



Democracy Perception Index 2018

June 2018

Democracies are losing the hearts and minds of their citizens, world's largest study on trust in government finds

The Democracy Perception Index (DPI) is a research project conducted by [Dalia Research](#), in collaboration with the [Alliance of Democracies](#) and [Rasmussen Global](#), to measure citizens' trust in government.

The DPI survey data ranks countries on how effectively they are *perceived* to be delivering core democratic benefits in the eyes of their citizens, including:

- 1) **Political Voice:** Sense of participation in politics
- 2) **Public Interest:** Trust that government is working for the people
- 3) **Free Speech:** Freedom to express opinions
- 4) **Information:** Access to balanced and neutral information

The DPI is the largest single survey conducted at once: covering 125,000 respondents for nationally representative results across 50 countries, from June 6th to June 18th, 2018. This represents over 75% of the world's population and 75% of the world's GDP.

The Findings

The Democracy Perception Index (DPI) finds a majority of people around the world feel like they have no voice in politics and that their governments are not acting in their interest (51% and 58% respectively). In particular, they have little faith that their government is formed "by the people" and works "for the people".

Perhaps most surprisingly, this public disillusionment is higher in democracies than in non-democracies.¹ Almost two thirds (64%) of people living in democracies thinks their government "rarely" or "never" acts in the interest of the public, compared with 41% of people living in non-democracies.

When asked if they think their voice matters in politics, over half (54%) of citizens living in democracies say their voices "rarely" or "never" matter in politics versus 46% in non-democracies. European democracies are amongst the countries where the most people feel voiceless. Compared to the other democracies included in the survey, South Korea scores the best, though with 42% of the population feeling like their voice doesn't matter.

In contrast to other studies on democracy, this study focuses specifically on public perception, namely the extent to which people feel they are receiving core democratic benefits such as the ability to have a voice in politics and a government that acts in their interest. It is possible that people are more critical about their governments in democratic countries than in non-democratic ones. But by focusing on perception instead of reality, this study sheds a light on potential drivers of political behavior such as voting choices and public unrest.

Given the politically sensitive nature of the survey, researchers noted the possibility that respondents might not feel comfortable reporting negative opinions about their government. However, the anonymity offered by

¹In the context of this study, 'non-democracies' are understood to be 'partly free' and 'non-free' countries, and 'democracies' are understood to be the 'free' countries as ranked by the composite '[Freedom in the World 2018](#)' index by Freedom House.



Dalia's online surveys as opposed to interviews conducted face-to-face or by phone might encourage respondents to answer more truthfully (see methodology section p.8).

Nico Jaspers, CEO and Co-founder of Dalia Research, said: *"Political systems around the world are currently changing with a speed that we haven't seen in almost 30 years. The key to understanding why this is happening and what to expect next is to tap into global public opinion. Right now the biggest risk for democracies is that the public no longer sees them as democratic."*

Nina Schick, Director of Data and Polling at Rasmussen Global, said: *"This groundbreaking global public opinion survey sheds light on the huge challenge faced by democracies around the world today. Democratic systems of governance are under severe threat, not only from foreign interference and the rise of autocratic regimes, but also from the huge crisis of confidence amongst the electorate. Democracies cannot afford to be complacent if they are to survive and prosper, and we are gathering at the Copenhagen Democracy Summit to begin to address these challenges."*

The study is being formally released to mark the inaugural [Copenhagen Democracy Summit](#) on June 22nd 2018, at which global leaders are gathering to discuss the challenges facing democracy.

