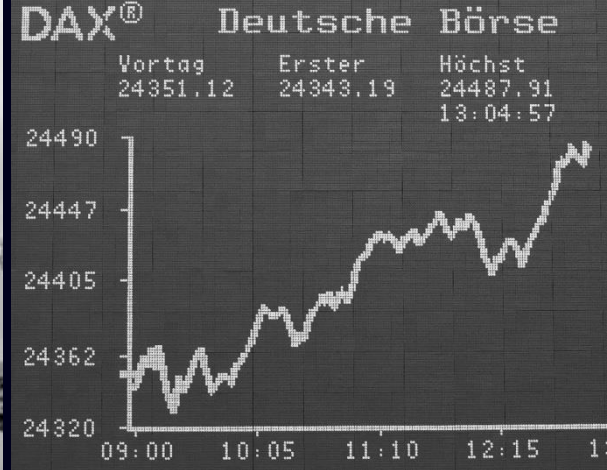


2026 Edelman Trust Barometer

Global Report
Trust Amid Insularity

CEO Insights

Edelman
Trust Institute



2026 Edelman Trust Barometer

METHODOLOGY

Annual online survey in its 26th year

Fieldwork conducted: Oct 25 – Nov 16, 2025

28
Countries

33,938
Respondents

1,200+/-
Respondents per country*

Argentina	China	India	Japan	Netherlands	S. Africa	Thailand
Australia	Colombia	Indonesia	Kenya	Nigeria	S. Korea	UAE
Brazil	France	Ireland	Malaysia	Saudi Arabia	Spain	UK
Canada	Germany	Italy	Mexico	Singapore	Sweden	U.S.

Data collected is representative of the general population across age, gender, and region within each country.**

*The sample size varies by country, from 1,200 to 1,501.

**Data also representative across nationality in Saudi Arabia and UAE, and race/ethnicity in the UK and U.S.

Margin of error for full general population 28-market global average: +/- 0.7 percentage points.

Margin of error for full general population country averages: +/- 3.3 to 3.7 percentage points (varies by country).

Margin of error is calculated at the 99% confidence level.

Global averages

Unless otherwise indicated, global averages are composed of all 28 countries surveyed.

Statistical significance

 Significant change

Indicates a statistically meaningful difference or change in the data that is unlikely to be due to chance or a random fluctuation.

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

Shortened question text

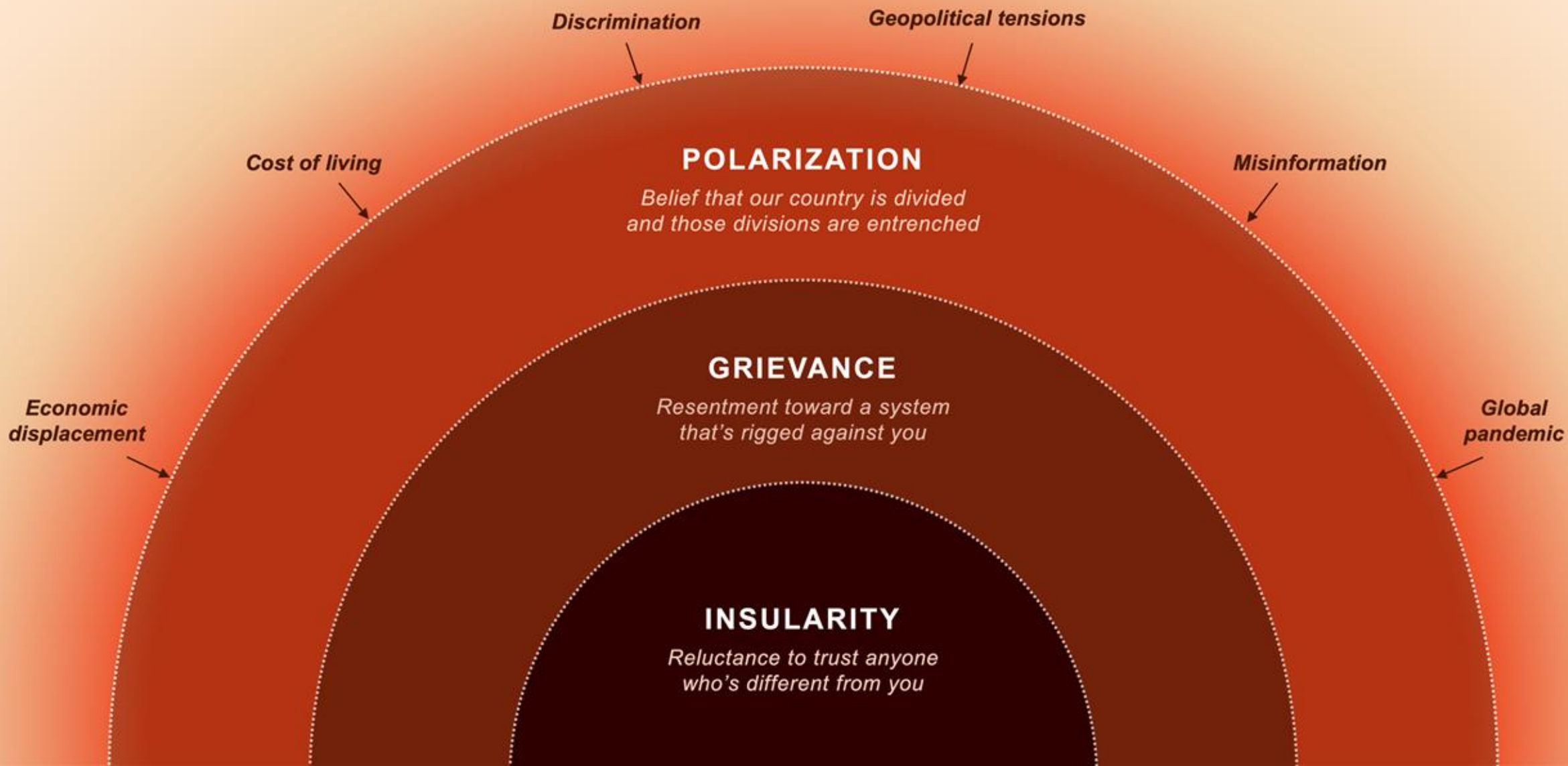
Throughout the report, question text has been edited for readability.

For more details on the margin of error, global averages, country-specific sample information, questions asked to partial sample, or to see the full text for any shortened statements, please see the Technical Appendix.

All contents in this report are the property of the Edelman Trust Institute.



