



2016 Edelman Trust Barometer: The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

16th Edelman Trust Barometer reveals A Tale of Two Britains

Little trust in Politicians, but business stages a trust revival

Brits are shifting towards staying in Europe but less well-off favour Brexit

TRUST HEADLINES

- A widening gap exists between the levels of trust that rich and poor Britons have in their institutions
- The poorest households are overwhelmingly pessimistic about their future; the richest are expecting their good fortune to continue or improve
- Business shows the widest gap in trust between income extremes
- Attitudes to Britain's future in Europe depend on where you stand on the social ladder

Monday January 18, 2016, LONDON - A yawning gap has opened between Britain's haves and have-nots in Edelman's annual survey of how much trust we place in the institutions that dominate our lives.

The trust that Britons feel in **government, business, the media and NGOs** depends on where they stand in the social hierarchy.

The Edelman Trust Barometer found a 17 percentage point gap between the trust that *Informed Publics* (university-educated, higher earners with a declared interest in politics and news) have in all these institutions compared with the rest of the population.

Trust in this sense can be interpreted as a reflection of how content Britons are with their lot. Trust matters for the business community in particular, because the Barometer has consistently shown that trusted companies attract more customers who will pay more for goods and services, and then act as advocates.

The 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer also reveals a huge variation in our expectations of a brighter future depending on our status. The higher up the income ladder, the more likely we are to be optimistic about our future quality of life.



This inequality of hope and trust backs up recent reports highlighting growing inequalities in life expectancy, income, educational achievement and many other factors plaguing the UK.

The divergence in trust between *Informed Publics* and the rest of the population is much greater than last year. The wealthier, better-educated group report trust levels of 57% (2015: 46%) in all institutions, while the rest of the population record a score of 40%. That 17-point disparity in trust has almost doubled in a year.

One example of this “trust gap” between the two demographics is on the critical issue of Britain’s continued membership of the EU. Among *Informed Publics*, 61% want to stay and 26% to leave; for those in the poorest households, only 34% are “In” supporters with 47% wanting “Out” of Europe.

Ed Williams, Edelman UK’s CEO, said: “The Trust Tale of Two Britains, in terms that Dickens would understand, is that better-off Britons see it as almost the best of times; those who have suffered more through austerity see it as closer to being the worst of times.”

“...it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness...” – Dickens, The Tale of Two Cities

When Edelman shone a stronger light on this “trust gap”, questioning the very richest and very poorest Brits, it revealed a trust chasm.

The Trust Barometer results show that trust in **government** to do the right thing was running at 54% among *High Net Worth* individuals; the elite among *Informed Publics* with incomes of more than £100,000 and with more than £650,000 of liquid assets. But trust was a staggering 28 percentage points lower at 26% for the least wealthy demographic, *Low Income* households or those with combined incomes of less than £15,000.

When it comes to trust in **business**, the disparity is even starker. *Low Income* households had a mere 35% trust score; for *High Net Worth* individuals, it was 67%, a trust gap of 32 percentage points.

There was a similar picture for trust levels for the **media** and for **NGOs** with a 12 point gap and 10 point gap respectively.



"...it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."

So it may come as little surprise to learn that there is a vast inequality when it comes to confidence in the future, too. In fact, attitudes to the future among the wealthiest are almost a mirror image of the outlook among the least wealthy.

Asked about their expectations for the year ahead, only 10% of *Low Income* households said they thought their standard of living would be higher at the end of 2016. The rest believed they would be worse off (44%), stay the same (40%) or didn't know (6%).

By contrast, only 10% of *High Net Worth* individuals expected a lower standard of living at year's end. The rest believed they would improve (34%) or at least maintain (56%) their position. Asked to project their hopes five years into the future, only 20% of the poorest were optimists; only 13% of the richest were pessimistic.

Ed Williams, Edelman UK CEO, said: "To my mind, the gulf between the hopes and aspirations of the top and bottom of the social ladder should worry everyone in Britain. The expectations of the great are becoming fundamentally divorced from those of the least privileged".

"To close this trust gap, politicians and business leaders have to convince the people who are suffering most through austerity of their empathy and their good intent. If our society doesn't win back the trust of those who feel discarded, we will only have ourselves to blame if false prophets fill that gap."

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About Edelman

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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 .