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

$$\kappa_{\alpha\beta}^{el}(T, \mu) = \frac{1}{\Omega} \int \sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon - \mu)^2 \left[ -\frac{\partial f_0(T, \varepsilon, \mu)}{\partial \varepsilon} \right] \partial \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

where  $e$  is the elementary charge,  $N$  is the number of  $k$ -points sampled in the Brillouin zone,  $\tau$  is the relaxation time and  $v_{\alpha}$  and  $v_{\beta}$  are the group velocities of the charge carriers along the  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  directions, respectively.  $\varepsilon(i,k)$  denotes the electronic energy of band  $i$  at wave vector  $k$ ,  $\mu$  is the chemical potential,  $\Omega$  is the unit-cell volume and  $f_0(T,\varepsilon,\mu)$  is the Fermi–Dirac distribution function. These equations form the basis for evaluating the Seebeck coefficient, electrical conductivity and electronic thermal conductivity as functions of temperature and chemical potential<sup>3</sup>.

## Results and Discussion

The Seebeck coefficient ( $S$ ),  $\sigma/\tau$ ,  $\kappa_e/\tau$ ,  $\sigma S^2/\tau$  and  $ZT$  using the approximations detailed in [11-13] calculated for the five  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers at 300 K and are summarized in Table 1. Notably,  $Y_2CCl_2$  has the largest positive Seebeck coefficient and the highest  $ZT$  at this temperature. The Seebeck coefficient ( $S$ ) is defined as the ratio between the induced thermoelectric voltage and the temperature difference across the material, as given by Eq. (5):

$$S = -\frac{\Delta V}{\Delta T} \quad (5)$$

**Table 1: Calculated thermoelectric parameters of  $Y_2CX_2$  MXenes (X= F, Cl, Br, I and O) at 300 K.**

System	$S$ ( $\mu\text{V/K}$ )	$\sigma/\tau_0$ ( $10^{15} \frac{1}{\Omega, m, s}$ )	$\kappa_e/\tau_0$ ( $10^{10}$ W/m.K.s)	$\sigma S^2/\tau_0$ ( $10^8$ W/m.K <sup>2</sup> . s)	$ZT$
$Y_2CF_2$	131	3751	4690	641	0.410
$Y_2CCl_2$	213	3259	7660	1474	0.578
$Y_2CBr_2$	-9.71	264100	255780	249	0.003
$Y_2Cl_2$	17.2	44560	26910	131	0.015
$Y_2CO_2$	10.2	82730	63660	86	0.004

The Seebeck coefficient is highly sensitive to carrier type and concentration. Positive  $S$  indicates hole-dominated (p-type) transport, whereas negative  $S$  indicates electron-dominated (n-type) transport [14-16]. In our results,  $Y_2CCl_2$  and  $Y_2CF_2$  structures have large positive Seebeck coefficients (213  $\mu\text{V/K}$  and 131  $\mu\text{V/K}$ , respectively), while  $Y_2CBr_2$  structure has a small negative  $S$  ( $\sim -9.7$   $\mu\text{V/K}$ ), consistent with its metallic or degenerate nature at the Fermi level. For  $Y_2CF_2$  structure, the  $S$  is larger at low temperatures and decreases by increasing temperature, which is characteristic of semiconductors and attributable to increased intrinsic carrier concentrations and smearing of the Fermi–Dirac distribution at elevated  $T$  [17-19].

The total thermal conductivity ( $\kappa_{\text{total}}$ ) of a material arises from two fundamental contributions: the electronic component ( $\kappa_e$ ) and the lattice or phonon component ( $\kappa_l$ ). Given the low-dimensional nature of these systems, we considered a conservative, estimated value for ( $\kappa_l$ ) from recent experimental and theoretical reports on similar MXenes to calculate a realistic and reliable value for  $ZT$ .

This ensures that our reported thermoelectric efficiency is not overvalued and remains within a physically plausible range. The overall heat transport can therefore be expressed as:

$$\kappa_{\text{total}} = \kappa_e + \kappa_l \quad (6)$$

The electronic term ( $\kappa_e$ ) originates from the movement of charge carriers (electrons and holes), while the lattice term ( $\kappa_l$ ) represents heat carried by lattice vibrations (phonons) [20, 21]. In metallic and semimetallic systems, where electronic conduction dominates,  $\kappa_e$  often constitutes a significant portion of the total thermal conductivity.

