



Factum

International Women's Day: Global Misperceptions of Equality and the need to Press for Progress

Sexual Harassment Seen as Biggest Issue Facing Women around the World

Toronto, ON, March 8, 2018 — To mark International Women's Day, and in the wake of the #metoo campaign, a new global study by Ipsos in collaboration with International Women's Day across 27 countries highlights the level of concern people around the world have about a number of equality issues. The survey was carried out online in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the USA among adults aged under 65.

In Canada the findings show:

- Sexual harassment is seen as the top equality issue facing women globally (32%), including in Canada (36%). Canadians rank equal pay as second (27%), higher than the global average (19% and fifth-most important issue).
- Half of all respondents in the study still think that reports of sexual harassment are ignored – though in Canada this falls to four in ten (40%). Four in five Canadians (81%) agree that a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment is essential to bring about change in our society.
- Canadians also overestimate women's representation in business leadership. We think that 17% of CEOs in the largest 500 companies around the world are women when it is actually just 3%.
- Three quarters (73%) of Canadians say equality is important to them and a similar proportion say things would work better if more women held positions with responsibilities in government and companies (65%).
- Four in ten (41%) agree that they're a "feminist" (undefined), including 51% of women and 31% of men. However, once a definition of feminism is included – someone who advocates and supports equal opportunities for women – 60% of Canadians agree that they're a feminist (65% of women vs. 55% of men), slightly higher than the international average (57%).

Global Findings

Sexual harassment is seen as the top equality issue facing women globally.

Three in ten people (32%) globally believe that sexual harassment is the biggest equality issue facing women and girls in their country – the top answer picked out from a long list of equality issues. Sexual harassment is a particular concern in Peru (58%), and for around half the people in Malaysia (51%) Turkey (51%) Mexico (48%) and India (47%). At the other end of the scale it is considered much less of a problem in Serbia and Russia (7% respectively) and around one in five say it is an issue in Poland (18%), Saudi Arabia (19%) and

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Japan (20%). The second most picked out issue globally is sexual violence (by 28%). Canadians picked sexual harassment (36%), equal pay (27%) and sexual violence (25%) as their three most-important issues facing women and girls in Canada.

The study also finds that despite the #metoo campaign and high-profile cases shining a light on the issue of sexual harassment, in many countries people still believe that women who come forward will not be taken seriously. Across all 27 countries, half (50%) agree that, these days, reports of sexual harassment are generally ignored compared with 40% who disagree. Indeed, in sixteen of the countries, the majority view is still that reports of sexual violence are ignored including Peru, Turkey, Mexico, Chile and South Korea. Conversely, in Great Britain, Sweden, Australia, Canada and the US most people do not think that reports of sexual harassment are ignored. In Canada, 40% agree reports of sexual violence are generally ignored, while 52% disagree.

And despite the high profile public debate on sexual harassment few people say they are talking about the issue with their family; only 15% say they are talking about it 'a lot' compared with twice the proportion (30%) who say they aren't talking about it at all. In fact, 33% of Canadians say they're not talking about it at all, which is above the international average.

Three-quarters (75%) of people around the world feel that a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment is essential to bring about change in society. Just one in six (16%) disagree. In Canada, 81% agree, making Canadians among the most likely to do so.

A third, however, shift the responsibility to women; 32% on average around the world agree that sexual harassment would end if the women simply told the man to stop, which rises to 57% saying this in India. In Canada, 30% agree, close to the international average.

Sexual harassment isn't identified as the only issue facing women. Around one in five around the world say that physical violence (21%), domestic abuse (20%) and equal pay (19%) are issues. Canada in particular over-indexes in equal pay (27% chose it as a top issue in Canada vs. international average of 19%).

People are wildly over-optimistic about the pace of change on pay and economic equality...

Nearly half of people globally (47%) think that equality between men and women will be achieved in their lifetime compared with 37% who disagree. In Canada, 49% agree that they'll see full equality between the sexes. However, the study suggests that we are wildly over-optimistic about the pace of change. In Canada, people think that it will take an average of 25 years for men and women to have economic equality across the entire world. The reality, according to [The World Economic Forum](#), is that this will not be achieved for another 217 years, at the current rate of progress.