The Questionnaire & Overall Results

Table 1: Democracy Perception Index - Global Public Perceptions (%) on Political Voice and Public Interest

Segment	Political Voice	Public Interest	Balance of Information	Freedom of Discussion
Question	<i>Do you feel that the voice of people like you matters in politics?</i>	<i>Do you feel that your government is acting in your interest?</i>	<i>Do you feel like the news you read or watch gives you balanced and neutral information?</i>	<i>Do you feel free to share your opinion on political issues in public even if most other people disagree with you?</i>
Answer Options	Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Never			
% of respondents who select:	"Never" or "rarely"			
All Countries ²	51%	58%	56%	46%
"Free" Countries	54%	64%	57%	43%
"Partly Free" Countries	48%	57%	55%	51%
"Not Free" Countries	46%	41%	54%	47%

Main Findings

- 1. The global public does not think their governments are delivering core democratic benefits:** More than half of global population (51%) covered in the study thinks that their voice "rarely" or "never"

² Countries categorised as 'Free,' 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free' as per the [Freedom in the World 2018](#) index by Freedom House, which is a composite of political and civil rights.



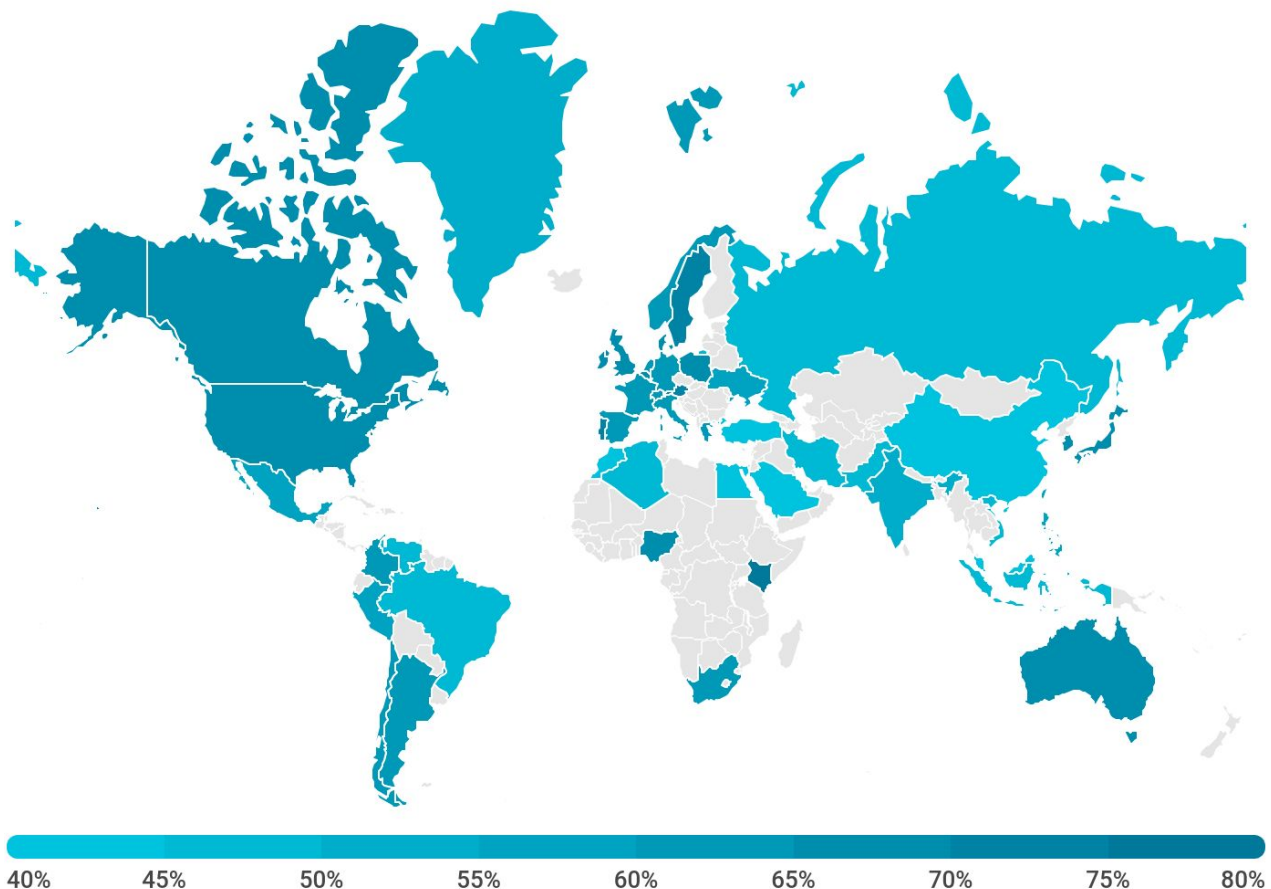
matters in politics, and as much as 58% believes that their government doesn't act in their interest. **(See Table 1).**

