



U.S. Gets Second Highest Score in Ipsos' Misperceptions Index

Americans Trail Only Italians in Being Most Wrong on Key Facts About Society

Washington, DC, August 29, 2018 – Ipsos has been running studies on how wrong people are about key social realities in their country since 2014. These have been brought together in a book, *The Perils of Perception – Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything*, to be published on September 6th. The full series of studies can be found at www.perils.ipsos.com

Ipsos summarized its extensive body of research with a Misperceptions Index on which the United States ranks second among 13 countries. The index is based on answers from over 50,000 men and women to 28 questions on a wide range of topics: immigration levels, crime rates, teenage pregnancy, obesity levels, how happy people are, unemployment rates, smartphone ownership, and many other social realities.

As the surveyed country whose citizens are most likely to have distorted views about social realities, Italy gets a score of 100. The U.S. comes next with a score of 90. France is third with a score of 86. At the other end of the misperceptions spectrum, Sweden gets a score of only 53 as Swedes are less often wrong about key facts pertaining to their society than people from any other country surveyed.

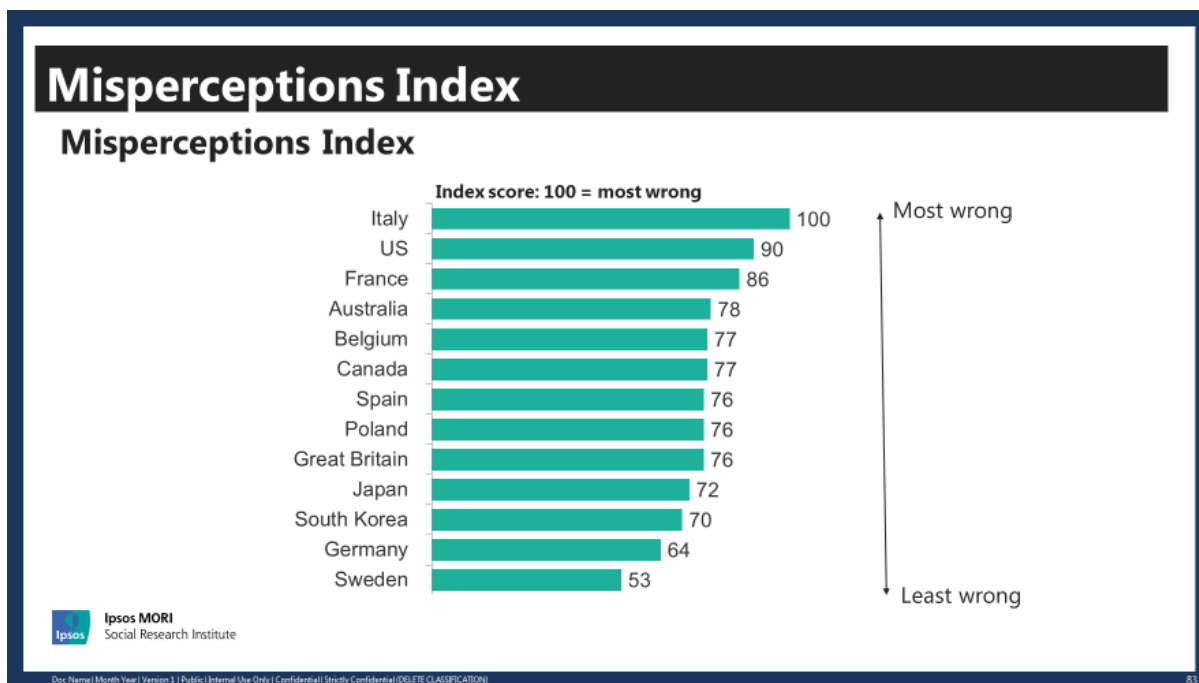
And the 'winner' (the most wrong) is... Italy!

Address: 2020 K Street NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: +1 202 463-7300

Contact: **Chris Jackson**
Vice President, U.S., Ipsos Public Affairs
Email: chris.jackson@ipsos.com
Tel: +1 202 420-2025



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Recent studies show Italians tend to be very wrong about many aspects of their society. For example, on average, Italians guess that:

- 49% of working-age Italians are unemployed, when the reality is 12%;
- 30% of their country were immigrants, when actual figures are 7%;
- 35% of people in Italy have diabetes, when in reality, it's only 5%.

