

# TRUST IN RESEARCH

Fostering trust, advocacy  
and motivation among  
research participants

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# IPSOS VIEWS

GAME CHANGERS



# THE ROLE OF TRUST

Trust is integral to the successful running of market research activities, as is the case with any industry. On one hand, it is critical to secure clients' trust. On the other, research agencies need to build respondent trust so that the individuals who complete research activities are willing to share their personal information, opinions and behaviours.

The market research industry has now evolved beyond gathering data through simple surveys, focus groups and in-

depth interviews. Research activities not only gather opinion but can also capture personal behaviours and data through various advanced techniques such as passive measurement of digital behaviours, facial coding and eye tracking. This continued evolution, along with the ongoing shift to online research, requires respondents to not only hold trust in the organisation they are working with but also be engaged and motivated to participate. Otherwise severe limits are placed on the project's success.

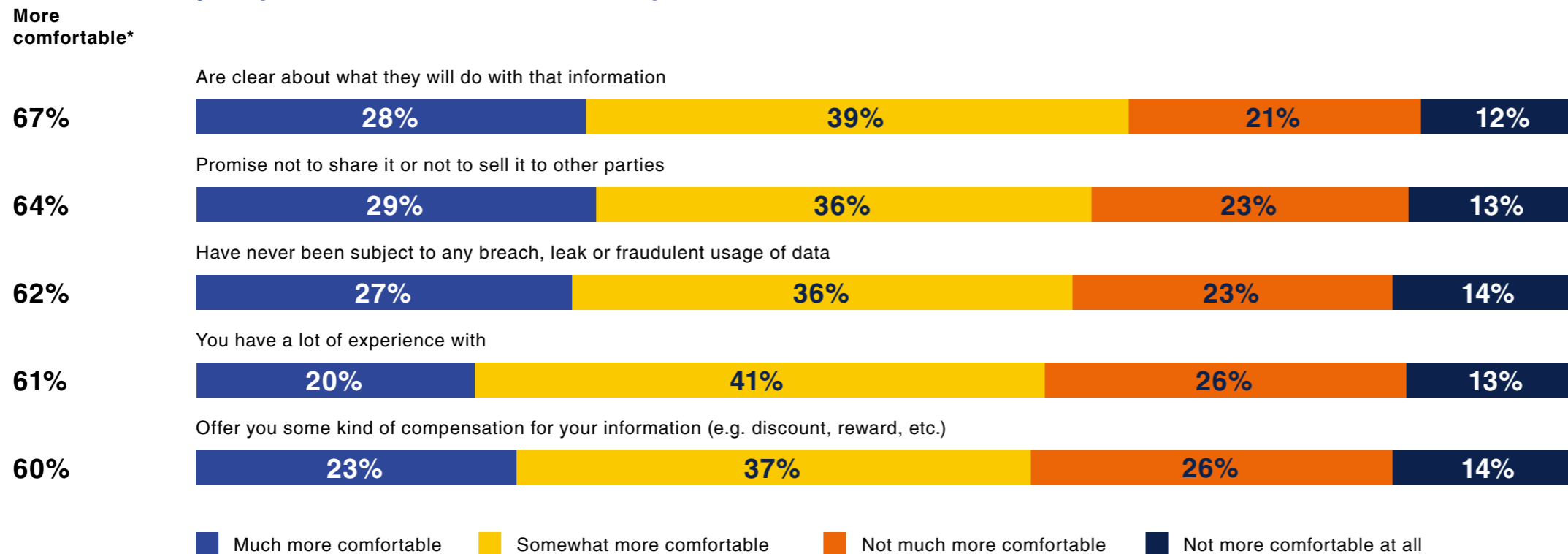
At Ipsos, our aspiration is that by operating as a full-service company owned by market researchers and its own data collection, we create a sense of security in the quality and the rigour of the insights that we provide.

As discussed in a recent Ipsos paper *The Power of Research Panels*<sup>1</sup>, research participants have a contract with Ipsos that establishes the rules of engagement: their data and privacy will be protected (especially in the post-GDPR digital

ecosystem), the answers provided will be anonymised and only be used for the purposes of the research study, and their data will be deleted after a specified period.

We have found that the public would be more comfortable sharing personal data with a company that is clear about how it will use it and that promises not to share it with third parties.