The Retreat Into Insularity



Worldwide, 7 in 10 Have an Insular Trust Mindset

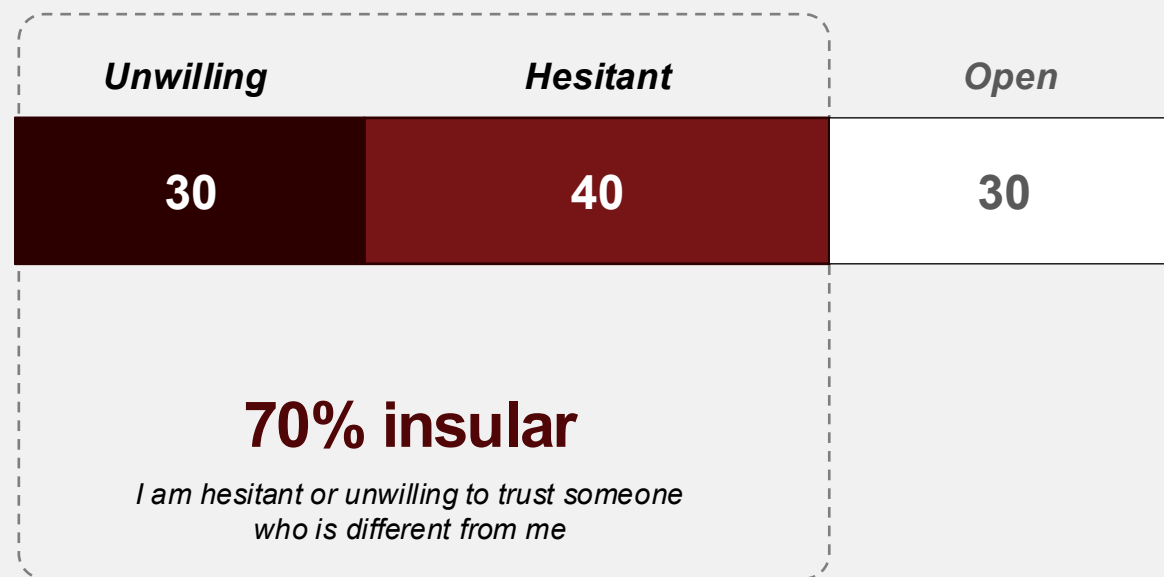
On average, percent who say

GLOBAL 28

When it comes to **trusting someone who:**

- Lives by **different core values** than me
- Believes **different facts** and trusts **different sources** than I do
- Wants to address **societal problems differently** than I do
- Has a **different culture, background, or lifestyle** than mine

I am generally ...



Business Leaders Face Skepticism

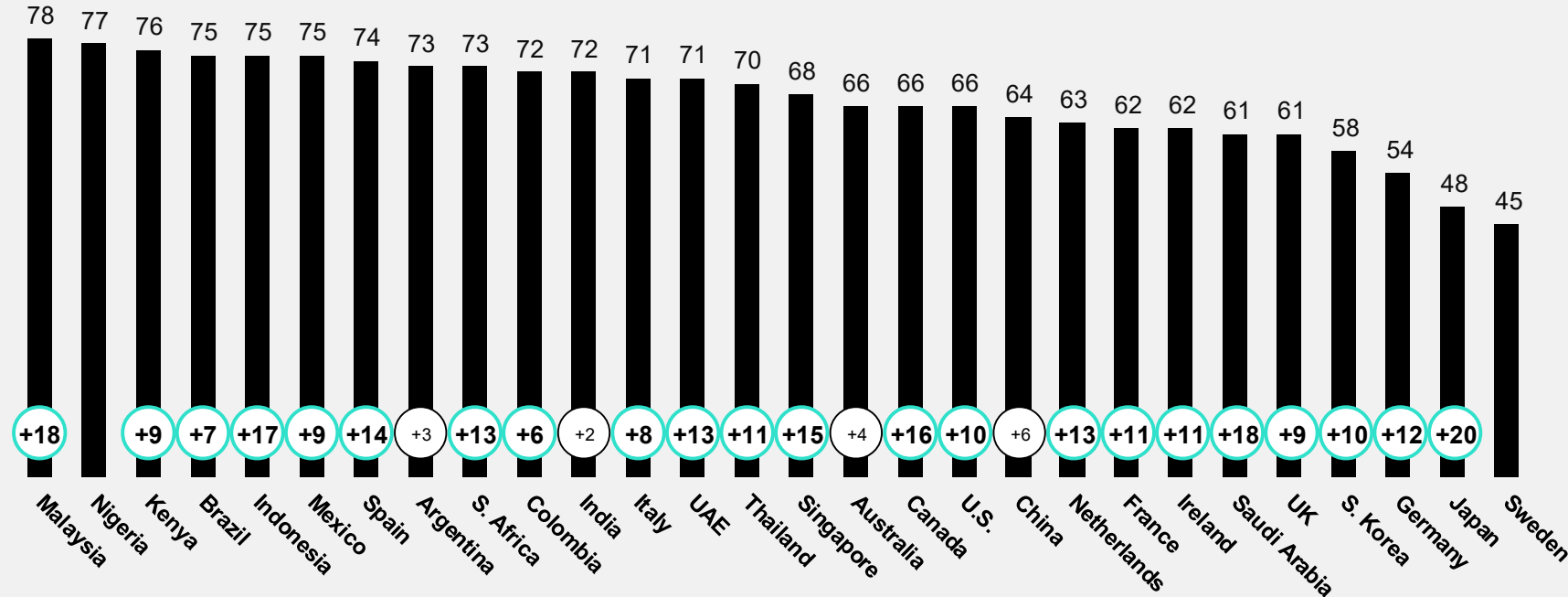
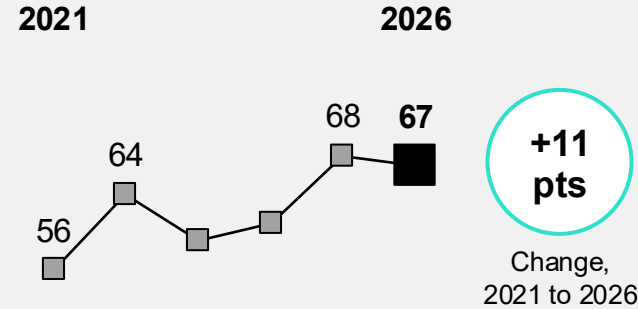


Since 2021, Fear of Business Leaders Lying Surges Across Globe

Percent who say

GLOBAL 26 Significant change

I worry that **business leaders purposely try to mislead people** by saying things they know are false



2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. POP_EMO. Some people say they worry about many things while others say they have few concerns. We are interested in what you worry about. Specifically, how much do you worry about each of the following? 9-point scale; top 4 box, worry. Question asked to partial sample. General population, 26-mkt avg. Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.

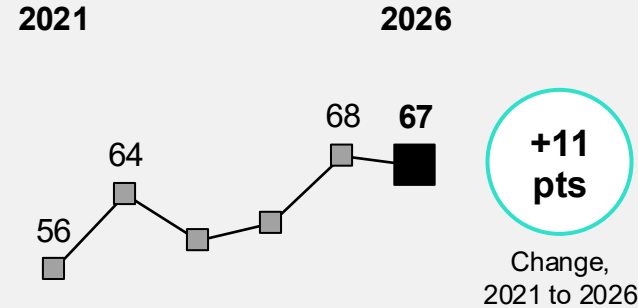


Non-Executives Have Grown Significantly More Concerned About Leaders' Claims

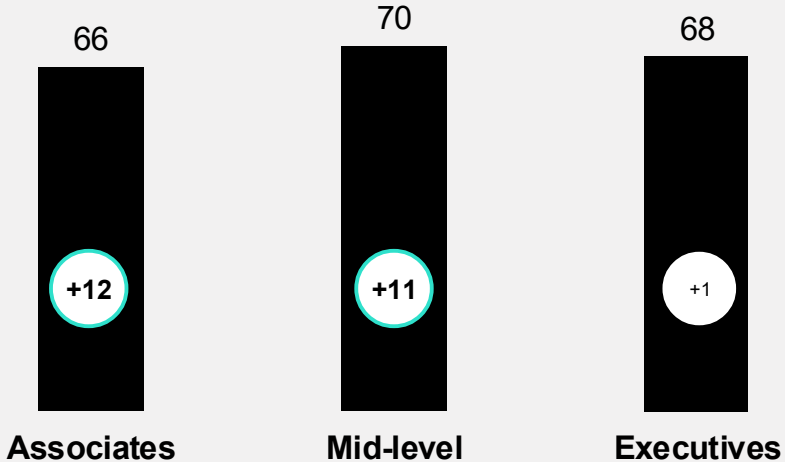
Percent who say

GLOBAL 26 Significant change

I worry that **business leaders purposely try to mislead people** by saying things they know are false



JOB LEVEL



2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. POP_EMO. Some people say they worry about many things while others say they have few concerns. We are interested in what you worry about. Specifically, how much do you worry about each of the following? 9-point scale; top 4 box, worry. Question asked to partial sample. General population, 26-mkt avg. and by job level within organization (Q421): executive (Q421/1-2), mid-level (Q421/3-5), associate (Q421/6-7). Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.



