

# 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer

Special Analysis:  
Trust at Work Across U.S. Divides



In collaboration with



**Harvard  
Business  
School**

Institute for the  
Study of  
Business in  
Global Society




# Special Analysis Based on: 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work

## Online survey of employees in its 3rd year

Fieldwork conducted: July 20 – Aug 1, 2023

**7** Countries  
**6,977** Respondents  
**1,000+/-** Respondents per country\*\*

Brazil China Germany India Japan UK  U.S.

Data collected is representative of employees across ages, gender and regions within each market. For more information on the audiences surveyed, please refer to the Technical Appendix.

\*\*The sample size varies by country from 986 to 1,003.  
7-market global data margin of error: General population +/- 1.5 percentage points (n=6,977)  
Country-specific data margin of error: General population +/- 4.1 percentage points (varies by country based on sample size, n=986 to n=1,003)  
Margin of error is calculated at the 99% confidence level

### Statistical significance

 Significant change

Indicates a mathematically significant change in data that can be attributed to a profound change rather than chance.

All indicated year-over-year significant changes were determined using a t-test set at a 99%+ confidence level.


### Shortened Question Text

Throughout the report, question text has been edited for readability. The full text for all shortened text is included in the Technical Appendix. **Note that the some of the items from the question about job seeker expectations (EMP\_IMP) also appear in highly shortened form on pg 10.**

For full details, please refer to the Technical Appendix



*Special Analysis Based on:*  
**2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work**

 **U.S. Regional Oversample**

Fieldwork conducted: July 20 – Aug 1, 2023

<b>Northeast (n=716)</b>	<b>Midwest (n=694)</b>	<b>South (n=853)</b>	<b>West (n=740)</b>
Connecticut	Illinois	Delaware	Arizona
Maine	Indiana	Florida	Colorado
Massachusetts	Michigan	Georgia	Idaho
New Hampshire	Ohio	Maryland	Montana
Vermont	Wisconsin	North Carolina	Nevada
New Jersey	Iowa	South Carolina	New Mexico
New York	Kansas	Virginia	Utah
Pennsylvania	Minnesota	West Virginia	Wyoming
Rhode Island	Missouri	Alabama	Alaska
	Nebraska	Kentucky	California
	North Dakota	Mississippi	Hawaii
	South Dakota	Tennessee	Oregon
		Arkansas	Washington
		Louisiana	
		Oklahoma	
		Texas	
		District of Columbia	

*Data collected is representative of employees across age, gender, and race/ethnicity within each U.S. region. For more information on the audiences surveyed, please refer to the Technical Appendix.*

\*\*The sample size varies by region from 694 to 853.

Region-specific margin of error: General population +/- 3.4 – 3.7 percentage points (varies by region based on sample size, n=694 to n=853)

Margin of error is calculated at the 95% confidence level



*This Special Analysis also includes findings from:*  
**2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Business and Racial Justice**

Methodology

**Online survey in its 4th year**

Fieldwork conducted: April 4 – April 12, 2023

**3,500**

Total respondents in the U.S.

**2,000 general population respondents**

All data is nationally representative based on age, gender, region, and race/ethnicity

Racial and ethnic community segments:

<b>Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders (ANHPI)</b>	<b>n=500</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>n=500</b>
<b>Hispanic and Latino/a/e (Hispanic)</b>	<b>n=500</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>n=1196</b>

*ANHPI, Black, and Hispanic data was collected using an oversample.  
All racial and ethnic segments are nationally representative based on age, gender and region.  
In this report, communities are ordered from smallest to largest based on their proportion relative to the total population according to the U.S. Census.*

**Statistical significance**

 - 0 + Significant change

Indicates a mathematically significant change in data that can be attributed to a profound change rather than chance.

All indicated year-over-year significant changes were determined using a t-test set at a 95%+ confidence level.



# Trust in the Workplace Since 2019: The Expanding Employer Remit

Jan 2019

**Employers Most Trusted**

Employers are the most trusted institution

*2019 Edelman Trust Barometer*

Apr 2020

**Employers Critical to Pandemic Response**

Employers more trusted to respond to the pandemic than other institutions

*2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust and the Coronavirus*

Sept 2021

**The Belief-Driven Employee**

Employees choose their employer based on values and beliefs

*2021 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: The Belief-Driven Employee*

June 2022

**Gen Z Redefines Work**

Gen Z is changing our willingness to pressure employers for change

*2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: The New Cascade of Influence*

Sept 2022

**The Workplace as Island of Civility**

Employees are more comfortable discussing controversial issues with coworkers than with neighbors

