



PRESS RELEASE

Global Study Finds that Americans Underestimate the Proportion of Deaths Caused by Cancer and Cardiovascular Diseases

Misconceptions of leading causes of death could be affected by news coverage and personal experiences

Washington, DC, February 14, 2020 — Across the 32 countries surveyed, cardiovascular diseases and cancer are the biggest causes of death, both underestimated by the public. In the United States, the difference between the proportion of actual deaths compared to the average guess of deaths is 19 percentage points for cardiovascular diseases and 8 percentage points for cancer.

On a scale of 1 to 32 with 1 being the least accurate country and 32 being the most accurate country in its estimate of deaths from each cause, the United States falls in the middle at 17.

- Americans underestimate the scale of cancer and cardiovascular disease, along with neurological disorders (10.8% vs. average guess 5.7%).
- The proportion of deaths per year from HIV/AIDS or STIs is overestimated in the United States, with 0.3% of deaths caused by this compared to the average guess of 4.4%.
- Interpersonal violence such as homicide or murder accounts for 0.7% of deaths in the United States (average guess 8.2%), and transport injuries such as road accidents account for 1.7% of deaths (average guess 8.9%).
- Deaths from terrorism in the United States are lower in actuality from the American average guess (0% and 4.4% respectively).
- Additionally, deaths from substance abuse disorders (0.2% vs. average guess 7.5%) and suicide (1.7% vs. average guess 8.9%) are also overestimated in the United States.

Nevertheless, half (51%) of Americans say they feel confident in all or some of their answers to the survey. Reasons for these misconceptions could include news coverage, personal experience, and fears.

In the United States, the most frequently mentioned thing seen in the news is terrorism and conflict (54%). Fifty-four percent of Americans also feel that they have the least control over being a victim of a terrorist attack. This news coverage and fear could potentially account for the overestimation of 4 points between the actual deaths from terrorism out of 100 deaths (0) and the average guess (4.4).

Three quarters (77%) of Americans report being personally affected by cancer, and 64% say the same for cardiovascular disease. Additionally, four in ten say they are most likely to get cancer (40%) or a cardiovascular disease (30%). Even with a large proportion personally affected by cancer and cardiovascular disease, they both are underestimated as leading causes of death in the United States.



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About the Study

These are the findings of the Ipsos MORI Perils of Perception Survey 2020. 16,000 interviews were conducted between 22 November and 6 December 2019.

The survey is conducted in 32 countries around the world, via the Ipsos Online Panel system in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, SAR China, Colombia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, SAR, China, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the USA.

Approximately 1000 individuals aged 16-74 were surveyed Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Spain. Approximately 1000 individuals aged 18-74 were surveyed in the USA and Canada. Approximately 500 individuals aged 16-74 were surveyed in Argentina, Belgium, Colombia, Hong Kong, SAR, China, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey.

18 of the 32 countries surveyed online generate nationally representative samples in their countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, SAR, China, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and United States).

Brazil, Chile, Colombia, SAR China, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey produce a national sample that is more urban & educated, and with higher incomes than their fellow citizens. We refer to these respondents as “Upper Deck Consumer Citizens”. They are not nationally representative of their country.

The “actual” data for each question is taken from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation Global Burden of Disease Study (2017). More information can be found at ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-2017. The source for Hong Kong, SAR, China data is <https://www.healthyhk.gov.hk/>.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.

Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.

The precision of Ipsos online polls are calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 4.8 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations



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For more information on this news release, please contact:

Chris Jackson
Vice President, US
Public Affairs
+1 202 420-2025
chris.jackson@ipsos.com

Kate Silverstein
Media Relations, US
Public Affairs
+1 718 755-8829
kate.silverstein@ipsos.com





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ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP www.ipsos.com