From “We” to “Me”: Our Shared Institutions Lose Over Time, *My* Local Circle Wins

Among those who say recent societal events impacted their trust in people or institutions (95%), percent who say

GLOBAL 27 excl. China

As a result of a major societal event in the past five years...

▼ I have lost trust in:	Net change	% who say they have	
		Lost trust	Gained trust
National government leaders	-16	40	24
Major news organizations	-11	35	24
Foreign business leaders	-6	30	24

△ I have gained trust in:	Net change	% who say they have	
		Lost trust	Gained trust
<i>My</i> neighbors, family, and friends	+11	18	29
<i>My</i> coworkers (among employees)	+11	20	31
<i>My</i> CEO (among employees)	+9	21	30

2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_CNG_HOW. How did this event impact your level of trust in each of the following? 5-point scale; codes 1-2, lost trust; codes 3-4, gained trust; the “net change” is the difference between those who gained trust minus lost trust. Question only asked to those who say societal events from the past five years have had an impact on their level of trust in other people or institutions (TRU_EVT = any of r1-8). General population, 27-mkt avg. Data not collected in China. “My coworkers” and “My CEO” were only asked to those who are employees of an organization (Q43/1). For a full explanation of this analysis, please see the Technical Appendix.



From “We” to “Me”: Associates’ Trust Circles Lag; Executives’ Circles Grow

Among those who say recent societal events impacted their trust in people or institutions (95%), percent of employees who say

GLOBAL 27 excl. China

As a result of a major societal event in the past five years, I
have **gained** or **lost** trust in...

Among associates	Net change	% who say they have	
		Lost trust	Gained trust
My CEO	0	21	21
My coworkers	+3	21	24
Business leaders (avg)	-10	30	20

Among executives	Net change	% who say they have	
		Lost trust	Gained trust
My CEO	+28	19	47
My coworkers	+27	20	47
Business leaders (avg)	+21	25	46

2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_CNG_HOW. How did this event impact your level of trust in each of the following? 5-point scale; codes 1-2, lost trust; codes 3-4, gained trust; the “net change” is the difference between those who gained trust minus lost trust. Question only asked to those who say societal events from the past five years have had an impact on their level of trust in other people or institutions (TRU_EVT = any of r1-8). General population, 27-mkt avg., by job level within organization (Q421): executive (Q421/1-2) and associate (Q421/6-7). Data not collected in China. For a full explanation of this analysis, please see the Technical Appendix.



Associates Nearly Twice as Likely as Execs to Hold Insular Trust Mindset

On average, percent who say

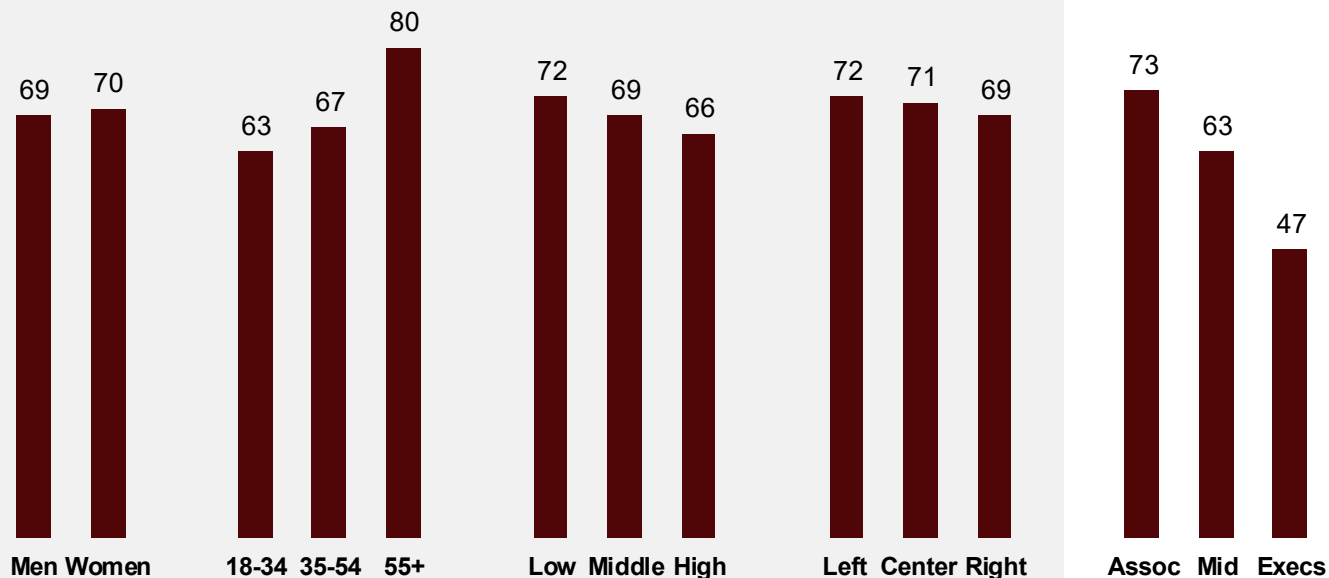
GLOBAL 28

I am generally **hesitant or unwilling to trust** someone who differs from me in these ways:

- Lives by **different core values**
- Believes **different facts** and trusts **different sources**
- Wants to address **societal problems differently**
- Has a **different culture, background, or lifestyle**

70%

GENDER | AGE | INCOME | POLITICS* | JOB LEVEL



2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. Insularity segments. General population, 28-mkt avg., and by gender, age, income, political leaning, and job level within organization (Q421): executive (Q421/1-2), mid-level (Q421/3-5), associate (Q421/6-7). Data shown reflects the sum of the percentages of respondents in the hesitant and unwilling groups. *Political leaning is not asked in China, Saudi Arabia, Thailand or the UAE and represents a 24-mkt-avg. For a full explanation of how the insularity segments were created, please see the Technical Appendix.