*2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust and the Workplace*

Sept 2023

**The Workplace Reconsidered**

Employers must rethink what work means to employees

*2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work*

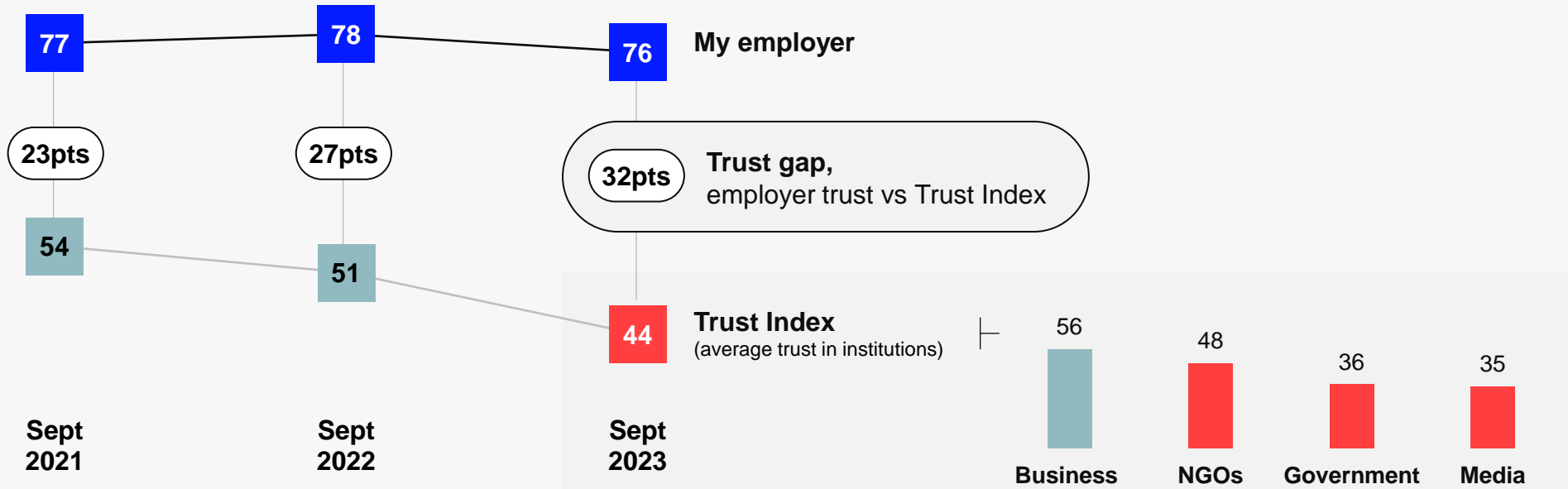
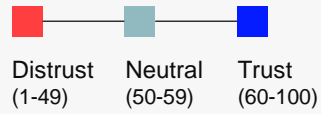


# Employer Exceptionalism



# Trust Gap Grows Between My Employer and Other Institutions

Percent of employees who trust, in the U.S.

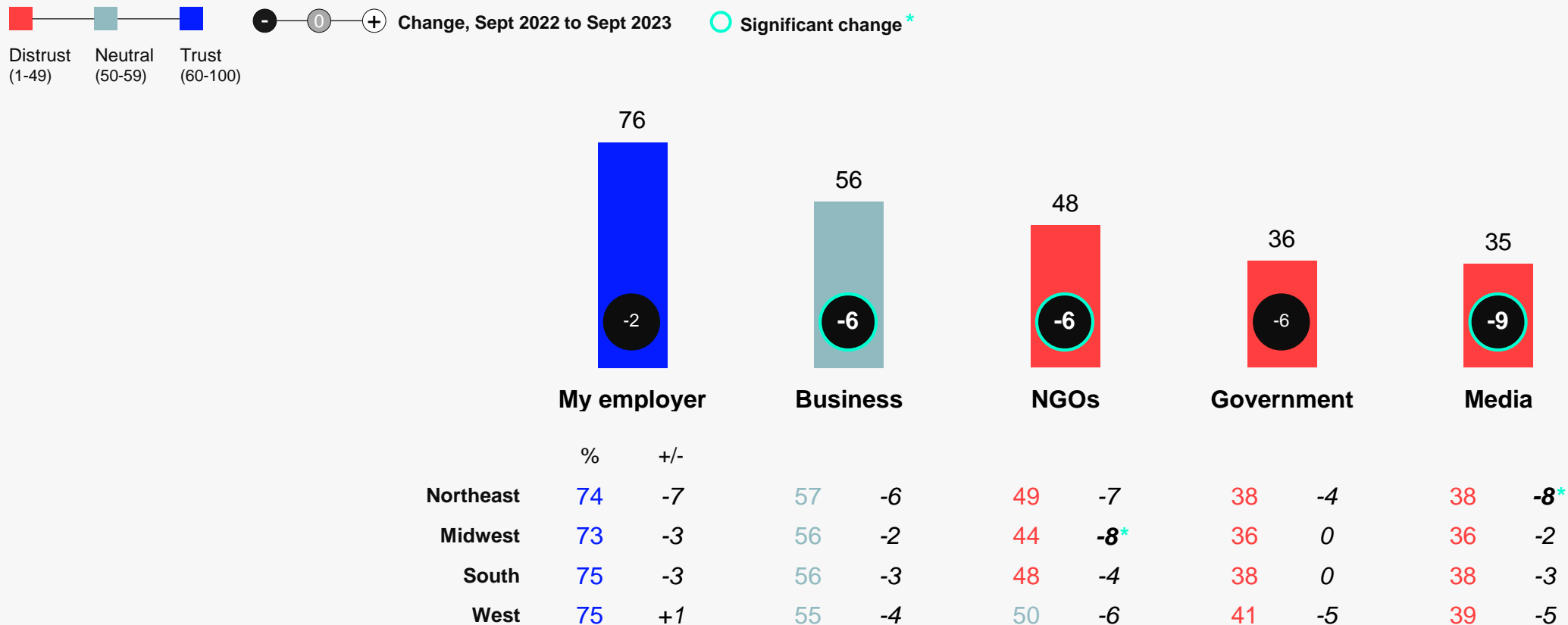


2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. The Trust Index is the average percent trust in NGOs, business, government and media. TRU\_INS. Below is a list of institutions. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. U.S. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1).



# My Employer Most Trusted in All U.S. Regions; Significant Declines in Business, NGO, and Media Trust

Percent of employees who trust, in the U.S.



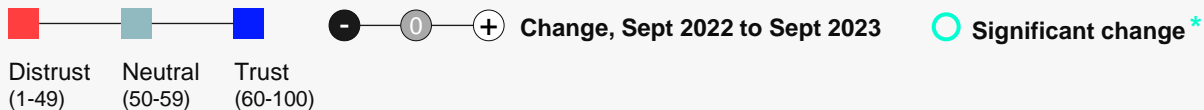
2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. TRU\_INS. Below is a list of institutions. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right using a 9-point scale where one means that you "do not trust them at all" and nine means that you "trust them a great deal". 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. U.S. and U.S. regional oversample. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1). Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.





