

Solidarity in the Restless Decade



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Kelly Beaver MBE is Chief Executive of Ipsos in the UK and Ireland, one of the largest and most innovative research organisations in the UK. She is a regular commentator in national press and broadcast media on public and business leader opinion and holds several honorary academic positions.

2024 is another pivotal year in the 2020s, an era we at Ipsos term 'the restless decade'. Rapid global shifts are driving significant disruption to existing structures: from a realignment of geopolitics, through population shifts in an ageing globe, to what appears to be an acceleration in technological and healthcare breakthroughs. Against the backdrop of a wetter, wilder and more unpredictable environment, new challenges – and solutions – are emerging at a dizzying pace.

This year is particularly noteworthy for being an historical year of democracy. Billions of people have already voted in elections around the world, with more to come in the following months. The fact that so many voters have an opportunity to express their opinions on their rulers naturally heightens the importance of public perceptions of all topics – not least global solidarity.

Our work for the Global Solidarity Report 2024, interviewing over 20,000 people across 31 countries, confirms significant tensions within the sentiments underlying global solidarity. These tensions reflect those seen in our wider work polling the global public, pointing to evolving challenges and opportunities over the course of this restless decade.

One key area of tension is among the citizens of the future. Across the survey we find that the youngest generation – Generation Z – are less likely to identify primarily as world citizens than their elder Millennial siblings. While they are as likely to hold a global identity as the older Generation X and Baby Boomers, this finding highlights a trend, captured in our work for International Women's Day, that an assumption that Generation Z are most aligned with 'progressive' causes can be misplaced.

There is work to do in winning over this generation by combating the rising sense of a 'lost future', especially in – but not limited to – the countries of Europe and North America. Otherwise, we will see rising disaffection with existing systems and greater support for new and more radical voices as our restless decade wears on.

A second tension in the data is between support for global solutions to climate problems and willingness to bear the costs for it. Across the world we find a majority in support of international bodies having the right to enforce solutions for certain problems like environmental pollution. Yet

only a third of citizens agree that their taxes should go towards solving global problems.

This speaks to a finding in our work of a perceived lack of leadership on climate issues from the global public. In this vacuum, while people often profess support for global action on important topics like climate change, their willingness to bear the costs of that action often falters in the face of more urgent, personal issues. This highlights the need to set a direction and identify 'win-win' solutions that help on both the global and personal levels.

In all this it is important to remember that a restless decade need not be a negative decade. Change is a driver of opportunities as well as threats. Our latest Ipsos Global Trends research senses the emergence of a new global consensus: the rapid change we are all experiencing should be seen as an 'unfrozen moment', a unique opportunity for us to reshape our world to make it a better, safer and more prosperous place.

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