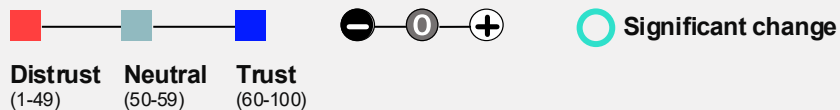
The Exceptional Role of *My* CEO



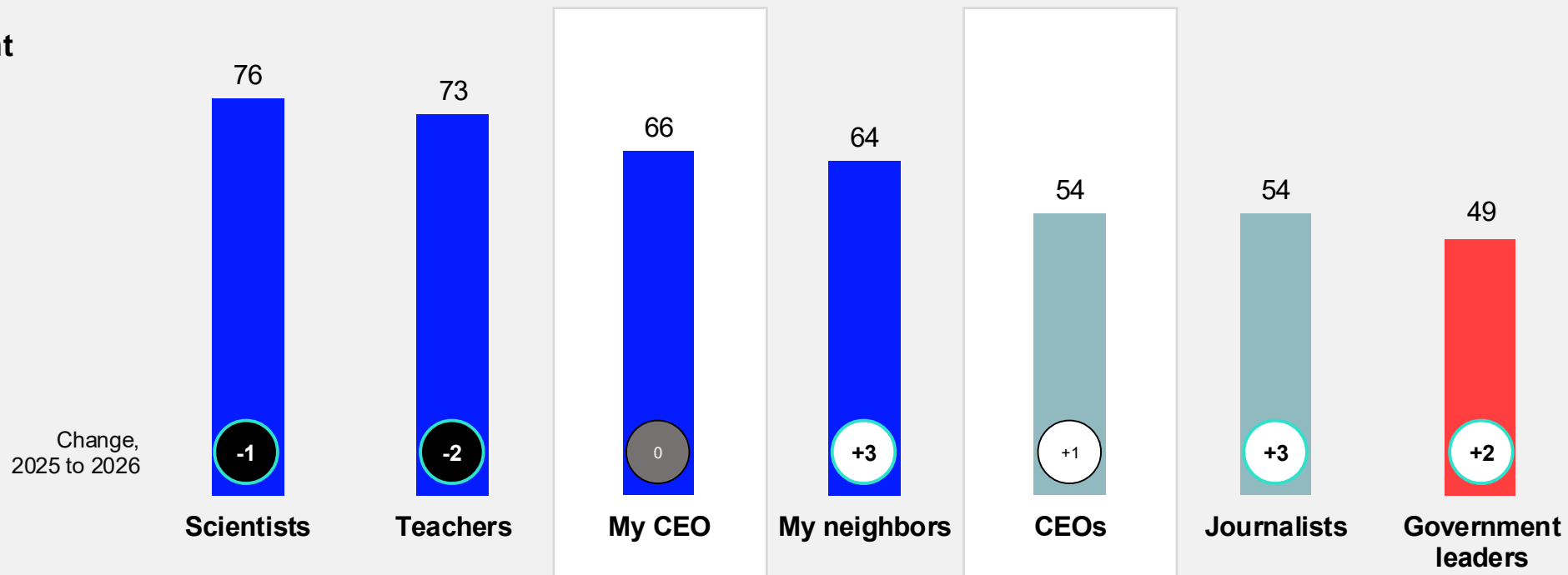
Trust is Local: My CEO More Trusted than CEOs in General

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28



I trust each to do what is right

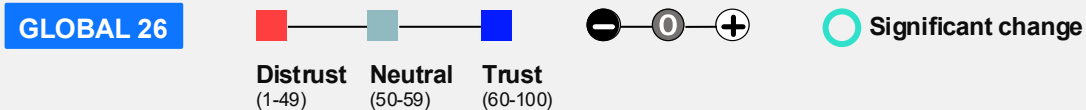


2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_PEP. Below is a list of groups of people. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that group of people to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. "My CEO" only asked to those who are employees of an organization (Q43/1). General population, 28-mkt avg. Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.

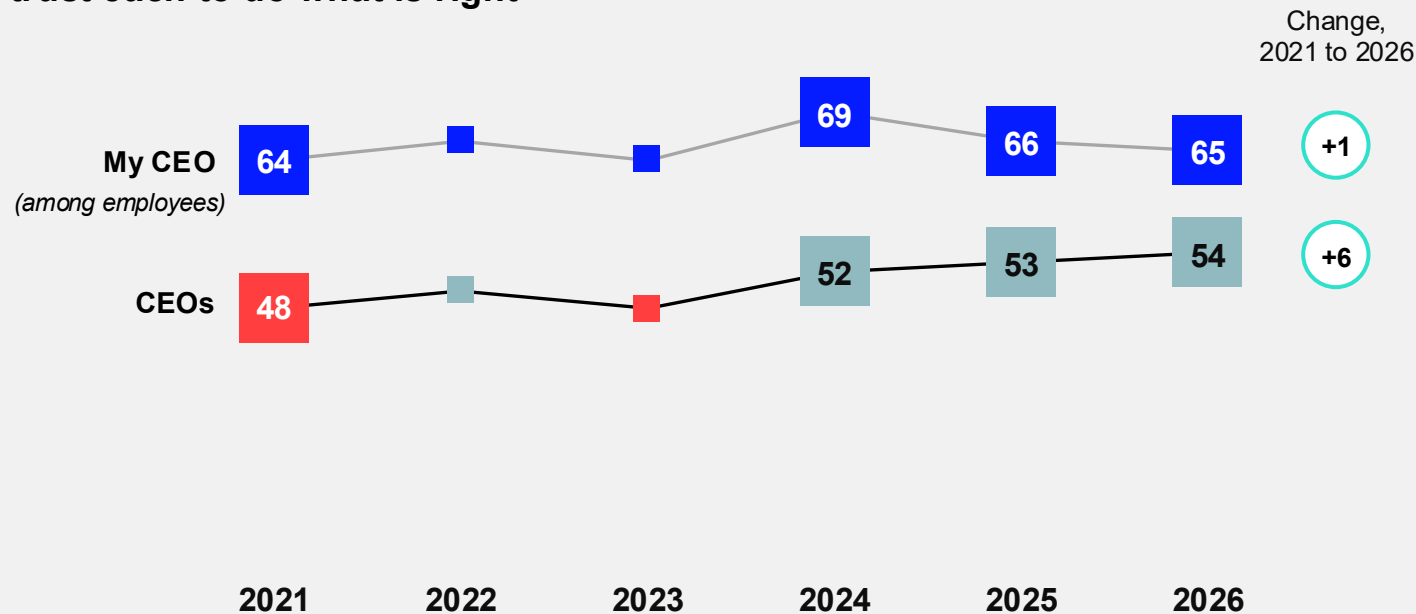


My CEO Consistently More Trusted Than CEOs in General

Percent who say



I trust each to do what is right

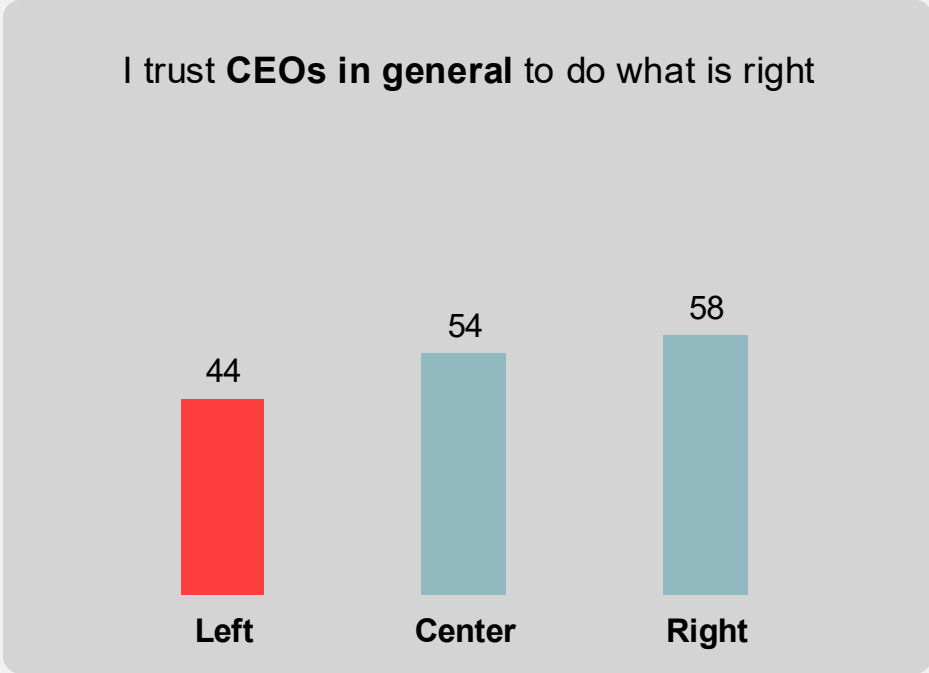


2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_PEP. Below is a list of groups of people. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that group of people to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. "My CEO" only asked to those who are employees of an organization (Q43/1). General population, 26-mkt avg. Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.



