



2019  
**Edelman  
Trust  
Barometer**  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer

The 19th annual trust and credibility survey. Research conducted by Edelman Intelligence, a global insight and analytics consultancy.

## Methodology

Online survey in 27 markets

33,000+ respondents total

All fieldwork was conducted between October 19 and November 16, 2018

### ▲ General Online Population

- Ages 18+
- 1,150 respondents per market

### ▲ Informed Public

- Represents 16% of total global population
- 500 respondents in U.S. and China; 200 in all other markets
- Must meet four criteria:

Ages 25-64

College-educated

In top 25% of household income per age group in each market

Report significant media consumption and engagement in business news and public policy

### ▲ Mass Population

- All respondents not including Informed Public
- Represents 84% of total global population

## 2019 Focus on Employer-Employee Relationship

55% of global general population are full-time or part-time employees (but not self-employed)

Oversample of employees of multinational companies: 500 respondents per market

**On the cover, from top right:** Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, President of Mexico, speaks at his inauguration: Manuel Velasquez/Getty Images; President-elect Jair Bolsonaro at a ceremony confirming his election victory in Brazil: Andre Coelho/Bloomberg via Getty Images; Teresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, at a European Union leaders summit in Brussels, Belgium: Jasper Juinen/Bloomberg via Getty Images; "Yellow Vests" demonstrators in Paris, France: Chesnot/Getty Images; Elon Musk, founder and CEO of SpaceX: David McNew/AFP/Getty Images; Women take part in a "women's wall" protest in Kochi in southern Kerala, India: -/AFP/Getty Images; Germany newsweekly magazine Der Spiegel admits fabricated reporting: Morris MacMatzen/Getty Images; Les Moonves, former president and CEO of CBS Corporation: Chris Farina/Corbis via Getty Images; Arif Naqvi, former CEO of Abraaj Capital Ltd.: Vivek Prakash/Bloomberg via Getty Images.

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# Trust at Work



Richard Edelman  
President and CEO

The past two decades have seen a progressive destruction of trust in societal institutions, a consequence of the Great Recession, fears about immigration and economic dislocation caused by globalization and automation. Traditional power elite figures, such as CEOs and heads of state, have been discredited. The growth of social media platforms fully shifted people's trust from a top-down orientation to a horizontal one in favor of peers or experts. Now we are seeing a further reordering of trust to more local sources, with "My Employer" emerging as the most trusted entity, because the relationships that are closest to us feel more controllable.

This shift is happening in the context of an acute "mass-class" divide. Trust among the informed public soared to a record high (65 percent) while the mass population continues to distrust institutions (49 percent). This profound ideological divide is in the double-digits in more than two-thirds of markets (highest in the UK, at 24 points), providing ample ground for nationalism, protectionism and insurgent grassroots movements. The trust inequality problem has moved into developed nations with egalitarian heritages, such as Canada (20-point gap) and is spreading into the developing world (17-point gap in India).

Pessimism is widespread. Only one-in-five of mass population respondents believe that the system is working for them; in developed markets, only one-in-three of that cohort believes his or her family will be better off in five years' time. Fears of job loss among the general population remain high, whether caused by a lack of retraining and skills (59 percent) or automation and innovation (55 percent). More than twice as many of these respondents say the pace of innovation is too fast (54 percent) versus those who say it is too slow (21 percent).

Trust is also divided along gender lines, with women more skeptical about institutions than men. The gender trust gap is in the double digits in several developed markets; this is mostly driven by women's lower trust in business (U.S., 15-point gap; Germany, 14-point gap).

Frustrated by their inability to effect positive change through the traditional electoral process, people are taking power back into their own hands. The Gilet Jaunes public demonstrations in France pitted the mass against the elite, forcing a retraction of a fuel tax. The #MeToo movement reached into the corporation, causing the exit of CBS chief executive Les Moonves and prompting a walkout by 20,000 Google employees to force change in the company's standards of behavior.

Tech companies have faced internal dissent over government contracts, with employees refusing to carry out projects from surveillance to security.

This urgent desire for change is driving a renewed interest in fact-finding, leading to a stunning rise in consumption and sharing of news, up 22 points in a year to 72 percent. This is a dramatic reversal from just a year ago, when half of our study respondents had walked away from traditional media because it was biased, chasing clicks and too upsetting to read. Trust in traditional media and trust in search are now tied at 66 percent, their highest historical levels, while trust in social media is in crisis (43 percent), especially in several developed regions that show enormous trust gaps between traditional and social media (U.S./Canada, 31-point gap; Europe, 26-point gap).

People have low confidence that societal institutions will help them navigate a turbulent world, so they are turning to a critical relationship: their employer. Seventy-five percent of respondents trust "My Employer" – 19 points more than business in general and 27 points more than government.



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Overwhelmingly, our employee respondents expect their employers to be their partners in change. Employees' expectation that prospective employers will join them in taking action on societal issues (67 percent) is nearly as high as their expectations of personal empowerment (74 percent) and job opportunity (80 percent). Nearly six in 10 look to their employer as a trustworthy source of information on contentious social problems and on important topics like the economy (72 percent) and technology (58 percent).

