



EDELMAN TRUST BAROMETER COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION: TRUST IN GOVERNMENT HITS HISTORIC HIGH IN THE UK

Trust in Government surges 24 points - public buoyed by economic rescue measures, but shocked by health policy failings

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Brits most likely in world to say: "Spend now, worry about the bill later"

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Public want bigger government and will trade liberty and privacy for safety – for now

LONDON, 5th May 2020 - Trust in government has reached record levels amongst Britons, rising more than any other country surveyed for a special pandemic edition of the Edelman Trust Barometer released today.

The huge increase in trust, a 24-point leap from 36 per cent in January to 60 per cent today - a historic high for trust in government in the UK – reflects an apparent strong belief in the economic rescue package put forward by the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak.

When asked to rate the government's performance during the pandemic, just over half of the public (52 per cent) said it was doing well or very well in "taking the necessary actions to keep the economy from collapsing".

Having been at the bottom of the pile in January, trust in the UK's government leaders has also jumped 25 points to 58 per cent. Now outstripping CEOs, and NGO representatives. A majority of Brits (53 per cent) also said they trust their "national government leader" to lead the country through the economic recovery.

However, the response of the government in terms of public health policy – testing, provision of critical medical supplies like PPE, protecting the vulnerable – has fallen short. Only 24 per cent think the government has done a good job on testing, 32 per cent on medical supply distribution, and 33 per cent ensuring access to care in the poorest areas.

Despite record headline trust levels, the data reflects concerns around the government's response to the emergency. Almost 3 in 5 said the government had failed them by not acting in a decisive manner as soon as the threat of the virus became known. There has been a 11-point decline in the public's opinion on the UK's preparedness for dealing with the pandemic - polling completed by Edelman at the beginning of March showed that 46 per cent thought the country was well-prepared for the viral outbreak - this has now dropped to 35 per cent.



The data shows that in order to maintain their trust, the British public expect the government to take decisive action. Nearly 3 in 4 say the government's highest priority should be saving as many lives as possible, even if it means the economy will sustain more damage and recover more slowly – the second highest of the 11 markets surveyed.

Brits are also willing to sacrifice some freedom and privacy if it helps government stop the virus. Some 4 in 5 state that restrictions of movement are entirely reasonable and appropriate, and nearly 3 in 5 say they are willing to cede information about their health and even their location to the government to help track and contain the spread of the disease.

“Government may be basking in record trust levels, but shadows loom. Popular economic interventions cannot go on indefinitely,” said Ed Williams, CEO & President, Edelman EMEA. “The UK may yet suffer more deaths in the crisis than any of our European neighbours. So, the government will need to convince people that their health is in safe hands or risk seeing trust plummet again,” Williams added.

“People turn to institutions in times of crisis, but there is a strong chance that when the realities of paying for the pandemic begin to bite, trust levels could fall as fast as they have grown.”

Drawing on Edelman's 20 years of studying trust, Williams said: “The history of the Trust Barometer has shown that in the wake of major global crises, peaks in trust in government are quickly followed by troughs. We saw this in the aftermath of 9/11 and following the financial crash of 2008.”

Britons are also clear on the role they want government to play in the future, with 61 per cent saying that the pandemic has convinced them the UK needs a bigger social safety net.

While 59 per cent of all Britons say that those with less education and fewer resources are paying more of the price of the pandemic, concerns about inequality are actually more acutely felt by the informed public. Among this group 75 per cent feel that those who have less are suffering more.

The informed public – 25-64-year-olds in the top 25 per cent of income earners, university educated and regular consumers of news - are also much more concerned about the economic gravity of the situation. 58 per cent of this group say they were worried about losing their jobs and the prospects of getting new work, compared with only 32 per cent of the mass population.

Some 70 per cent of the informed public agreed with the statement that “capitalism as it exists today does more harm than good” while just 44 per cent of the mass population agreed.



Business has also moderately benefitted from increased levels of trust in institutions amongst the general public but has failed to keep pace with trust in government. Trust in business grew by 8 points since January but is trusted by just 55 per cent of the British public, compared to 60 per cent for government.

The UK's Government leaders are also outpacing Britain's CEOs when it comes to leadership through the pandemic. When asked which leader is doing an outstanding job meeting the demands placed on them in the crisis, "national government leaders" scored 42 per cent. UK CEOs also landed bottom of the pile when measured against CEOs from the other 11 markets surveyed.

According to the British public, business is underperforming on putting people before profits (32 per cent) and helping other small businesses in need (29 per cent). It is also missing the mark on helping get the country back up and running – only 28 per cent feel business is doing well at preparing for the eventual recovery.

When it comes to trust in traditional media (69 per cent) was sharply up near record levels, however British journalists scored poorly (22 per cent) for their response to the global health emergency. Britons are finding it difficult to find reliable and trustworthy information about the virus and its effects (41 per cent), and nearly two thirds worry about the volume of fake news being spread about the virus.

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About The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring Update: Trust and the Covid-19 Pandemic

The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring Update: Trust and the Covid-19 Pandemic is an update to the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer. The survey was conducted by Edelman Intelligence between April 15 and April 23, and sampled more than 13,200 respondents in 11 markets: Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, S. Korea, U.K. and U.S. 1,200 people were surveyed in each market, 100 of which were informed public. All informed public respondents met the following criteria: aged 25-64, 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 <https://www.edelman.com/research/trust-2020-spring-update>

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