My CEO Trusted Across Political Leanings; CEOs in General More Politicized

Percent who say

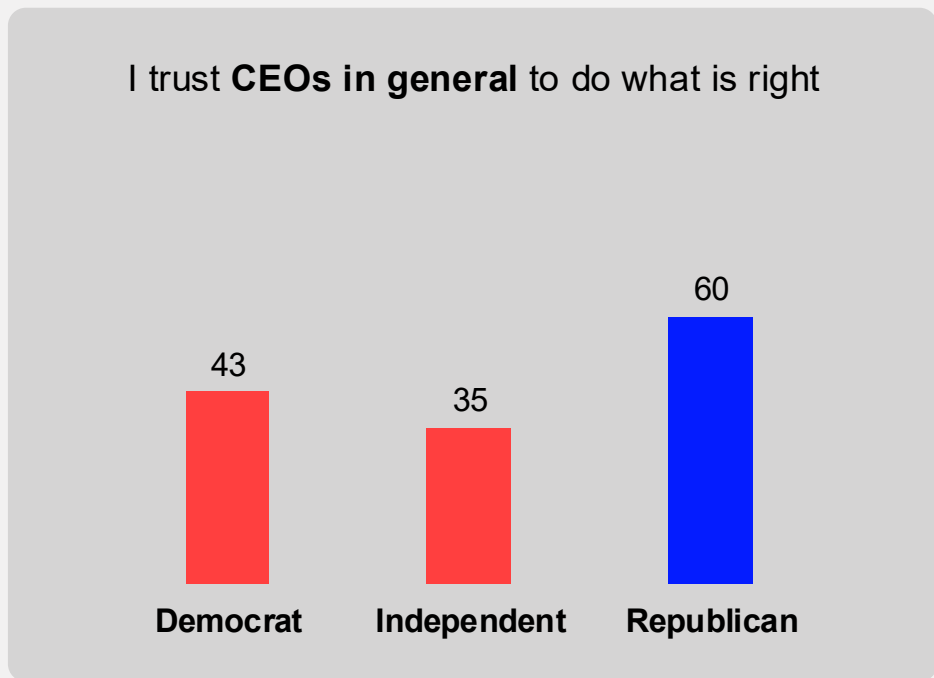
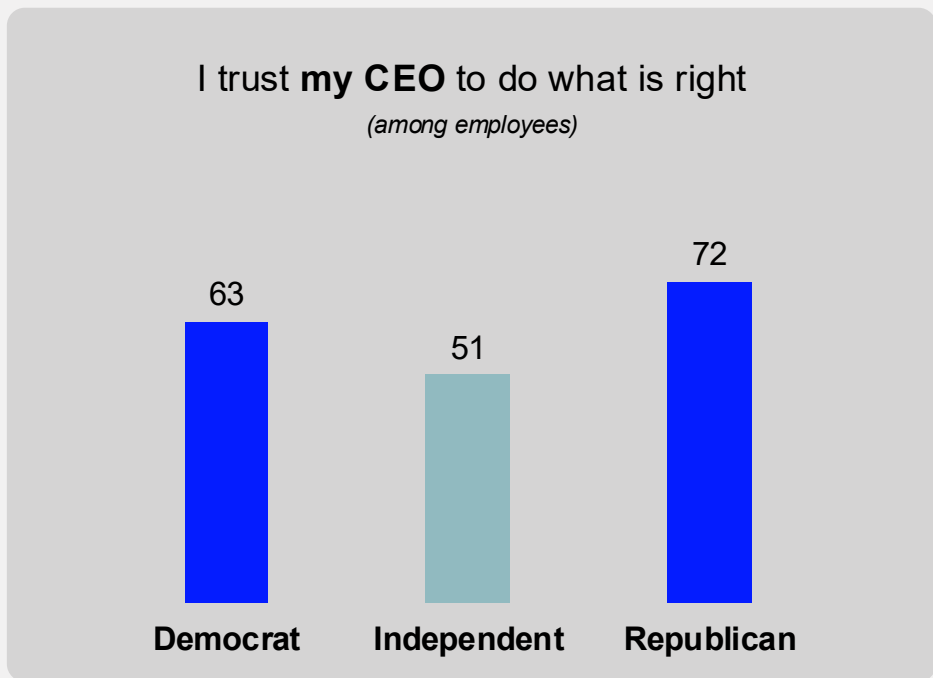
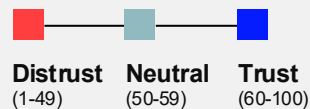


2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_PEP. Below is a list of groups of people. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that group of people to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. "My CEO" only asked to those who are employees of an organization (Q43/1). General population, 24-mkt avg., by political leaning. Political leaning is not asked in China, Saudi Arabia, Thailand or the UAE.



U.S. Case Study: My CEO Trusted by Dems and Reps; CEOs in General More Divided

In the U.S., percent who say



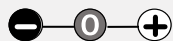
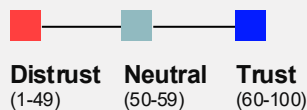
2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_PEP. Below is a list of groups of people. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that group of people to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. "My CEO" only asked to those who are employees of an organization (Q43/1). General population, U.S., by political affiliation.



For Low Earners and Associates, My CEO Not Trusted

Percent of employees who say

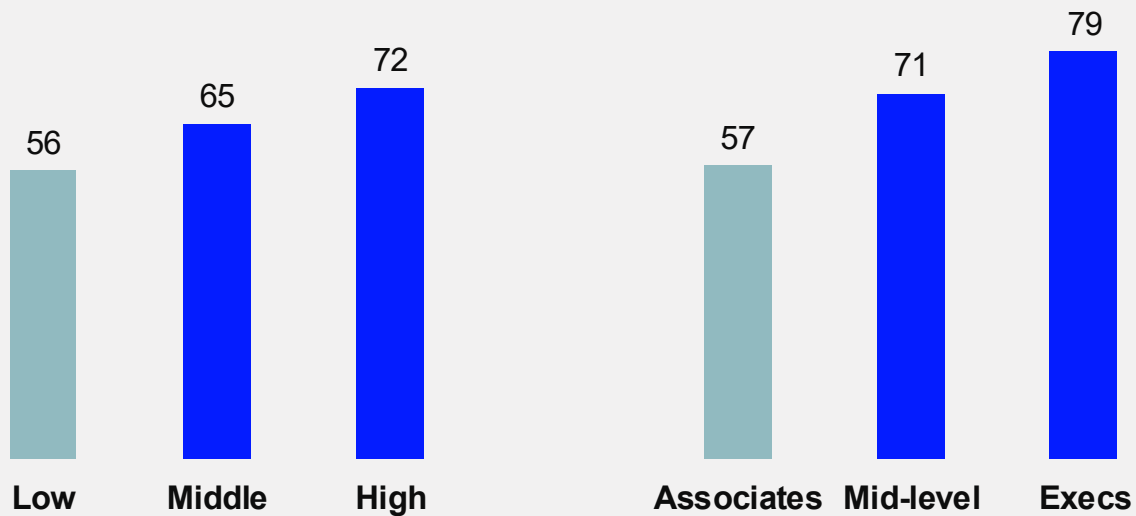
GLOBAL 28



Significant change

I trust my CEO to do what is right

INCOME | JOB LEVEL



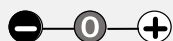
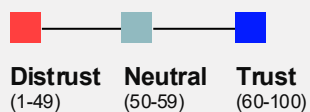
2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_PEP. Below is a list of groups of people. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that group of people to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. "My CEO" only asked to those who are employees of an organization (Q43/1). General population, 28-mkt avg., by income and job level within organization (Q421): executive (Q421/1-2), mid-level (Q421/3-5), associate (Q421/6-7). Income quartiles were determined separately for each country based on the distribution of household incomes among respondents from that country.