This significant shift in employee expectations opens up an enormous opportunity for employers to help rebuild societal trust, as the general population sees business as being able to make money and improve society (73 percent). The result is a new employee-employer contract—Trust at Work—predicated on taking these actions:

1. **Lead Change** – Establish an audacious goal that attracts socially-minded employees and make it a core business objective (for example, the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan to double revenue without increasing the company's use of natural resources). To realize this full-scale commitment to societal change, companies must

first address employees' very real fears about the threat of automation to their livelihoods and provide them with retraining.

2. **Empower Employees** – Go direct to employees with fact-based information about the issues of the day, supplementing the mainstream media, which has been winnowed by a difficult business model. Give employees a voice on your channels; trust in company-owned media rose by seven points this past year.
3. **Start Locally** – Care for the communities where you operate, especially if you are a multinational. Be part of the solution on education, inequality and infrastructure. Enable your employees to volunteer and give back locally.
4. **CEO Leadership** – CEOs must speak up directly on social issues, such as immigration, diversity and inclusion. But they must do more than talk; they must demonstrate their personal commitment, inside and outside the company. Seventy-six percent of people expect CEOs to take a stand on challenging issues.

Trust at Work is a fundamental rebalancing of the employee-employer relationship, shifting from top-down control to one that emphasizes employee empowerment. In a full employment economy, an employee has more freedom to choose the kind of workplace they are now coming to expect, one where values and the power to make change are a given.

This is the path that business must follow to help restore trust, the greatest moral challenge of our era. The critical work of building a better future for all begins in the workplace.

# Divided by Trust

The Edelman Trust Barometer registered modest gains in people's trust in each of the four major societal institutions—government, business, media and NGOs—in 2019, but no institution saw changes dramatic enough to change its standing (Fig. 1). Government and media remain distrusted by the general population, while among the informed public, trust in all four institutions rose by four points. Among the general population, gains were even smaller (a two-point increase for NGOs and three points for the remaining three institutions).

The more dramatic story this year is that the world is now divided by trust. There is a 16-point gap between the more trusting informed public and the far more skeptical mass population,

marking a return to record highs of trust inequality, and the reemergence of a true “mass-class” divide (Fig. 4).

The phenomenon fueling this divide was a global rise in trust among the informed public. Markets such as the U.S., UK, Canada, South Korea and Hong Kong saw trust gains of 12 points or more among the informed public. In 18 markets, there is now a double-digit trust gap between the informed public and the mass population (Fig. 3).

Despite the divergence in trust between the informed public and mass population, the world is united on one front—all share an urgent desire for change. Only one in five feels that the system is working for

them, with nearly half of the mass population believing that the system is failing them (Fig. 2).

Relatedly, fears associated with potential job loss are high. Fifty-nine percent worry about the ability to get a new a job due to a lack of training or skills. Fifty-five percent cite automation, and 57 percent cite the harmful effects of trade policies as a driving concern.

Pessimism runs particularly rampant across the developed world. In 14 markets, the majority of the mass population does not believe they will be better off in five years.

## A MODEST RISE IN TRUST

Percent trust 2018 vs. 2019

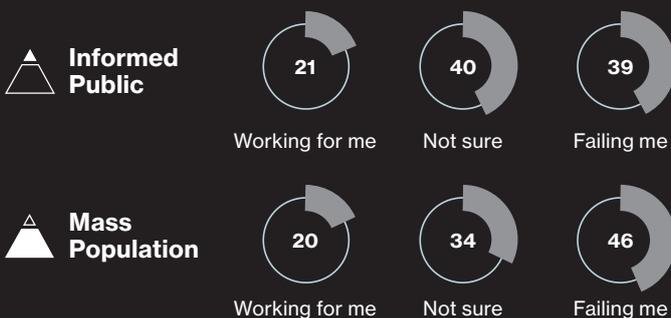
FIG. 01



## LOW CONFIDENCE IN THE SYSTEM

Percent who agree the system is...

