



Global Attitudes Toward Europe Ahead of the 2019 European Elections

New Ipsos Global Advisor poll among citizens of 28 countries investigates views about the European Project

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Key Findings

- Almost half of Americans think the European project has made Europe stronger
- European pessimism about the EU widely held, but receding

Global, American, and European Views About the European Project

Half of adults across the world (53%) think the European project has made Europe stronger today than it would have been without it, according to a new Ipsos survey conducted in 28 countries. Globally, only 11% say that it's made Europe weaker.

Among the nine countries in the European Union surveyed, the proportion of those who say it's made Europe stronger (48%) is close to the global average, but the proportion of those who says it's made Europe weaker (19%) is higher. Opinions within the EU vary widely. The view that the European project has made Europe stronger is held by about six in ten people in Poland (62%) and Sweden (58%), but by only one third in Italy (37%) and France (31%). Outside of the EU, positive views of the European project are held most widely in India, South Africa, and across Latin America. In the United States, 45% of adults think the European project has made Europe stronger today while 10% think that it's made Europe weaker. The countries where negative views about it are most prevalent are Japan, Turkey and Russia.

In Europe, 30% think the European project has had more successes than failures while 19% say failures have outnumbered successes. On balance, the assessment is most positive in Poland and Hungary, the countries surveyed that joined the EU most recently. In contrast, it is negative in France, Italy, and Belgium, which count among the original signatories of the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Americans are more likely to say that the European project has had more successes than failures (26%) than to say the opposite (11%). U.S. views are aligned with those across all 19 countries surveyed that are not part of the EU (29% vs. 12%).

Europeans' Views about the European Union Today

Across the nine EU countries surveyed (Belgium, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Poland, and Sweden), 48% say they believe things across the EU are on the wrong track. This is actually an improvement from 57% two years ago. This compares with just over a quarter (28%) saying things are heading in the right direction (up 7 points) and another quarter (25%) who say they're unsure. The most pessimistic countries are Italy (57% wrong track), France (54%), and Britain (52%), while Poland (40%) and Spain (41%) are the least negative. However, with the exception of Germany, each EU country surveyed is now less pessimistic than in 2017.

Furthermore, the survey also shows that nearly half of Europeans across these nine EU countries plus Serbia believe that the rules of the EU are rigged to advantage the rich and powerful (45%). This view is held most widely in aspiring member state Serbia (65%), followed by Belgium and Italy (both 50%). It is least prevalent in Poland and Sweden (both 38%). Half (52%) also believe that the

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leaders of the EU don't care about people like them with Serbia (58%), Belgium (57%) and France (56%) most likely to believe this and Germany (48%) and Poland (47%) least likely.

The survey also shows that:

- Only 42% of those surveyed across nine EU countries say they know much about the advantages of EU membership – although even fewer feel they know much about its disadvantages (36%). Britons are the most likely to feel well informed about both the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership – the French and Spanish the least.
- Europeans are less negative than they were in 2017 as to whether the European Union made the effects of the economic crisis better or worse. Now just one in four say the EU made the crisis worse in their country (26%, compared with 36% in 2017); 27% think the EU mitigated the impact of the crisis. Hungarians are most likely to think the EU helped reduce the effects of the economic crisis (49%), while Italians are most likely to say it made things worse (47%).

European Parliament Elections

With the European Parliamentary elections on the horizon, the new Ipsos poll reveals half (50%) of the public in the nine EU countries say they are interested in the upcoming elections (44% say they're not). Italy, Poland and Hungary are the countries with the most interest (65%, 63%, and 56%, respectively) while the French, Belgians and the British are among the least interested (44%, 41%, and 36%, respectively). On the elections, the survey also finds:

- Europeans are split on whether they think anti-European movement parties will win the elections, with roughly a quarter (23%) saying they will win and another quarter (24%) saying they won't – the number saying they will win jumps to 42% in Italy.
- One in three (35%) agree that in the European elections it's too risky to elect new political parties with radical ideas for change (21% disagree) with Belgium (41%) and Germany (39%) finding it most risky.
- Support for traditional parties however is also low with just 16% saying voters should stick with political parties who have been in power before (35% disagree). Hungary (49%), Italy (39%), Belgium (39%) and France (38%) are most negative towards established parties.
- Overall, just half (51%) of Europeans correctly know that members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by the citizens of each member state they represent. Hungarians (65%) and Polish citizens (63%) are most likely to know this while Germans (43%) and Belgians (41%) are least likely.

Overall, there is little enthusiasm for the way democracy works in the EU, and often even less for the way it works in people's own countries. Across the ten European nations, on average, people are largely split on their satisfaction levels with the way democracy works in the EU with three in ten (29%) saying they're satisfied and 31% saying they're dissatisfied (40% say neither or they don't know). Those in Poland (46%) are the most satisfied with EU democracy, while those in Italy (25%), Britain (25%) and France (19%) are the least. Despite low levels of satisfaction with democracy in the EU, levels of satisfaction within the public's respective countries is often lower. A quarter (26%) say they're satisfied with how democracy works in their country while 44% say they are dissatisfied. Sweden (41%) and Germany (36%) are the most satisfied with how democracy works in their country with Serbia (17%) and Hungary (16%) the least satisfied.

Other perceptions on the EU's success found in the survey include:

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- Europeans recognize the benefits the European project has made to ease of travel and trade between EU member states. Nearly three quarters (73%) say the EU has made a positive contribution with ease of travel across Europe. Two-thirds (66%) say it's made a positive impact on trade between European nations and 60% say the same regarding the range of goods and services available. A majority (59%) of Europeans also agree on the positive contribution the project has made to the peaceful relationships between the European nations.
- Europeans, however, are less convinced about the contribution the project has made towards improving standards of living and levels of immigration. Two in five (41%) think it has improved the standards of living in their country, with a big variation between countries such as Poland and Spain on the one hand (67% and 52% respectively), versus Italy and Spain on the other (just 26% and 22%). Europeans are most critical about the impact of the European project on levels of immigration they are comfortable with – four in ten (38%) say it has had a negative impact, higher in France (43%), Italy (44%), Sweden (44%) and Belgium (46%).

Looking to the Future

Europeans think the EU's most important priorities over the coming years should be:

1. Reducing poverty and social inequality (46% and down 5 points from 2017)
2. Fighting organized crime and terrorism (37% and down 7 points)
3. Protecting the environment (37% and up 11 points)
4. Creating economic growth and jobs (36% and down 8 points)
5. Reducing illegal immigration from outside the EU (36% and down 4 points).

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About the Study

These are the findings of the Global Advisor Wave for the 2019 European Parliament Elections, an Ipsos survey conducted March 22 - April 5, 2019 in 28 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, France, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America.

Interviews were conducted with 19,531 adults aged 18-74 in the U.S., Israel, Canada, China, Malaysia, South Africa and Turkey, and aged 16-74 in all other countries -- approximately 1000+ individuals per country in all countries, except Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Hungary, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey, where the samples are approximately 500+. Only some of the questions were asked in all the 19 countries surveyed that are not members of the European Union.

Of the 28 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 12 remaining countries surveyed – Brazil, Chile, China, India, Israel, 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.

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. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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