CEOs in General Trusted Only by High Earners and Mid-Level+ Employees

Percent who say

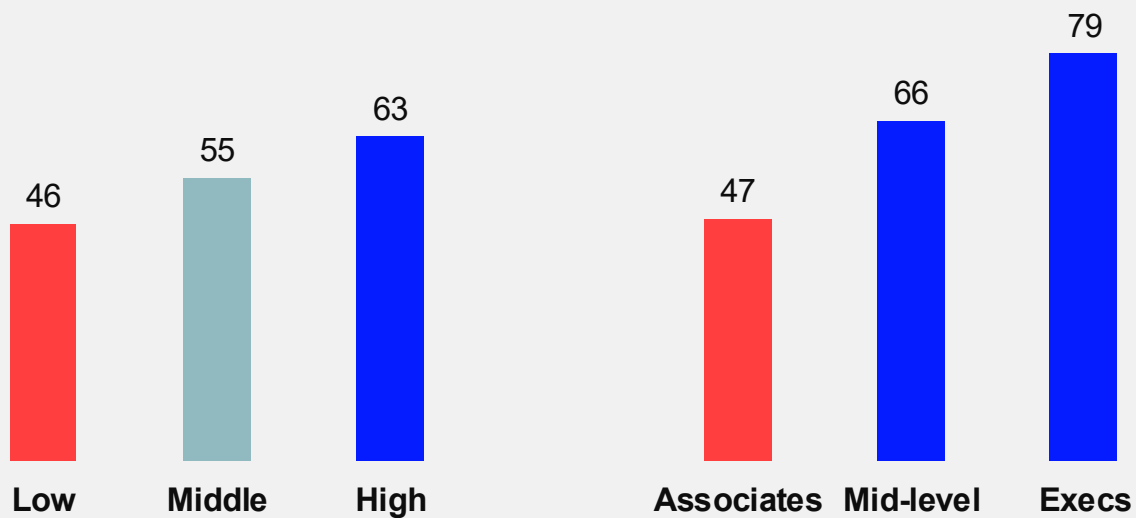
GLOBAL 28



Significant change

I trust CEOs in general to do what is right

INCOME | JOB LEVEL



2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_PEP. Below is a list of groups of people. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that group of people to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. General population, 28-mkt avg., by income and job level within organization (Q421): executive (Q421/1-2), mid-level (Q421/3-5), associate (Q421/6-7). Income quartiles were determined separately for each country based on the distribution of household incomes among respondents from that country.



AI: A Moment of Vulnerability for Leadership

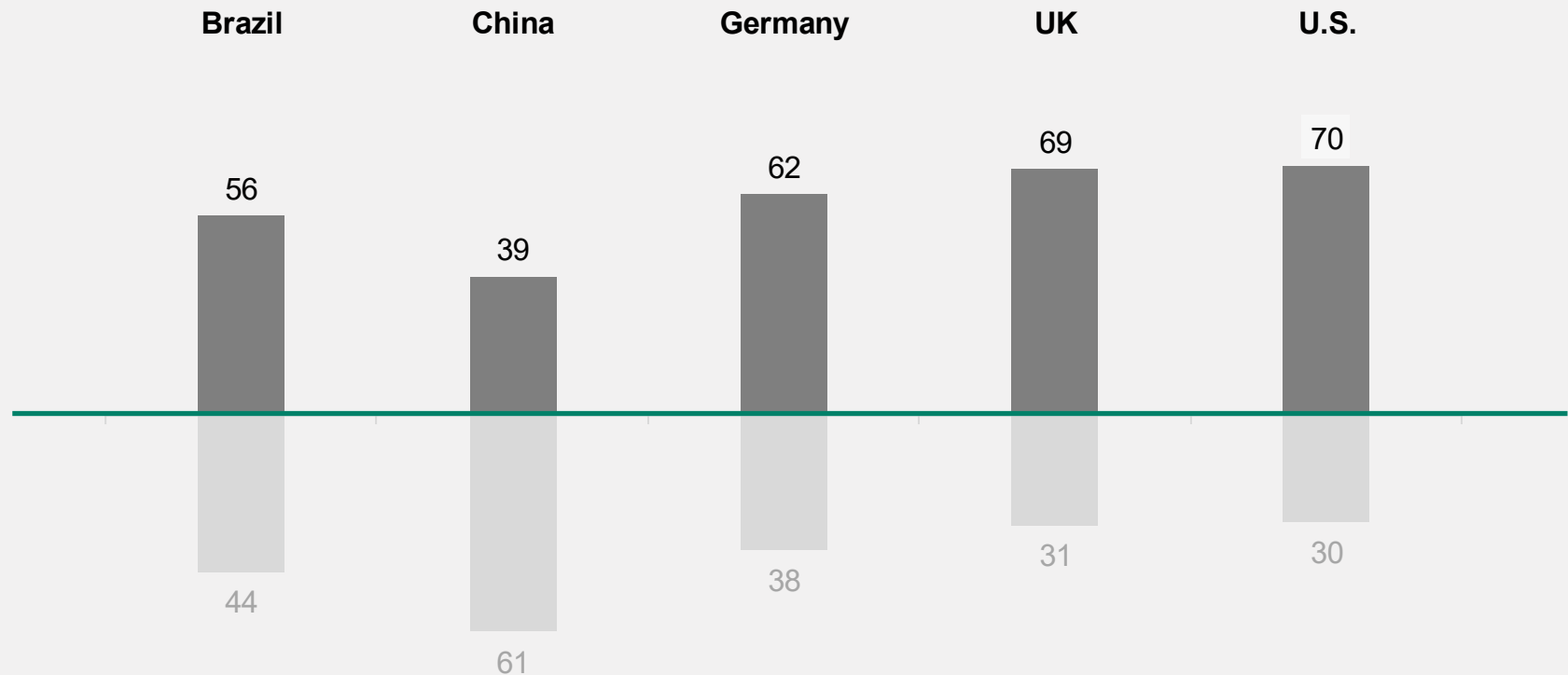


Many Concerned About Business Leaders' Transparency on Jobs and Gen AI

Which potential impact of generative AI on society is more likely?

Business leaders *aren't* fully honest with employees about job cuts

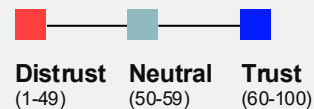
Business leaders *are* fully honest about job cuts



Peers Trusted To Tell the Truth About AI Across Job Levels; Less Than Half of Associates Believe Their CEO

Percent of employees who say

Flash Poll 5-Market Average



I trust each to **tell the truth** about **generative AI**

Associates

Mid-level

Executives

Someone like me

69

83

82

My friends and family

67

80

78

Scientists or AI researchers

60

75

76

My CEO

47

68

77

CEOs

39

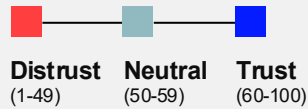
61

70



U.S. Case Study: To Sidestep Polarization, Speak Through Peer Voices

In the U.S., percent who say



I trust each to **tell the truth** about **generative AI**

Democrat Independent Republican

My friends and family

70 74 69

Someone like me

69 67 69

Scientists or technical experts who study AI

60 53 46

My CEO *(among employees)*

47 46 57

My coworkers *(among employees)*

48 44 52

*Democrats trust scientists on AI;
Republicans lean toward employer voices*



U.S. Case Study: Shared Belief Across Politics That Employers and Government Need to Step Up on AI

In the U.S., percent who say

This **would increase my enthusiasm** for using generative AI in my work/personal life

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Getting high quality training through my employer to use Gen AI effectively <i>(among employees)</i>	59	54	59
An income safety net existed for those who lost their jobs to Gen AI	60	51	50
Employers were required to retrain or redeploy employees displaced by Gen AI	53	52	47
Schools taught children how to use Gen AI in healthy and productive ways	52	48	50
Government programs supported the use of Gen AI	49	47	52

Government mandates on AI appeal across political affiliation



CEO as Trust Broker



Trust Brokering Most Powerful Action for Business To Earn Trust in High-Stakes Moments

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

When responding to a highly divisive social issue, a **business could earn my trust** by ...

