



Press Release

PERCEPTION VS REALITY: IPSOS STUDY REVEALS SINGAPOREANS MOST ACCURATE IN ASIA PACIFIC

Singapore, 06 December 2017 – Ipsos' latest "Perils of Perception" survey highlights how wrong the online public across 38 countries are about key global issues in their country.

In Asia Pacific, countries included in the survey were Singapore, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. **Joseph Chua, Managing Director of Ipsos in Singapore comments**, "On many subjects – murder rates, terrorist deaths, teenage pregnancy, diabetes and how healthy people feel – things are NOT as bad as they seem!"

Some of the key patterns in **Asia Pacific** are:

- Only 17% of people think the **murder rate** is lower in their country than it was in 2000 – but it is significantly down in most Asia Pacific countries, and, across the countries overall, it is down 49%.
- Only 19% think **deaths from terrorist attacks** are lower in the last 15 years than they were in the 15 years before that – when they have actually reduced by about 15% across the 11 APAC countries surveyed.
- Most overestimated the percentage of **prisoners who are foreigners** in their countries, with the average guess at 22%, when it is actually 9%.
- **Teen pregnancy** is overestimated across the region, often by a staggering amount. Overall, the average guess is that 21% of teenage girls give birth each year when the reality is below 2%. The Philippines records the highest teenage pregnancies among the 11 markets surveyed. Filipinos guessed that 40% of teenage girls give birth each year, when the actual figure is only 6.3%.
- Six in ten people across Asia Pacific countries are unsure or believe that there is a link between some **vaccines and autism** in healthy children, despite the claim being widely discredited – only 36% think it is false.
- Among APAC citizens, the USA is seen as the **booziest nation** in the world, when it actually only ranks 13th. Very few correctly picked Belgium as the country with the highest alcohol consumption in the study. Australia and South Korea both have strong self-images as boozy nations, with nearly 6 in 10 in each picking their own country as one of the top three alcohol consumers.
- But the USA is correctly seen as having the **sweetest tooth**, a clear winner, picked well ahead of any other country.
- People generally overestimate how connected by technology we are, with the average guess across Asia Pacific countries that 71% have a **Facebook account** when only 42% do (excludes China).
- People in every country overestimate the extent of **diabetes** in their country. Asia Pacific respondents think 35% of their population have the condition when only 8% do.
- Hong Kong and South Korea hugely underestimate the significance of **suicide** among young adults in their country.



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Some of the key **global** patterns are:

- Only 7% of people think the **murder rate** in their country is lower than it was in 2000 – but it is significantly down in most countries, and, across the countries overall, it is down 29%
- Only 19% think **deaths from terrorist attacks** are lower in the last 15 years than they were in the 15 years before that – when they are significantly down across most of these countries, and overall they are around half the level they were
- People hugely overestimate the proportion of **prisoners in their countries who are immigrants**: the average guess is 28% when it is only 15%
- **Teen pregnancy** is overestimated across the world, often by a staggering amount. Overall, the average guess is that 20% of teenage girls give birth each year when the reality is 2%. And some countries guess that around half of teenage girls give birth each year, when the highest actual figure in any country is 6.7%
- Six in ten people across the countries are unsure or believe that there is a link between some **vaccines and autism** in healthy children, despite the claim being widely discredited – only 42% think it is false
- Russia is seen as the **booziest nation** in the world, when they actually only rank 7th. Very few correctly pick out Belgium as the highest alcohol drinking nation in the study
- But the USA is correctly seen as having the **sweetest tooth**, a clear winner, picked well ahead of any other country
- People generally overestimate how connected by technology we are, with the average guess across the countries that 75% have a **Facebook account** when only 46% actually do.

Among individual Asia Pacific countries, we get some things very wrong and others guesses are quite accurate...