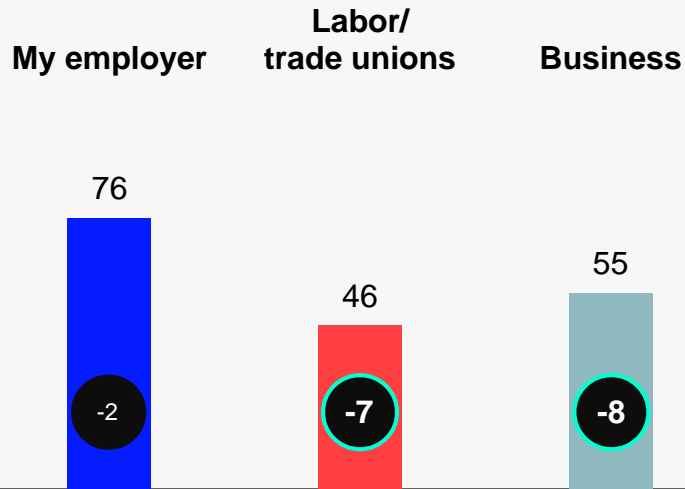
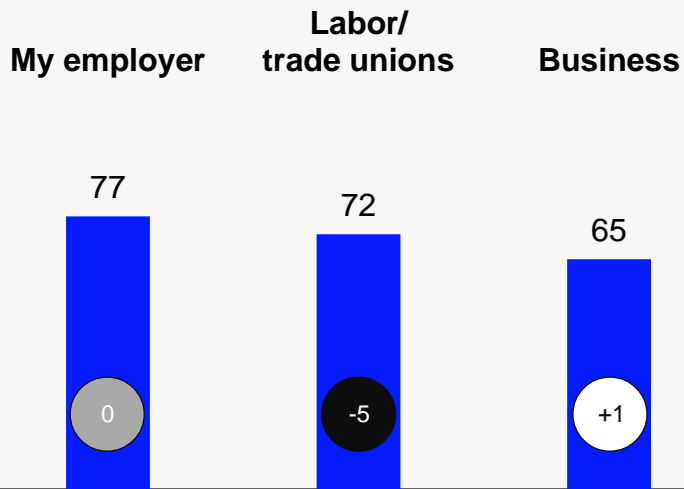
# Among U.S. Labor Union Members, Trust in Unions on Par with Employer Trust

Percent of employees who trust, in the U.S.



## Among union workers (17%)

## Among non-union workers (82%)



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. TRU\_INS. Below is a list of institutions. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right using a 9-point scale where one means that you "do not trust them at all" and nine means that you "trust them a great deal". 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. U.S. by UNION. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1). Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.



# In the U.S., High Employer Expectations for Advancement, Empowerment, and Societal Impact

Average percent of employees who say each is a **strong expectation or deal breaker** when considering a job, in the U.S.

## Career advancement (avg)

86%

- Competitive wages*
- Work experience*
- Training*
- Career opportunities*

## Personal empowerment (avg)

83%

- Regular communication*
- Truthful information*
- Easy employee input*
- CEO embodies values*
- Employees in planning*
- Employee diversity*

## Societal impact (avg)

68%

- Reflects my values*
- Greater purpose*
- Meaningful work*
- Social impact*
- Listens to employees*
- CEO takes a stand*



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. EMP\_IMP. When considering an organization as a potential place of employment, how important is each of the following to you in deciding whether or not you would accept a job offer there? 3-point scale; top 2 box, important. U.S. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1). "Career advancement" is an average of attributes 1-4; "Personal empowerment" is an average of attributes 5-6, 8-11; "Societal impact" is an average of attributes 12-17. Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level. Attribute text has been shortened for readability; please see the full text in the Technical Appendix.