Within the Wiedemann–Franz law, the electronic thermal conductivity is approximately proportional to the electrical conductivity ( $\sigma$ ) and the absolute temperature ( $T$ ), as described by:

$$\kappa_e = L\sigma T \quad (7)$$

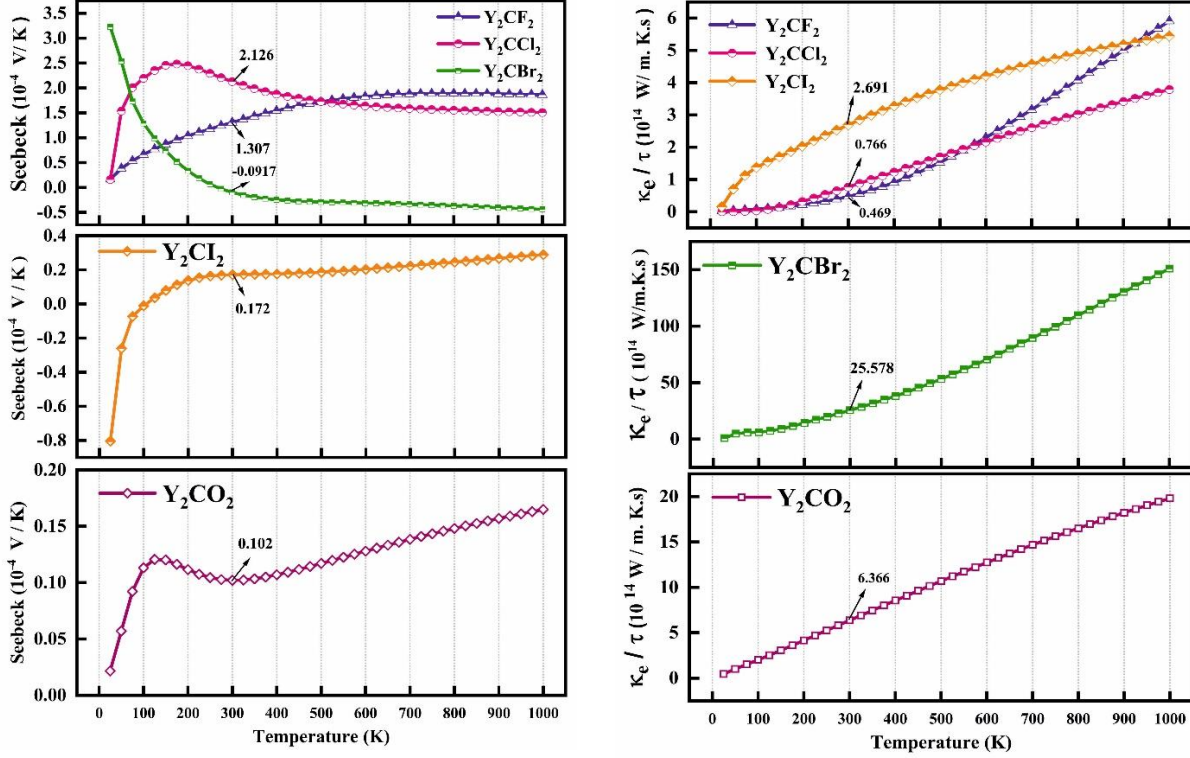


Figure 2: Calculated Seebeck coefficient and thermal conductivity of  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers ( $X= F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) as a function of temperature.

where  $L$  is the Lorenz number, which takes the theoretical value of ( $\approx 2.44 \times 10^{-8} \text{ W}\Omega/\text{K}^2$ ) for ideal free-electron systems [21, 22]. This relation assumes a parabolic electronic band structure and energy-independent scattering time. However, for low-dimensional materials such as 2D MXenes, these assumptions may not be strictly valid. Consequently, the Lorenz number can deviate from its classical value, depending on the degree of band non-parabolicity, carrier concentration and temperature.

The electronic contribution to thermal conductivity ( $\kappa_e$ ) arises from charge carriers and is a component of the total thermal conductivity [20,21].