FIG. 02



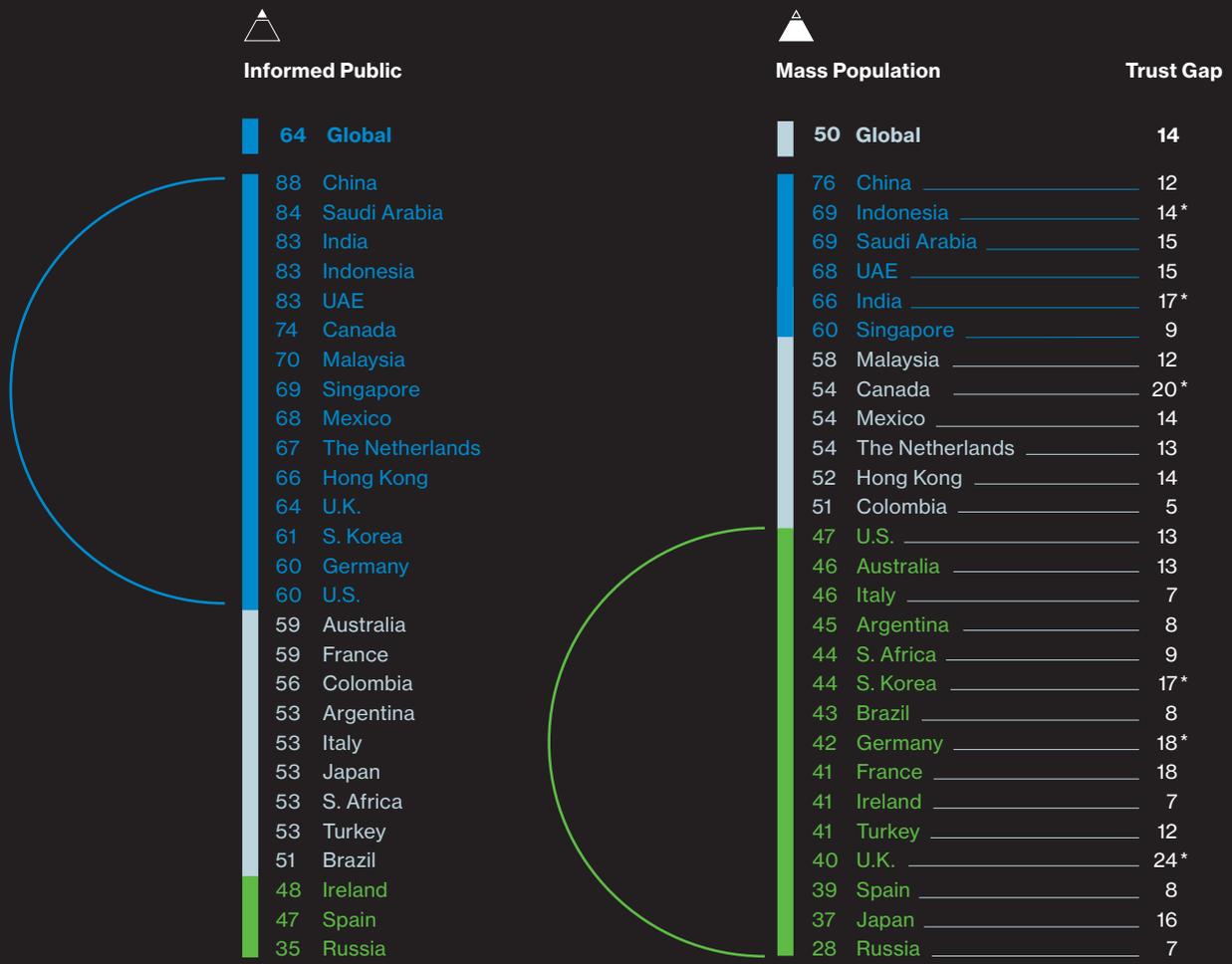
Only **1 in 5** believe the system is working for them

# A WORLD OUT OF BALANCE

Trust Index 2019

Trust (>59) Neutral (50-59) Distrust (<50)

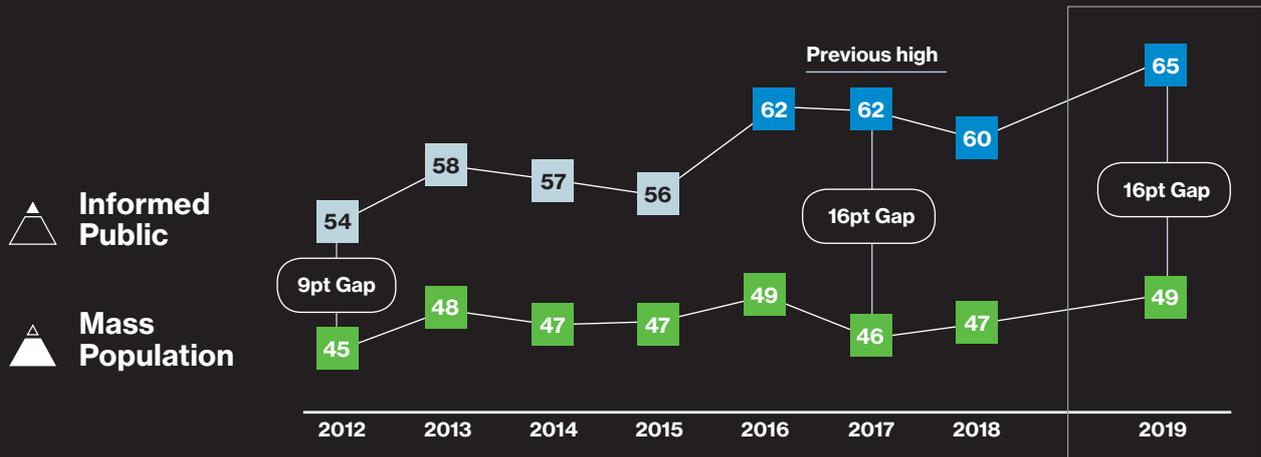
\*highest-ever trust inequality



## TRUST INEQUALITY RETURNS TO RECORD HIGHS

Trust Index (23-market average)

Trust (>59) Neutral (50-59) Distrust (<50)



# An Urgent Desire for Change

In conjunction with pessimism and worry, there is a growing move toward engagement and action. In 2019, consumption of news and information has resurged (Fig. 5). Whereas in 2018 nearly half stated that they consumed news less than once a week, that percentage has now declined to 28 percent. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 40 percent not only consume news

more than once a week, but they also routinely amplify it.