# Less Talk, More Action

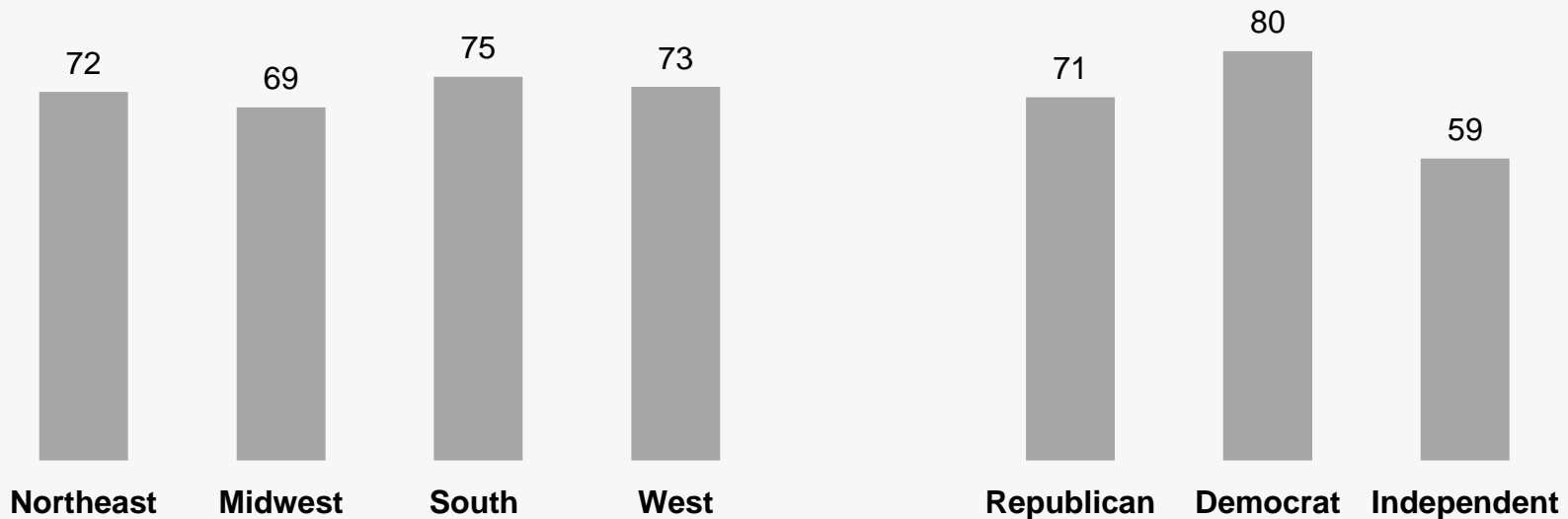


# U.S. Employees Want Their Work To Shape The Future

Percent of employees who say each is a **strong expectation or deal breaker** when considering a job, in the U.S.

When considering a job, I want the opportunity to do work that will **shape the future** in some meaningful way

**71%**



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. EMP\_IMP. When considering an organization as a potential place of employment, how important is each of the following to you in deciding whether or not you would accept a job offer there? 3-point scale; top 2 box, important. U.S., and by political affiliation and U.S. regional oversample. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1).



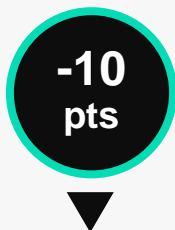
# U.S. Employees Divided Over Whether CEOs Should Take a Public Stand on Controversial Issues

Percent of employees who say each is a **strong expectation or deal breaker** when considering a job, in the U.S.

● ○ + ○ Significant change

When considering a job, I expect the **CEO to speak publicly about controversial issues I care about**

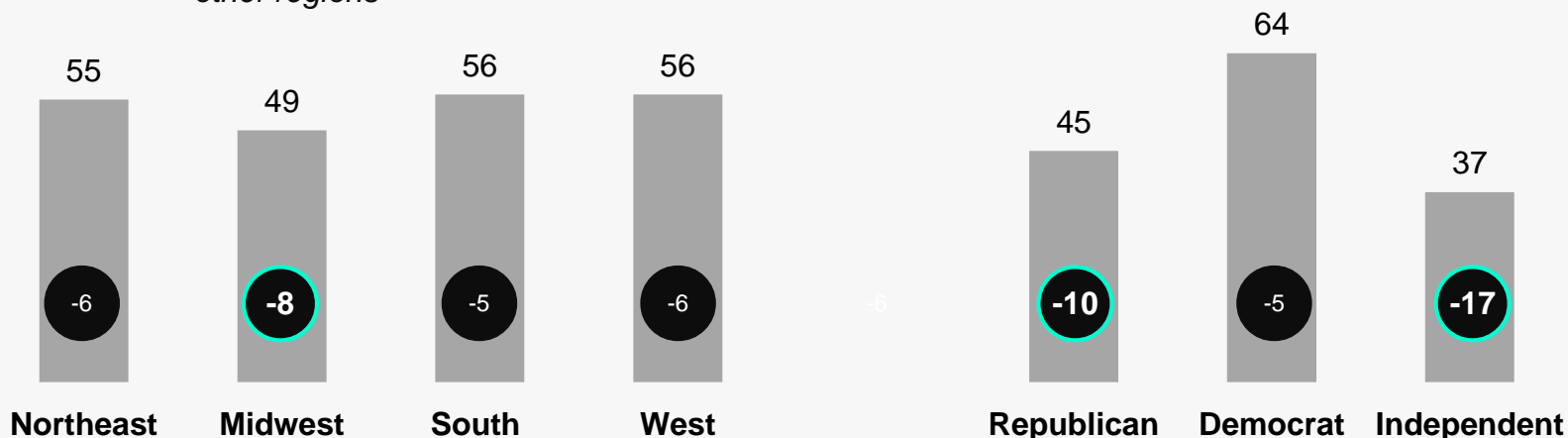
**51%**



Change, Sept 2022 to Sept 2023

Significantly lower expectations among Midwest employees vs. other regions

Nearly 2 in 3 Democrats still expect CEOs to take a stand



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. EMP\_IMP. When considering an organization as a potential place of employment, how important is each of the following to you in deciding whether or not you would accept a job offer there? 3-point scale; top 2 box, important. U.S., and by political affiliation and U.S. regional oversample. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1). Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.



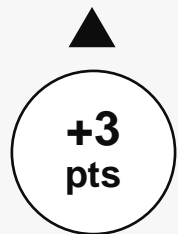
# Across Divides, U.S. Employees Bring Societal Issues to Work

Percent of employees who say, in the U.S.

