2026 Edelman Trust Barometer

Special Report:
Brand Growth in an Insular World

Top 10 Findings

01 Insularity is widespread, with two-thirds of consumers reluctant to trust someone different from them.

66% say they are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone who is different from them, including people with different core values, facts and sources, approaches to societal problems, or backgrounds. Of those people, 30% are unwilling to use brands used by people who differ from them.

02 Consumers prioritize domestic brands when making purchasing decisions.

Over two-thirds say it is important or a critical purchase criterion that the brands they buy are headquartered in their country, up 5 points since 2023.

03 Trust drives purchases as much as quality and value.

88% say trusting the brand is an important or critical purchase criterion, on par with quality (89%) and value (88%).

04 Consumers define relevance through more than culture.

On average, utility is the most effective way to make a brand relevant (85%), followed by identity reflection (81%), community connection (77%), emotional resonance (76%), and pop culture fluency (67%).

05 Gen Z and millennial consumers hide brand use to avoid social stigma.

42% of people ages 18-29 and 41% of 30–45-year-olds say there are brands they use in secret to avoid stigma, while 40% across both age groups say they have stopped using brands because of peer pressure.

06 Brands fall short on trust and relevance.

Globally, almost half say they don't trust brands, brands aren't doing a good job at being relevant, or both, with strongest agreement in developed markets like Japan (75%), South Korea (61%), Canada (57%), Germany (57%), the UK (56%), the U.S. (53%), and France (51%).

07 When trust and relevance are integrated, audience expansion carries less risk.

71% of those who both trust brands and find them relevant are willing to continue using a brand that begins selling to people who are different than them, compared to 36% among those who neither trust brands nor find them relevant.

08 Earned media carries more weight than advertising.

41% say what people who are not paid by a brand say about it has the biggest impact on their willingness to trust the brand, compared to 20% who cite what a brand says about itself as their top trust influence.

09 Engagement peaks when brands are both trusted and relevant.

59% of those who both trust brands and find them relevant engage with others on a brand's social media channels monthly or more, compared to 27% among those who neither trust brands nor find them relevant.

10 Creators influence what people buy, try, and trust.

Among those who follow content creators (62%), 37% tried a brand for the first time because of a creator in the last 6 months, 35% talked about a brand with friends, 29% engaged in self-improvement, 29% began trusting a brand, 27% tried a new style, and 27% started a new hobby.

To learn more about the Edelman Trust Barometer,
https://www.edelman.com/trust/2026/trust-barometer #TrustBarometer
All data is based on general population sample unless otherwise noted.

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