## Q: To what extent would you be more comfortable about sharing your personal information with companies or brands that...



A survey conducted with the World Economic Forum explores the broader context of online trust and data privacy. It finds members of the public say they are more likely to share personal data if they are:

- Clear about what will be done with the information
- Promised it will not be shared with third parties
- Already familiar or experienced with the organisation in question
- Offered some kind of compensation.

\*Much or somewhat more comfortable

Source: <https://www.ipsos.com/en/ignorance-and-distrust-prevail-about-what-companies-and-governments-do-personal-data>

Base: 17,811 adults aged 16-64 across Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States..

## DEFINING TRUST

Trust can be defined in many ways. According to Merriam-Webster, trust is “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something”<sup>2</sup>. Steven M.R. Covey states “...trust means confidence. The opposite of trust – distrust – is suspicion.”<sup>3</sup> And, as Zheng and Katok<sup>4</sup> allude to, if individuals are to trust a market research company they must accept a level of risk, as they voluntarily agree to provide personal data and assume that the market research agency will treat it appropriately.

**Trust is to behave voluntarily in a way to accept vulnerability due to uncertain behaviour of another (the trustee), based upon the expectation of a positive outcome.** Zheng and Katok

This paper shares the view from Ipsos panelists on their experiences and ongoing participation in research. We also bring in knowledge and experience from across our Corporate Reputation, Brand Health Tracking and Social Intelligence Analytics capabilities to present the wider view around trust and engagement in research studies.

We explore the essential elements of trust, how to establish trust with respondents or panelists – as well as motivate their ongoing engagement – and consider what is important when building long-term trust and advocacy in market research.

Ipsos’ 2019 report on trust<sup>5</sup> interrogates the idea that trust is in terminal decline in society today. It doesn’t find evidence for this stark conclusion, instead suggesting that there is a more nuanced conversation to be had – one that is less about trust per se, and more about what organisations and individuals can do to be trustworthy in a particular context.

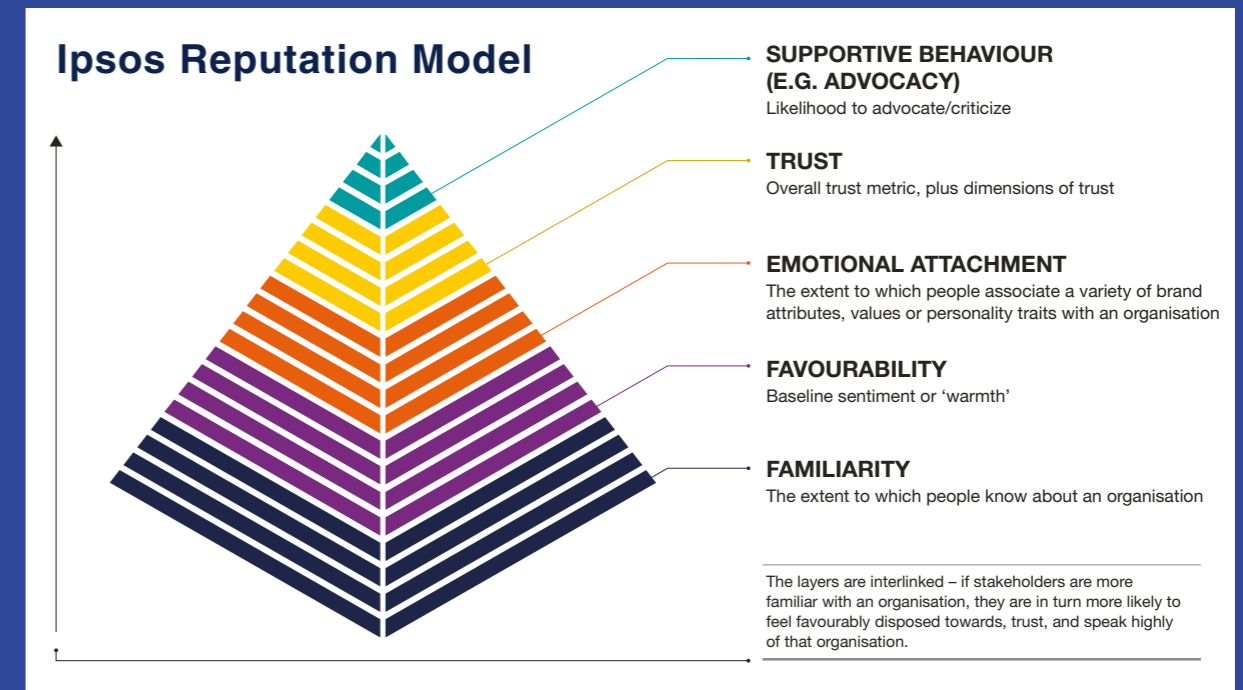
**Without some degree of trust society simply would not function.”**

