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Tension between rich and poor seen as key source of division around the world – followed by politics, class, immigration and values.

One in three think their country is divided by “culture wars” – but higher in South Africa, US and India

London, 25th June — Just over a third of people on average in 28 countries across the world (a Global Country Average of 35%) think that their country is divided by “culture wars” according to a new Ipsos Global Advisor poll, carried out in partnership with the Policy Institute at King’s College London. Despite this, however, there is wide variation in this opinion when looking at individual

The poll, which was conducted online between 23 December 2020 and 8 January 2021, shows people in South Africa (58%), India (57%) and the US (57%) are most likely to feel that their country is divided by “culture wars”, with a significant gap in opinion between them and people in Brazil (47%), who are next most likely to think their nation is divided in this way. Those in Germany (19%), Russia (18%) and Japan (9%) are least likely to feel divided. In most countries, relatively few actively disagree with the statement (Global Country Average of 14%). Instead the level of don’t knows is often notable (19% Global Country Average, while 32% take a neutral position), suggesting this is not a concept that many are familiar with.

When it comes to various types of perceived tensions the survey found that on average across the 28 countries surveyed, people perceive most tension to exist between the rich and poor (Global Country Average of 74% say there is at least a fair amount of tension), followed by divisions by politics (69%), social class (67%), immigration (66%), and between those with different values (65%). There is relatively less tension (but still mentioned by nearly half) seen between cities and those outside cities, between old and young, or by levels of education or between men and women. There were different patterns for different countries:

- The US comes top for perceived tension between different ethnicities, with 83% believing there is a great deal or fair amount in the country. South Africa, where 79% feel this way, comes second. China (31%) and Japan (26%) come last.
- People in South Korea (87%), Chile (86%) and the US (85%) are most likely of those surveyed to say there is tension in their nation between those with more socially liberal ideas and those with more traditional values. China (38%) and Japan (34%) again are at the bottom of the list.
- Chile (84%) and Russia (82%) are ranked top for perceived tensions between the metropolitan elite and ordinary working people. Those in Japan (39%) and China (37%) are least likely to think this.
- Perceptions of tension between men and women are highest in South Korea, at 80%, followed by around seven in ten in South Africa, Mexico and Brazil.
- The Netherlands and Russia do best on this measure, with around a quarter in each nation believing there is tension across the gender divide.



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- Those in South Korea (70%) and Peru (66%) are most likely to say there is tension between those with a university education and those without. People in Russia (30%) and the Netherlands (27%) are least likely to think this.
- Those in South Korea (91%) and the US (90%) are most likely to say there is tension between people who support different political parties.
- Individuals in South Africa (89%) and Belgium (81%) are most likely to think there is tension between immigrants and those born in their country. People in Japan (35%) and China (35%) are the least likely to think this.
- When it comes to tension between the rich and the poor people in Chile (91%) and South Korea (91%) are most likely to say it exists in their country. Those in Japan (54%) and Saudi Arabia (50%) are the least likely to think this tension exists.
- People in Chile (88%) and South Korea (87%) are most likely to say there is tension between different social classes. Those in China (43%) and Saudi Arabia (41%) are least likely to think this.
- South Korea (80%) was the country most likely to say there is tension between the old and young with people in India (61%) the second most likely to say this. Those in France (31%) and Sweden (29%) were least likely to say there was tension between these age groups.
- South Korea (78%) and India (75%) were the countries where the most people said there is tension between different religious groups. China (35%) and Japan (23%) were the countries where people were least likely to think this.
- People in Peru (66%) and India (61%) were most likely to say there is tension between people who live inside cities and those outside cities. Those in the Netherlands, Spain (both 29%) and Germany (25%) were the least likely to think this.

People in the 28 countries surveyed were asked to rate their feelings about political correctness on a scale from 0 to 7, with 0 meaning many people are too easily offended and 7 meaning people need to change the way they talk to be more sensitive to those from different backgrounds. Overall, in most of the countries most people leaned towards believing we need to change the way people talk (in the Global Country Average, 31% placed themselves 0 to 3 on the scale and 60% 4 to 7).

Those in Britain (51% placed themselves 0 to 3 on the scale), the US (49%) and Australia (50%) were most likely to think people are too easily offended. However, other nations, such as Sweden (47%), Canada and the Netherlands (both 45%) score similarly in having an ambivalent view towards political correctness.

At the other end of the spectrum, people in Turkey (76% score themselves 4 to 7 on the scale), India (also 76%) and China (72%) are most likely to feel that people need to change the way they talk to be more sensitive.



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Technical details

These are the results of a 28-market survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 23,004 adults aged 18-74 in Singapore, 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa and Turkey, 21-74 in Singapore and 16-74 in 22 other markets between 23 December 2020 and 8 January 2021.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Hungary, India, 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 their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, Chile, mainland China, India, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent

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