In our results, the  $Y_2CBr_2$  structure has the largest  $\kappa_e$  (limiting its  $ZT$ ), while  $Y_2CCl_2$  and  $Y_2CF_2$  have comparatively lower  $\kappa_e$ , which has higher thermoelectric efficiency [23, 24]. The electrical conductivity within the Boltzmann transport formalism is expressed as:

$$\sigma = e^2 \int \tau(\varepsilon) v^2(\varepsilon) D(\varepsilon) \left( -\frac{f}{\varepsilon} \frac{\partial}{\partial \varepsilon} \right) d\varepsilon \quad (8)$$

Also, the electrical conductivity (reported as  $\sigma/\tau$ ) was computed within the Boltzmann formalism. The high  $\sigma$  often leads to reduced  $S$ , so an optimal balance between  $\sigma$  and  $S$  is necessary for maximizing the power factor ( $\sigma S^2$ ) and  $ZT$  [25–30]. The power factor, which evaluates the combined effect of electrical conductivity and Seebeck coefficient, is defined as :

$$PF = \sigma S^2 \quad (9)$$

The  $Y_2CBr_2$  structure exhibits very high  $\sigma/\tau$  but its  $S$  is low which yields a small  $\sigma S^2/\tau$  (and thus small PF). Among all studied systems,  $Y_2CCl_2$  and  $Y_2CF_2$  exhibit the most favorable balance between electrical conductivity and Seebeck coefficient, leading to the highest values of  $\sigma S^2/\tau$  and power factor (PF) throughout the investigated temperature range (0–1000 K).

Figure 2 shows the temperature dependence of  $S$  and  $\kappa_e$  for all five monolayers; Figure 3 presents  $\sigma$  and  $\sigma S^2$  (power factor) as functions of temperature, while Figure 4 displays  $ZT$  for proposed monolayers [31–37]. The dimensionless thermoelectric figure of merit is given by:

$$ZT = \frac{\sigma S^2 T}{\kappa} \quad (10)$$

The dimensionless figure of merit ( $ZT$ ) is defined as  $ZT = \sigma S^2 T / (\kappa_e + \kappa_l)$ , where  $S$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\kappa_e$  and  $\kappa_l$  are the Seebeck coefficient, electrical conductivity, electronic thermal conductivity and lattice thermal conductivity, respectively.

The calculated  $ZT$  values reveal that  $Y_2CCl_2$  ( $\approx 0.578$  at 300 K) and  $Y_2CF_2$  ( $\approx 0.410$ ) possess superior thermoelectric performance compared to other representative 2D materials such as  $MoS_2$  ( $ZT \approx 0.11$ ) and  $Ti_3C_2$  ( $ZT \approx 0.22$ ). This improvement can be attributed to the more favorable electronic transport characteristics and optimized balance between  $\sigma$  and  $S$  in the  $Y_2CX_2$  family, although their  $ZT$  values remain below those of conventional bulk thermoelectrics like  $Bi_2Te_3$  ( $ZT \approx 0.80$ ) [38–45].

