



Globally, only Four in Ten People Say Everyone in Their Country Enjoys the Same Basic Human Rights

Key Findings:

- Just three in ten adults across 28 countries say human rights aren't a problem in their country, ranging from 55% in Germany to 17% in Colombia
- Eight in ten people surveyed stress the importance of having laws that protect human rights in their country and more than half say they make their life better
- However, two in three say some people take unfair advantage of them, more agree than disagree that only undeserving people benefit from them, and one in seven say there's no such thing as human rights
- Four in ten people admit they know little to nothing about human rights
- Freedom of speech, the right to one's life, the right to liberty rank as the most important human rights to be protected
- Children, the disabled, older people and women are the groups most widely believed to require protection for their human rights
- Among major organizations focusing on human rights, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Amnesty International have the highest awareness levels globally, followed by the International Federation for Human Rights, Lawyers Without Borders and Human Rights Watch; all are widely seen as doing a good job, especially ICRC

Paris/New York – A new global Ipsos poll conducted in 28 countries finds that only four in ten (43%) global citizens agree that **everyone in their country enjoys the same basic human rights**, casting doubt over how universal human rights actually are – even in some of the most developed countries. While two in ten (20%) neither agree nor disagree, one in three (33%) flat out disagree that everyone in their country enjoys the same basic human rights. Interestingly, people in Germany (63%) and China (63%) are most likely to agree, while those in South Africa (25%) and Italy (28%) are least likely.

Just one in three (31%) agree that **human right abuses are a problem in some countries, but they are not really a problem in their own country**. In fact, four in ten (39%) disagree with this statement, acknowledging the existence of abuses in their homeland. One quarter (25%) neither agree nor disagree. The opinion that human rights abuses are not really a problem at home prevails is most prevalent in Germany (55%), Malaysia (48%) and Saudi Arabia (48%), while the opposite view is most widely shared in Colombia (69%), followed by South Africa, Peru, and Mexico (60% in all three).

Among 16 groups of people, those most seen as in need of protection for their human rights are: children (selected by 56% of survey respondents globally), the disabled (48%), older people (44%) and women (38%). Next are: people on low incomes (30%), refugees (24%), ethnic minorities (23%), young people (22%), people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (21%), the unemployed (21%), people with little or no education (20%) and immigrants (19%), religious minorities (15%), people with different political views (12%), part-time workers (11%), and prisoners (8%). While 2% believe none of these groups requires human rights protection, 10% don't know.

Most Acknowledge Importance of Human Rights, But Admit Knowledge is Lacking

Most global citizens (78%) agree that **it is important to have a law that protects human rights in their country**, while just 6% disagree, 12% are neutral and 3% don't know. Those most likely to believe that such as law is important are found in Serbia (90%), Hungary (88%), Colombia (88%) and South Africa (86%). Disagreement is most prevalent in Brazil (12%), Saudi Arabia (11%) and Turkey (11%). Similarly, 72% of global citizens feel that **human rights are important to creating a fairer society**, while only 8% disagree with this premise, 16% are neutral and 4% don't know.

Moreover, most global citizens (73%) believe that **there is such a thing as human rights**, while 14% are closer to the opinion that **there is no such thing**. One in ten (13%) don't know or have no opinion about the issue. Those most likely to believe that human rights do exist are citizens of Turkey (92%), South Korea (87%), Colombia (87%) and China (85%). Those most likely to disagree are found in Poland (29%), Brazil (26%) and Russia (21%).

While a much larger proportion consider them to be important, only 56% of global citizens say they **know a great deal or a fair amount about human rights**. Four in ten people across the 28 countries surveyed (38%) admit their ignorance on the topic, saying they know not very much or nothing at all about human rights. Citizens of Japan (65%) are those most likely to admit to knowing little or nothing about human rights, followed by those of Russia (56%), Hungary (56%), Mexico (53%) and Spain (52%). In contrast, about three quarters of those surveyed in Turkey (79%), South Africa (76%) and Malaysia (73%) claim to know at least a fair amount about them.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights identifies a series of fundamental rights that should be universally protected for all peoples across all nations. Respondents were asked **which of the following are defined as human rights according to the U.N.** It appears that, here also, knowledge is lacking as only seven human rights were identified by at least half of all those surveyed globally. And several rights not featured in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights are erroneously assigned to it by more than a small fraction.