Encouraging people to cooperate on finding solutions without taking a side	35
Supporting the position that is true to its values	28
Supporting my position	13
Not taking any public position on the issue	13



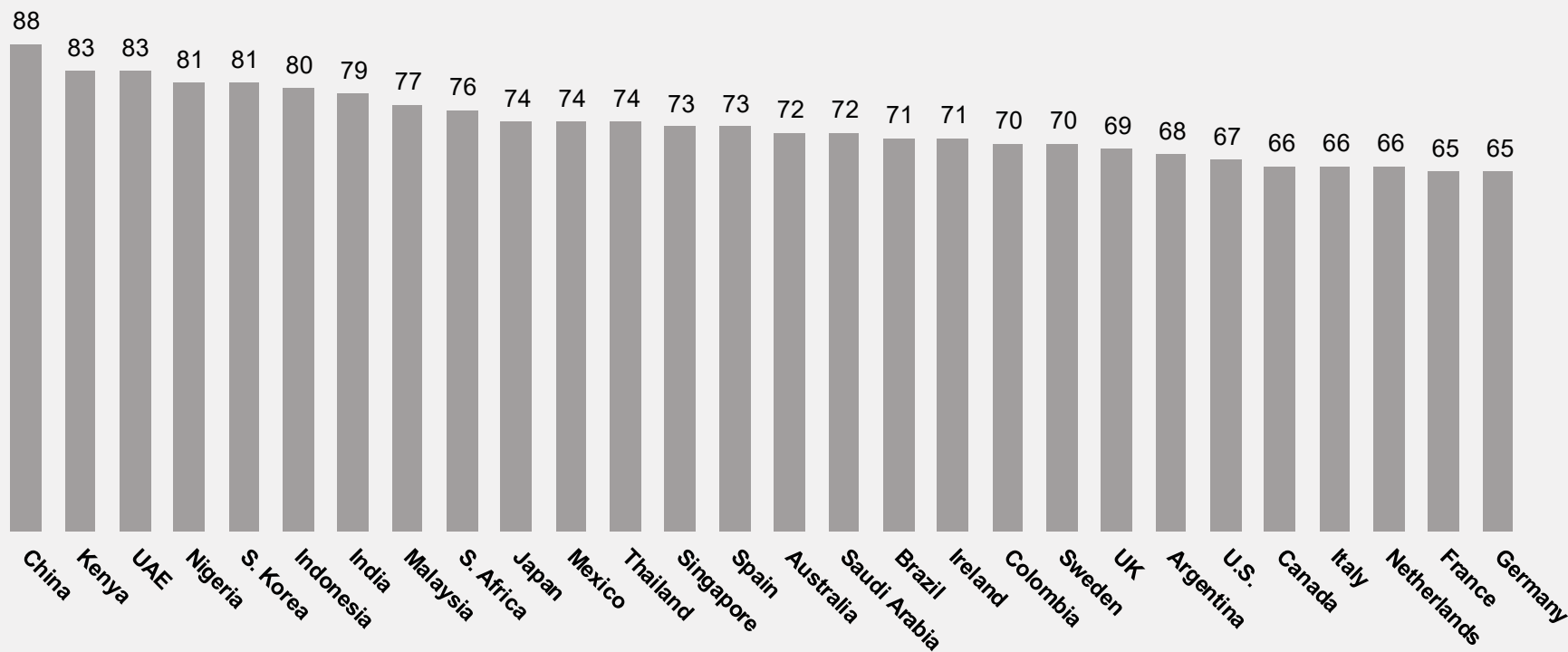
Across Markets, Shared View That CEOs Must Broker Trust

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

CEOs are obligated to bridge divides and facilitate trust building between groups of people who distrust each other

73%



2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. BRK_RSP. To what degree do you feel each of the following institutions and individuals have an obligation to actively bridge divides and facilitate trust-building between groups of people who distrust each other on the basis of having different values they live by, facts they rely on, backgrounds they come from, or approaches to solving challenges in society? Codes 3-5; somewhat or more obligated. General population, 28-mkt avg.

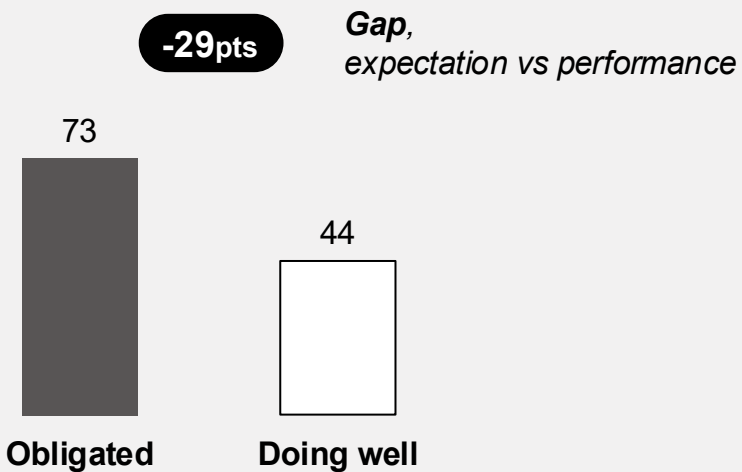


CEOs: Lead By Example

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

When it comes to bridging divides and facilitating trust building between groups of people who distrust each other, **CEOs are ...**



This would be an **effective strategy for business** to facilitate trust building between distrusting groups:

Ensure CEOs consult people with different values and backgrounds when making business decisions	75
Have CEOs constructively engage with groups who criticize or distrust the company	74

2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. BRK_RSP. To what degree do you feel each of the following institutions and individuals have an obligation to actively bridge divides and facilitate trust-building between groups of people who distrust each other on the basis of having different values they live by, facts they rely on, backgrounds they come from, or approaches to solving challenges in society? 5-point scale; codes 3-5, at least somewhat obligated. BRK_PER. How well do you feel each of the following are doing when it comes actively bridging divides and facilitating trust-building between groups of people who distrust each other on the basis of having different values they live by, facts they rely on, backgrounds they come from, or approaches to solving challenges in society? 5-point scale; codes 4-5, doing well. BUS_BRK. For each of the business actions listed below, please indicate whether you feel it would be an effective strategy or not for actively bridging divides and facilitating trust-building between groups of people who distrust each other on the basis of having different values they live by, facts they rely on, backgrounds they come from, or approaches to solving challenges in society. 5-point scale; codes 3-5, moderately or more effective. General population, 28-mkt avg. Questions asked to partial sample.