## TRUST IN PANELS: THE IPSOS EXPERIENCE

To have real value as an insights provider, respondent trust is essential. The first building block is for respondents to believe their data is protected and secure, and that their opinion is important. With this understanding in place, they are more willing to provide more sensitive and personal information, and to enter a long-term, reciprocal relationship with a research company that leads to continued participation in research over time.

As set out in *Corporate Reputation: The key questions answered*<sup>6</sup>, trust drives reputation because it reflects how people think about an organisation. Trust is also earned.

For Ipsos panels, it is critical to maintain trust so that panelists remain engaged and motivated to participate. As more than half of Ipsos panelists participate in more than one research panel (see Figure 1), it is especially important to keep to high standards and consistently meet respondent expectations.



Reputational equity brings benefits for attracting and maintaining engagement with respondents. We have found that, across all regions, Ipsos shows a strong, established reputation with its panelists, as well as high levels of advocacy (see Figure 2). Brand name awareness and respect plays a part in this. In markets where Ipsos has a strong presence in polling and in public media releases, resulting in a strong share of voice, Ipsos is as reputable as its associated panel brand (see Figure 3).

**Figure 1: % of respondents who belong to one or more additional panels**

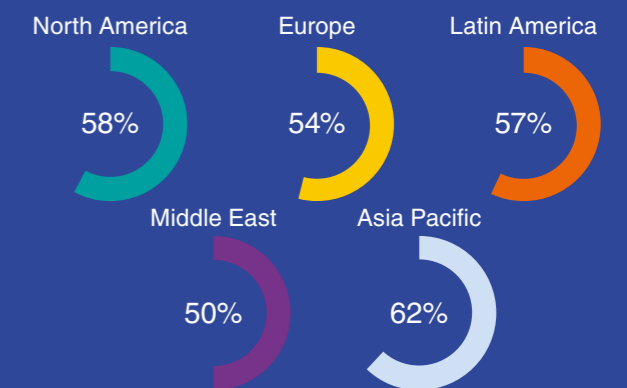
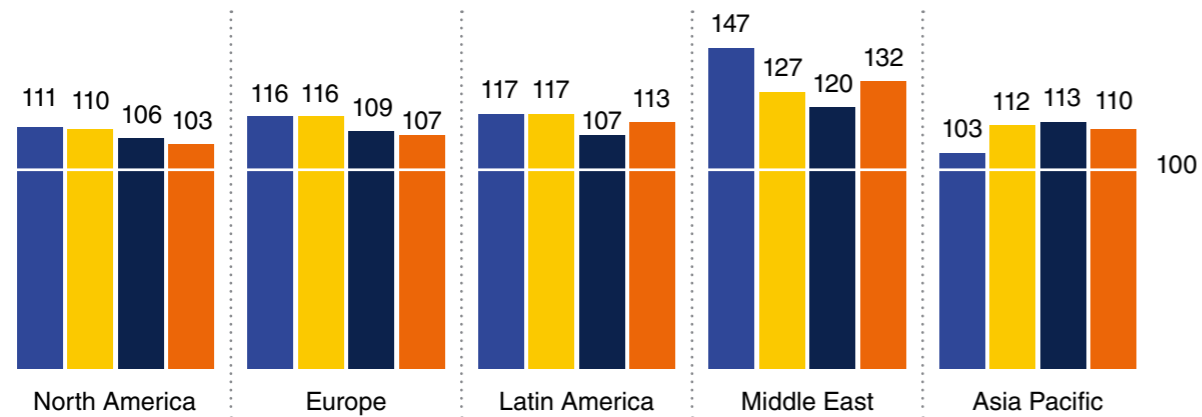
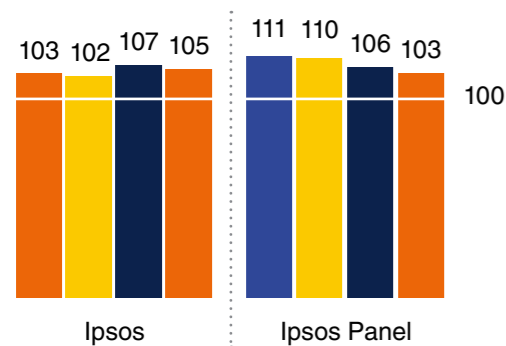