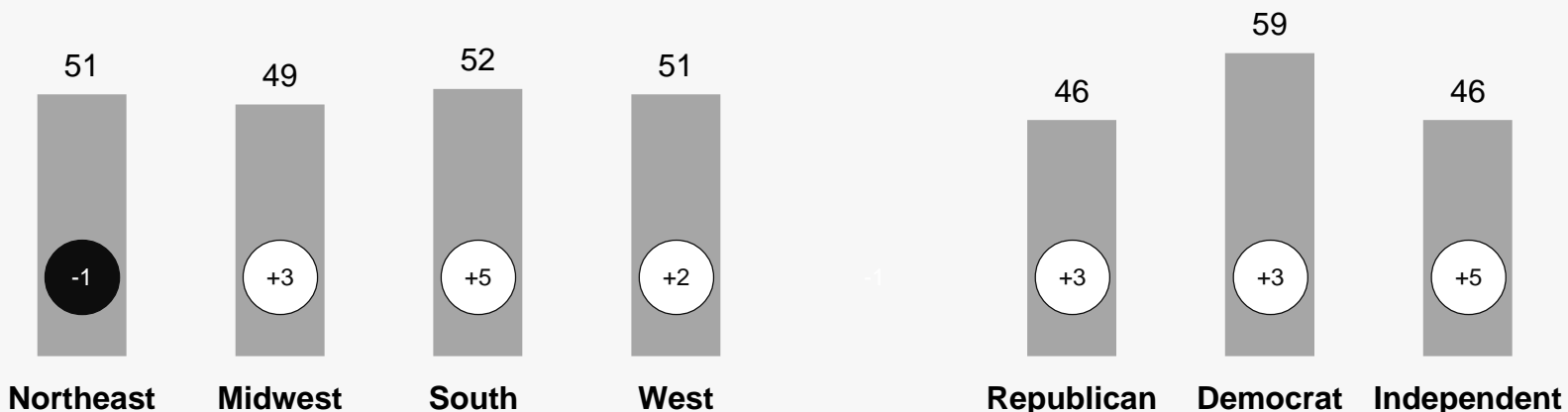
● ○ + ○ Significant change

I frequently engage in conversations with my coworkers about important societal issues

51%



Change, Sept 2022 to Sept 2023

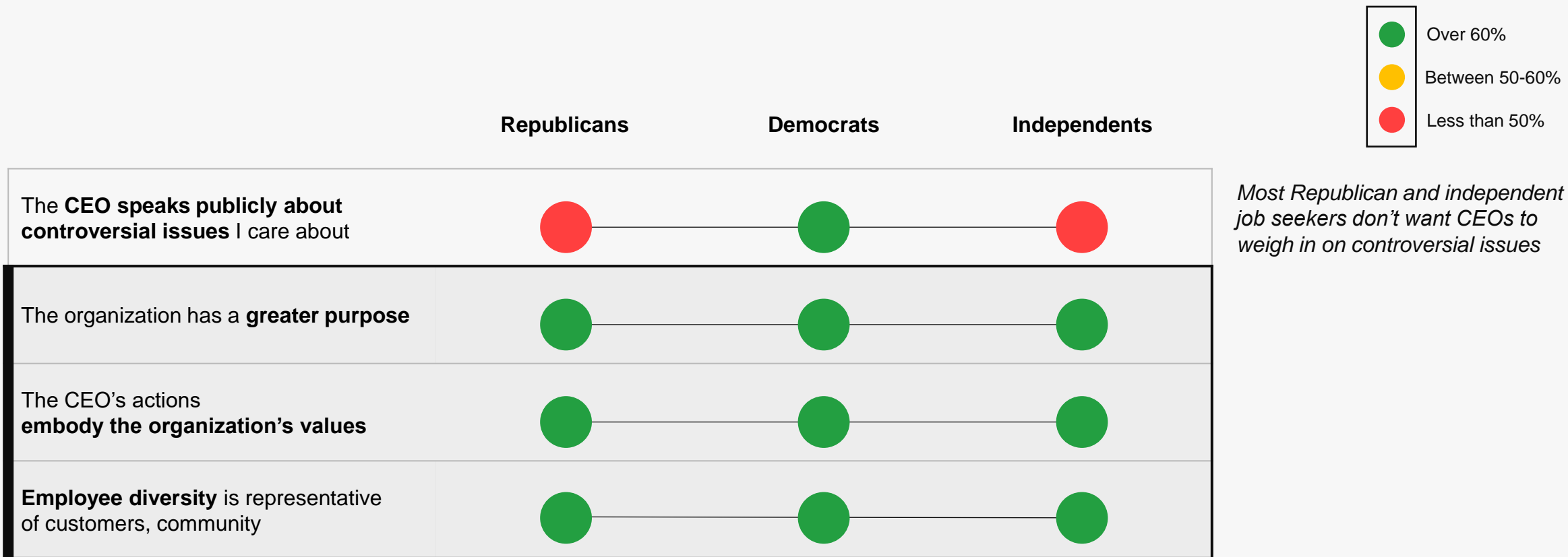


2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. CIVIL\_ROLE. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 9-point scale; top 4 box, agree. Question asked of half the sample. U.S., and by political affiliation and U.S. regional oversample. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1). Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.



# Across U.S. Party Lines, Consensus for Employer Purpose, Values, and Action

Percent of U.S. employees who say each is a **strong expectation or deal breaker** when considering a job



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. EMP\_IMP. When considering an organization as a potential place of employment, how important is each of the following to you in deciding whether or not you would accept a job offer there? 3-point scale; top 2 box, important. U.S., by political affiliation (Republican n=252, Independent n=245, Democrat n=373). All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1).