- 2. Citizens in democracies don't feel their voice matters:** Over half (54%) of citizens living in democracies think their voices "rarely" or "never" matter in politics versus 46% in non-democracies. Of the ten countries that perform the worst on 'political voice', nine are democracies. **(See Graph 1).**
- 3. Public disillusionment is greater in democracies than in non-democracies:** In democracies, a majority of the population (64%) believes that their government "rarely" or "never" acts in the interest of the public. In non-democracies, people are less pessimistic, with only 41% saying the same. **(See Table 1).**
- 4. Citizens across the world don't trust the news they read:** Across the 50 countries surveyed, more than half of respondents (56%) say that the news they read "rarely" or "never" gives them a balanced or neutral view of the world. **(See Graph 3).**
- 5. Citizens don't feel free to share political opinions in public.** Almost half (46%) of citizens in all countries said they feel "rarely" or "never" free to share their opinion on political issues. Trust in free speech is higher in democratic states (43%) than in non-democratic states (47%). **(See Graph 4).**

Mapping Global Results

Graph 1: Where People Feel Their Governments Aren't Acting in Their Interest

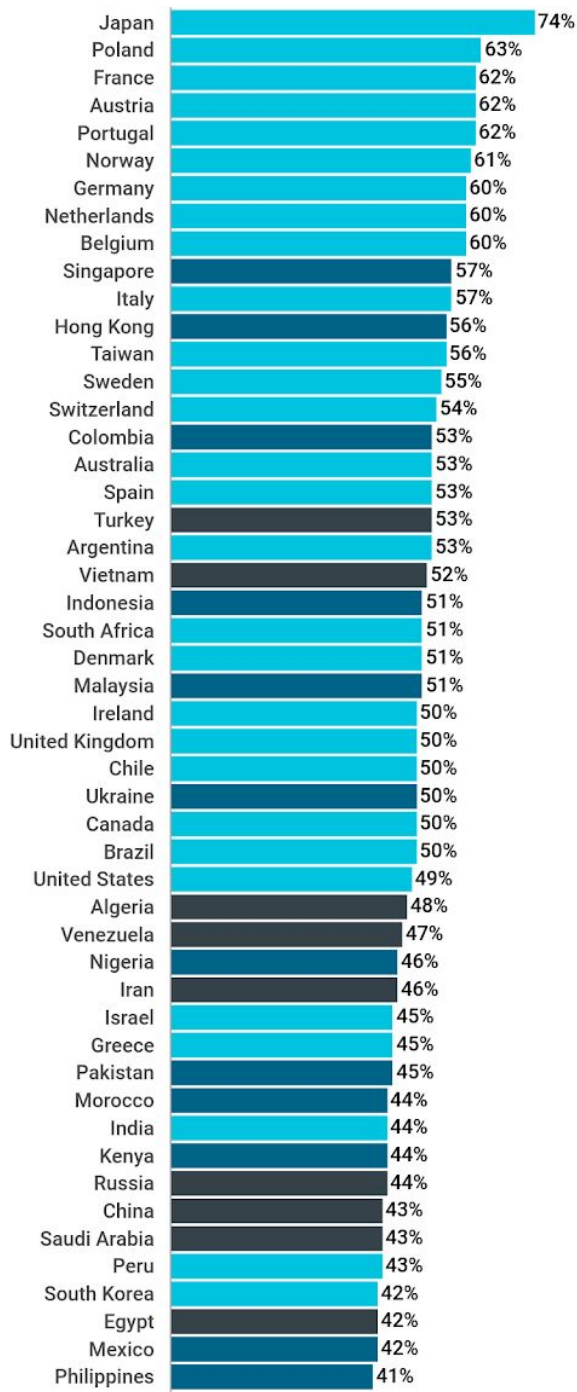
(%) of respondents who say they "never" or "rarely" feel their government acts in their interest





Do you feel that the voice of people like you matters in politics?

