



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

New Ipsos study finds three quarters of Malaysians say they can spot fake news, but half of them admits they have discovered stories to be fake after they believed them to be true

Key Findings

- 74% of Malaysians think they can spot fake news themselves, but only 60% think their fellow average Malaysian can
- 69% of Malaysians say they have seen deliberately fake reports in the media fairly regularly
- 50% of Malaysians say they have believed a story they've then found out is fake
- 48% of Malaysians now think of 'fake news' as an attack term used to discredit stories that politicians or the media don't agree with
- 58% of Malaysians think other people don't care about facts anymore, they just believe what they want
- 42% of Malaysians trust politicians to tell the truth less now than they did 30 years ago

Fake news is a topic that is constantly highlighted across the globe. Following this, Ipsos conducted a study amongst 19,000 people in 27 countries to understand views around the subject.

The Anti-Fake News Act was passed on 2nd April 2018 in Malaysia, just prior to the 14th General Election on 9th May. Given the broad definition of 'Fake News', one of the concerns was that there would be misuse of this law to stifle and dissent free speech¹.

The findings for Malaysia follows.

Ability to identify 'Fake News'

When asked the extent to which they agreed that they are able to tell real news apart from 'Fake News' (which was defined as entirely made up stories or facts), Malaysians are among the countries particularly confident in their own abilities, with 74% agreeing.

However, Malaysians have much less faith in the average person in their country: with only 60% of them confident that the average Malaysian can distinguish real and fake news.

Nearly 7 in 10 Malaysians say that they have seen stories where news organisations have deliberately said something that isn't true. 50% of Malaysians additionally say that they have been taken in by fake news in the past – that they have believed a news story was real until they later found out it was fake.

¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/08/17/asia/malaysia-fake-news-law-repeal-intl/index.html>



What does 'Fake News' mean to Malaysians?

The term 'fake news' is used in a number of different ways. The most common understanding is 'stories where the facts are wrong', which 62% of Malaysians pick out as their understanding of the term. But 1 in 2 Malaysians also see fake news as stories where news outlets or politicians only pick facts that support their side of the argument. Nearly the same proportion (48%) of Malaysians additionally see fake news as a term politicians and the media use to discredit news they don't agree with.

But Malaysians care little about facts anyway

58% of Malaysians believe that the average person in their country doesn't care about facts on politics or society anymore, they just believe what they want.

It's not surprising then that the majority of Malaysians (68%) say that they have more confidence in their own understanding of social realities like immigration levels and crime rates than the average person.

But our studies have shown that people often have misperceptions about the realities around them

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 from Malaysians were that social media (59%), politicians (54%), or the media (51%) misleads people.

Many also see that people have a biased view of the world: 48% of Malaysians think they're wrong because of our tendency to focus on negative news, to think things are getting worse or to generalise from our own experience.

It is interesting that while 58% of Malaysians think there is more lying and misuse of facts in politics and media in Malaysia than there was 30 years ago, 61% are confident that they know more about politics and society than they did 30 years ago.

Arun Menon, Managing Director, Ipsos in Malaysia said

"In the age of populism, it is increasingly visible that media and public figures try to appeal to the heart rather than intellect of the population. This leads to a situation where the public will believe what they want to believe rather than taking facts into consideration. Fake news is playing to this psychology amongst Malaysians. With the majority of Malaysians having encountered fake news regularly, and with many of them having been duped before, there is a significant level of scepticism of what they read in the media. This leads to the media and public figures having the need to take greater precaution and pay cautious attention to what is being released and stated with greater check and balance. The Ipsos survey alludes to this need within the public space in order to regain trust amongst the public"

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Note to Editors:

- The full study was conducted across **27 countries**: 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.
- 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.
- In Malaysia, 503 interviews were conducted.
- Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.
- 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.
- To access the full 27-country report, please visit <https://www.ipsos.com/en-eq/fake-news-filter-bubbles-and-post-truth-are-other-peoples-problems>

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