

Edelman Trust Barometer Shows Employers Are Most Trusted, With CEOs Expected To Take a Lead on Societal Issues

Irish Findings Reveal Opportunity for a potent Government and Business Partnership to address climate change, discrimination, immigration and income inequality

- *High Trust In Traditional Media at 60% As Social Media Least Trusted*
 - *Trust in Energy Sector drops 14 points to 44%*
- *Less than half of Irish respondents (42%) say their country is more divided today than in the past*
 - *But Economic and Existential Societal Concerns Remain*

March 13, 2023 Dublin – CEOs are expected to act on major societal challenges, with a significant majority of respondents to the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer expecting them to take a stand on climate change (84%), the wealth gap (77%), immigration (76%), discrimination (81%) and the treatment of employees (90%). Edelman's annual Trust Barometer surveys trust levels in four institutions – government, the media, business and NGOs. Now in its twenty-third year, the 2023 edition surveyed over 32,000 respondents in 28 countries including more than 1,000 members of the Irish general public.

The Trust Barometer's Irish findings show that 73% of employed respondents trust their employer. This rating is more than 20 points higher than business, which at 52% among the general population - a drop of two points on 2022 - is Ireland's highest ranking institution for trust. Trust in the other institutions also fell when compared to last year. NGOs (51%) are down by four points, trust in government fell two points to 47% and the media fell five points to 40%.

The findings indicate that the five-point trust gap between business and government is considerably lower than the global average of 12 points. It also sits in stark contrast to sentiment in the UK where there is a large 13-point trust gap between the two institutions.

The slender gap in trust between government and business in Ireland points to the need for a partnership approach between these institutions to face down the threats posed by climate change, income inequality, immigration, discrimination and employee treatment. On average, 48% believe progress is more likely to be made on these issues by Government and business partnering rather than both working independently (20%) or alone (Government 16%, Business 8%).

The Ireland edition of the 2023 Trust Barometer shows less economic optimism than before, with just 31% of respondents believing that they and their family will be better off in five years, compared to 42% in 2022. The Ireland data also reveals that 84% of employed respondents are worried about job loss and 70% of the general population are concerned about inflation. Existential concerns also loom large among Irish respondents, with 73% concerned about climate change and 71% worried about nuclear war arising from international conflict, the findings show.

Less than half of Irish respondents (42%) say their country is more divided today than in the past. There is a marked difference in the UK where 65% of UK respondents feel their country is now more divided now than before.

A majority in Ireland are concerned about societal divisions: 54% feel that the lack of civility and mutual respect is the worst they have ever seen, and just over half (51%) are of a view that the social fabric is too weak to act as a foundation for unity and common purpose. A far higher number of those surveyed in the UK - 70% and 66% respectively – say they see a worsened lack of civility today and a social fabric that is too weak for unity.

Irish respondents' ratings of the country only fall as 'moderately polarised' in our analysis, with Irish respondents more likely to believe that the country's divisions are surmountable. The Irish view contrasts sharply with Edelman Trust Barometer findings in the UK, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, France and Japan, which all show that those countries are at risk of severe polarisation - a situation where divisions are entrenched and it is unlikely that agreement can be reached on key issues and challenges.

“Ireland is a positive outlier with regard to social cohesion. When compared to many of our European neighbours, the Trust Barometer shows that we are more likely to feel it’s possible to overcome our lack of agreement on key societal issues and are less likely to feel extreme division. While there are divisions, they are surmountable, and the findings show that there is a real opportunity for government and business to work in unison to ensure that we face down these differences together,” said Joe Carmody, CEO, Edelman Ireland.

The Irish data also reveals high trust levels in traditional media, which at 60% dipped just one point since 2022. In stark contrast, trust in social media remains low and is now at 23% trust – a two-point drop on last year.

The food and beverage sector has been revealed as the most trusted sector (70%) across 15 industries included in the research. The steepest fall in trust, however, saw the energy sector (44%) record a double-digit decline after falling 14 points on 2022. The Irish respondents also called out family-owned firms as the most trusted businesses (72%) in Ireland, with more people believing that they would do the right thing compared to privately held (48%), stated-owned (46%) and publicly traded entities (45%).

The Edelman Trust Barometer also reveals the commercial benefit of more societal engagement by business. The Global findings show that consumers are turning to brands that match their beliefs and values with over three in five of respondents (63%) stating that they buy from or advocate for brands based on beliefs and values. Almost seven in 10 employees globally (69%) state that an organisation having societal impact is a strong expectation or deal breaker when considering a job.

The Irish findings also show that 70% of respondents trust the World Health Organization (WHO) and 58% trust the United Nations (UN). Ireland is an outlier when it comes to trust in the European Union (EU), the Edelman Trust Barometer shows. The EU is trusted by 63% of Irish respondents, and while this is four points lower than 2022, Ireland is the member state with the highest trust rating of the institution. Ireland’s trust in the EU is 16 points higher than the bloc’s biggest country, Germany, and 18 points ahead of Ireland’s nearest neighbour, the UK.

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About Edelman

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Since our founding in 1952 by Dan Edelman, we have remained an independent, family-run company. We use our profits to strengthen our business, provide our employees with opportunities to grow, advance our industry, and serve as a responsible citizen of the world. Every day, we strive to live and work by a long-held set of core values: the pursuit of excellence, the freedom to be curious, the courage to do the right thing, and a commitment to improving society.

In Ireland, we are the trusted strategic and creative communications partner enabling solutions to our clients’ most pressing business challenges and opportunities.

About the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer

The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer is the firm’s 23rd annual trust and credibility survey. The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer online survey sampled more than 32,000 respondents, which includes 1,150 general population respondents across 28 countries. The margin of error among the global sample at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 0.6 percentage points. For the Ireland sample, it is +/- 2.9 percentage points.