% who responded "Never" or "Rarely"



Freedom House Ranking

■ Not Free ■ Partly Free ■ Free

Based on a census-representative survey of ~125k people in 50 countries completed in June 2018 by Dalia Research.

Perception of Political Voice

The public does not think their governments are delivering core democratic benefits: More than half of the world (51%) thinks that their voice "rarely" or "never" matters in politics.

Democracies vs. Non-democracies

Overall, people in democracies are more likely to feel like their voice doesn't matter in politics. Out of the top 10 countries where people feel the most dissatisfied, 9 are democracies.

In non-democratic countries, fewer people feel voiceless. Out of the bottom-10 countries where people are least likely to say that their voice doesn't matter, 7 are non-democracies.

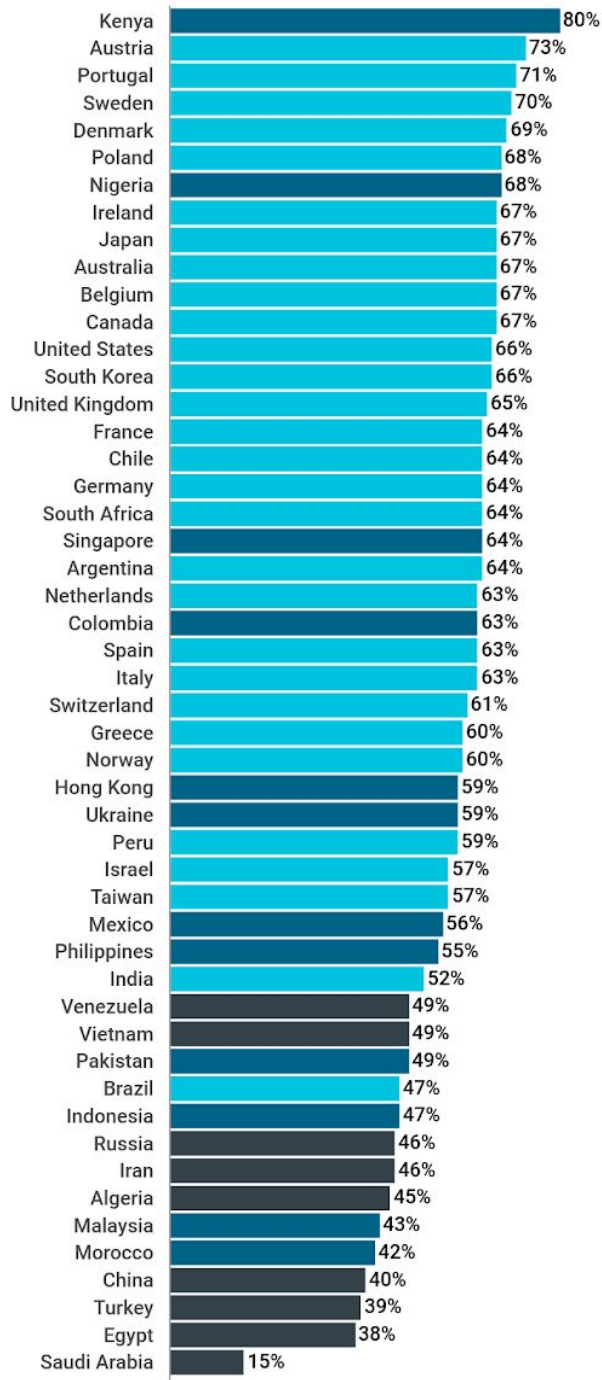
Country Highlights

Besides Japan, where as much as three quarters of the public (74%) feels like their voice doesn't matter, the countries with the highest levels of dissatisfaction are mostly European democracies. In comparison to these European democracies, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom show lower levels of public disillusionment, albeit with nearly half of their own populations feeling voiceless.