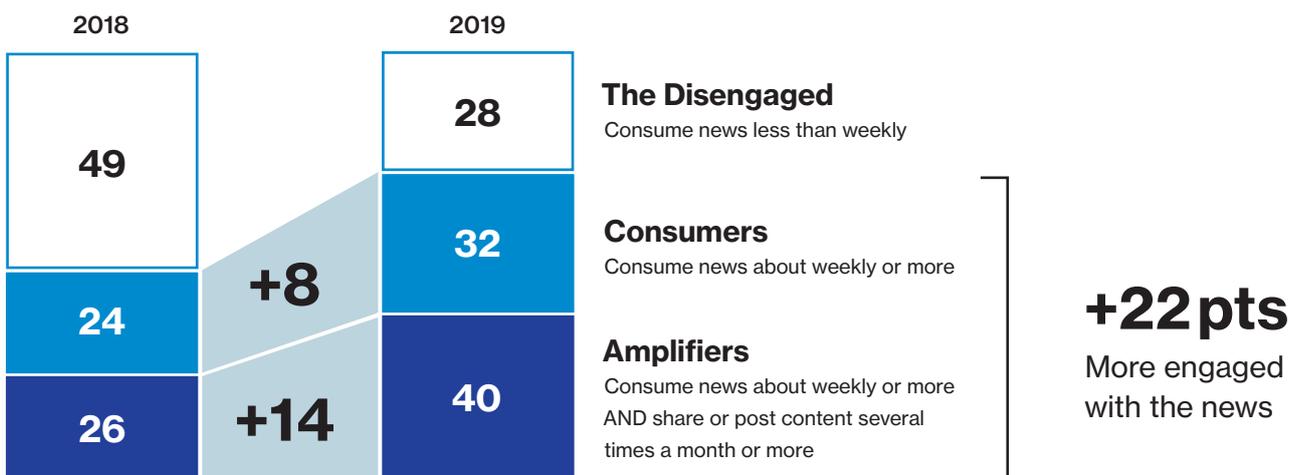
Yet, while people are using the tools available to them to educate themselves and amplify opinions and information, trust in social media as a source of information remains significantly lower than trust in traditional media sources in all regions of the world (Fig. 6).

In the U.S. and Canada, there is a 30-plus point difference (65 to 34) between trust in traditional and trust in social media. But people are encountering roadblocks in their quest for facts and understanding, with high concern about fake news.

## MASSIVE RISE IN NEWS ENGAGEMENT

FIG. 05

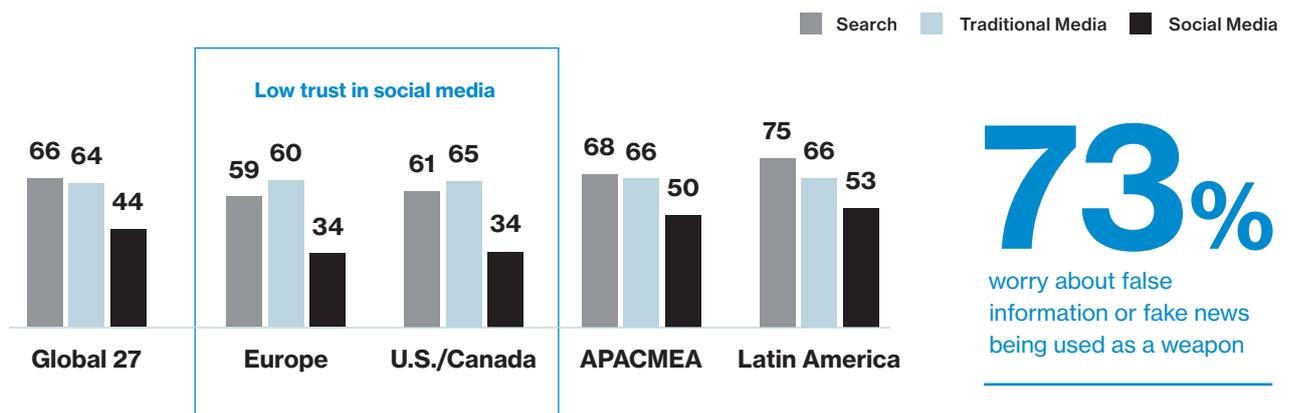
How often do you engage in the following activities related to news and information?



## LOOKING FOR RELIABLE SOURCES

FIG. 06

Percent who trust each source of news



# Women Trust Less



**Carol Potter**  
President & CEO,  
Europe & CIS

In 2018, the #MeToo movement gathered huge momentum, stretching into almost every aspect of our lives. The UK celebrated 100 years since women got the right to vote, and many more women voted to Remain than Leave in the Brexit referendum. In India, millions of women formed a human wall to spotlight gender equality. In France, we see a large female presence in the Gilet Jaunes protests, and across the Atlantic, women voters turned out in record numbers for the U.S. Congress midterm elections in November.

Against this backdrop it seems apt to interrogate our Edelman Trust Barometer data to see if it highlights any differences in trust between men and women.

It does appear that overall all women are less trusting than men (Fig. 7). Women in the general population show distrust in 15 out of 27 markets, four more markets than men. Their

trust scores in general are lower, notably in developed markets like the U.S., Germany, Australia, Japan, France and Canada.

Could it be that with all the focus on the imbalance of power between men and women that women feel less represented, more disenfranchised and thus less trusting?

Of significance is the relative mistrust that women have in business compared to men. Globally, the gap is seven points, but it stands at 15 points in the U.S., and there are eight markets where the gap is greater than seven points.

Should we be surprised when we see a shrinking number of female CEOs and the exposure of indefensible gender pay gaps in countries like the UK, where companies have been required to publish their salaries? Even the iconic institution of the BBC was found lacking. Women are not seeing women in charge in business or as highly valued as men. Does this undermine their faith?

