



EDELMAN TRUST BAROMETER 2016 – TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Huge “trust gap” emerges – poorer Britons trust government far less than richer ones

Few believe politicians represent them – Edelman [video](#) shows witty cynicism of voters

Brexit strongly favoured by those struggling through austerity; the wealthy want to stay in EU

Migration and more straight-talking by political leaders top the wishlist of UK citizens

Disengaged Brits struggle to name party leaders

January 18, 2016, LONDON - The 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals a huge gap between the haves and have-nots of Britain in the trust they place in their **government**.

A raft of recent reports by the former deputy prime minister [Nick Clegg](#), the [Social Mobility Commission](#), the medical charity [King’s Fund](#) and the [High Pay Centre](#) all highlighted troubling signs of increasing inequality in British life.

The results of the 2016 annual Trust Barometer back these up in no uncertain terms, with trust levels vividly reflecting the diverging attitudes of different social tiers in the UK to their elected officials.

So while David Cameron and his supporters can be content that trust in government as an institution has risen slightly to 37% among all those surveyed for the Trust Barometer, they should pause for thought given that this overall number hides a huge “trust gap” of 28 percentage points between richest and poorest. And overall, no single politician has convinced more than a hard core of supporters that they have the interests of the electorate at heart.

The trust gap is growing: trust in government in 2016 is running at 54% among *High Net Worth* individuals – those earning more than £100,000 a year and with liquid assets of more than £650,000 – but for the *Low Income Households* bracket – those with incomes of less than £15,000 – trust is a mere 26%.

The successful are happy with their governments; the struggling far less so.

In other Western countries, the rise of populist politicians has been prompted by the growth in numbers of those dissatisfied with “politics as usual”. Hence the emergence of groups such as



Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece as well as the unlikely momentum of Donald Trump in the US. Indeed, in last year's general election, the UK saw UKIP won nearly 4 million votes.

The SNP also shows as most trusted amongst their electorate in the 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer with a trust score of 45% north of the border. Next come the Conservatives with 38% nationally, slightly up on last year, but the other parties are struggling to convince the population that they can be trusted.

Labour has fallen 10 points in two years to 31%, while the Lib Dems have a trust score of 23%, 8 percentage points down on their 2014 trust score. Over the same period, UKIP has also dropped 10 points, to 19%.

Asked which issues would make them trust their government more, two stood out.

One was honesty in government communications – implying that this is currently in short supply – which was cited by 44%. The other was “management of refugees and migrants”, mentioned by a third of respondents (34%).

Ed Williams, Edelman UK CEO, said: “How much trust you have in government depends on your economic circumstances. These findings are supported by many different reports that highlight growing inequality in Britain, but it is the first that it has shown up as an impacting on trust in the institution of government as a whole.”

Politicians – Serious trust issues and recognition issues too

The same picture emerges when Edelman asked Britons how much they trusted party leaders: David Cameron's score was up 7 points to 40% since 2014. Nicola Sturgeon was up 8 points on her 2015 score with 28%, although that score leaps to 51% in Scotland alone.

Jeremy Corbyn's trust score of 18% was only just over half of Ed Miliband's standing of 33% two years ago. New Lib Dem leader Tim Farron tied Mr Corbyn, trusted by just 18%, and far below his predecessor Nick Clegg's 27% in 2014.

Nigel Farage saw a 7-point decline in trust since last year with 21% (2014: 25%).

Overall, trust levels in individual leaders are very low.

The Trust Barometer asked respondents to say which major leader “represents someone like me”. None of Britain's leaders, who were in theory all elected to do just that, convinced even a third of the



population that they did have their interests at heart. David Cameron was top of a worryingly low poll with just 32%. Mr Corbyn and Mr Farage scored 24%, and Mr Farron 15%.

Some Brits, reflecting low levels of engagement and trust, struggle even to identify party leaders.