Figure 2/3 legend: ■ Familiarity ■ Favourability ■ Trust ■ Advocacy

**Figure 2: Relative Performance of Ipsos Panel brands against key competitor brands by region. (Double Index\* of Top Box Results)**



**Figure 3: Relative Performance of Ipsos versus Ipsos Panel brand in a market where the Ipsos brand is well known. (Double Index\* of Top Box Results)**



\*Double Indexing was used to allow for comparisons of brands of different sizes, and to minimise the impact of Ipsos panel brand effect. The average is 100.

The reasons for trusting Ipsos, given spontaneously by panelists, often refer to the organisation's reputation. This shows that in addition to gaining trust in Ipsos

panel brands through their experiences, panelists also trust Ipsos where the Ipsos public presence is well-established and its face and name is known locally.

**Ipsos is a great name in the market research field.**

**My friends told me I can trust Ipsos completely and they handle data very carefully.**

## MOTIVATING ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Within the online and social ecosystem, there are channels, feeds and pages instructing individuals to make money through joining online panels. These posts often review the panels available to inform potential followers if the panel is trustworthy or willing and able to fulfill their side of the market research contract<sup>7</sup>.

As per the Stereotype Content Model by Fiske<sup>8</sup>, individuals assess trustworthiness along two dimensions:

- Warmth: perceived intent
- Competence: perceived ability to act on their intent

While it is important to be seen as trustworthy, to support ongoing research participation, panelists also need to be motivated. According to the Job Characteristics Model<sup>9</sup>, motivation requires at least one of the following: skill variety, task identity and/or task significance; together with autonomy and feedback.

### Most Important Trustworthiness Attributes for a Market Research Organisations

1	Takes all necessary precautions to protect your privacy	Competence
2	Takes all necessary precautions to protect your personal information	Competence
3	Treats you with respect	Warmth
4	Provides you with a choice of rewards that are relevant to you	Competence
5	Provides you with rewards in a timely fashion	Competence

(n=2,285 panelists) across North America, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Asia Pacific.

**I've been a panelist for quite a while now and I feel safe answering their surveys.**

**Figure 4: Panellist Ratings of Ipsos Panels\* Performance**

Warmth	Treats you with respect	63%
Competence	Makes it easy for you to provide your opinion	62%
Warmth	Treats you equitably	52%
Competence	Provides you with rewards in a timely fashion	51%
Warmth	Invests in a long-term relationship with you	45%
Competence	Continually delivers on its promises	45%
Competence	Provides you with a choice of rewards that is relevant to you	45%
Warmth	Acts in an ethical way	45%

% of Panelists who rate Ipsos Panels\*\* performance as 'very good' (n=2,285) across North America, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Asia Pacific.

\*Results for Ipsos follow a similar pattern.

When reviewing the factors that underscore trustworthiness and motivate ongoing motivation, we can see that panelists do not merely want to receive compensation/rewards for their work; these rewards must also be worth their effort, relevant to them, and attached to tasks that they enjoyed doing.

Just as important is the desire to be a part of a mutually beneficial relationship

in which the individual is treated with respect and equitability, feels that their opinion is important, and can participate in interesting research activities for which they understand the core purpose. Additionally, given that globally individuals are increasing their digital footprint, there is an expectation that their privacy and personal information will be protected.

**Figure 5: Most Important Attributes of a Market Research Organisation**

Feedback	Being rewarded for offering your time to complete research studies	63%
Task Identity	Being rewarded for participating in activities you enjoy	62%
Autonomy	Your opinion is considered important	52%
Task Identity	Being interested in the research topic	51%
Skill Variety	Able to participate in a variety of different research activities	45%
Task Identity	You understand the core purpose for the research activity	45%
Task Significance	Feeling like you are a part of something bigger	45%

% of Panelists who rate attribute as 'Very Important' (n=2,285) across North America, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Asia Pacific

As Ipsos carries out work for clients across many sectors which explore different topics and questions, there is a variety of research activities available to panelists. This choice further bolsters ongoing motivation and engagement.