“Engagement” is a key factor in trust for women. As women are more engaged with news and information, their trust gap with men closes. The good news is that women in the informed public are becoming more engaged, with a 23-point spike in engagement from last year.

But overall, the skepticism on behalf of women begs the question: What do we do? Should we talk more directly and more often to women? Should we dial up talking about our purpose, our intentions and our integrity when we talk to women as our employees or our customers?

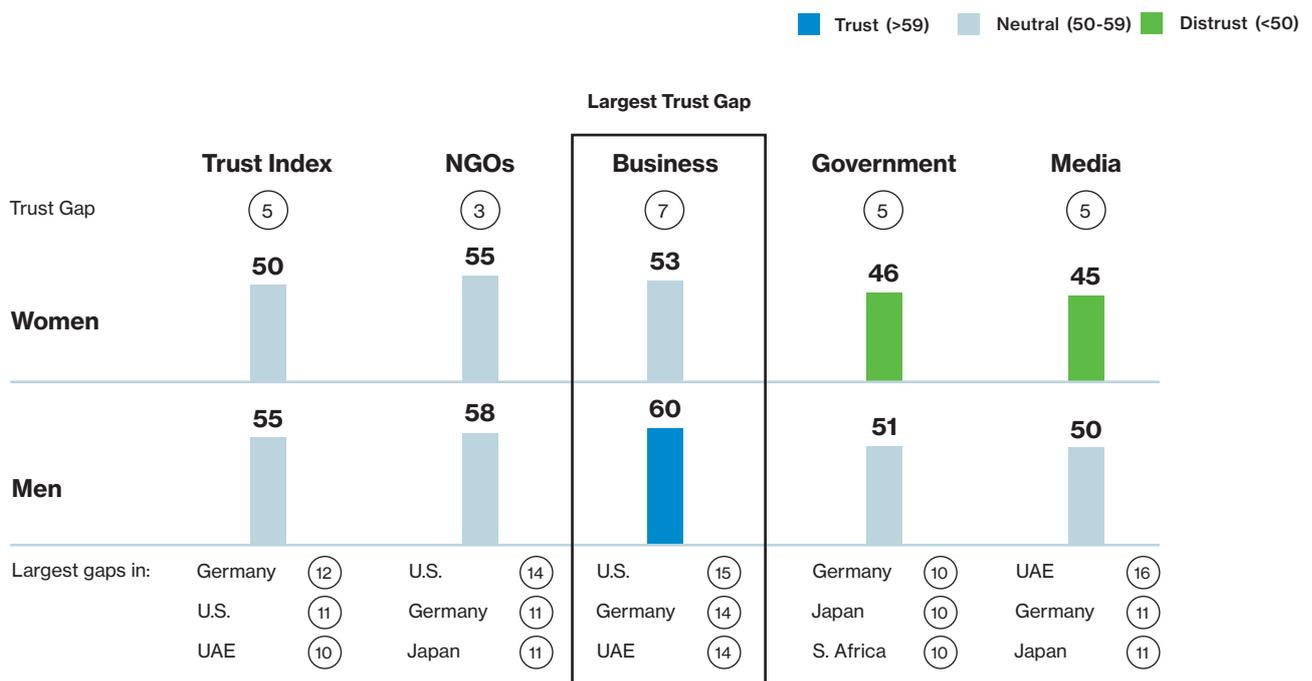
And as we see trust becoming a more local issue, the way business treats women in its local community may well become something we need to pay attention to.

At a time when the debate over women’s place in our society is center stage and unlikely to go away soon, it is worth us all giving these findings careful thought.

## DIVIDED ALONG GENDER LINES

Percent trust

FIG. 07



# My Employer: A Trusted Partner for Change

People are now bringing their call for change to the workplace, where they have a trusted relationship—their relationship with their employer. Trust in “My Employer” outranks trust in any single institution, with trust levels at 75 percent (Fig. 8). This is a global phenomenon. In the vast majority of markets, trust in employers rose, and in all markets, employers are trusted more than they are distrusted (Fig. 9). Even for the more skeptical mass population who have lost faith in the system, trust in employers is high.

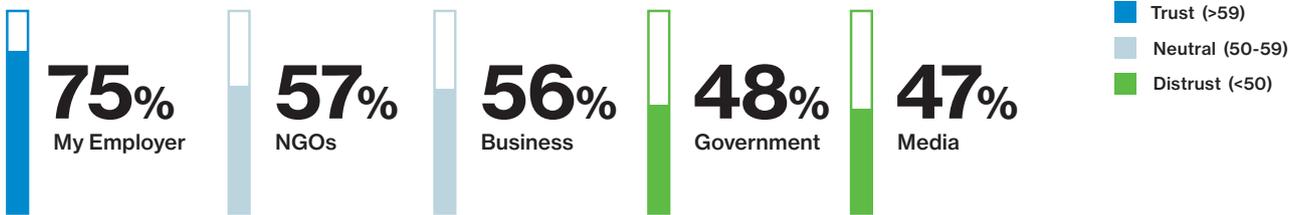
A closer examination reveals that the majority are looking to their employers to provide certainty by acting as a trustworthy source of information on contentious societal issues. Further, what drives trust in employers is not simply operational excellence or decisions that would impact jobs. On the contrary, an organization’s contributions to society, its values and its vision for the future all outweigh operational decisions in terms of earning trust.