Unprompted, fewer than nine out of 10 (86%) could name David Cameron as leader of the Conservatives (possibly showing that not all people realise that the role of PM also carries with it leadership of a party).

Jeremy Corbyn was named by 71% as leader of Labour – 5% think Ed Miliband is still leading the Opposition.

A slightly lower number (68%) volunteered Nigel Farage's name as leader of UKIP (although he has been in charge far longer than Mr Corbyn).

A mere 18% could name Lib Dem leader Tim Farron (one in seven voters (13%) have not noticed the departure of Nick Clegg).

Other findings show the extent of disengagement of those who have suffered most from austerity.

- Only 62% of those in *Low Income* households – those with incomes of less than £15,000 who might be thought to be natural Labour supporters - could name Mr Corbyn compared to 81% of his class enemies among the richest members of society, *High Net Worth* individuals with incomes of more than £100,000 and liquid assets of more than £650,000.
- Mr Farage was unknown to 4 out of 10 in the poorest group (61% recognition)
- Only Mr Cameron showed no such class divide – he is recognised by 84% and 89%, low to high incomes respectively.

Ed Williams, Edelman UK CEO, said: "Political egos should be brought to ground by these findings. But if we are tempted to find some of the results a bit funny, we should remember that in other countries, the gap in perceptions between those who were engaged in politics and those who found it increasingly irrelevant to them, was a symptom of a deeper problem."

Brexit – another class divide in trust

The Trust Barometer also asks people their views on particular issues, and of course Britain's position in Europe was a major topic.



According to the Edelman findings, Brits are becoming more inclined to remain, but there is a deep division based on social status.

In 2016, the “In” side reached 48% support, while “Out” dropped to 35% with the rest undecided or didn’t know. Last year, In was at 46% and Out was 41%, and in 2014 Brexit was actually leading by 46% to 40%.

That same “trust gap” emerges within the general population, depending on relative wealth and how informed you are.

Of *Informed Publics*, people who by definition are interested in and follow political debate, 61% want to stay in Europe, only 26% want to leave.

Those with household incomes under £15,000, by contrast, favour leaving the EU by a margin of 47% to 34%. They are much less likely to be actively following subtle changes in the arguments that precede the In/Out referendum, which may come as early as this summer.

But this group, who have been hard hit by austerity, are likely to identify honest government communications, unemployment and immigration as their main concerns about the future.

Ed Williams, Edelman UK CEO said: “This situation keeps changing but one thing is for sure: it is “game on” for the debate on whether the UK decides to leave the EU. That’s because the issues that the majority of respondents told us matter most to them – including unemployment and regulation of immigration and the management of refugees and migrants crossing into Europe – are hitting the headlines in new ways every day.”

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About Edelman

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Edelman has been awarded thirteen Cannes Lions including the Grand Prix for PR in 2014. Edelman has been voted Pan-EMEA Consultancy of the Year at the 2015 Sabre Awards, Global Agency of the Year and Best Agency to work for 2013 by the Holmes Report and International Agency of the Year 2013 by the PRCA and is a 2015 Sunday Times Best Company to Work For. Please visit www.edelman.co.uk for further information.

About the Edelman Trust Barometer

The 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer is the firm's 16th 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 16th, 2015. The 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer surveyed more than 33,000 respondents with an oversample of 1,150 general population respondents ages 18 and over and 500 informed public respondents in the U.S. and China and 200 informed public respondents in all other countries representing 15 percent of the total population across 28 countries. All informed publics met the following criteria: ages 25-64, college-educated; household income in the top 25 percent for their age in their country; report significant media consumption and engagement in business news and public policy. The 2016 Trust Barometer UK Supplement was fielded from 11th – 13th January. The survey consists of 1,000 general online population with Informed Publics occurring naturally in the population sample. Additional boost samples of 250 low income households and 100 high net worth individuals have been included in the UK Supplement.

For more information, visit www.edelman.com/trust2016 .