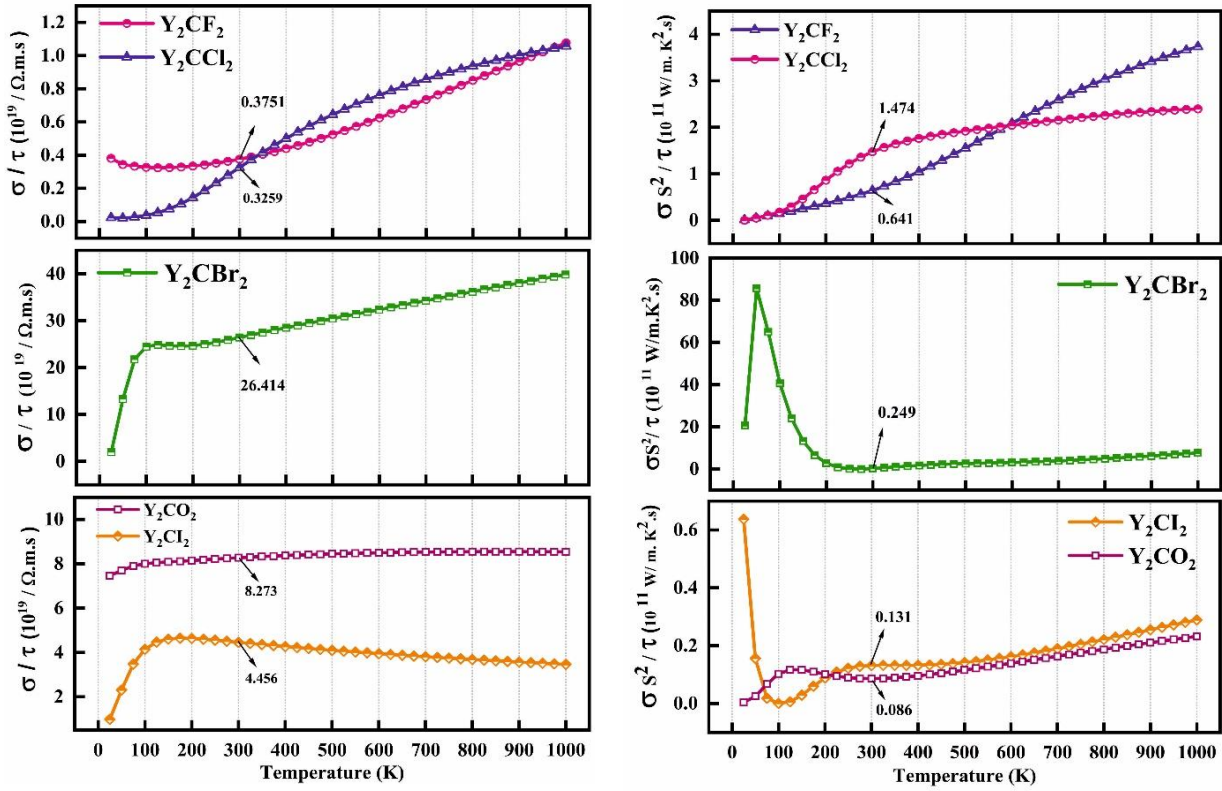


Figure 3: Calculated electrical conductivity and power factor of  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers ( $X=F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) as a function of temperature.

Our analysis indicates that termination plays a dominant role. The lighter halogen terminations (F, Cl) improve the thermoelectric performance relative to terminations (Br, I) or oxygen. These trends can be explained by variations in electronegativity and atomic radius, which together influence the electronic band structure and phonon scattering mechanisms.

The superior power factor (PF) in  $Y_2CCl_2$  and  $Y_2CF_2$  compared to other members of the family can be attributed to the significant modification of the electronic band structure by the surface termination elements (F, Cl). The high electronegativity of F and Cl atoms leads to a strong orbital hybridization with the d-orbitals of Yttrium (Y), which effectively tunes the density of states (DOS) near the Fermi level. Specifically, these terminations introduce a 'pudding-mold' type band structure or flat-dispersive bands, which are known to enhance the Seebeck coefficient while maintaining relatively high electrical conductivity.

Second, regarding the scattering mechanisms, the different ionic radii and electronegativities of the functional groups modify the crystal potential. In the case of  $Y_2CCl_2$ , the larger atomic radius of Cl compared

to F results in a slight expansion of the lattice, which in certain directions reduces the electronic effective mass ( $m^*$ ) crystallographic directions. This reduction in ( $m^*$ ) enhances carrier mobility ( $\mu$ ) and subsequently the electrical conductivity ( $\sigma/\tau$ ). Furthermore, the surface terminations act as a chemical pressure that modulates the band gap and the curvature of the valence/conduction bands. The synergy between a high Seebeck coefficient (due to band flattening) and improved conductivity (due to optimized effective mass) results in the observed high-power factor in these two specific structures [45].

Overall, these findings suggest that surface engineering (through appropriate terminal element selection) provides an effective route to tune the thermoelectric performance of  $Y_2C$ -based MXenes. Strategies such as doping, strain engineering or heterostructure design could further enhance the power factor and reduce the lattice thermal conductivity, thereby improving ZT in future studies