How Executive Optics Are Formed: Earn Positive Employee Word-of-Mouth Feedback

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

This influences my opinion of a CEO:

What **their employees** say about them

51

What they say about themselves in **formal interviews with journalists**

24

What they say about themselves with **independent individuals** (e.g., podcasters or content creators)

22

How **news coverage** depicts them

21

What they share about themselves on **their own social media**

19

What they say about themselves in **press releases**

16

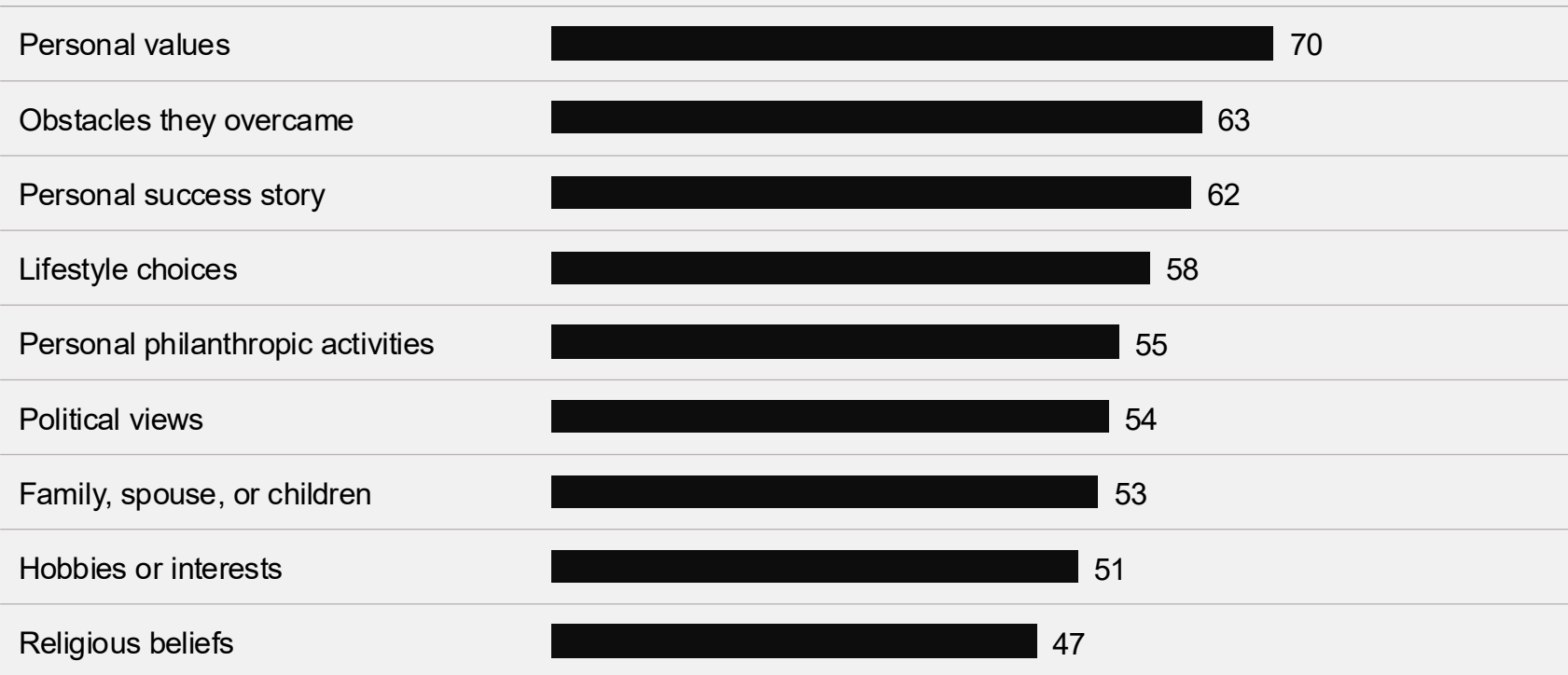


Executive Storytelling That Builds Trust: Shared Values and Surmounted Obstacles Outweigh Anecdotes on Family or Hobbies

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

Learning about this aspect of a **CEO's personal life** is important to building my trust in them:



The CEO Mandate: High Expectations, Low Margin for Error

1

CEOs Face a Credibility Crisis

Fear that business leaders mislead the public has surged globally (+11 pts since 2021) and this skepticism is significantly higher among non-executives, widening the credibility gap.

2

“My CEO” Is Trusted, But CEOs in General Are Not

There is a consistent trust premium for my CEO vs. CEOs broadly, reinforcing that trust is local, relational, and proximity-driven, not institutional.

3

An Internal Trust Divide Is Emerging

Executives are 32 pts more trusting of CEOs than associates, with lower-income and associate level employees showing significantly lower trust in leadership.

4

CEOs are Falling Short as Trust Brokers

There is broad agreement that CEOs have a responsibility to bridge societal divides, but CEOs are falling short on these expectations.

Supplemental Data



Traits of CEOs of the Future

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

This best describes the **type of business leader that I trust to lead us into the future:**

	vs		
Born in this country	82	18	Born outside this country
They always tell the truth , even if it makes it harder to accomplish their goals	77	23	They are willing to misrepresent certain facts in order to build support for their ideas and policies
Someone who wants to change the way things are done	74	26	Someone who wants to maintain the status quo and stop things from changing
They make decisions based on data and research	72	28	They follow their instincts
They speak directly to the public without anyone editing or rewriting their words	67	33	When they speak directly to the public their words have been reviewed and edited by their staff
They prioritize work-life balance , working only 8-hour days, not on weekends and taking lots of vacation time	65	35	They work long hours , most weekends and rarely take any vacation
A person who tries to make sure that everyone is as happy as possible	61	39	A person who acts on what they feel is right and does not care if some people are upset as a result
They hold themselves to a higher moral standard than the rest of us, both inside the workplace and outside of it	50	50	They hold themselves to the same moral standard as the rest of us, both inside the workplace and outside of it

2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. CEO_LED. You are about to see a series of two choices. Each choice describes a different trait or characteristic a CEO or business leader might possess. For each pair, we want you to choose the one that best describes the type of business leader that you would trust to lead us into the future. While we know that some of these choices may not be easy, please do your best to select only one of the two options given — the trait that you feel is more important for a business leader to have these days. General population, 28-mkt avg.



Business: Showcase Best Practices for Trust Brokering

Percent who say

GLOBAL 28

This would be an **effective strategy for business** to facilitate trust building between distrusting groups:

	Global 28
Invest resources into maintaining and safeguarding the places that everyone uses, such as parks, schools, and libraries	80
Host community events where employees, customers, and local residents can identify shared interests	78
Train business leaders to use de-escalation language and conflict resolution techniques in communications	77
Create and support large-scale campaigns that highlight collective achievements	76
Fund local mediation programs or conflict-resolution services to help communities bridge divides	75
Bring employees into the workplace to interact with people who are different than them	74
Research how the company might contribute to division and commit to change	73
Create campaigns that counter divisive accounts of societal challenges with narratives that encourage cooperation	72
Pull ad money away from outlets or individuals that sow distrust	70
Partner with unexpected organizations to initiate cross-cultural or cross-political conversations	68

2026 Edelman Trust Barometer. BUS_BRK. For each of the business actions listed below, please indicate whether you feel it would be an effective strategy or not for actively bridging divides and facilitating trust-building between groups of people who distrust each other on the basis of having different values they live by, facts they rely on, backgrounds they come from, or approaches to solving challenges in society. 5-point scale; codes 3-5, moderately or more effective. Question asked to partial sample. General population, 28-mkt avg.



Employers: Scale Trust Brokering Across the Workforce

Percent of employees who say

GLOBAL 28

This would be an **effective strategy for my employer** to facilitate trust building between distrusting groups:

	Global 28
Promote a shared identity and culture so that employees are reminded of what unites them rather than divides them	82
Build teams that will require people with different values to work together to succeed	81
Provide mandatory employee training for engaging in constructive dialogue amid conflict	80

