



# “Anti-System” Sentiment Still Strong Around the World

## However, Fewer Think Their Country Is in Decline Compared with 2016

**Washington, D.C., September 25, 2018** — Two years after Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, a global Ipsos survey revisits the topic of populism and “system is broken” sentiment. It paints a picture where fewer people around the world think their country is decline than in 2016, but many still believe the system is rigged against them, leaving them alienated from the traditional system of politics, with a majority looking for a strong leader willing to break the rules.

The survey, conducted online among adults aged under 65 in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Spain, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States, shows a slight decline in anti-system tendencies but suggests that the potential for more political uncertainty is still very present.

### Country in decline?

- On average, just **under half (44%) of people across 24 countries believe their country is in decline, down 13 points from 57% in 2016**. Perceptions of decline are strongest in Brazil (67%), South Africa (64%) and Argentina (58%). Less negative are Chile (24%), Germany (25%), Canada (30%), South Korea, and India (both 31%).
- **In 2016, a majority of people in 15 of the 24 countries thought their country was in decline, but this is now the case in just six countries**. The biggest change has happened in South Korea where 31% think their country is in decline down from 73% two years ago as a political scandal resulted in presidential impeachment. Other notable swings toward optimism occurred in Belgium, Italy, Spain, France, Mexico, and especially in Germany, where the sense of decline has nearly halved from 47% in 2016 to 25%. Germany is now the second most optimistic nation surveyed, behind Chile and ahead of Canada. While pessimism has risen in India (from 22% to 31%), it remains one of the most positive countries.
- **Half of Americans (51%), think the U.S. is in decline**, down from 60% in 2016.

### Is the system broken?

- Nevertheless, there remains a strong sentiment that the people in charge do not care about the average person, and instead favor the rich and powerful, albeit slightly less so than two years ago.
- **Across 25 countries, two in three (63%) believe their country’s economy is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful, down from 69% in 2016**. This is a view shared by 66% of Americans, also down from 69%. It is most prevalent in Russia and Hungary, and has risen in South Africa over the past two years. Italy, however, has seen

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## Press Release – continued –

an anti-system feeling decline of 19 points from 75% in 2016 to 56%. Only Malaysia and Sweden show lower levels.

- **Three in five people (59%, down from 64% in 2016) feel that their traditional parties and politicians do not care about them.** This view is most common in Mexico and in South Africa, where it has gained in prevalence to 70% from 65%. It is shared by 64% of Americans, down just two points from two years ago. Following the trend, anti-system sentiment continues to fall in Italy, with now just half (51%) feeling alienated from traditional parties (compared to 72% in 2016), and it is also lower than average in Germany, Sweden and Japan.
- On average, **three in five (59%) agree that politicians should be able to say what's on their minds, regardless of what anyone else thinks of their views** – six points less than in 2016 (65%). Preference for outspoken politicians is highest in Hungary and Russia (73% each). In the U.S., it has receded by 12 points from 60% several months before the election of Donald Trump to 48% today – less than in any other country except Turkey and Japan.
- Overall, **six in ten (62%) believe that the authorities are not strict enough on crime**, though this varies widely by country, rising higher across Latin America and South Africa. The U.S. is more divided on this issue than any other country surveyed, with one third of Americans (35%) saying their authorities are not strict enough vs. one in five (21%) saying they are too strict.

### Support for populist-style leadership?

- **Globally, just over half (52%) agree their country needs a strong leader willing to break the rules**, a marginal change since 2016 (49%). However, there are notable variations regarding the direction of the magnitude of the change across countries
- Argentina, Mexico, Spain and Peru all show notable increases in support for populist-style leadership. Countries where that support is highest are Peru, India, Mexico, Russia and Turkey.
- In contrast, swings *against* anti-establishment leaders are seen in France (the highest-scoring nation on this measure in 2016) with a 19-point drop to 61%, Poland and Italy. While support for populist leadership has grown in Sweden (from 23% to 32%), it remains the country least attracted to it after Germany.
- Just four in ten Americans favor a strong leader willing to break the rules (39%, nearly unchanged since 2016).
- **Support for established parties is weak, with just one in five (21%) saying countries should stick with political parties and leaders who have been in power before.** It is a view shared by only 20% of Americans.
- On the other hand, **39% globally – and 36% in the U.S. – think it's too risky to elect parties or leaders with radical plans who have not been in power before.** Countries with the highest levels of hesitation are Peru, Brazil, and Russia, while citizens of Italy, Sweden, and Great Britain are more willing to embrace untested parties.

### Confidence in institutions?

- **Globally, eight in ten (79%) lack confidence in political parties (including a majority in every country surveyed), practically unchanged since 2016, and two in three (66%) lack confidence in their government.** In

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## Press Release – continued –

both instances distrust is particularly high in Spain and across Latin America. However, distrust of government has receded most significantly in South Korea and Italy. Compared with 2016, even larger proportions of Americans have little or no confidence in political parties (78%, up 4 points) and in government (70%, up 6 points).

- **Two in three (65%) globally (nearly unchanged since 2016), 64% in the U.S. (down 3 points), and a majority in every country surveyed lack confidence in the media.** Distrust in the media remains highest in Hungary (at 85%) and shows significant gains in Turkey and India. In contrast, it has eased notably in Germany.
- **Just under half (47%) say they lack confidence in international institutions, improving slightly from 2016 when it was 52%.** Those lacking confidence have decreased in Spain over two years, going from 77% to 65%, although it remains among the least positive nations, along with Italy and many other European countries. Exactly half of Americans have little or no confidence in international institutions (50%, down 4 points).
- **Worldwide, over half say they lack confidence in banks (52%) and big companies (56%), indicating a slight drop in distrust from 2016 for both.** India, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia show the lowest levels of distrust towards banks and large companies. The U.S. is close to the global average in both cases. Citizens of Spain and Italy are those least confident in their banks.
- **Lack of confidence in the justice system has improved slightly, moving from 59% to 56%.** Perceptions have improved in Hungary, Mexico, and South Korea, but still remains uncertain in countries across Latin America, reaching up to four in five (81%) in Peru. At 48%, the proportion of Americans who distrust the justice system is unchanged.

### Exclusionism versus opening up to the world?

- **People are split on whether their country should protect itself or open up more to world (31% vs 35% on average),** while one in three are still unsure, reflecting a similar pattern from 2016. Those most keen to protect themselves include Australia, the United States, and Canada, while Mexico and Peru think they need to open up.
- The urge to open up to the world has increased in Brazil and France, but has decreased in Spain and Sweden.
- However, sentiment among Americans that the United States needs to take more steps to protect itself from today's world is down by 10 points from around half (47%) in 2016 to 37%.

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## Press Release – continued –

### Notes to editors

- In total 17,709 interviews were conducted between June 26 – July 9, 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 25 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States of America). Only some of the questions were asked in Saudi Arabia.
- 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+. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. Visit [www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com) for more details.
- This data is part of a substantial study into the attitudes and drivers of the political mood around the world, being carried out by Ipsos. It revisits and tracks questions from a previous study, carried out towards the end of 2016 called Power to the people? Beyond populism.
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## Press Release – continued –

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