Data Vision 4 – The World’s Leading Problems, 2008 and 2013

The World’s Leading Problems – Then and Now

Every year, Roper Reports Worldwide asks respondents in countries around the world which of a long list of issues they are most concerned about. In this interactive chart, we show the five leading issues for 25 countries in 2013 and levels of concerns in 2008, when the global financial crisis was unfolding. Click on an issue to see which countries rank it among their top five concerns; the darker the color, the higher the ranking.

2013 Concerns: Text

Five years after the global financial crisis, concerns about recession and unemployment still weigh on the world. The issue ties with inflation and high prices as the #1 concern globally, up from #3 in 2008. Recession and unemployment is the most pervasive issue, ranking in the top five in 23 of 25 countries. It is #1 in 10 countries, including the US.

The deal-mindedness consumers have shown since the global financial crisis is not going away. “Inflation and high prices” ties recession and unemployment as the world’s #1 concern. It ranks in the top five in 21 of 25 countries and is #1 in five countries, including China and Russia.

Consumers’ preoccupation with finances extends to their 3rd-ranked concern. Having enough money to live right and pay bills is in the top five in 19 of 25 countries. It is #1 in two countries, Australia and Canada.

While the economy has crowded out crime and lawlessness globally – it has slipped from 2nd to 4th since 2008 – the issue continues to be paramount in some key developing countries. It is the #1 issue in eight countries, including Brazil, Mexico, and India. It ranks in the top five in 20 of 25 countries.

Environmentalists have a point: It’s hard to focus the world’s attention on environmental pollution amid so many other problems. Pollution ranks #5 globally, but that is largely driven by its high rank in China (#2) and Sweden (#1). It ranks in the top five in only 7 of 25 countries.

Frustration with government is on the rise. Wrongdoing and corruption by government officials has moved up to #6 on the list of global concerns, +3 ranks from 2008. It ranks in the top five issues in seven countries, led by the Czech Republic (#1).

It’s not just the economies of developing countries that make them worth watching. They are also more likely to prioritize the forward-looking concern of educational quality. Of seven countries ranking education among their top five issues, six are developing countries. Concern ranks highest in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico (#3). Overall it ranks sixth, tied with wrongdoing/corruption by government officials.

The future of retirement and pension plans provided by government is a growing concern, ranking 8th, up from 13th in 2008. The issue is felt particularly in developed countries with aging populations. Concern is highest in Japan (#2) and Germany (#3).

While the cost of healthcare ties the future of retirement and pension plans for #8 globally, it only ranks in the top five in two countries (vs. seven for retirement and pensions). It is #4 in the US and #5 in Australia.

Economic inequality is a growing concern globally, ranking 10th, up from 14th in 2008. It is in the top-five in four countries, with concern highest in Taiwan and Turkey (both #4).

Despite growing alarms from scientists, global warming and climate change still ranks relatively low on the world’s list of concerns, at #11, unchanged from 2008. It does not make the top-five in any of 25 countries.

Terrorism has been steadily declining as a concern. It now ranks #12 globally, down from #9 in 2008 and #5 in 2003. It is a top-five concern in only one country, Turkey, where it is #1.

Drug abuse has fallen as a global concern to #13 globally, down 6 ranks from 2008. However, it remains a top-five issue in four countries, led by Thailand (where it is #1) and South Africa (#2).

Religious extremism/fundamentalism is #14 among trended global concerns. But it has moved up 2 ranks from 2008. Concern is highest in Sweden (#5).

Immigration ranks #15 globally, -1 rank from five years ago. In contrast to 2008, when it made the top five in one country, the UK (#2), it is not a top-tier concern in any of 25 studied countries.

Foreign relations ranks 16th, +1 rank from five years ago. It is a top-five concern in only one country, Japan, where it is 4th.

AIDS continues to be a top-tier concern in South Africa, where it ranks #3. But in the world as a whole, it has fallen steadily and now ranks #17, down from #9 a decade ago.

Relations between racial and ethnic groups ranks #18 of 19 trended concerns globally, -2 ranks from 2008. It does not rank in the top five of any of 25 countries.

Aid to countries in the Third World is last among 19 trended concerns, unchanged from 2008. It is not a top-five issue in any of 25 countries.