Do you feel that your government is acting in your interest?

% who responded "Never" or "Rarely"



Freedom House Ranking ■ Not Free ■ Partly Free ■ Free

Based on a census-representative survey of ~125k people in 50 countries completed in June 2018 by Dalia Research.

Perception of Government Public Interest

Overall, more than half of global population (58%) covered in the study thinks that their government "rarely" or "never" acts in their interest.

Democracies vs. Non-democracies

In the democracies surveyed, a majority of the population (64%) believes that their government "rarely" or "never" acts in the interest of the public.

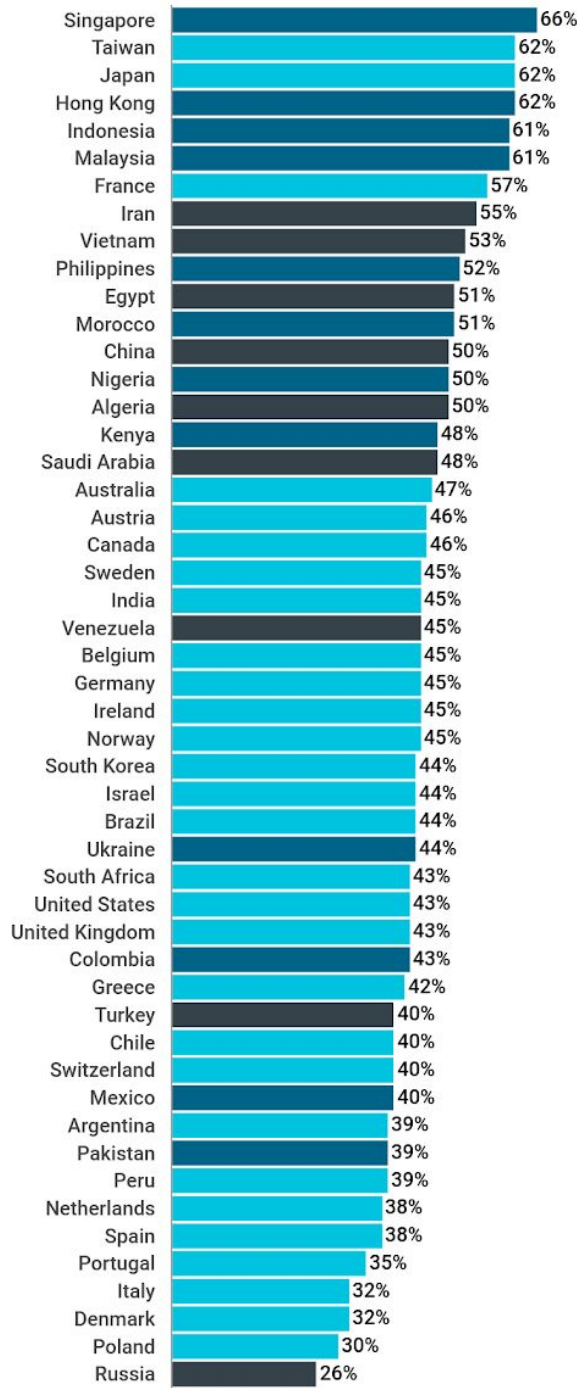
Of the ten countries where the public most overwhelmingly says the government "rarely" or "never" acts in their interests, eight are democracies. This view is shared by almost two thirds (67%) of the electorates in Australia, Belgium, Japan and Ireland. In Poland it is even higher at 68%, and the sentiment climbs in Denmark (69%), Sweden (70%), Portugal (71%) and Austria (73%).

On the other hand, people in non-democratic countries are less likely to say their government doesn't act in their interest: 41% in non-democracies compared to 64% in democracies. The country where dissatisfaction is the lowest is Saudi Arabia, where only 15% think the government "never" or "rarely" acts in their interest.