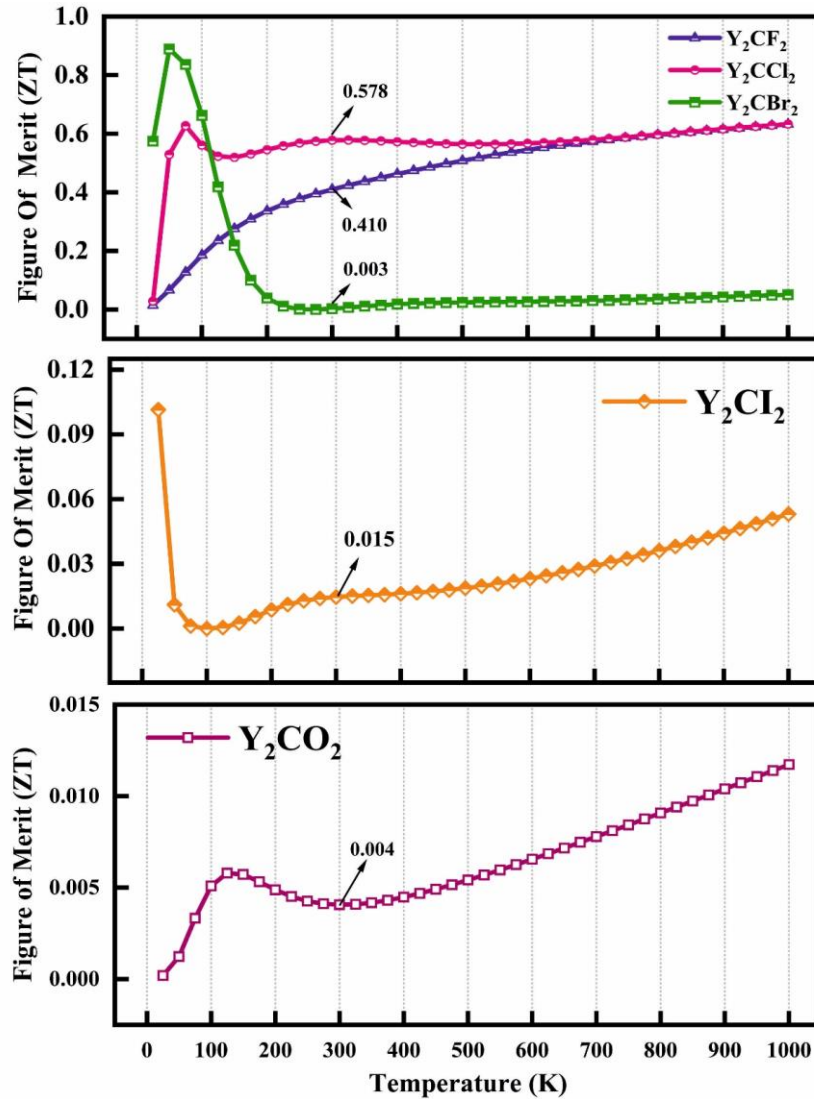


Figure 4: Calculated thermoelectric figure of merit (ZT) of  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers ( $X= F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) as a function of temperature

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, the thermoelectric properties of the two-dimensional semiconducting  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X= F, Cl, Br, I$  and  $O$ ) were investigated using first-principles calculations. The results indicate that  $Y_2CCl_2$  and  $Y_2CF_2$  exhibit significant thermoelectric performance due to their relatively high Seebeck coefficients, favorable electrical conductivity and low lattice thermal conductivity. Among the studied structures,  $Y_2CCl_2$  achieves the best performance with a figure of merit of  $ZT \approx 0.578$  at 300 K. Moreover, the appreciable performance of  $Y_2CF_2$  highlights the high potential of this structure for high-temperature thermoelectric applications. In contrast,  $Y_2CBr_2$ ,  $Y_2Cl_2$  and  $Y_2CO_2$  demonstrate lower efficiencies, which can be attributed to differences in the chemical and structural characteristics of the terminal element.

The comparison of these five structures indicates that the type of terminal element in MXene significantly influences their thermoelectric properties. Structures with lighter halogen elements such as F and Cl demonstrate superior performance compared to those containing heavier halogens like Br, I or O. These differences can be attributed to factors including variations in electronegativity, atomic size and their impact on the electronic and phononic band structures.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that terminal surface engineering in MXene structures, including the choice of an appropriate element, can play a crucial role in optimizing their thermoelectric performance. Future investigations may focus on further enhancing these properties through strategies such as doping, lattice strain engineering or heterostructure design to achieve even higher performance.