Americans come close in having erroneous perceptions about many aspects of U.S. society. On average, Americans estimate that:

- 17% of the U.S. population is Muslim, when the actual figure is around 1%
- 24% of girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year, when the actual figure is 2.1%

At the other end, Swedes are the least wrong among people from 13 countries, and are especially accurate on some facts. For example, on average, Swedes guess that 32% of prisoners in Sweden are immigrants, when the actual figure is 31%. Still, Swedes get a lot wrong: on average, they estimated that 24% of their country's population is unemployed, when at the time, it was 8%.

People across the world, including Americans themselves, think of the U.S. as the country whose citizens are most likely to have the facts wrong...

Ipsos recently asked people from 27 countries who they *think* would have the least accurate view of their own society. **The country whose citizens are most widely expected to get facts wrong is the U.S., with an impressive 27% of the global vote** — way ahead of

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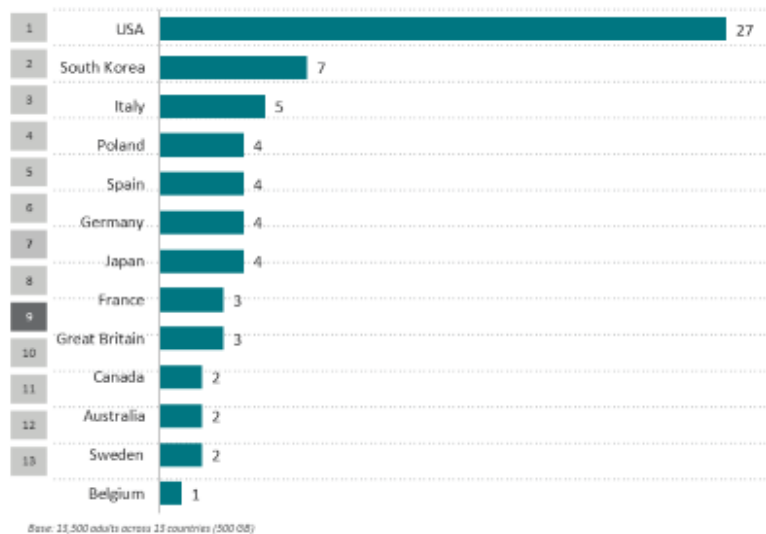
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any other country. Actually, half of Americans surveyed (49%) select the U.S. as the country with the most inaccurate perceptions of its society among 13 countries listed.

Which of these countries do you think were least accurate about the facts about their society?



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GAME CHANGERS



Commenting on the results, Bobby Duffy of Ipsos said:

Lots of people in all countries get many things wrong about their societies, but from looking across this unique series of Ipsos studies, there are clearly patterns where some countries are more consistently wrong than others. Our “Misperceptions Index” summarizes who was most wrong – and Italy get the dubious honor of ‘winning’.

The immediate question is why are there differences between countries? Why is Italy much worse at guessing these facts than Sweden? We’ve looked at many possible explanations in the book, everything from the education system, to the nature of media and politics, levels of trust and attitudes to government.

And one of the very few factors that seems to be associated is how “emotionally expressive” the country is – that is whether people in the country tend to argue loudly, touch each other and laugh a lot.

This may seem a bit strange, but we need to remember that our guesses at these questions are partly emotional – they send a message about what’s worrying us. If immigration is a big concern, we automatically pick a big number, even if, in reality, immigration levels are much lower. Our misperceptions are about our emotions as much as our ignorance of the facts, and therefore it’s not that surprising that emotionally expressive countries have more exaggerated guesses.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- ***The Perils of Perception – Why We’re Wrong About Nearly Everything*** is published by Atlantic Books on September 6, 2018 – for more info see www.perils.ipsos.com
- Over 50,000 interviews were conducted in 13 countries in studies between 2014-2017 to construct the Misperceptions Index. Full details of the studies, source data for the realities and information on the calculation of the Index can be found at www.perils.ipsos.com
- For the new study on which countries people thought would be most wrong, 18,243 interviews were conducted across 27 countries using the Ipsos Online panel system in June-July 2018
- 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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For more information on this news release, please contact:

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GAME CHANGERS

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We make our changing world easier and faster to navigate and inspire clients to make smarter decisions.

We deliver with security, speed, simplicity and substance. We are Game Changers.

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