Do you feel free to share your opinion on political issues in public even if most other people disagree with you?

% who responded "Never" or "Rarely"



Freedom House Ranking ■ Not Free ■ Partly Free ■ Free

Based on a census-representative survey of ~125k people in 50 countries completed in June 2018 by Dalia Research.

Perception of Free Speech

Nearly half of the global population surveyed (46%) feels like they are not free to speak their mind in public about political issues.

Democracies vs. Non-democracies

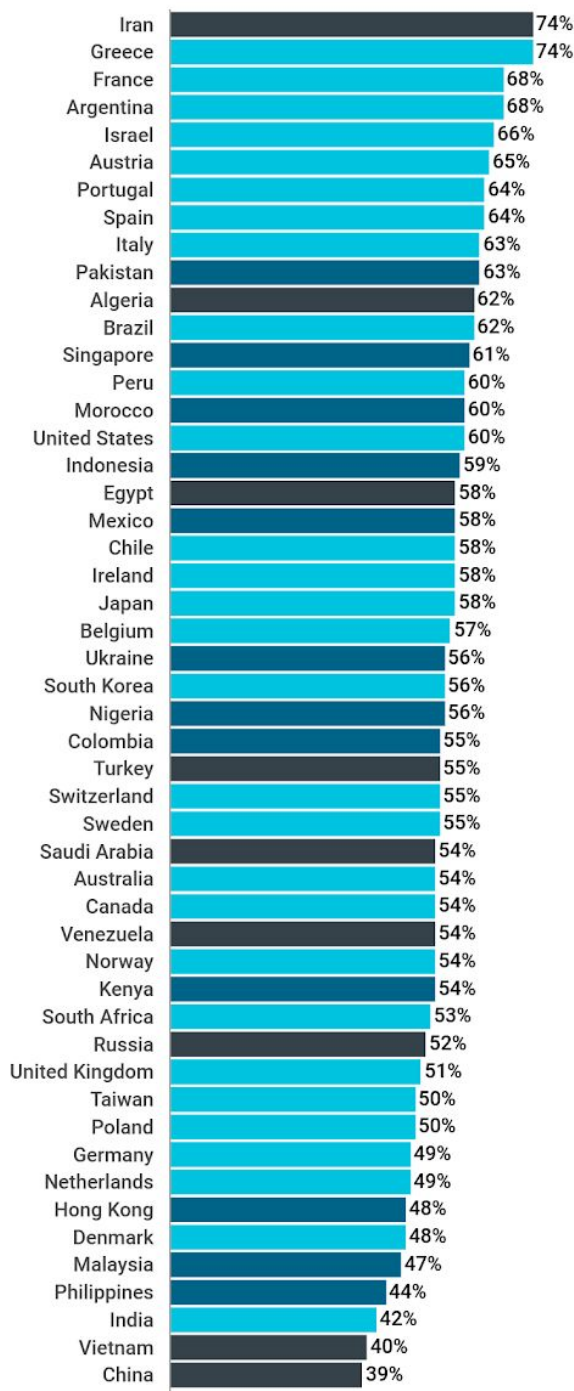
For the most part, this lack of freedom is felt more in non-democratic societies than in democratic societies: out of the 15 countries where a majority (50% or more) of the population feels like they aren't able to speak their mind, only 3 are democracies.

Country Highlights

The most surprising result is Russia, where the fewest share of people (26%) feel like they can't speak their mind freely. This directly contradicts such indicators as the Freedom House Ranking, where Russia scores poorly for "Civil Liberties", including freedom of expression.

Do you feel like the news you read or watch gives you balanced and neutral information?

% who responded "Never" or "Rarely"



Freedom House Ranking

■ Not Free ■ Partly Free ■ Free

Based on a census-representative survey of ~125k people in 50 countries completed in June 2018 by Dalia Research.

Perception of Information

Across the 50 countries surveyed, more than half of respondents (56%) say that the news they read "rarely" or "never" gives them a balanced or neutral information.

