



# Press Release

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## South Africans uphold universal Human Rights amidst global challenges

*As South Africa prepares to commemorate Human Rights Day on 21 March, an Ipsos study reveals that South Africans strongly believe in the universality of human rights and democracy, despite perceiving an increasingly dangerous future world.*

The study, conducted as part of the Halifax Security Forum's annual survey across 30 countries, shows that 8 in 10 online South Africans (82%) view democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as universal values that all nations deserve and can aspire to, closely aligning with the 30-country average of 81%.

"These findings reflect the enduring impact of South Africa's struggle for human rights and democracy," says Mari Harris, Sub-Sahara Africa Knowledge Specialist at Ipsos in South Africa. "As we think about the 1961 Sharpeville massacre and celebrate our progress since then, it's clear that South Africans remain committed to the fundamental principles enshrined in our constitution."

### Key findings include:

- **Moral Leadership:** 82% of South Africans believe the country has a responsibility to be a moral leader in the world, significantly higher than the 30-country average of 70%.
- **Democratic Example:** 69% of South Africans agree that the country is a good example of a democracy, compared to the 30-country average of 61%.
- **Global Cooperation:** 81% of South Africans believe the country should work with others towards global goals, even if it doesn't always get exactly what it wants.
- **Economic Rights:** 71% of South Africans believe free trade is beneficial for the country's economy, closely aligned with the 30-country average of 70%.

"South Africans' strong belief in the country's moral leadership and democratic values reflects the transformative journey our nation has undergone since the end of apartheid," Harris explains. "This commitment to global cooperation and economic progress suggests that South Africans see human rights not just as political ideals, but as integral to the country's development and international relations."

### However, the study reveals concerns:

- **Increasing Dangers:** 80% of South Africans believe the world has become a more dangerous place over the last year, matching the 30-country average.
- **Personal Safety:** 79% of South Africans feel threatened about their personal safety and security in the next twelve months, significantly higher than the 30-country average of 61%. (This opinion underlines South Africans' concerns about crime and corruption as major issues in the country as measured in the separate "What worries the World" monthly surveys. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/what-worries-world>).

- **Technological Threats:** 56% agree that the digital technology revolution could undermine and destroy democratic freedoms, slightly above the 30-country average of 51%.

"While South Africans strongly uphold human rights principles, they're also acutely aware of the challenges," Harris notes. "This combination of idealism and realism reflects our nation's unique history and ongoing journey in protecting and promoting human rights. Our challenge – as citizens, community leaders, and government – is now to translate this belief in universal rights into tangible improvements in the lives of all South Africans."

The study also found that South Africans are cautiously optimistic about their country's future role in world affairs, with 4 in 5 believing South Africa (81%) will have a positive influence in the next decade.

## Global Context and Implications

**The study also provides insights into how South Africans view their country's role in a global context:**

- **Positive Global Influence:** 81% of South Africans believe their country will have a positive influence on world affairs in the next decade, higher than the 30-country average of 74%.
- **Faith in International Institutions:** South Africans show higher-than-average confidence in global institutions:
  - 80% believe the United Nations will have a positive influence (30-country average: 68%).
  - 76% are positive about the World Bank's influence (30-country average: 61%).
  - 75% have faith in the International Monetary Fund's impact (30-country average: 60%).
- **Economic vs Military Power:** 75% of South Africans believe economic power is more important in world affairs than military power, compared to the 30-country average of 66%.

## Challenges and Concerns

**Despite the overall positive outlook, the study highlights several areas of concern:**

- **Disinformation:** 78% are concerned about the deliberate spreading of disinformation, slightly above the 30-country average of 76%.
- **Ethnic Conflict:** 71% feel threatened by potential violent conflicts between ethnic or minority groups, compared to the 30-country average of 60%.
- **Cybersecurity:** 82% of South Africans feel threatened by potential hacking of their personal information, higher than the 30-country average of 76%.
- **Government Response:** South Africans show mixed confidence in their government's ability to respond effectively to various threats, with confidence levels ranging from 44% to 58% depending on the specific threat.



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"These concerns underscore the complex challenges we face in protecting human rights in the 21st century," Harris notes. "From digital rights to social cohesion, our commitment to human rights must evolve to address new and emerging threats."

## Looking Ahead

As South Africa commemorates Human Rights Day, these findings provide a nuanced picture of a nation that remains committed to the principles of human rights and democracy, while grappling with both domestic and global challenges.

"Our research shows that South Africans continue to embrace the values that Human Rights Day represents," Harris concludes. "As we move forward, the challenge will be to address the concerns highlighted in this study while building on our strong foundation of human rights. This requires ongoing dialogue, vigilance, and action from all sectors of society."

Read the Halifax Security Forum world affairs report and view the data here: <https://www.ipsos.com/en/halifax-report-2024>

## For more information on this news release, please contact:

### Mari Harris

*Sub-Sahara Africa Knowledge Specialist, Ipsos in South Africa*

Mobile: +27 (0) 82 557 5058

[mari.harris@ipsos.com](mailto:mari.harris@ipsos.com)

### 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 30-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.



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- *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.*

## 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, and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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[www.ipsos.com](http://www.ipsos.com)

35 rue du Val de Marne  
75 628 Paris, Cedex 13 France  
Tel. +33 1 41 98 90 00