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Poorer health, loss of livelihood, and climate-related disasters top list of perceived personal threats in 2021

Optimism prevails about access to digital tools and technology

Topline Findings

Washington, DC, January 22, 2021 — Deteriorating health, loss of income or employment, and more frequent weather-related natural disasters are each perceived as a real threat by three out of five adults across the world, according to a new Ipsos survey for the World Economic Forum. Among the 23,004 online adults from 28 countries surveyed between December 23, 2020 and January 8, 2021, more think the pace of climate change, employment opportunities, and general health conditions will get worse this year than expect they will improve. However, two-thirds globally are unconcerned about being able to access digital tools and technology and only one in ten expect it to be more challenging in 2021.

When asked how real a threat they think each of seven possible developments is to them and their family in the next 12 months:

- 62% of adults globally say that “deteriorating health (mental or physical)” is a real threat (18% a “very real threat” and 44% a “somewhat real threat”);
- 61% say so of “loss of income or employment” (22% and 38%);
- 60% of “more frequent occurrence of weather-related natural disasters” (18% and 42%);
- 55% of “conflicts and trade disputes between my country and other countries” (13% and 41%);
- 48% of “worsening social prejudice or inequality, e.g., due to gender or ethnicity” (13% and 35%);
- 44% of “more difficulty accessing training/education” (12% and 33%); and
- 33% of “more difficulty accessing digital tools and technology” to be a threat (8% and 25%).

Looking at each of the seven areas of concern, more adults globally expect five of them to get worse in 2021 than to improve:

- The pace of climate change — by 20 percentage points (18% will improve, 44% will stay the same, 38% will get worse);
- Employment opportunities — by 15 points (25%, 34%, 41%);
- General health conditions — by 5 points (27%, 42%, 32%);
- Inequality (e.g., based on gender or ethnicity) — by 4 points (19%, 57%, 24%); and
- Relations between one’s country and other countries — by 2 points (23%, 53%, 25%).

On the other hand, more think things will improve in 2021 than get worse when it comes to:

- The availability of digital tools and technology — by 26 percentage points (36% will improve, 55% will stay the same, 10% will get worse); and
- Opportunities for training and education - by 2 points (25%, 53%, 22%).





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National Differences on Threats and Change in 2021

Health

Among the 28 countries surveyed, deteriorating mental or physical health is most widely viewed as a personal threat in Turkey (by 78%), Chile (74%), Spain (72%), and South Africa (71%), and least so in China and Saudi Arabia (44% in both).

The percentage of those expecting general health conditions to improve in 2021 significantly exceeds (i.e., by at least 5 points) the percentage of those who think they will get worse in just 9 out of 28 countries surveyed, most so in Saudi Arabia (by 52 points), China (42 points) and Peru (38 points). In contrast, pessimists outnumber optimists significantly in 17 countries, especially in Hungary (by 45 points), Poland (39 points), and Great Britain (37 points).

Livelihood

Countries where losing one's income or employment is most widely viewed as a real threat are Chile (81%), Peru (80%), and Turkey (80%); at the other end of the spectrum, fewer than two in five feel threatened by it in the Netherlands (32%), Sweden (38%), and China (39%).

Significantly more expect employment opportunities to improve in 2021 than to get worse in only 7 of the 28 countries, most of all in Peru (by 42 points) and Saudi Arabia (39 points); the reverse is seen in 19 countries, most markedly in Japan (by 57 points), Great Britain (53 points), and France (50 points).

Climate

A more frequent occurrence of weather-related natural disasters is particularly likely to be perceived to be a threat to oneself and one's family in Chile (78%), Spain (77%), and France (76%) and least so in Saudi Arabia (41%), Sweden (43%), and China (44%).

The percentage of those expecting the pace of climate change to improve in 2021 significantly exceeds the percentage of those who think it will get worse in 7 out of 28 countries surveyed, most so in China (by 28%) and Saudi Arabia (26%). However, pessimists about the pace of climate change outnumber optimists in 20 countries, most of all in Italy (by 51 points), Turkey (51 points), and France (50 points).

International conflicts

The two nations surveyed whose citizens most fear conflicts and trade disputes between their country and other countries include Turkey (76%) and Australia (69%). In contrast, fewer than four in ten of adults surveyed in Sweden (33%), Saudi Arabia (38%), and the Netherlands (39%) view international clashes and trade wars as a real threat for them and their family.

The percentage of those expecting relations between their country and other countries to improve in 2021 significantly exceeds the percentage of those who think they will get worse in 10 out of 28 countries surveyed, led by Saudi Arabia (by 48 points), Peru (47 points) and Mexico (38 points). In contrast, those who think their country's international relations will get worse outnumber those who think they will improve in 14 countries, particularly in Australia (by 35 points), Great Britain (35 points), Hungary (34 points), and Poland (34 points).



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Prejudice and inequality

The proportion of those who expect worsening social prejudice or inequality (for example due to gender or ethnicity) in the next 12 months is highest in Turkey (69%), South Africa (63%), and Chile (63%); it is lowest in Sweden (30%) and Russia (33%).

More people think inequality will improve in 2021 significantly than expect it will get worse in only 7 out of 28 countries surveyed, most of all in Saudi Arabia (by 36 points), Peru (35 points), and China (32 points). In contrast, pessimists about inequality outnumber optimists in 16 countries, especially in Hungary (by 30 points) and Italy (29 points).

Training and education

The prospect of having more difficulty accessing training/education is most commonly seen as a real threat in Turkey (75%) and Peru (67%) and least commonly in Sweden (19%), the Netherlands (24%), and Australia (25%).

Significantly larger proportions of people expect opportunities for training and education to improve in 2021 than to get worse in 12 countries — most of all in Saudi Arabia (by 45 points), Peru (44 points), Mexico (36 points), and China (36 points). However, there are significantly more pessimists than there are optimists in 13 countries, especially in Hungary (by 29 points), Japan (24 points), and Great Britain (24 points).

Digital tools and technology

Concern about having more difficulty accessing digital tools and technology is most widespread in Argentina (54%), India (52%), and South Korea (50%) and least so in Sweden (12%), Australia (18%), and Canada (19%).

The percentage of those expecting the availability of digital tools and technology to improve in 2021 exceeds the percentage of those who think it will get worse in all countries surveyed; this is most of all the case in Saudi Arabia (by 57 points), Peru (55 points), and India (48 points). Italy is the only country where, while the proportion of optimists is greater than that of pessimists by 3 points, the difference is not statistically significant.

Read the [World Economic Forum's article](#).

About the Study

This 28-country Global Advisor survey was conducted between Wednesday, December 23, 2020 and Friday, January 8, 2021 via the Ipsos Online Panel system among 23,004 adults aged 18-74 in United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, 21-74 in Singapore, and 16-74 in 22 other countries.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China (mainland), France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Hungary, India, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. can be taken as representative of these countries' general adult population under the age of 75.





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The samples in Brazil, Chile, China (mainland), India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each country’s sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data. 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 know” or not stated responses.

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 +/- 4.8 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos’s use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website. The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

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