

## Trust in our institutions is under threat?

There is little good news for most institutions in the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer. Surveying 37,000 of the general population as well as the 'informed public' across 27 countries, the report shows that business is the only institution seen as competent AND ethical.

Trust in leaders has declined over several years of the survey - whether government leaders, religious leaders or CEOs. People still trust in scientists and tend towards trusting locally in what they know. 57% of respondents said that "government leaders are purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations"; and 56% said the same about business leaders.

People's views of different information sources is also worrying with all forms of media seeing a significant drop in trust since the previous report.

Interestingly, there is an opportunity for business leaders to step into the trust gap. 68% felt that CEOs should step in when government does not fix societal problems and 65% felt that CEOs should hold themselves accountable to the public as well as the Board and shareholders.

In the UK, the British Attitude Survey has measured a significant decline in those who say they trust the government 'most of the time or just about always' - down from 40% in 1986 to just 15% in 2019. About 34% profess to 'almost never' trust the government. More recently, the handling of the pandemic has seen opinions change in the UK. Trust in government rose in the first 3 months of Covid-19 by 24% but has slipped back to January 2021 by 15%.

Several surveys have shown that trust tends to be lower in those with lower incomes and levels of education.