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## Supplementary Files

**Table S-1: Structural parameters of Y<sub>2</sub>CX<sub>2</sub> (X = F, Cl, Br, I, O).**

System	Y <sub>2</sub> CF <sub>2</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub> CCl <sub>2</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub> CBr <sub>2</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub> CO <sub>2</sub>
a = b (Å)	3.60	3.71	3.78	3.88	3.54
C (Å)	15.49	22.25	22.63	23.25	15.49
L <sub>Y-C</sub> (Å)	2.49	2.54	2.55	2.59	2.70
L <sub>Y-X</sub> (Å)	2.37	2.77	2.91	3.11	2.18
d <sub>C-X</sub> (Å)	3.26	3.79	3.92	4.13	3.24
θ <sub>1</sub> (deg)	87.6	86.1	84.58	83.26	98.00
θ <sub>2</sub> (deg)	92.4	93.89	95.42	96.75	81.99
θ <sub>3</sub> (deg)	84.22	90.87	91.30	92.31	82.34

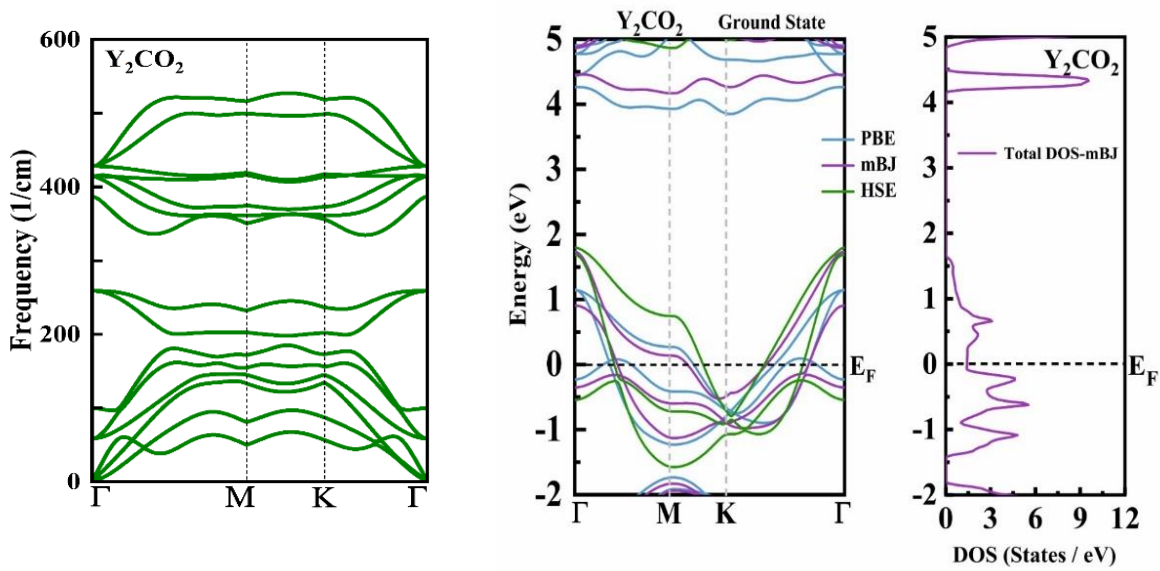


Figure S-1: Phonon spectrum and electronic band structure along with the total density of states (TDOS) using PBE, mBJ, and HSE06 approaches for the monolayer metallic Y<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>2</sub> at the ground state.