1. **Good Health:** In Singapore we think other people report their health as worse than they actually do, and in fact, we are among the **least accurate** in our beliefs. Our average guess is that only 55% of people say their health is good or very good, when actually 81% say their health is good or very good. The Asia Pacific region average guess is 55% for people saying their health is good or very good, while 9% guessed their health was poor.
2. **Foreign-born prisoners:** we think that immigrants make up a much greater proportion of the Singapore prison population than they actually do. We guessed an average of 30% of all prisoners were born in a foreign country, but the actual figure is 9.9%, which is much lower than immigrants' share of the overall population at about 30%. In the Asia Pacific, the average guess was 22%.
3. **Murder rate:** the large majority of people in Singapore think the murder rate is higher now or the same as in 2000, when it is actually around 78% lower. About 3 in ten (34%) think it's higher, 31% think it's about the same, and only 28% correctly guess that it is lower. Across the Asia Pacific, 74% think the murder rate is higher or the same.
4. **Teenage pregnancy:** we hugely overestimate the proportion of 15-19-year-old women and girls giving birth each year across the Asia Pacific region. Singapore think it's 11% of Singaporean teenagers who give birth each year (about one in 10) when the actual figure is only 0.4%. The Asia Pacific average guess is 21%.
5. **Diabetes:** People in every country significantly overestimate the prevalence of diabetes, including those in the Asia Pacific. We think that 35% of people in Singapore have diabetes, when the actual figure is around 11%. The Asia Pacific average guess was 35%.



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- 6. **Facebook membership:** All countries also overestimate Facebook membership, with an average guess that 83% of Singapore aged 13+ have a Facebook account, when the actual figure is 67%. The Asia Pacific average guess was 71%.
- 7. **Vehicles:** Most countries overestimate the number of registered vehicles per 100 people with the Asia Pacific average guess being 84%. Singapore estimated the number of registered vehicles per 100 people at 53 (approximately 1 vehicle for every 2 persons) when the actual number is just 18 (approximately 1 vehicle for every 5 persons).
- 8. **Suicide:** There is a real split in accuracy on the proportion of deaths by suicide among young people. Singapore estimated the proportion of deaths of women aged 15-24 due to suicide was 18% when the actual was 34%. Estimates for the deaths of young men due to suicide was 18% when the actual number was 27%.
- 9. **Vaccines:** There are a wide variety of views among Asia Pacific countries when it comes to beliefs around the link between some vaccines and autism in healthy children despite the claim being widely discredited. In Singapore 20% believe the statement to be true and 48% say they don't know, with 32% saying it is false. Across the Asia Pacific region, 22% said the claim was true while 36% said it was false.
- 10. **Terrorism:** Most countries in the Asia Pacific do not believe deaths from terrorist attacks are lower in recent years, despite that being the case in many. In Singapore, 22% say that deaths from terrorist attacks were lower between 2002-2016 than they were between 1985-2000, a further 40% said about the same, while 24% think deaths from terrorism were higher over the last 15 years. In reality, deaths from terrorist attacks dropped from 5 to 0 over that time period. In the Asia Pacific region as a whole, one third (33%) believed there were more terror related deaths, 35% said about the same and 19% said there were less deaths.

We also asked some more “festive” questions, about our spiritual beliefs, as well as which Asia Pacific countries have the sweetest tooth and greatest thirst for alcohol...

- 1. **Alcohol:** Given the vastly different attitudes and cultural beliefs around alcohol in the Asia Pacific there was diversity of opinion among these nations. Singapore are the 27th most likely to be picked out as the highest consumers of alcohol from the 38 countries included, while our actual rank is 34th.
- 2. **Sugar:** Most Asia Pacific countries ranked low in their consumption of sugar per person. We asked people to select the countries they believe consume the most sugar per person from our list - and Singapore was ranked 30th behind a clear winner in the USA (mentioned by 58%) followed by Great Britain (20%). Interestingly, our self-image is that we have a sweeter tooth than we actually do: 31% of people in Singapore think we're in the top 3 biggest consumers of sugar.