As people look for change, they are increasingly turning to CEOs to lead it—from positive change on prejudice and discrimination, to training for the jobs of tomorrow, to sexual harassment. Today, 76 percent say CEOs should take the lead on change, rather than waiting for government to impose it—an 11-point increase in the last year alone.

## "MY EMPLOYER" IS THE MOST TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP

FIG. 08

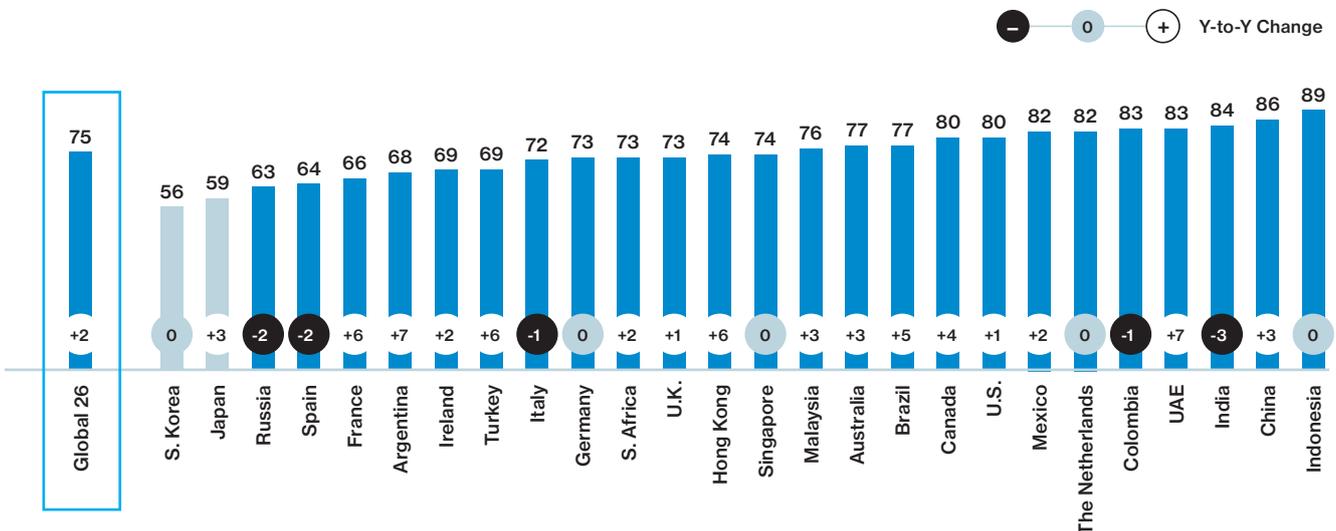
Percent trust



## STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH "MY EMPLOYER" AROUND THE WORLD

FIG. 09

Percent trust in "My Employer"



# CEOs Must Lead Change



Stephen Kehoe  
Global Chair,  
Reputation

In the face of heightened expectations on CEOs to step into the trust vacuum left by government, pressure is on them to do more – and quickly – to invoke a sense of certainty, reassurance and confidence with employees as well as the general public.

While needing to continue to project an image of calm, collected and certain leadership, particularly ahead of a potential economic downturn, CEOs must clearly also consider the significantly heightened expectations on them to be advocates for change in a world that is still confused and uncertain.

In last year's Edelman Trust Barometer, we noted that expectations on CEOs to speak up and lead change was up to a record high of 65 percent. Our advice was similar: take advantage of the moment to project leadership and maximize the business benefits of doing so. A few CEOs did seem to take up this call to action, from Paul Polman's push to organize the business response to climate change, to Satya Nadella's support for DREAMers and stand against family separations – but not enough. This year, the call to action appears to be yet more urgent – a rise

by 11 points in the public's expectation that CEOs will speak up and lead change. Today, some 76 percent of respondents believe CEOs need to step up.

And stepping up proactively is required. Importantly, our data shows that whereas there is a trust "advantage" of some 19 points for "my employer" (75 percent) versus business in general (56 percent), the same trust advantage is only seven points when comparing the credibility of "my CEO" (54 percent) versus CEOs in general (47 percent). In other words, employee trust in employers should not be assumed to be an endorsement of the CEO.

What do CEOs need to do to build trust? There are clues in the data. The first is to recognize that while hope is placed in employers to get it right, people are generally unhappy. Pessimism is pervasive; most people in the developed world do not believe they will be better off in five years.

Second, it's key to note that employees and prospective employees want CEOs to act beyond reproach when it comes to speaking the truth. Candor, honesty and transparency are all powerful trust-building elements, together with high

expectations (74 percent) that CEOs will embody the values and mission of the organization they lead.

There continues to be much uncertainty in the world, and while trust levels have generally seen a recovery, it is distributed unequally between the informed public and mass population groups we surveyed. There are heightened expectations on CEOs as a result, but generally they are not stepping up to the challenge. This is a miss. Not only from a perspective of trust overall, but in terms of the business benefits that accrue to employers who are regarded as treating their employees well in an age of fragmentation and inequality.



# The New Employee-Employer Contract

The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer data points to a surprisingly deep relationship between employees and employers. Employees are ready and willing to trust their employers, but the trust must be earned through more than “business as usual.” Sixty-seven percent would refuse to work for, or expect higher pay from, an organization that did not share their values or provide the opportunity to address societal problems (Fig. 10).

