

# **The ‘Perils’ of Perceptions: Americans’ Estimates of Number of Immigrants, Atheists, and Those Living Rurally Radically Out of Step with Reality**

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## **The ‘Perils’ of Perceptions: Americans’ Estimates of Number of Immigrants, Atheists, and Those Living Rurally Radically Out of Step with Reality**

**Washington, DC** – In a recent survey of over 30 countries, Americans showed a high level of disconnect between perceptions and reality of issues and threats, with very few exceptions. Only on issues relating to the percentage of female politicians and female employment rates did the US public seemed to have a firm grasp on reality (19% of politicians are woman and 63% of women are employed), which were within one percent of the actual numbers. However, the American public believes that over 34% of grown children aged 25 to 34 live with their parents, and yet this number is actually an encouragingly low 12%.

Ipsos regularly conducts polls as part of their “[Perils of Perception](#)” survey of beliefs in 33 nations around the world. This data can all be found on Ipsos’ [website](#). In the study for 2015, Ipsos found a significant disconnect between the perceptions of the American public and the reality of the numbers on issues ranging from income inequality, obesity, immigration, and access to the Internet.

### **Key Misperceptions of the American Public**

- Number of Immigrants in the US: **Off by 19%** (Perception: 33%; Actual: 14%)

- Number of atheists or those who do not associate with religion: **Off by 24%** (Perception: 40%; Actual: 16%)
- Percentage of people living in rural areas: **Off by 16%** (Perception: 35%; Actual: 19%)
- Number of adults who are overweight or obese: **Off by 16%** (Perception: 50%; Actual: 66%)
- Number of adults (age 25 to 34) living with their parents: Off by 22% (Perception: 34%; Actual: 12%)
- Portion of total household income held by the top 1%: **Off by 20%** (Perception: 57%; Actual: 37%)
- Portion of total household income the top 1% SHOULD own: **Off by 10%** (Perception: 27%; Actual: 37%)
- Portion of people with internet access: **Off by 11%** (Perception: 76%; Actual: 87%)

The full Ipsos “Index of Ignorance” is given in the table below. Mexico and India receive the dubious honor of being the most inaccurate in their perceptions on these issues, while South Koreans are the most accurate. There are some regional patterns in this table – for example Latin American countries tend to be more inaccurate, European and Americans more accurate – but this hides individual differences, and is not the whole story. New Zealand is the least accurate of the developed countries (in the top five most ignorant), while China is in the top 5 most accurate.



Ranking	Country	
1	Mexico	<b>Least accurate</b>
2	India	
3	Brazil	
4	Peru	
5	New Zealand	
6	Colombia	
7	Belgium	
8	South Africa	
9	Argentina	
10	Italy	
11	Russia	
12	Chile	
13	United Kingdom	
14	Israel	
15	Australia	
16	Japan	
17	Canada	
18	Germany	
19	Netherlands	
20	Spain	
21	Norway	
22	France	
23	Sweden	
24	United States	
25	China	
26	Poland	
27	Ireland	
28	South Korea	<b>Most accurate</b>

For more information and to take the Perils of Perception Quiz please go to:

[www.ipsos-mori.com/perilsofperception](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/perilsofperception)



*These are the findings of the Ipsos MORI Perils of Perception Survey. 25,556 interviews were conducted between conducted between October 1<sup>st</sup> – October 16<sup>th</sup> 2015. The survey is conducted in 33 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain, Turkey and the United States of America. Approximately 1000+ individuals were surveyed in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Serbia, Spain, Great Britain Montenegro, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the United States of America. Approximately 500+ individuals were surveyed in the remaining countries. Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. The “actual” data for each question is taken from a variety of verified sources for each question and country – a full list of sources/links to the actual data can be found [here](#).*



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