

PRESS RELEASE

Eight in Ten Believe Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law are Universal Values All Nations Can Aspire to

Yet, Only 1 in 3 Respondents Think Things are Getting Better in the World These Days as Support for Free Trade Drops

Toronto, ON, November 23, 2024 – There's some optimism for a better future amid a bleak outlook of the state of things today.

New polling of more than 22,000 people across 30 countries by Ipsos for the [Halifax Security Forum](#) finds 81%, on average across 30 countries, believe democracy, human rights and the rule of law are universal values that all nations deserve and can aspire to while 19% think these are uniquely Western values that are only possible in those countries.

The belief in universal values is held by a majority of all respondents polled via Ipsos' [Global Advisor](#) online platform between Sept. 20 – Oct. 4, 2024, with people in India (60%) the least likely to agree and those in Colombia and Mexico (both at 90%) the most likely to agree. The proportion of Americans (83%) who believe democracy, human rights and rule of law are universal values is a bit above the global average (81%) while Canadians' attitude (78%) is a bit below.

Pessimism seeping in

While there's widespread belief that all countries deserve and can aspire to universal values there's also widespread pessimism. Only one in three (36% on average across 20 countries*) agree "when you really think about it more things are getting better in the world these days than are getting worse," down six percentage points year-over-year. That's also well off the 47% who said the same in 2017 when we first started asking this question and lower than it was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when 41% said things were getting better.

In 2024, a mere 29% (-two percentage points since 2023) of Canadians say things are getting better in the world these days while 31% (-six pts) of Americans agreed when this poll was conducted in late September/early October during the fierce U.S. presidential election race.

Biden's America not seen as that great

Our polling was done before former U.S. President Donald Trump officially won a second, non-consecutive term as president on November 6 and thus reflects the current administration led by U.S. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, who ultimately lost her bid to be President.

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The proportion of people who agree “when it comes to achieving positive outcomes in the world, the United States continues to be the most reliable leader for democratic nations” dropped in 29 out of 30 countries to 51% (-seven pts on average globally year-over-year) and didn’t budge from 48% in Belgium. The biggest drops were seen in Japan (-16 pts to 48%) and India (-12 pts to 71%). There was a slight drop among Americans (-two pts to 62%) who think the U.S. continues to be the most reliable leader for democratic nations, but a larger dip was seen among Canadians (-five pts to 42%).

Meanwhile, there’s been a slide in the proportion of people in all 30 countries who agree “I would have more respect for global institutions and agreements if democratic nations had more influence over them than authoritarian nations,” falling 12 points to 68% versus 2023. The biggest decline is among Canadians (-19 pts to 59%) while the U.S. saw a significant dive as well (-15 pts to 58%).

And a new question added to the poll this year reveals just over half (55% on average across 30 countries) agree the U.S. and its allies, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), make the world more secure. People in Poland (74%) are the most likely to hold this view, while those in Türkiye (40%) are the least likely. And two in three (66%) Americans believe the U.S. and its allies make the world secure versus 56% of people in Canada.

Looking inward

Politicians around the world, including U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, have trumpeted the need for more inward-looking economies, as cost-of-living issues persist.

Support for free trade is down in all 30 countries since 2023 to 70% (-10 pts on average globally). The biggest drop is in Singapore (-16 pts to 75%), with Canada (66%) and Sweden (65%) both seeing 15-point declines. The U.S. (69%), Germany (68%) and Japan (55%) all saw 14-point drops in the proportion agreeing that free trade is beneficial for their country’s economy.

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About the Study

These are the results of a 30-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform and, in India, on its IndiaBus platform, between Friday, September 20 and Friday, October 4, 2024. For this survey, Ipsos interviewed a total of 22,989 adults aged 18 years and older in India, 18-74 in Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, Türkiye, and the United States, 20-74 in Thailand, 21-74 in Indonesia and Singapore, and 16-74 in all other countries.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals each in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals each in Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, and Türkiye. The sample in India consists of approximately 2,000 individuals, of whom approximately 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face and 200 were interviewed online.

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 considered representative of their general adult populations under the age of 75. Samples in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, and Türkiye 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.

India’s sample represents a large subset of its urban population — social economic classes A, B and C in metros and tier 1-3 town classes across all four zones.

The data is weighted so that the composition of each country’s sample best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data. “The Global Country Average” reflects the average result for all the countries and markets in which the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

When percentages do not sum up to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 percentage point more/less than the actual result, 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 where N=1,000 being accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of where N=500 being accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos’ use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

*Change for 20-country average is based on the countries which were in all editions of the Ipsos for the Halifax Security Forum report.

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About Ipsos

Ipsos is one of the largest market research and polling companies globally, operating in 90 markets and employing nearly 20,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. Our 75 business solutions are based on primary data from our surveys, social media monitoring, and qualitative or observational techniques.

“Game Changers” – our tagline – summarizes our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence our rapidly changing world.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has been listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120, Mid-60 indices, STOXX Europe 600 and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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

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