...and we hugely overestimate women's representation in business leadership

Misperceptions about reaching equality may be influenced by the fact that we think that aspects of women's lives are better than they actually are. In particular, we hugely overestimate the extent to which women are represented in business leadership; we estimate that, of the world's top 500 companies, one in five (19%) has a female CEO – when the actual figure is just 3%. In Canada we think it's 17%, a slightly better guess but still well off the reality.

People tend to be more accurate though when it comes to estimating the proportion of female politicians in their country. People in Malaysia, India, Brazil and China tend to overestimate the number of female politicians but in the majority of the countries, people actually *underestimate* the number – particularly in Spain, South Africa, Mexico, Belgium, Serbia, Germany and Argentina. In Canada, we're reasonably accurate in guessing that 28% of our MPs are women (26% actually are).

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Even so, the majority view around the world is that women need to be better represented; six in ten people (61%) globally agree that things would work better if more women held positions with responsibilities in government and companies compared with 26% who disagree. Only in Russia do more people disagree than agree. In Canada, 65% agree.

Most say equality is important but close to half around the world think things have gone far enough when it comes to giving women equal rights

More generally, the vast majority of people (70%) across the world agree that achieving equality between men and women is important to them personally (and this figure rises to three quarters - 74% - of women, compared to two thirds - 66% - of men). In Canada, 73% agree (78% of women vs. 68% of men).

But views are split on whether things have gone far enough in their country when it comes to giving women equal rights, with 45% around the world agreeing with this statement and the same proportion disagreeing. In eleven of the countries, the majority view is that things have gone far enough on equality, and across the countries there are similar levels of agreement among men and women. In Canada most disagree (52%) that things have gone too far, while only 35% agree. Men (41%) are more likely to agree than women (30%).

Across the countries, over half (57%) say that they're a feminist, defined as someone who advocates and supports equal opportunities for women, while three in ten (32%) disagree. There are variations by country, with agreement is highest in South Africa, India, Italy and China and lowest in Japan, Russia and Germany.

However, when we ask if people define themselves as a feminist without providing an explanation as to what one is, then levels of agreement fall significantly. Overall just under four in ten (37%) agree compared with nearly half (48%) who disagree. Only in India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Spain do more people agree than disagree, suggesting that the term feminist still carries fairly negative connotations across the globe.

In Canada, 41% agree that they're a feminist (with no definition), but when we say it is someone who advocates and supports equal opportunities for women, it rises to 60%.

Reviewing the findings from a worldwide perspective, **Glenda Stone, Partnerships Director for International Women Day** said:

The good news is that a focus on gender parity has increased exponentially worldwide. This has been fuelled by a significant increase in coverage of gender issues by mainstream media, an impressive rise in women's voices via social media platforms, employers actively working to create more diverse and inclusive workplaces, an increase in awareness raising campaigns, and an overall expectation by younger generations for more equal societies.

The challenge is to move towards mass adoption of a "gender parity mindset" to guide behaviour and forge gender-equal perspectives. The survey highlights key areas where women are still marginalised and discriminated. There is no place for complacency. Complacency belittles women.

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International Women's Day provides an important opportunity for all countries and segments of society to celebrate the gains and achievement of women. It also serves as a strong call-to-action to press for progress in every way.

About the Study

- In total 19,428 were interviewed between 26 January – 9 February, 2018. The survey was conducted in 27 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the USA).
- Approximately 1000 individuals aged 16-64 or 18-64 were surveyed in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, Spain, Great Britain, and the USA. Approximately 500 individuals aged 16-64 were surveyed in Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey.
- The precision of Ipsos online polls are calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.
- 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: <http://perils.ipsos.com/>
- Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. 16 of the 27 countries surveyed generate nationally representative samples in their countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and United States). Brazil, Chile, China, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey produce a national sample that is considered to represent a more affluent, connected population. These are still a vital social group to understand in these countries, representing an important and emerging middle class.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

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