

Perceptions of Democracy Survey v1

International IDEA fielded its first Perceptions of Democracy Survey (PODS) between May 2023 and January 2024. In each of the 19 countries surveyed, the questions were translated into local languages. The demographic questions were slightly different across the countries in order to properly address the local practices in terms of describing ethnicity, religion, education, and other matters. The sample questions provided in this document provide the essential content of the questionnaire in English, including demographic options for the USA. As other popular and expert surveys have covered similar topics with great success over many years, many of the questions included in PODS were adapted or copied from other surveys.

Example questions

Module: liberal democratic institutions

[q1] How confident are you that you know who your representative is in [national legislature]

- <1> Completely confident
- <2> Fairly confident
- <3> Somewhat confident
- <4> Slightly confident
- <5> Not confident at all

[q3] When the government fails to provide something it owes you - anything from a pension payment to good schools for your children - to whom do you go for help?

- <1> Elected representative
- <2> Local bureaucrat
- <3> Community leader
- <3> Family member
- <4> Other [specify]

[q4] How satisfied are you with the overall performance of the national government in [country]?

- <1> Completely satisfied
- <2> Satisfied
- <3> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- <4> Dissatisfied
- <5> Completely dissatisfied

[q5] In your experience, does the court system provide equal and fair access to justice?

- <1> Never
- <2> Rarely
- <3> Sometimes
- <4> Often
- <5> Always
- <6> Don't know

[q7] Taking into account election day, the election campaign, and the vote counting process, would you consider the most recent national election in [country] to have been free and fair?
<1> No, not at all. The elections were fundamentally flawed and the official results had little if anything to do with the 'will of the people' (i.e., who became president or who won the legislative majority);

<2> Not really. While the elections allowed for some competition, the irregularities in the end affected the outcome of the election;

<3> It's complicated. There was substantial competition and freedom of participation but there were also significant irregularities. It is hard to determine whether the irregularities affected the outcome or not;

<4> Yes, somewhat. There were deficiencies and some degree of fraud and irregularity but these did not in the end affect the outcome (as defined above);

<5> Yes. There was some amount of human error and some logistical restrictions but these were largely unintentional and without significant consequences.

[q8] If the government (president or prime minister in particular) were engaged in unconstitutional, illegal or unethical activity, how likely is it that the legislature would conduct an effective investigation?

<1> Extremely unlikely

<2> Unlikely

<3> As likely as not

<4> Likely

<5> Certain or nearly certain

[q12] Of the major media sources that you may read, listen to, or watch, how often are they critical of the government?

<1> None

<2> Only a few marginal outlets

<3> Some important outlets routinely criticize the government but there are other important outlets that never do

<4> All major media outlets criticize the government, at least occasionally.

[q13] Do you feel that you have the freedom to publicly say what you really think about issues in your community?

<1> Always

<2> Usually

<3> About half of the time

<4> Rarely

<5> Never

[q15] Do you have the freedom to pursue the goals that matter to you, and to build the kind of life that you want for yourself?

<1> Always

<2> Usually

<3> About half of the time

<4> Rarely

<5> Never

Module: Public Participation

[q16] Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Voting is a meaningful way of impacting the government.

- <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Somewhat agree
- <3> Neither agree nor disagree
- <4> Somewhat disagree
- <5> Strongly disagree

[q21_grid] Please select all of the activities in which you have participated in the last 12 months:

- [vote] Voted in a national or local election
- [rally] Attended a rally
- [signed] Signed a petition
- [participated] Participated in an industrial action (such as a strike)
- [politicalparty] Attended meetings held by a political party
- [tradeunion] Attended meetings held by a trade union
- [community] Attended meetings held by a community or professional organization (such as village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce);
- [civildis] Engaged in civil disobedience
- [rentstrike] Participated in a rent strike
- [encouraged] Encouraged others to vote or participate in politics
- [informal] Attended informal gatherings of neighbors
- [other] Other [specify]

[q24] How often are people like you denied or provided inferior access to public services?

- <1> Never
- <2> Sometimes
- <3> Often
- <4> Always
- <5> Don't Know

[q29] Comparing your personal economic conditions with those of your parents' when they were about your age, would you say that you are better off, worse off or about the same?

- <1> Better off
- <2> Worse off
- <3> About the same
- <4> Don't know

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being much worse and 5 being much better, how would you rate your access to each of the following resources, in comparison to others in [country]?

[q31] A quality education in your community

[q33] Opportunities to make a living

[q34] Housing of an acceptable standard

[q37] On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being much worse and 5 being much better, how vulnerable do you feel you are to violence, in comparison to others in [country]?

- <1> Much worse
- <2>
- <3>
- <4>
- <5> Much better

[q38] How easy or difficult is it to obtain [form of national identification card] (or other government issued identification in [country])?

- <1> Very easy
- <2> Easy
- <3> Difficult
- <4> Very difficult

[grid] To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- [q41] Governments should risk losing the elections when they have done a bad job.
- [q42] The party or group that wins the election should be able to govern and make policies however they want.
- [q44] It is more important to have a government that can get things done, even if we have no say over what it does.
- [q46] People should be restricted from discussing politics in public if they are criticizing the government.
- [q47] The courts should be able to stop the government if it violates the constitution.
- [q49] Gender equality in political representation is a goal that we should pursue.

