

The Trust 10

01 A raging infodemic feeds mistrust

Trust in all news sources is at record lows: Social media (down 5 points to 35 percent); owned media (down 5 points to 41 percent); traditional media (down 8 points to 53 percent); and search engines (down 6 points to 56 percent). Over half say government and business leaders are deliberately misleading with lies and misinformation.

02 Government spring trust bubble bursts

In May 2020, government emerged as the most trusted institution, when people sought leadership in the fight against Covid-19 and restoring economic health. But government squandered its trust bump, losing the most ground of any institution in the last six months (down 8 points globally in January 2021).

03 Trust declines in the world's largest economies

Trust in the U.S. government is at 40 percent and even lower in China (30 percent) among foreign respondents. China has seen the most dramatic decline in trust from its own citizens (from a Trust Index of 90 to 72 in the past six months). The U.S., already in the bottom quartile for trust, dropped a further five points post-election (43 percent) – which would put it ahead only of Japan and Russia.

04 Covid-19 fears impede return to workplace

Fifty-two percent of respondents choose to work at home out of fear of Covid-19 while commuting/in office, more productivity and enhanced work-life balance. Yet nearly two in 3 respondents at the time of our survey said they are willing to get vaccinated within a year.

05 Only 1 in 4 practice good information hygiene

Nearly 40 percent practice poor information hygiene – not engaging with multiple news sources, immersing in news echo chambers and not vetting information and amplifying unvetted information.

06 Societal leaders are not trusted to do what is right

Amidst urgent problems and in a year of crisis, leadership is failing. Trust in societal leaders declines further and government leaders, religious leaders, journalists and CEOs are outrightly distrusted.

07 Business becomes only trusted institution and the only one seen as both competent and ethical

Business (61 percent) is the most trusted institution and the only institution that is seen as both competent and ethical – beating government in competence by nearly 50 points and approaching NGOs on ethics.

08 Business is expected to fill the information void

The biggest opportunity to earn business trust is guarding information quality; 53 percent believe companies have a responsibility to step in and fill the information void when the news media is either absent or failing to supply people with accurate and timely information.

09 'My Employer' sees continued high trust while 'My Employer's' media is seen as most credible information source

'My employer' continues to be trusted around the world with 76 percent global trust, and it is the most believed source of information (61 percent) – over national government (58 percent); traditional media (57 percent); social media (39 percent).

10 New expectations of business bring new demands for CEOs

More than 8 in 10 respondents expect CEOs to publicly speak out on societal challenges like the impact of the pandemic, job automation, societal issues and local community issues; 68 percent want CEOs to step in when government won't fix societal problems; 65 percent want CEOs to hold themselves as accountable to the public as to shareholders.

All data is based on general population sample unless otherwise noted.

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