# DEI Divide: Executives Overestimate Progress



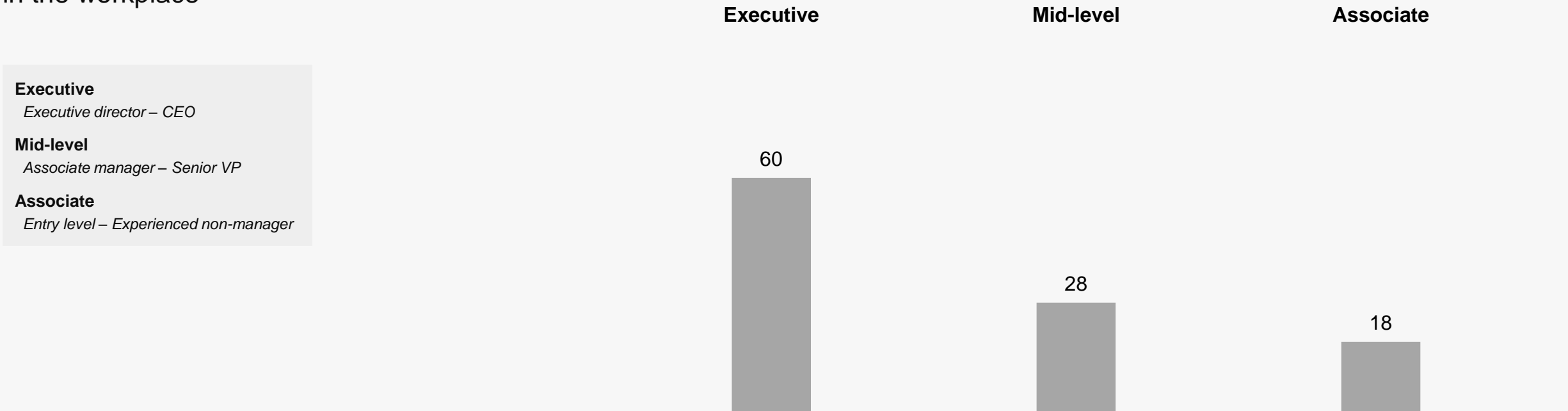


# Executive Disconnect: Employees Do Not See Progress on Racism at Work

Percent of U.S. employees who say

I feel my organization is making  
**a lot of meaningful progress** on  
addressing racism and racial inequities  
in the workplace

Executives **42pts** more likely to say their  
organization is making progress than Associates



**Executive**  
*Executive director – CEO*

**Mid-level**  
*Associate manager – Senior VP*

**Associate**  
*Entry level – Experienced non-manager*

2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Business and Racial Justice. WORK\_PROG. Do you feel that the organization you work for is making meaningful progress when it comes to addressing racism and racial inequities in your workplace? Code 1, a lot of progress. Question only shown to those who are employed by an organization (Q43/1). General population, U.S., by level within the organization (Q421). Executive = Executive Director to CEO; Mid-level = Associate Manager to Sr. Vice President; Associate = Entry level to Experienced (non-manager).

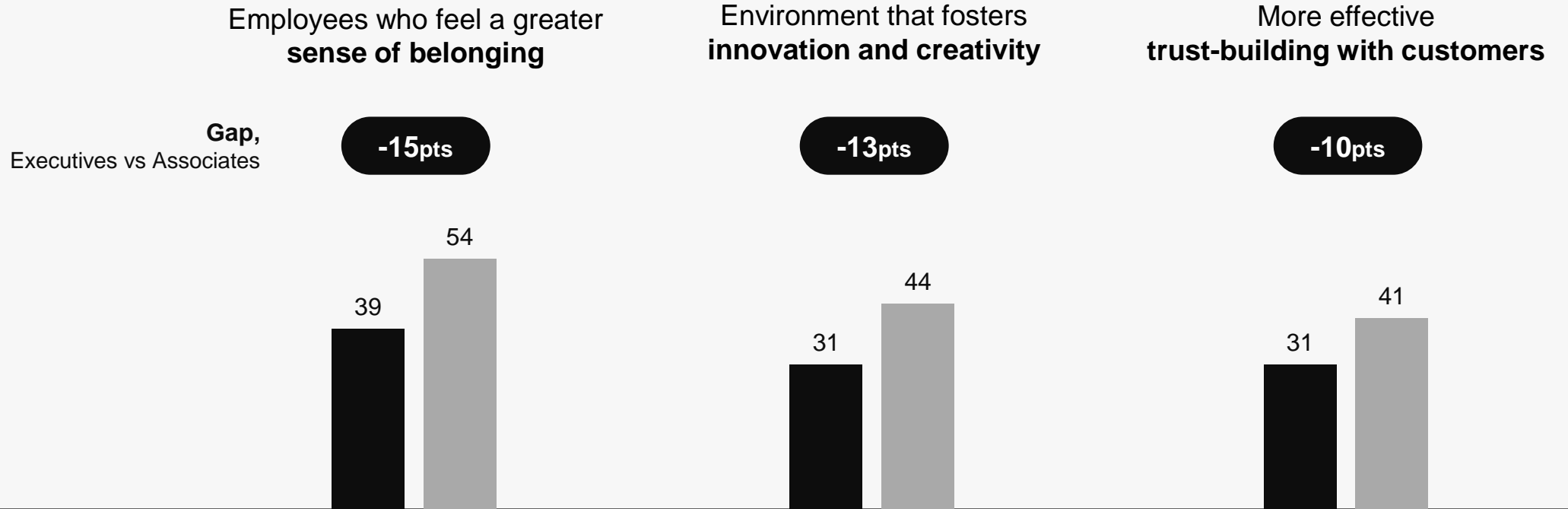


# Executive Disconnect: Associates More Likely to See Benefits of Diverse Workforce

Percent of U.S. employees who say

This is a **benefit** of having a diverse workforce:

■ Executives ■ Associates



# Employer Outcomes at Stake: Progress on Addressing Racism in the Organization Drives Business Impact

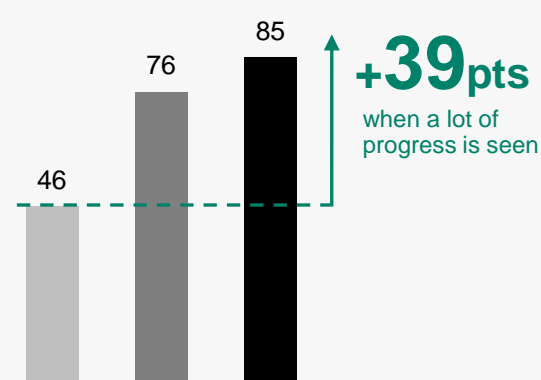
Percent of U.S. employees who agree with each statement, across amount of progress seen

How much progress has your employer made addressing racism and racial inequities in your workplace?



