FACTUM

The World Still Believes in Democracy, But Its Faith in American Leadership Is Fading

New Ipsos survey for Halifax International Security Forum finds strong support for democracy, widespread concern about its future and declining confidence in America's international influence.

Toronto, Canada, November 20, 2026 — Democracy remains overwhelmingly popular around the world. But many of its supporters believe it is under threat in their own countries, and fewer than half regard the United States as the most reliable leader of democratic nations. A new Ipsos survey conducted for the Halifax International Security Forum finds that 83% of respondents across 30 countries believe democracy is the best system of government for providing peace and security for themselves and their families. Another 82% agree that democracy, human rights and the rule of law are universal values that all nations deserve. At the same time, 63% believe democracy in their own country is under threat. Only 42% regard the United States as the most reliable leader for democratic nations when it comes to achieving positive outcomes in the world. The survey of more than 22,500 people is being released at the Halifax International Security Forum, which meets this year under the theme *Agenda: Ideals.*

Democracy Remains Popular

Despite years of political turmoil and international conflict, support for democracy remains strong. More than eight in ten respondents believe democracy is the best system for providing peace and security. Support reaches 91% in Sweden, 87% in Germany and 86% in Great Britain. In Canada, 80% agree, compared with 79% in the United States. The belief that democracy, human rights and the rule of law are universal values is almost as widespread. Across the 30 countries, 82% agree, an increase of three percentage points over the past year. These findings do not support the idea that people around the world are abandoning democracy. But support for democratic principles does not necessarily mean confidence in democracy's future.

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Democracy's Supporters Are Worried

Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 63%, believe democracy in their own country is under threat. Concern is particularly high in several major democracies. In Germany, 79% believe their democracy is threatened, while 77% of Americans and 76% of people in France agree. In Brazil, the figure reaches 81%. In Canada, 57% believe democracy is under threat. Germany provides an especially revealing example. While 87% believe democracy is the best system for providing peace and security, 79% also believe democracy in their country is threatened. Americans show a similar pattern. Nearly eight in ten believe democracy is the best system, but almost as many are worried about its future in their own country. People can believe strongly in democracy while having serious doubts about its security. Indeed, those who value it most may have good reason to be concerned about its future.

America's Leadership Is in Doubt

The survey also reveals serious questions about the United States' traditional position as leader of the democratic world. Across the 30 countries, only 42% agree that America remains the most reliable leader for democratic nations when it comes to achieving positive outcomes in the world. Confidence is particularly weak among America's closest allies. In Canada, just 28% regard the United States as the most reliable democratic leader. The figure is also 28% in Great Britain and Germany, while 33% in France agree. Even Americans are divided. Fewer than half, 47%, believe their country remains the most reliable leader of democratic nations. The longer-term trend in America's international reputation provides important context. Across the 20 countries tracked consistently in the annual survey, the proportion expecting the United States to have a positive influence on world affairs over the next decade has fallen from 64% in 2022 to 42% today. Canada, by comparison, is expected to have a positive international influence by approximately 80% of respondents.

For much of the postwar era, American leadership rested on the belief among other democracies that the United States would act in support of their shared interests. The survey suggests that confidence can no longer be assumed.

The Alliance Still Matters

Despite doubts about American leadership, the public has not abandoned international security cooperation. Across the 30 countries, 51% agree that the United States and its allies, including NATO, make the world more secure. That is higher than the 42% who regard America as the most reliable leader of democratic nations. The findings suggest that people can continue to see value in an alliance while questioning the reliability of its principal member.

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There is also uncertainty about whether the current American approach to international affairs will outlast President Donald Trump. Across the countries surveyed, 62% believe the United States will return to its more traditional role on the world stage once Trump is no longer in office. But that expectation is weaker among some of America's closest allies. In Canada, only 52% anticipate such a return. Americans themselves are almost evenly divided, with 51% believing their country will eventually resume its traditional international role.

For democratic countries that have depended on American leadership, these findings present a difficult calculation. They must make decisions about their own security without knowing whether the United States will return to the international role it once played.

The Future of Democratic Leadership

The findings provide an important backdrop to this year's Halifax International Security Forum. Democracy continues to command widespread support. Most respondents believe its principles are universal, even as many worry about the future of democracy in their own countries. But support for democracy is considerably stronger than confidence in American leadership. The United States remains central to the security of democratic nations. Yet its traditional partners are increasingly uncertain about its reliability, and many are unsure whether that will change after Trump leaves office.

The public has not rejected democracy. What has changed is confidence in the country that has traditionally led the democratic world. For the leaders gathering in Halifax, that may be the most important finding in this year's survey.

About the Study

The Ipsos World Affairs and Security Report 2026 was conducted online among 22,526 adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries between September 25 and October 9, 2026.

The study examines international security threats, democratic values, global leadership and public attitudes toward international cooperation. Historical comparisons are based on the 20 countries included consistently in the annual research.

The international figures represent averages across the countries surveyed rather than population-weighted estimates of the world's population.

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