In turn, meeting these expectations builds stronger and more resilient trust (Fig. 11). Employees who have higher trust in their employer are far more likely to engage in beneficial actions on their behalf. Specifically, trusting employees are more engaged, they will advocate on behalf of their organization, and they remain far more committed and loyal than their more skeptical counterparts (Fig. 12). In sum, societal action by employers creates trust, which fosters a more deeply engaged and productive workforce.

Increasingly, actions that go beyond operational excellence are the new expectation of business. In fact, the 2019 Trust Barometer saw a nine-point increase in the number of general population respondents who agreed that a company can take specific actions that both increase profits and improve the economic and social conditions in the communities where it operates.

## EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS NOW INCLUDE SOCIETAL CHANGE

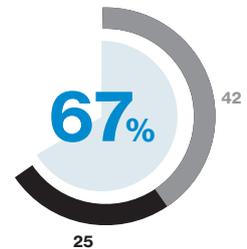
Percent of employees who expect each from a prospective employer

FIG. 10

- Strong expectation**  
 You would have to pay me a lot more to work for an organization that does not offer this
- Deal breaker**  
 I would never work for an organization that does not offer this

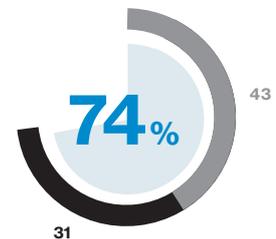
### Shared Action

My employer has a greater purpose, and my work has a meaningful societal impact



### Personal Empowerment

I know what is going on, I am part of the planning process, and I have a voice in key decisions; the culture is values-driven and inclusive



### Job Opportunity

My employer offers good wages, training, career growth and interesting work experiences

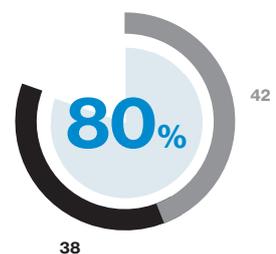


FIG. 11

## MEETING EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS BUILDS RESILIENT TRUST

Percent who trust their employer by degree to which expectations are met

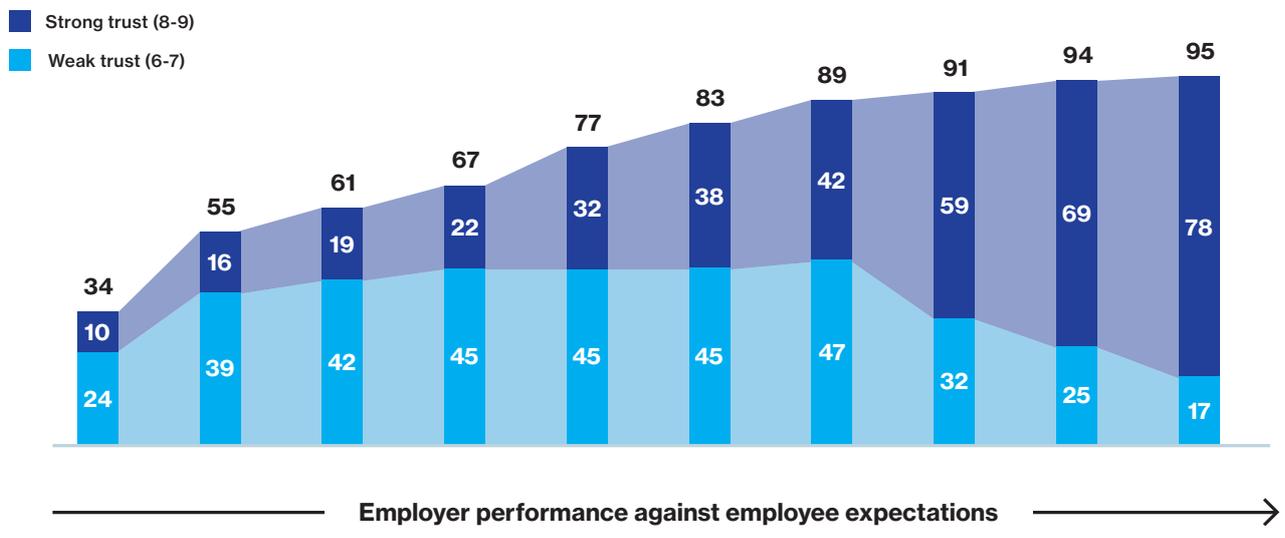
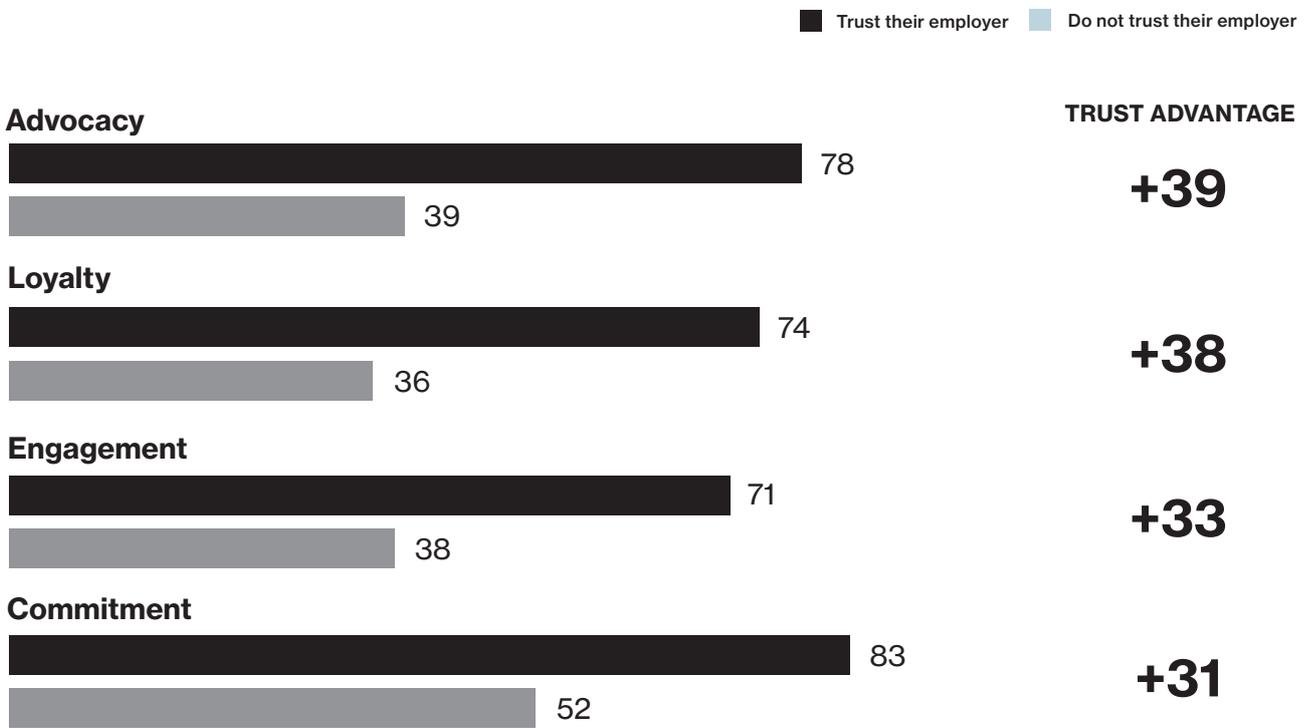