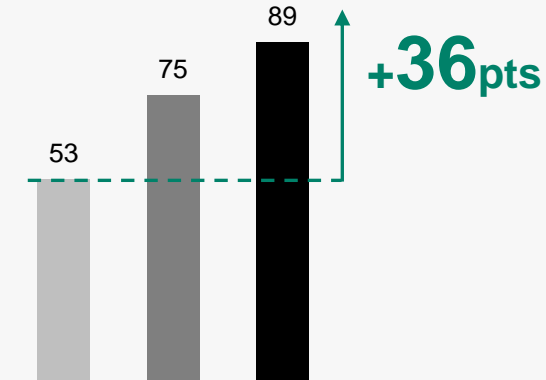
## Loyalty

I want to stay working for my employer for many years



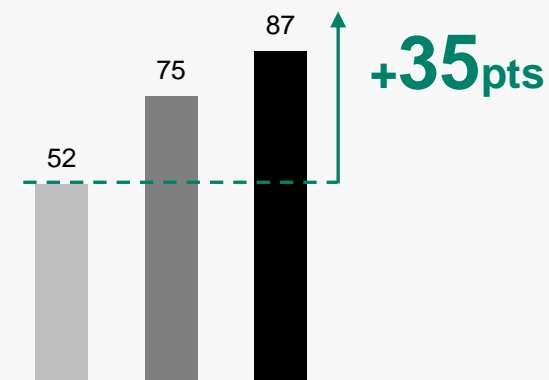
## Employer advocacy

I would recommend my employer as an employer to others



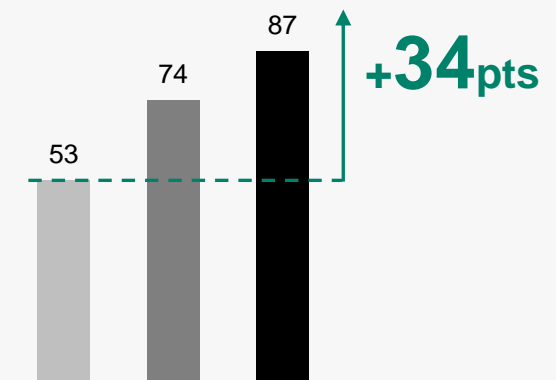
## Belonging (avg)

I am friends with my coworkers and I feel like I fit in well at my organization



## Commitment (avg)

I do more than what is expected to help my employer succeed



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Business and Racial Justice. EMP\_ENG. Thinking about your current employer, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? 9-point scale; top 4 box, agree. Question only shown to those who are employed by an organization (Q43/1). "Loyalty" is attribute 1; "Advocacy" is attribute 3; "Belonging" is an average of attributes 32-33; "Commitment" is an average of attributes 9, 11, 16. General population, U.S., among those who see their organization making a lot progress (WORK\_PROG/1), some progress (WORK\_PROG/2) or no progress (WORK\_PROG/3-4) addressing racism in the workplace.



# Employer Trust Advantage in Action

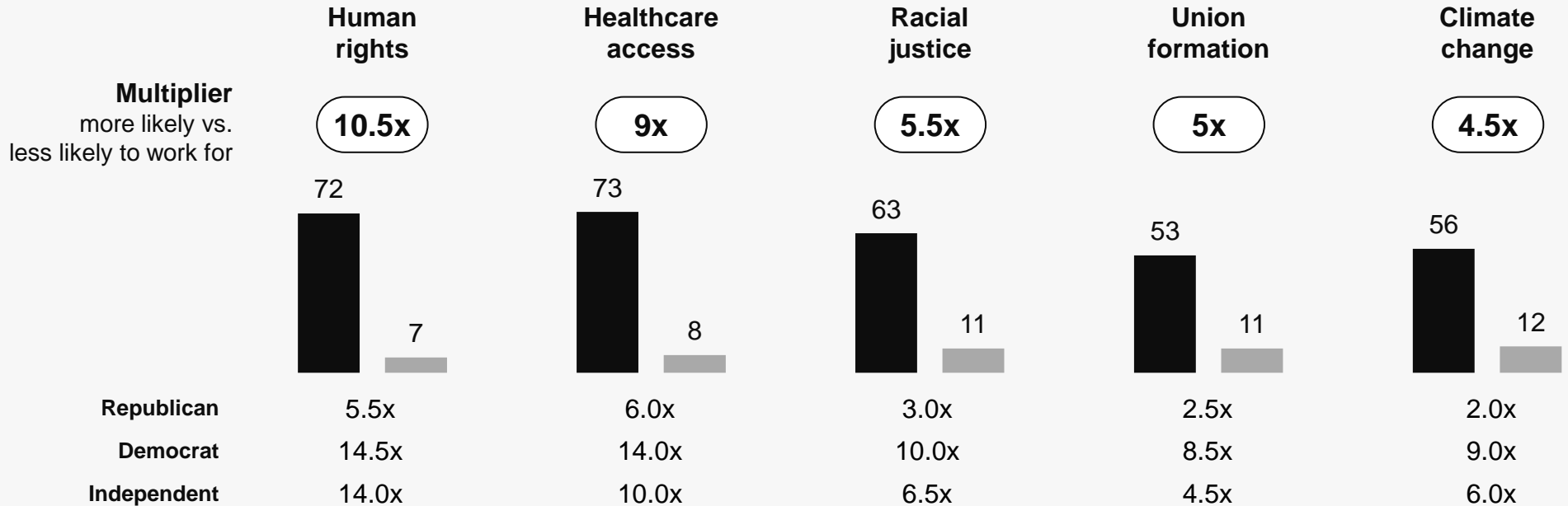


# Action Builds Trust: Bipartisan Consensus for Employer Action Across Key Societal Issues

Percent of employees who say, in the U.S.