[q51_q54grid] Next, we will describe various types of political systems. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very good and 5 being very bad, indicate how good or bad you believe each system is for governing this country.

- [q51] Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country
- [q52] Having the army rule
- [q53] Having a democratic political system
- [q54] Having a system governed by religious law

- <1> Very good
- <2>
- <3>
- <4>
- <5> Very bad

{Q55_INTRO} You might have favorable thoughts or feelings about having a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with parliament or elections. Or you might have unfavorable thoughts or feelings about having a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with parliament or elections. Or you might have some of each. We would like to ask you first about any favorable thoughts and feelings you might have about a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with parliament or elections. Then in a moment, we will ask you some separate questions about any unfavorable thoughts and feelings you might have.

{end Q55_INTRO}

[q55] {open} First, do you have ANY favorable thoughts or feelings about a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with Parliament or elections, or do you NOT have any?

<1> Yes, I have one or more unfavorable thoughts.

<2> No, I don't have any unfavorable thoughts.

[q56 if q55==1] How favorable are your favorable thoughts and feelings about a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with Parliament or elections?

<1> Extremely favorable

<2> Very favorable

<3> Moderately favorable

<4> Slightly favorable

[q57] Do you have ANY unfavorable thoughts or feelings about a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with Parliament or elections, or do you NOT have any?

<1> Yes

<2> No

[q58 if q57==1] How unfavorable are your unfavorable thoughts and feelings about a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with Parliament or elections?

<1> Extremely unfavorable

<2> Very unfavorable

<3> Moderately unfavorable

<4> Slightly unfavorable

[q59] In your view, how should laws be made at the national level?

<1> By a legislature

<2> By the people themselves

<3> By elders

<4> By custom or tradition

<5> Don't know

<6> Other [specify]

[q60] In your view, where should people go for justice when they feel they have been wronged?

<1> The government

<2> Communities

<3> Elders

<4> Families

<5> Individuals

<6> Other [specify]

[q61] In your view, who should be primarily responsible for caring for vulnerable people in the community?

<1> The government

<2> Communities

<3> Elders

<4> Families

<5> Individuals

<6> Other [specify]

[q62] In your view, who should be primarily responsible for regulating economic activity?

- <1> The government
- <2> Communities
- <3> Elders
- <4> Families
- <5> Individuals
- <6> Other [specify]

[q70] {mult} Which are the most important values children should learn? (select all that apply)

- <1> Obedience
- <2> Equality
- <3> Justice
- <4> Honesty and integrity
- <5> Accountability
- <6> Resilience
- <7> Empathy
- <8> Faith
- <9> Family
- <10> Patriotism
- <11> Other [specify]

Module: Demographics

Gender

What is your gender?

- <1> Man
- <2> Woman
- <3> Non-binary
- <4> Other

Sexual orientation

Which of the following best describes your sexuality?

- <1> Heterosexual / straight
- <2> Lesbian / gay woman
- <3> Gay man
- <4> Bisexual
- <5> Other
- <6> Prefer not to say

Birthyear

In what year were you born?

Assets - Household

[assets]. Do you or any member of your family have any of the following goods? (read each one of the goods and tick an answer for each).

House in which the parents have a separate bedroom from the children
Own house

Washing machine
Running hot water
Sewage system
At least one meal a day
Drinking water
Heating/ Air Conditioner
Response options:
<1> Yes
<2> No

Assets - Communications

[assets]. Do you or any member of your family own any of the following goods? (read each one of the goods and choose an answer for each).

Car
Computer
Fixed telephone
Mobile phone
Smartphone
Internet Connection at home
Response options:
<1> Yes
<2> No

Education

How many years of formal education have you completed?
Dropdown options range from 0 to 22, with "Not sure" as an option.

[q84] Do you identify as being part of a minority group within your country?

<1> Yes [if yes, specify]
<2> No
<3> Not sure

Employ

Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Select all that apply.

<1> Employed - full time (32 or more hours weekly)
<2> Employed - part time (15 to less than 32 hours weekly)
<3> Employed - less than 15 hours
<4> Self-employed
<5> Helping family member
<6> Unemployed
<7> Student, in school, in vocational training
<8> Retired
<9> Housewife, homemaker, home duties
<10> Permanently disabled
<11> Others, not in labor force

Importance of religion

How important is religion in your life?

<1> Very important

- <2> Somewhat important
- <3> Not too important
- <4> Not at all important

Religion

What is your present religion, if any?

- <1/"Protestant"> Protestant
- <2/"Roman Catholic"> Roman Catholic
- <3/"Mormon"> Mormon
- <4/"Eastern or Greek Orthodox"> Eastern or Greek Orthodox
- <5/"Jewish"> Jewish
- <6/"Muslim"> Muslim
- <7/"Buddhist"> Buddhist
- <8/"Hindu"> Hindu
- <9/"Atheist"> Atheist
- <10/"Agnostic"> Agnostic
- <11/"Nothing in particular"> Nothing in particular
- <12/"Something else"> Something else

Race

What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

- <1> White
- <2/"Black"> Black or African-American
- <3/"Hispanic"> Hispanic or Latino
- <4/"Asian"> Asian or Asian-American
- <5> Native American
- <8> Middle Eastern
- <6/"Two or more races"> Two or more races
- <7/"Other"> Other

Language spoken at home

What language(s) do you speak at home?