



# Fake News, Filter Bubbles, and Post-Truth Are Other People's Problems

## 77% of Americans Think Other People Live in Their Own Internet Bubble... but Only 32% Think They Themselves Do

**Washington, DC, September 5, 2018** — A new Ipsos study of over 19,000 men and women across 27 countries, part of our long-running series on misperceptions of key social realities – [The Perils of Perception](#) – highlights how people think fake news, filter bubbles, and post-truth are things that affect other people more than it affects them personally.

Yet, three out five adults (both globally and in the U.S.) say they regularly see fake news, and nearly half say they've believed a fake story before finding out it's fake. Unsurprisingly, people also think trust in politicians and the media has declined and that lying in the media is increasing. On a more positive note, there is no sign of a wholesale decline in knowledge of political and social issues among people: global citizens are split on whether their understanding of realities is increasing or not.

### ***Other people live in a filter bubble...***

The United States has the highest level of agreement (77%) that the average person in the country lives in a bubble on the internet, only connecting with people like themselves and looking for opinions they already agree with. Next are India (74%), Malaysia (72%) and Sweden (71%). At other end of scale, only 44% agree in Japan. The global average is 65%.

However, people tend to think of themselves as much more open-minded: Globally, only 34% think they only connect to people like themselves or look for opinions they already hold; 32% of Americans do. At the low end of the spectrum, only 22% in Germany agree with this about themselves, as do 23% in Sweden and Argentina.

### ***Other people struggle to identify fake news***

Nearly two thirds of people surveyed in the U.S. (65%) and across the world (63%) are confident they can identify 'fake news' (which was defined as entirely made up stories or facts) from real news. People from Turkey, Chile, and Peru are those most confident in their own abilities, while people from Japan (30%) and Spain (39%) are those least sure of it.

Again, people have much less faith in the average person in their country: only 41% globally think their average fellow countryperson can distinguish between real and fake news. People in Sweden (26%), Japan (26%), Italy (27%), Great Britain (28%), and the U.S. (29%) have the least faith in their fellow citizens' ability to do so.

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### **But other people don't care about facts anyway**

Two thirds of Americans (68%) believe that the average person in their country doesn't care about facts on politics or society anymore and they just believe what they want, compared to 60% of the global population. This pessimistic view is most common in Peru (71%), Serbia (70%) and Turkey (69%). More people agree with it than disagree in all 27 countries, although it is not quite a majority opinion in Italy (48% agree), Japan (49%) and China (49%).

It's not surprising then that most people have more confidence in their own understanding of social realities like immigration levels and crime rates than the average person. Across all 27 countries, 59% think they have a better understanding vs. 29% who say they don't. In the U.S., it's 55% vs. 33%.

Survey respondents from Turkey (76%) and India (75%) are particularly confident that they are better informed than their average compatriot. This may reflect that this study was conducted online, among a more affluent, connected population than average in these countries. However, there is misplaced confidence in many high-internet penetration countries like the U.S. where this cannot be the explanation.

### **'Fake news' is regularly seen by the majority and has been believed by nearly half**

Sixty percent of people across all 27 countries – and 61% of Americans – report seeing very or fairly often stories where news organizations have deliberately said something that isn't true. There are huge variations on this between countries: 82% in Argentina say they see deliberately fake stories at least fairly regularly, but only 30% in Germany, 36% in Japan and 39% in South Korea say the same.

Nearly half the people across the 27 countries (48%) and a similar proportion of Americans (46%) say they've been taken in by fake news in the past – that they've believed a news story was real until they later found out it was fake. Brazilians are particularly likely to agree with this as 62% say they've believed a fake story at some point.

### **'Fake news' is losing its meaning: a third think it's used as an attack term for stories politicians don't like**

The term 'fake news' is used in a number of different ways. The most common understanding is 'stories where the facts are wrong', which 56% globally and 62% in the U.S. pick out as what they think of when they hear it. However, 44% globally and 56% in the U.S. also say it makes them think of stories where news outlets or politicians only pick facts that support their side of the argument. Americans (51%) are more likely than people from any other country to think of 'fake news' as a term that politicians and the media use to discredit news they don't agree with. Globally, 36% do so, but just 11% do in Italy.

### **People think we're wrong about social realities because the media, social media, and politicians mislead us – but many also recognize we have our own biases**

As we know from our misperceptions studies, people get a lot wrong about key realities like what percentage of their population are immigrants, or whether crime is going up or down. When asked why people get these things wrong, the main answers are that

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politicians mislead people (52% globally, 64% in the U.S.), the media do so (49% and 58%, respectively), or social media do so (41% and 58%, respectively).

But many also see that people have a biased view of the world: 43% globally and 57% in the U.S. think we're wrong because of our tendency to focus on negative news, to think things are getting worse or to generalize from our own experience.

### **We think trust in politicians is declining and lying is increasing – but we're split on whether our political knowledge is getting worse**

Given the results from the survey, it's no surprise that 64% globally and 69% in the U.S. think people in their country trust politicians to tell the truth less than they did 30 years ago. Countries where this view is most widespread are Sweden (80%) and South Africa (77%).

### **About the Study**

- These are the findings of a Global Advisor survey into the political mood around the world. In total 19,243 interviews were conducted online between June 22 – July 6, 2018 among adults aged 18-64 in the US and Canada, and adults aged 16-64 in all other countries.
- The survey was conducted in 27 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system. The countries reporting herein are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America.
- Between 500 and 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis via the Ipsos Online Panel. The sample was 1000+ in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States of America. In all other countries the sample was 500+. The precision of Ipsos online polls is 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 Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.
- In countries where internet penetration is approximately 60% or higher the data output generally reflects the overall population. Of the 27 countries surveyed online, 16 yield results that are balanced to reflect the general population: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain and the United States. The 11 remaining countries surveyed – Brazil, China, Chile, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey - have lower levels of internet connectivity and reflect online populations that tend to be more urban and have higher education/income than the general population.
- 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.

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos' online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

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