**It the platform I like the most. It is very trustworthy... I like the subjects covered in its surveys.**

## BUILDING LONG-TERM TRUST AND ADVOCACY

To truly understand which elements are most critical for Ipsos and its panels and use this to support continued trust and advocacy, a drivers analysis was conducted to determine the factors that would have the most impact.

The analyses demonstrate that panelists take their job contract seriously and expect it to be reciprocated. So, while panelists expect rewards for their time

and effort, they will trust Ipsos and its panels when they (and their personal data) are treated with the utmost respect and consideration.

It is also important to them that, through participation in research projects that they care about and understand the core purpose of, they can influence future decisions.

Figure 6: Key Drivers of Trust and Advocacy for Ipsos and Ipsos Panel Brands

Warmth	Competence	Motivation
Treats you well for loyalty	Takes all necessary precautions to protect your privacy	Being interested in a research topic
Continually delivers on its promises	Takes all necessary precautions to protect your personal information	Being able to influence the future of products and services with one's opinion
Treats you with respect	Provides accurate descriptions about potential online research activities	Being rewarded for participating in activities one enjoys
Treats you equitably	Makes it easy for you to provide your opinion	Understanding the core purpose of the study
Operates without bias	Uses the information you provide for its intended purpose	Being interested in a research topic

Surveys are picked up by the media to have data on a topical issue. I am proud to participate and give my opinion.

Terms of Privacy are clear and regularly updated. No issues for a long time with good advice.

"I have been working with Ipsos panel brand for many years without worry."

Investing in a long-term relationship with panelists further supports brand advocacy.

Interesting nuances appear when reviewing the key drivers in developed and developing markets. In developed markets, panelists want to be treated like an important consultant, to know how they influence decisions and to receive rewards that are worth their effort.

We also find that trust and advocacy in developed markets is supported by Ipsos being a brand with which panelists are proud to be associated, supported in many markets by our polling presence.

"I trust Ipsos because we often hear about them in the media."

Furthermore, there is the power of personal identity: it is critical that an individual's opinion is considered important. Offering a variety of research activities is also key as people in those developed markets are likely to be more accustomed to online surveys and therefore may respond well to the variety.

In developing markets, we find a stronger sense that panelists value our panels having a positive impact on society through their everyday business. Receiving answers to any questions or concerns and, not unexpectedly, being rewarded in a timely fashion is also key.

In certain developing markets where there is a tendency for individuals to define themselves against others, the key drivers for panelists include:

- Feeling like you are part of something bigger.
- Knowing how your answers compare to others' answers.
- Understanding that the purpose of the research will have a positive impact on others' lives.

"The polls I answer are sometimes cited when it comes to the opinion of the public and I appreciate being part of it."

I have complete confidence in Ipsos because it is often cited in the media. I think it is a reference for polls in my country.

## A TRUSTED PUBLIC IMAGE

As discussed in *Opinion Polls: a tour of the territory*<sup>10</sup>, polling puts a face to the market research industry and provides a brand name for people to recognise through media releases. In various markets around the world, Ipsos is a household name because of its investments in polling practice and continued advancements in this area. Although polls are most typically linked with elections, Ipsos' practice is wider

than this. Individuals have an opportunity to see how their opinions input into broader decision-making, both for governments and companies alike.

A review of social media data illustrates the benefits for a research organisation having a recognised position among the public as a polling company. To take the case of Ipsos, even though polling is a small part of our overall business, the

