

BBC World and Synovate unveil global attitudes to democracy

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More than half the people surveyed in a global opinion poll for BBC World believe that terrorism can destroy democracy. The survey of 12,000 people across 15 countries on five continents was carried out in August by the international market research company Synovate.

The survey was commissioned as part of a wider exploration of global attitudes to democracy to be aired during **BBC World's *Why Democracy?*** season.

Steve Garton, global head of media research, Synovate says, "We set out to reflect people's feelings across the world about how important a role democratic processes played in their lives. The answers may surprise some, showing a diversity of opinion. Interestingly, it is precisely this diversity of opinion that underpins democratic principles."

Sian Kevill, editorial director **BBC World** says, "There are many fascinating national variations to come out of this survey, but I was particularly struck by how people in some of the world's longest established democracies, seem to have an element of fear over how fragile that could prove in the face of terrorism."

Key Findings:

Can Terrorism Destroy Democracy?

In total, 58% of respondents say they agree with the statement: terrorism can destroy democracy. That is made up of 35% who strongly agree and 23% who somewhat agree. Nearly a quarter of those surveyed disagree with the statement. The country with the highest seeming concern is France with 76% agreeing, closely followed by Denmark with 75%, Dubai with 72% and the United States with 70%.

Fewer than half agree in Italy and India and 37% and 31% respectively strongly disagree with the statement in these countries.

How important is it to vote?

When it comes to the importance of voting in their national elections, the vast majority of respondents - 84% - feel it is very or quite important. However there are some interesting national variations. France is the most convinced on the importance of voting, with 82% saying they regard it as very important. Other countries sharing similar strength of opinion, with more than three quarters saying so, are Denmark, South Africa, the USA and India.

Dubai, part of the United Arab Emirates - the only one of the 15 countries surveyed that doesn't have a full democracy - was in line with the average, with 60% saying voting is very important and 22% opting for quite important.

In Russia, however, just 34% believe it is very important to vote and 20% say it is not important at all.

When the results were analysed by strength of religious belief, those to whom religion was very important were the most likely to say voting was very important, at 71%, compared with 62% of respondents overall.

Is a global parliament a good idea?

Support for a global parliament, where votes are based on country population sizes, and the parliament is able to make binding policies, is muted.

Just 14% say they would very likely support the concept. However, almost a quarter see the concept as one they may support but with reservations.

The highest level of unqualified support came from India, at 36%. When the results were analysed by strength of religious belief, almost a quarter (23%) of those across all markets to whom religion was very important indicated wholehearted support, as opposed to 10% of those whose religious beliefs were less strong or not important.

Can democracies solve climate change?

Respondents were also asked whether, given their political structures, they thought China or the USA was best equipped to combat climate change. Overall, the USA came in well ahead of China at 57% versus 22%. However 21% of those asked were undecided. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 87% of US residents believe their system is best equipped.

The most scepticism about the United States' ability to combat climate change came from India where just 40% opted for the USA. The next most sceptical was Russia with 46% for the USA and 34% for China.

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