	Total
Freedom of speech	58%
Freedom of thought and religion	55%
Right to equal treatment before the law	52%
Right to life (no one can try to end your life)	52%
Right to liberty (no one can take away your freedom without good reason)	52%
Freedom from discrimination (such as race, color, gender, language, religion, disability, national or social origin, or any other status)	50%
Right to freedom from slavery or forced labor	49%
Right to vote	48%
Right to a fair trial	47%
Right to security (to be safe)	47%
Right not to be tortured or subject to inhumane or degrading treatment	46%
Right to privacy	45%
Right of children to free education	39%
Right to work, and to equal pay for equal work	39%
Right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty	38%
Right to travel freely within their country	37%
Right to own property	34%

Right to a family life (including equal rights to marriage)	34%
Right to protest	34%
Right to free, or low-cost, healthcare**	32%
Right to seek asylum from persecution	31%
Right to adequate standard of living	31%
Right to rest and leisure (including holidays from work)	28%
Right of women to have an abortion*	18%
Right to keep as much of one's own income as possible with the lowest possible taxes*	13%
Right to end your own life*	10%
Right of companies to operate with the fewest possible regulations*	7%
Right to bear arms (own a gun)*	6%
None of these	1%
Don't know	12%

* Not mentioned in the U.N Declaration of Human Rights

** Free or low-cost implied, but not explicitly mentioned in UNDHR

The poll shows a great divide in the belief about the efficacy of human rights laws in the lives of citizens. While 53% believe that **laws protecting human rights make a positive difference in their life**, 7% say their impact is negative and 31% say they make no difference. One in ten (9%) are unsure. Those most likely to believe that these laws have a positive impact include residents of South Korea (75%), China (70%), Turkey (69%), India (69%) and Colombia (69%). In contrast, the prevailing view among respondents in Japan (54%), Serbia (50%), Italy (48%) and Germany (45%) is that laws protecting human rights make no difference to their life. Of note, one in eight adults in Argentina and Brazil (12% in each country) say these laws make a negative difference.

Cui Bono?

Many global citizens remain skeptical about who actually benefits from human rights' protections:

- Two in three global citizens (65%) agree with the suggestion that **some people take unfair advantage of human rights**, while just 10% disagree, 19% are neutral and 6% don't know. Respondents from Colombia (78%), South Africa (78%), Peru (78%), Mexico (78%) and Serbia (76%) are most inclined to agree, while those from Belgium (44%) and Sweden (47%) are least likely to do so.
- Nearly four in ten (37%) agree that **the only people who benefit from human rights in their country are those who do not deserve them such as criminals and terrorists**. Three in ten (31%) disagree with this statement, while 26% are neutral and 7% don't know. Agreement is most prevalent in Brazil (60%), Peru (60%) and India (53%) and least common in Japan (16%), the United States (22%) and Canada (23%).

On balance, half of global citizens (50%) reject the notion that human rights are meaningless to them in their daily life. The other half either agree that they are meaningless (19%), don't feel strongly either way (25%), or don't know (6%).

Freedom of Speech, Right to Life seen as Paramount

From a list of 28 options (most, but not all, of which are mentioned in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights), the rights most commonly chosen among the four or five **most important** ones to protect are freedom of speech (32%) and right to life (no one can try to end your life) (31%). They are followed by: the right to liberty (27%), the right to equal treatment before the law (26%), freedom from discrimination (26%), freedom of thought and religion (25%), and the right to security (24%).