Democracies vs. Non-democracies

Perception of information is varied between democracies and non-democracies, suggesting no clear relationship. Researchers noted that the perception of neutral information is highly subjective, and therefore the results should be interpreted as a reflection of public perception and dissatisfaction instead of an assessment of reality.

Country Highlights

According to the World Press Freedom Index³, China has one of the most controlled press, but our results show that only 39% of the public believes that they don't have access to balanced and neutral information, reflecting the lowest level of dissatisfaction out of all 50 countries surveyed.

On the other hand, Iran, which also has one of the most controlled media industries in the world according to the World Press Freedom Index, stands out in our results as the country where the most people (74%) feel like they do not consume balanced or neutral information.



Notes For Editors

Democracy Perception Index (DPI) Methodology

This report presents an overview of a study conducted by Rasmussen Global and Dalia Research between 2018-06-06 and 2018-06-18. The sample of n=125,000 online-connected respondents was drawn across 50 countries, with country sample sizes ranging from 1,000 to 6,000⁴. Nationally representative results were calculated based on the official distribution of age, gender and education for each country's population, sourced from most recent and available data from Barro Lee & UNStat, and census.gov. The average margin of error across all countries sampled is (+/-) 4.6%.

Data Collection

Dalia's surveys are conducted online through internet-connected devices, such as smartphones, tablets and computers. Dalia follows an open recruitment approach that leverages the reach of over 40,000 third-party apps and mobile websites. To ensure coverage across different demographic groups and geographical regions, Dalia targets a highly diverse set of apps and websites – from news to shopping, to sports and games. As a result, Dalia generates up to 21 million answers every month from respondents living in as many as 100 different countries.

Data Privacy and Anonymity

Once a user opts-in to complete a survey, Dalia informs the respondent about the nature of market research and explains that all answers - including the generic demographics that are part of the targeting and quality assurance process - are recorded anonymously. To ensure respondent privacy and a high quality of response data, Dalia does not collect any personally identifiable information (PII) on users. In contrast to surveys conducted face-to-face or by telephone, the anonymity offered with Dalia's methodology may help reduce response bias, interviewer bias and respondent self-censorship.

Data and Graphs

The graphs in this report are available for download [here](#). Attribution to Dalia Research and Rasmussen Global is required when citing these results.

About Dalia Research

Dalia Research was founded in Berlin in 2013 with a clear vision to utilize mobile technology to change the way attitudinal data is collected, analysed and presented. Harnessing the app economy and combining advanced data science with real-time targeting and attribution technologies, Dalia's insights engine distributes millions of micro surveys worldwide to gather and analyze real-time data on consumer attitudes, public opinion and market trends.

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⁴ The average sample size is ~1500 respondents per country. Some larger countries (i.e. India, China) have sample sizes of ~6000. Although rare, in some instances, the sample size is between 500 and 1,000.



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About Rasmussen Global

Established in 2014 by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Rasmussen Global is an international team with experience on the frontline of international politics, diplomacy, and communications. Rasmussen Global's head office is in Copenhagen, and they work across key decision centres in Brussels, Berlin, London and Washington DC. Their clients include international consulting firms, major companies, and foreign governments.

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Copenhagen Democracy Summit

The Democracy Perception Index is being released to mark the inaugural Copenhagen Democracy Summit, organised by the Alliance of Democracies in partnership with Rasmussen Global and Dalia Research. The Copenhagen Democracy Summit is an annual conference bringing together political and business leaders, including current and former heads of government, from the world's democracies. The purpose of the conference is to build the intellectual and interpersonal foundations for a robust alliance of the world's democracies.

Website: <http://www.allianceofdemocracies.org/initiatives/the-copenhagen-democracy-summit/the-summit/>

The Alliance of Democracies Foundation

The Alliance of Democracies Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2017 by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the former NATO Secretary General and former Prime Minister of Denmark. The Foundation is dedicated to the advancement of democracy and free markets across the globe.

Website: <http://www.allianceofdemocracies.org/>