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UK IS DRIFTING IN “THE TRUST DOLDRUMS”

January 20, 2015, LONDON – The UK is drifting in the Trust doldrums as Government, Business and the Media are all flatlining in their trust scores, according to the 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer. In a surprisingly rapid decline, trust in NGOs in the UK - the fourth key institution measured in the 33,000 person global survey - dropped by 16 points to 51%¹.

This dip in fortunes, against a backdrop of an improving economy, has dragged the UK into a block of 13 distrusting countries² in the 27 country survey – just above Russia.

Business has dipped four points to 52% and the Media is down three points to 38%. Meanwhile, with the General Election just months away, trust in Government has made little progress, rising just one point to 43%.

Paradoxically, while the UK’s trust in Business has dropped, it is still well regarded by other countries around the world. Companies headquartered in the UK are trusted by 70%, just 6 percentage points below chart-topping Sweden. The table is propped up by the BRICs and Mexico.

“Key institutions in the UK such as Government, Media and Business have had a better year than previous years, but that has not been converted into increased levels of trust,” commented Ed Williams, Edelman’s UK and Ireland CEO. “There is no doubt that we are stuck in a rut. There is a real danger that the years of continuing low trust have permanently rewired our attitudes towards the institutions that shape our lives. It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to navigate out of the trust doldrums.”

General Population

When it comes to assessing political parties to “do what is right”, the Conservatives are level pegging with Labour, both on 36%. But it appears that the LibDems are suffering from being in coalition as their trust score has dropped 6 percentage points to 25%, slipping behind UKIP on 27%.

Boris Johnson remains Britain’s most trusted politician and Nigel Farage is the only party leader with an increase in his score over the year. Both also score far higher with voters who are asked which politician they trust most to “speak their mind” (66% and 61% respectively) compared to David Cameron, Ed Miliband or

¹ Trust scores are evaluated by asking a representative sample of the UK population to rate Government, Media, Business and NGOs to do what is right on a zero to nine point scale. Trust is six to nine out of nine

² “Distrusting” countries are those where an average of trust levels across all four institutions is less than 50%



Nick Clegg (43%, 37%, 32%). However, when asked which political leaders “communicate honestly” the numbers plummeted with Nigel Farage on 31% and Boris Johnson on 42%.

“This demonstrates that it is dangerous to underestimate how perceptive voters can be – they know there is a difference between plain speaking and honest speaking”, added Mr Williams.

This year, Edelman UK also posed a simple trust test: if you lent a £10 note to a political leader, would you trust them to pay it back? The answer was not good for any of our leaders. Not a single political leader measured in the Barometer results scored more than 50%.

The Barometer also points to a roadmap for how Government and Business can chart a way to improve their trust levels. “Honest communications” tops the public’s view of how Government can increase trust at 52%, above other factors such as addressing immigration on 44%, or changing the UK’s relationship with Europe at 32% and unemployment at 30%.

When it comes to Business, the issue of companies paying their fair share of tax remains the most important in building trust equal with, “responsible behaviour”, both at 42%. This is significantly above “providing consistent levels of service and quality” at 30%.

Globally this year’s Trust Barometer reveals an alarming evaporation of trust across all institutions, reaching the lows of the Great Recession in 2009. Trust in Government, Business, Media and NGOs in the general population is below 50% in two-thirds of countries, including the U.S., U.K., Germany and Japan. Informed public respondents are nearly as distrustful, registering trust levels below 50% in half of the countries surveyed.

For the first time, the Barometer looked at trust and its link to innovation and found that trust issues are hindering acceptance of technological advancements. A majority of respondents believe innovation is happening too quickly (51%) and that it is being driven by greed (54%) and Business growth imperatives (66%), while only some (24%) see it being done to make the world a better place. More than half (55%) feel Business is not doing enough testing on new developments.

“The pace of change has never been faster and innovation has become an even greater imperative for Business success,” said Richard Edelman, president and CEO, Edelman. “Innovation should be a trust accelerator, but today it is not. To invent is no longer enough. There must be a new compact between company and individual, where companies demonstrate that innovations are safe based on independent research, provide both societal and personal benefit and are transparent about the use of customer data.”

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ABOUT THE EDELMAN TRUST BAROMETER

Results are for Informed Publics unless otherwise stated. The 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer is the firm’s 15th annual trust and credibility survey. The survey was powered by research firm Edelman Berland and



consisted of 20-minute online interviews conducted on October 13th – November 24th, 2014. The 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer online survey sampled 27,000 general population respondents with an oversample of 6,000 informed publics ages 25-64 across 27 markets. The 2015 Trust Barometer UK Supplement was fielded from 12th – 13th January. The survey consists of 1,000 general online population with Informed Publics occurring naturally in the population sample. All informed publics met the following criteria: college-educated; household income in the top quartile for their age in their country; read or watch business/news media at least several times a week; follow public policy issues in the news at least several times a week. For more information, visit www.edelman.com/trust2015

ABOUT EDELMAN

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