Looking across the seven key questions where we get people to estimate factual realities, there are clear patterns in which countries have a more accurate view of their countries. To capture this, we've calculated the Ipsos “Misperceptions Index”, as shown in the table below.

In the Asia Pacific, the Philippines are the least accurate country, while Singapore is the most accurate.

38 country ranking	APAC 11 country ranking	Country	
3	1	Philippines	Least accurate
5	2	India	



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6	3	Indonesia	
14	4	Japan	
15	5	Malaysia	
17	6	South Korea	
19	7	New Zealand	
21	8	Hong Kong	
26	9	Australia	
27	10	China	
28	11	Singapore	Most accurate

Globally, **South Africa** receives the dubious honour of being the most inaccurate in their perceptions on these issues, with Brazil and India also high up the list.

Sweden are the most accurate, followed by Norway, with Denmark in third.

Ranking	Country	
1	South Africa	Least accurate
2	Brazil	
3	Philippines	
4	Peru	
5	India	
6	Indonesia	
7	Colombia	
8	Mexico	
9	Turkey	
10	Saudi Arabia	
11	Argentina	
12	Italy	
13	Chile	
14	Japan	
15	Malaysia	
16	France	
17	South Korea	
18	Hungary	
19	New Zealand	
20	Netherlands	
21	Hong Kong	
22	Poland	
23	USA	
24	Russia	
25	Germany	
26	Australia	
27	China	



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28	Singapore	
29	Israel	
30	United Kingdom	
31	Belgium	
32	Canada	
33	Serbia	
34	Montenegro	
35	Spain	
36	Denmark	
37	Norway	
38	Sweden	Most accurate

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Notes to editors:

Bobby Duffy, Managing Director of Ipsos Social Research Institute, London and author of the report explained: “Across all 38 countries in the study, each population gets a lot wrong. We are often most incorrect on factors that are widely discussed in the media, such as deaths from terrorism, murder rates, immigration and teenage pregnancy.

“There are multiple reasons for these errors – from our struggle with maths and proportions, to media and political coverage of issues, to social psychology explanations of our mental shortcuts or biases.

“But in particular, we know from previous studies that this is partly because we overestimate what we worry about: the more we see coverage of an issue, the more prevalent we think it is, especially if that coverage is frightening or threatening. Our brains process negative information differently - it sticks with us and affects how we see realities. We’re more worried than we should be about how our countries are and how they’re changing.

“Some of the patterns are also worrying for our own decisions: our uncertainty about the link between vaccines and autism in healthy children, despite this being widely discredited, can affect our behaviour and therefore health outcomes in nations.

“We also have the wrong image of other countries in many instances: Russia and America’s image as hard drinkers probably come from cultural cues we see widely in entertainment - while Belgians get off lightly as they don’t feature so much! But there is some truth in these national images: the USA is also correctly nailed for its sweet-tooth!

“It is also clear from our ‘Misperceptions Index’ that the countries who tend to do worst have relatively low internet penetrations: given this is an online survey, this will reflect the fact that this more middle-class and connected population think the rest of their countries are more like them than they really are.”

Technical note:

- *These are the findings of the Ipsos Perils of Perception Survey 2017. 29,133 interviews were conducted between 28th September – 19th October 2017.*
- *The survey is conducted in 38 countries around the world, via the Ipsos Online Panel system in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary,*



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India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the USA. The following countries used either online or face-to-face methodologies: Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway and Serbia.

- Approximately 1000 individuals aged 16-64 or 18-64 were surveyed in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Montenegro, Norway, Russia, Serbia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Approximately 2000 individuals aged 16-64 were surveyed in Germany. Approximately 900 individuals aged 16-64 were surveyed in Netherlands. Approximately 500 individuals aged 16-64 were surveyed in Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Hungary, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey.
- The “actual” data for each question is taken from a variety of verified sources. A full list of sources/links to the actual data can be found here. www.perils.ipsos.com
- Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.
- Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.

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