Other rights cited by more than 10% of all people surveyed across 28 countries include: the right of children to free education (20%), the right to freedom from slavery or forced labor (20%), the right to free or low-cost healthcare (20%), the right not to be tortured or subjected to inhumane or degrading treatment (19%), the right to privacy (19%), the right to a fair trial (18%), the right to work and to equal pay for equal work (18%), the right to vote (17%), the right to an adequate standard of living (14%), the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty (11%), and the right to own property (11%).

Certain human rights far more important in some countries than they are globally (for a full listing, please see the graphic report):

- Freedom of speech is more widely viewed as a priority in Sweden (45%), Peru (43%) Turkey (43%) and Germany (42%) as it is on average across the 28 countries (32%).
- The right to life (no one can try to end your life) stands out in Colombia (60% vs. 31% globally), as does the right to free education for children (36% vs. 20% globally).
- Three rights stand out in South Korea -- equal treatment before the law (44% vs. 26% globally), liberty (42% vs. 27% globally) and freedom from discrimination (40% vs. 26% globally).
- Freedom of thought and religion is especially valued in Brazil (39% vs. 25% globally) as is the right to security (38% vs. 24% globally).
- The right to bear arms is a priority for 15% in the United States vs. just 3% globally and no more than 5% in any other country.

The United Nations Leads in Awareness among Organizations with a Human Rights-related mission; All Are Seen as Doing a Good Job Protecting Human Rights

Among various organizations focusing on the protection of human rights, the United Nations is the only one known by a majority of global citizens (72%). Two organizations – the International Committee for the Red Cross (49%) and Amnesty International (48%) – are both known by about half of all those surveyed and three others – International Federation for Human Rights (27%), Lawyers Without Borders (24%) and Human Rights Watch (22%) are known by about one quarter of all respondents.

Each one of the organizations asked about is perceived to be doing a good job protecting human rights by a majority of those who are aware of them, chief among them ICRC with 67% of positive ratings.

Organization	% aware	% good job protecting human rights
United Nations	72%	51%
International Committee of the Red Cross	49%	67%
Amnesty International	48%	55%
International Federation for Human Rights	27%	57%
Lawyers Without Borders	24%	54%
Human Rights Watch	22%	55%
Human Rights Campaign	14%	60%
Refugees International	14%	54%
Liberty	14%	50%
UN Watch	13%	52%
Global Rights	12%	54%
Protection International	8%	62%
International Rights Protection Office*	7%	N/A
Anti-Slavery International	6%	60%

*Not a real organization

“The three human rights that people across all nations most want to see protected are freedom of speech, freedom of thought and religion, and the right to equal treatment. While they are perceived as the most fundamental rights, they are also the least universal ones. The findings reflect each country’s specific history and situation, peoples’ sense of personal vulnerability, and the experience of living in places where human rights are virtually nonexistent, all too recent, or insufficiently protected and where attitudes are expressed independently (or not) from the action of governments.”, Yves Bardon, Director at the Ipsos Knowledge Centre, said.

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About this study:

This survey was entirely conceived and conducted by Ipsos Global Advisor in 28 countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States. Except for Belgium and Sweden, all countries surveyed were referenced in Human Rights Watch’s 2018 Annual Report.

Interviews were conducted between May 25 and June 8, 2018 with 23,249 adults aged 18-64 in the United States and Canada and 16-64 in all other countries via the Ipsos Online Panel system.

Approximately 1,000-plus individuals per country participated in the survey except for Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey (approximately 500-plus per country).

Weighting has been employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample’s composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent country census data.

The precision of online Ipsos polls is calculated using a credibility interval, with a poll of n=1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and a poll of n=500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on the use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

In 17 of the 28 countries, internet penetration is sufficiently high to think of the samples as representative of the wider national population within the age ranges covered: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Serbia, South Korea, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United States.

Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey, have lower levels of internet penetration; these samples should not be considered to be fully nationally representative, but instead 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.

Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of do not knows or not states responses. Data is weighted to match the profile of the population.