FIG. 12

## TRUST CEMENTS THE EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP

Percent of employees who engage in these types of behaviors on behalf of their employer



# Trust Is Tangible



**Antoine Harary**  
Global Managing Director,  
Edelman Intelligence

## Introducing the Edelman Net Trust Score

Over the last 19 years, the Edelman Trust Barometer has detected and documented some of the largest opinion shifts shaping the world. We have observed that the state and dynamic of trust in institutions was in many ways predictive of larger societal, economic and political changes to come.

Building on the conviction that trust is predictive in nature and converts into tangible realities, we initiated a comprehensive and global effort to augment the science of trust on a global scale. This 18-month process, conducted in partnership with leading academics in the field of trust and reputation, including Professor Daniel Diermeier of the University of Chicago, resulted in considerable progress in our understanding of what makes trust such a powerful asset for organizations, how to measure it accurately and demonstrate the true value it brings.

For example, we found that the power of trust as a key indicator is very much connected to its forward-looking nature and strong

connection to risk. Unlike reputation or favorability, which are backwards-looking metrics, trust implies a dynamic projection—it is a bet that stakeholders place, trusting that the organization will deliver against their positive expectations.

We also advanced the understanding of the process that leads people to trust an organization or not (Fig. 13).

One of the most significant outputs of this R&D effort is the Edelman Net Trust Score, a simple metric that can be used by businesses and organizations to monitor the state of their trust capital across countries and audiences. The score is comprised of an analysis of how stakeholders answer a simple question: *To what extent do you trust the organization to do what is right?*

We analyze the answers by looking at the share of respondents who express High, Medium and Low Trust.

Beyond its simplicity, we have found strong evidence that this score operates as a predictor of the resilience of a business or organization through adverse events. We also are measuring significant correlations between High Trust

and stakeholders' goodwill in the form of higher levels of loyalty, recommendation and endorsement, all contributing to giving High Trust companies a significant competitive advantage.

Finally, we are observing fascinating parallels between the level of trust a company enjoys and its long-term performance in the marketplace and on the stock market (Fig. 14), findings we are continuing to strengthen and document.

Trust is a critical asset for any organization, and as such, it needs to be protected, promoted and managed to improve the chances that an organization will succeed in the long term.

### THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF TRUST

FIG. 13

**Ability:** The perception that the organization is good at what it does

**Integrity:** The conviction that it is honest

**Dependability:** The expectation that it will keep its promises

**Purpose:** The sentiment that it is trying hard to have a positive impact on society

## HIGH TRUST COMPANIES OUTPERFORM THEIR SECTOR

Stock performance of 31 high trust U.S. companies, compared to a weighted sector average  
Jan 2018 – Dec 2018



FIG. 14

High Trust companies outperformed their sector by an average of

**5%**  
January - December 2018

## About Edelman

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Edelman is an independent global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations – long-established and just-emerging – to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations.

Our global network comprises 6,000 practitioners in more than 60 offices whose work spans brand, reputation, digital, and advisory and is powered by analytics, planning, creative and media relations.

Among our many honors are the Cannes Lions Grand Prix for PR; the Holmes Report's 2018 Global Digital Agency of the Year; Advertising Age's "Agencies to Watch 2018;" and, five times, Glassdoor's "Best Places to Work." Since our founding in 1952, we have remained a family-run business.

Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle).

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