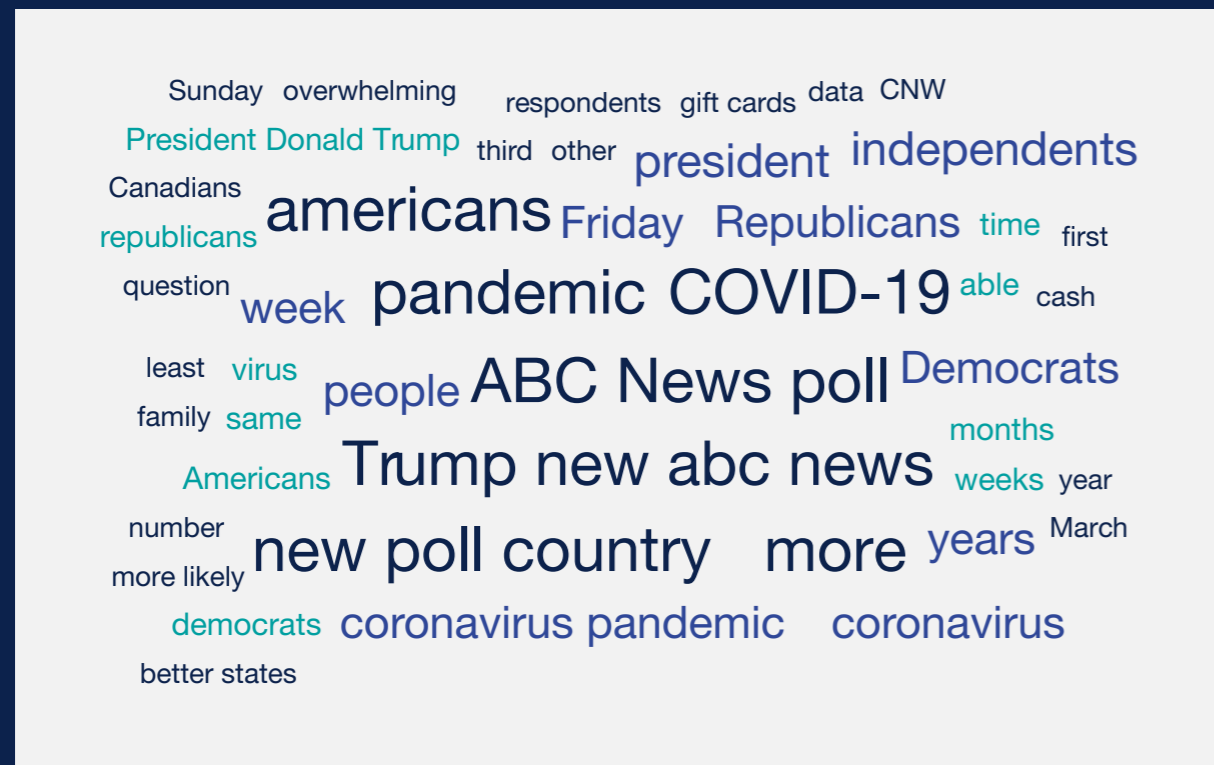
social media data skews heavily towards news posts, including those from national and regional news, TV and radio, news agencies, and so on. The top words used and the semantics surrounding them (the what and how of a social conversation) appear to exclusively relate to polls that Ipsos has released.

**I am a panelist at this polling institute. I have always had my rewards and I have never had any security problems.**

**[Panel name] is affiliated with Ipsos, which is a very serious institution.**

With a face and a name to Ipsos, consumers and citizens can establish a sense of trust in its data collection capabilities, whether online or offline.

Figure 7: Key words used in reference to Ipsos and Ipsos panels on social media



Source: Ipsos Social Intelligence Analytics

Figure 8: Ipsos polling features in media outlets worldwide



## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRUST

Trust is critical to any business sector, just as it is essential for society to function. It has a special significance within market research that centres around respondents. The individuals that offer up their personal opinions and data for market research purposes need to trust that it will be protected and used appropriately.

Each organisation needs to find its own way of establishing a trusted relationship with respondents. But reflecting on our experience at Ipsos, we would highlight the following four factors as being particularly important when it comes to trust, advocacy and motivation:

1. **A public presence** (gained through participation in global and local polling, for example) provides a sense of familiarity and a base level of trust for potential participants.
2. A continued commitment to **participant data security**, across all modes of data collection.
3. Reinforcing the sense that each panelist's opinion is important and they are an integral part of the market research industry, and through their involvement they are **participating in something bigger**.
4. As the market research industry continues to evolve, offering panelists the opportunity to participate in a variety of research activities that can **build and sustain their interest**.

We believe that securing respondent trust is a cornerstone of delivering reliable and trustworthy research insights. By staying close to participants' motivations, preferences, and real-life contexts, we are able to adapt our approaches and meet evolving expectations.

The quality of market research data is inextricably linked to the strength of engagement with individual participants, and so investing in activities that foster trust and advocacy must be a priority.

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