I am more or less likely to work for a company if the organization were to **publicly support and demonstrate a commitment to:**

More likely Less likely



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. EMP\_RISK. If a company/organization were to publicly support and demonstrate a commitment to each of the following, how would that impact your likelihood of working for that company/organization? 5-point scale; top 2 box, more likely; bottom 2 box, less likely. Question asked of half the sample. U.S., and by political affiliation. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1). The multipliers are rounded to the nearest .5.



# Leverage the Power of Employers to Effect Change: Workplace DEI Initiatives On Par With Government Action

Percent of employees who say, in the U.S.

This is an **effective measure to address racism:**

## Employer Action:

Have **DEI initiatives**  
in the workplace

**80%**

Republican Democrat Independent

72 88 \*n/a

## Government Action:

Require **schools** teach the  
complete history of people of color

**80%**

Republican Democrat Independent

68 86 \*n/a

Enact legislation that  
reforms **policing**

**78%**

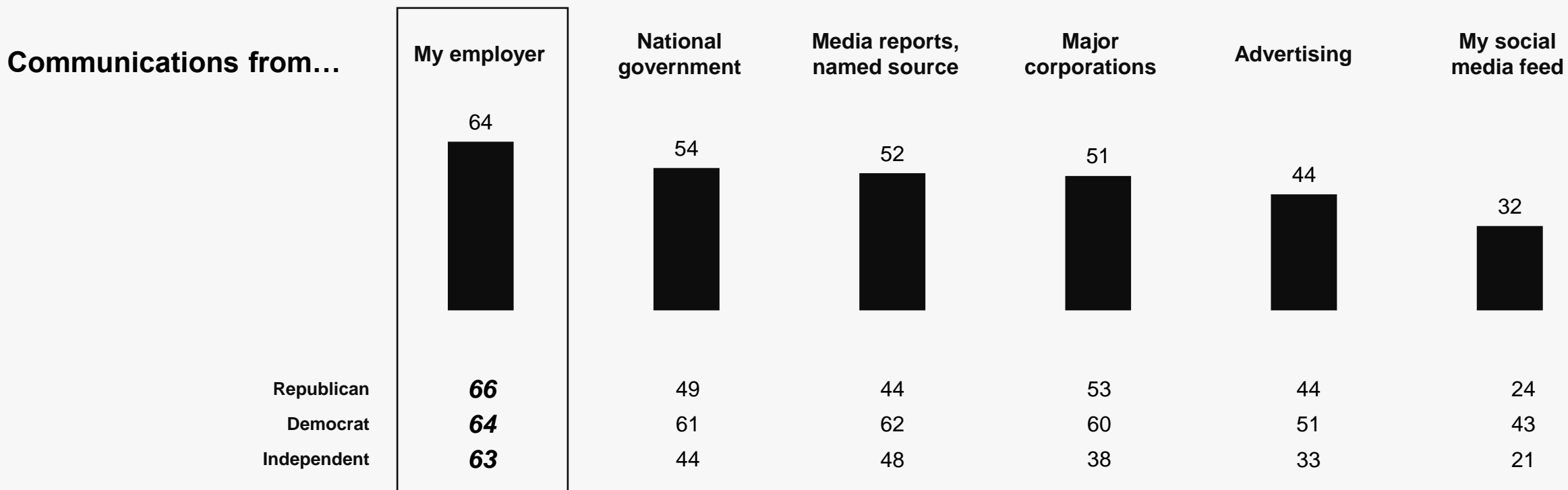
Republican Democrat Independent

66 85 \*n/a



# Cut Through the Echo Chambers: Across Partisan Divides, Employer Media Most Believable

Percent of employees who believe information from each source **automatically, or after seeing it twice or less**, in the U.S.



2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust at Work. HEAR\_TIME1. When you see a new piece of information or a news story in each of the following information sources, how many times do you need to see it or hear it repeated in that same type of information source before you believe it is really true? Question asked of half the sample. Data is a sum of codes 1-3. U.S., and by political affiliation. All data is filtered to be among employees who work for an organization or corporation (Q43/1).



# Build the Infrastructure for Employee Influence

Percent of employees who say, in the U.S.

Effective ways for me to feel **my perspective is incorporated** into my organization's decisions:

My manager has **formal support** to voice my concerns

My employer creates a team that represents all employee levels to **address work issues**

My employer creates a **stakeholder council** that includes union leaders, executives, clients, employees

80%

76%

62%





# 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Analysis: Trust at Work in the U.S.

## *Employer Exceptionalism in a Divided Country*

**1**

### **Employer trust brings responsibility**

Amid broader institutional declines in trust, my employer continues to be the exception. Work is where people make sense of the world. Employers need to reconsider the workplace and what makes work meaningful.

**2**

### **Close the executive disconnect**

While executives feel like their organizations are making progress, most employees disagree. CEOs need to hold their senior management accountable.

**3**

### **Bridge national divides**

In a country polarized along geographic, political, and racial divides, employers are in a unique position to lead and take action on issues such as racial justice or worker rights. Use the power of employer communications to break through echo chambers with trustworthy information.

**4**

### **Less talk, more action**

Employees are divided on how much CEOs should publicly speak out on controversial issues—but they are aligned that they want their organization to effect change. Societal engagement must be aligned to local markets and stakeholders. Lead through action, not talk.