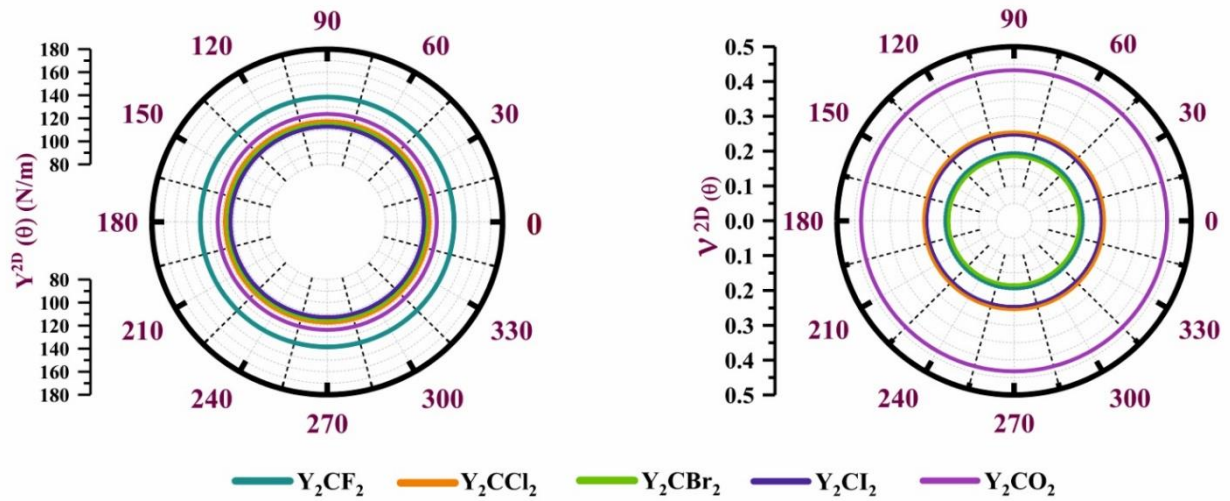
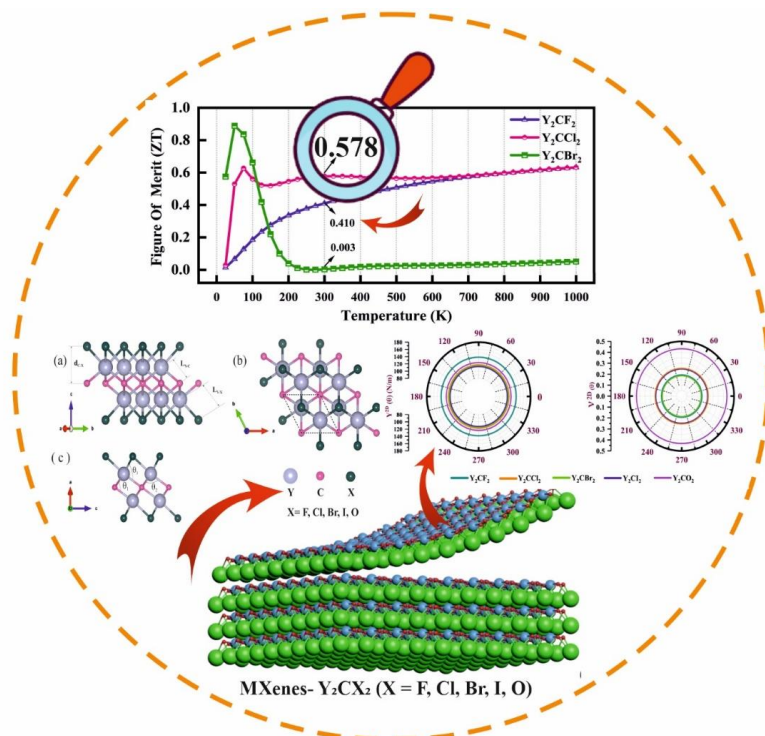


Figure S-2: Angular dependence of Young's modulus and Poisson's ratio for  $Y_2CX_2$  monolayers ( $X = F, Cl, Br, I, O$ ).

Table S-2: Elastic constants of two-dimensional  $Y_2CX_2$  nanostructures ( $X = F, Cl, Br, I, O$ ).

System	$C_{11}$ (N/m)	$C_{22}$ (N/m)	$C_{12}$ (N/m)	$G=\bar{C}_{66}$ (N/m)	$Y^{2D}$ (N/m)	$\nu^{2D}$	$\gamma^{2D}$ (N/m)
$Y_2CF_2$	143.65	143.65	27.25	58.20	138.49	0.190	85.45
$Y_2CCl_2$	123.91	123.91	31.17	46.37	116.07	0.252	77.54
$Y_2CBr_2$	118.59	118.59	21.93	48.33	114.54	0.185	70.26
$Y_2Cl_2$	120.04	120.04	29.52	45.26	112.78	0.246	74.78
$Y_2CO_2$	152.06	152.06	65.72	43.17	108.89	0.432	108.89

TOC  
Graphic



MXenes-  $Y_2CX_2$  ( $X = F, Cl, Br, I, O$ )