

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT FALLS SHARPLY IN JUST 3 MONTHS

- *Trust in government to 'do the right thing' sinks by 13 points since November*
- *Vast majority of Brits blame politicians' behaviour for undermining trust*
- *Sense of powerlessness has left just 15% thinking UK political system works for them, and just 20% think that the economic system works in their favour*

LONDON, 31st January 2022 - The British public's trust in government 'to do the right thing' suffered a significant 13-point decline between last November and January to just 29%, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer published today.

The findings, from a supplementary survey of the 22nd annual Edelman Trust Barometer – the largest study of institutional trust in the world – fielded in the UK this month, show trust in all levels of government¹, has declined, suggesting controversy around events in Downing Street has had much wider implications for the whole political system.

Both Boris Johnson and Keir Starmer have seen trust in them fall in the last year. The Prime Minister saw an 18-point drop to 22% (down from 40%) and the Leader of the Opposition saw a 10-point drop to 26% (down from 36%).

There has been a 7-point increase in the number of people who believe that politicians are more likely to lie or mislead compared to a year ago (up from 52% to 59%).

Worryingly, the Trust Barometer shows the collapse in trust runs deeper still, with respondents stating that the way political leaders have acted has left the country divided and is eroding the fabric of democracy.

A total of 79% of Brits now think the way politicians behave is undermining trust in government and 73% say the way they act is making society more divided. A year ago, around half (52%) of Brits thought political parties were behaving in a way that undermines democracy, but now two-thirds of them (66%) feel this way.

Just 15% of those surveyed believe the political system in the UK works in their favour, resulting in a stronger sense of disenfranchisement. Less than a third of people (31%) say they have the power to influence politics based on how they vote, and a majority (57%) say they feel powerless as a citizen to affect change. Starkly, a majority of Brits (55%) say the Covid-19 vaccination should be mandatory for people in this country, but no major UK political party holds this policy position.

Six in ten Brits (60%) believe the UK is on the wrong track, compared to just four in ten who believe it is on the right track (40%). The lack of trust in government and disempowerment felt by Brits is coupled with fears about a rising cost of living and an economic system that they think is broken.

¹ Includes Trust in 'government in general', 'central government', and 'local government'



A majority (53%) of UK residents highlighted the rise in living costs as one of their most pressing concerns. Meanwhile, the number of people who believe their standard of living will get worse in the next year outnumbers those who think it will get better by almost four to one (41% think it will get worse; 11% think it will get better). It is a sharp rise from 29% of Brits who said so last year.

Twice as many Brits think the economic system works against them (41%) as for them (20%). This is even starker for low-income earners, with 54% saying they think the economic system does not work in their favour.

Low-income earners are also much more likely to have seen their financial situation negatively impacted by the pandemic as high-income earners: 52% versus 22% on their feeling of financial security (a 30-point gap); 48% versus 27% on how much they spend on bills (a 21-point gap); and 45% versus 20% on their salary (a 25-point gap).

Ed Williams, President and CEO Edelman EMEA, said:

"Public perceptions of how politicians are behaving is clearly eroding trust in politicians and in the institution of government itself. Very few people feel that the political and economic system works for them, and yet a majority feel powerless to affect change."

"It is unclear whether this low-trust environment is a passing storm or a permanent change in the weather. To shift the public mood will require politicians to tackle the firmly held belief that they cannot be trusted - a process that really can only succeed through action, addressing the issues that matter and delivering positive change to people's lives."

The "great stay" and new expectations of employers

As the British workforce begins to return to the office, the Edelman study also shows that stories about the "great resignation" may have been overplayed. Only 11% of Brits say they have quit their job or taken a sabbatical in the last two years. Just 12% of those who were not furloughed or made unemployed by Covid-19 say that they have started a new job in this period.

However, the pandemic has impacted the labour market by shifting what people are looking for from their employer. Six in ten working Brits say spending time with family (61%) and work-life balance (60%) have become more important to them since the beginning of Covid-19. It shows the primacy people are giving time with loved ones and time outside work. This trumps money; less than half (44%) say that generous salary and financial benefits have become more important since the virus hit.

Ed Williams, President and CEO Edelman EMEA, said:

"Employers really need to understand the dynamic nature of what their workforce values and the significant attitudinal shifts that have taken place during the pandemic. Human capital is the most valuable asset in any firm, but often employee engagement is deprioritised with costly consequences further down the road."



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Notes to Editors

To add further insight for the UK to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, this supplementary survey was done by research firm Edelman Data & Intelligence (DxI) and consisted of 20-minute online interviews conducted between 6-14th January 2022. This UK Supplement online survey sampled over 2,000 respondents, consisting of 2,011 members of the general population and then boost samples of 102 high-income respondents with a household income of £100k+ and non-property assets of £650k+ (to create a total sample size of 149) and 344 low-income respondents with a household income of £15,000 or less (to create a total sample size of 662).

The general population sample is nationally representative of the UK population with regard to gender, age and region.

The 2022 Edelman Global Trust Barometer is the firm's 22nd annual trust and credibility survey. The survey was powered by research firm Edelman Data & Intelligence (DxI) and consisted of 30-minute online interviews conducted between November 1 and November 24, 2021. The 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer online survey sampled more than 33,000 respondents, which includes at least 1,150 general population respondents across 28 countries, including the UK.

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