

Society does not trust its leaders or institutions. V3

What is the purpose of this article?

- 1) To enable boards of directors, C-Suite, and shareholders to begin a discussion regarding: the value of society's trust in them, and whether action must be taken to increase trust.

What are the critical learnings in this article?

Globally,

- 1) The majority of people believe government and business leaders purposefully try to mislead people.
- 2) 40% of the American public believes problems with their social institutions cannot be fixed and to just "let them burn".
- 3) Governments are seen as far less competent, and ethical, than business.
- 4) 74% believe that elected officials don't care what people like them think.

I wonder how society can survive when the population doesn't trust leaders and institutions.

How many people trust CEO, business leaders, and the government?

The 2024 Edelman Global Trust Barometer¹ has disturbing global statistics:

- 1) 49% of people in developed countries trust NGOs, business, government, and media. (It's 63% in developing countries)
- 2) 79% of the general population in China trust business, government, and media.
- 3) Governments are seen as far less competent, and ethical, than business.
- 4) 63% of people trust business. 51% trust government. 49% in Canada. 40% in the US.
- 5) 63% of people believe that government leaders are purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations. 64% feel that way about journalists and reporters, 61% about business leaders.
- 6) 74% of people trust scientists to tell the truth about new inventions and technologies. 51% trust CEOs and 45% trust government leaders.
- 7) 88% of people worry about job loss, 76% worry about climate change, 73% worry about nuclear war.
- 8) 59% believe that government lack competence to regulate emerging innovations.
- 9) 62% expect CEOs to manage changes occurring in society, not just those occurring in their business.

The 2024 Edelman Canadian Trust Barometer² show Canada is similar to the rest of the world.

- 1) 53% of people in Canada trust NGOs, business, government, and media.
- 2) 57% trust business, 51% trust the media, and 49% trust government.
- 3) 39% of Indigenous trust business, 41% trust media, and 28% trust government.
- 4) 82% are worried about job loss, 71% about climate change, and 70% about nuclear war.
- 5) 77% trust scientists to do what is right, 74% trust teachers, 43% trust government leaders, and 39% trust CEOs.
- 6) 60% of people believe that government leaders are purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations. 59% about business leaders. 55% feel that way about journalists and reporters,
- 7) 59% believe that government regulators lack adequate understanding of emerging technologies to regulate them effectively.
- 8) 41% believe scientists do not know how to communicate with people like me.
- 9) 74% trust scientist to tell the truth about new innovations and technologies. 40% trust CEOs and government leaders.
- 10) 59% expect CEOs to manage changes occurring in society, not just those occurring in their business.

How many Americans believe that their political institutions should be burned to the ground?

6 surveys done in 2018 by Professors Michael Bang Petersen, Mathias Osmundsen, and Kevin Arceneaux³ revealed:

- 1) 24% of the American public agreed "society should be burned to the ground"
- 2) 40% of the American public agreed "we cannot fix the problems in our social institutions we need to tear them down and start over" and "when it comes to our political and social institutions, I cannot help thinking 'just let them all burn'".
- 3) Key findings include: people are so discontent that they do not care about truth; people deliberately share false and hostile rumours on social media with the goal "to mobilize the audience in pursuit of chaos."

What are some key findings from Harvard's Fall 2023 survey of U.S. youth, 18-29 years of age⁴

- 1) What % trust neither Joe Biden nor Donald Trump to handle the following issues: Israel-Hamas War: 44%; Climate change: 39%; Gun violence: 39%; Crime and public safety: 37%; protecting democracy: 32%.
- 2) Youth believe that the American economy is in worse shape than the personal situation. Very Bad (American 22%, personal 9%), Fairly Bad (American 48%, personal 24%), Very Good (American 3%, personal 13%)

What are some key findings from the Pew Research Center's Global Public Opinion survey regarding democracy, published February 28, 2024⁵

- 1) 59% are dissatisfied with how their democracy is working. 47% of Canadians are dissatisfied. 66% in the US are dissatisfied.
- 2) 74% believe that elected officials don't care what people like them think. 64% believe this in Canada. 83% in the US.
- 3) 42% say no political party in their country represents their views. 35% of Canadian's believe none of the political parties represent them. In the US its 49%.
- 4) 77% believe a representative democracy (people elect those who will pass laws) is a good way to govern.
- 5) 70% believe direct democracy (people directly vote on laws) is a good way to govern. 70% in Canada believe it's somewhat good or good. In the U.S. it's 66%
- 6) 58% believe having experts govern is good. 49% in Canada believe it's somewhat good or good. In the U.S. it's 48%.
- 7) 31% of people in Canada believe representative democracy is a very good way to govern. This is a drop from 43% in 2017. 14% believe it's bad or somewhat bad. In the US it's 23% believing bad or somewhat bad
- 8) 52% have an unfavourable view of their national leader. 58% have unfavourable view of opposition leader. 55% have unfavourable view of political parties.

My personal observation

- 1) If people believe their interests are not being looked after by institutions and society, then the sense of frustration can lead to tearing them down. I wonder if politicians, CEOs, and boards of directors understand the long-term implications of their deliberate or accidental actions to destroy the public's trust in them.

What are your next steps?

- 1) Conduct an anonymous survey of your board of directors, CEO, and C-Suite to learn their perception of how important trust in them is, in order to achieve the company's long-term value creation.
- 2) Survey your board of directors, CEO, C-Suite, employees and other members of your company's ecosystem, learn the degree of trust in the board of directors, CEO, and C-Suite.
- 3) Analyze the results to determine if: trust is needed, and if improvements in trust are needed.

What further reading should you do?

- 1) Read each of the 5 articles in the footnotes below, to understand further details regarding the lack of trust and the perceived issues with capitalism and democracy.

Footnotes

¹ 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer – global report
<https://www.edelman.com/trust/2024/trust-barometer>

² 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer – Canada
<https://www.edelman.ca/trust-barometer>

³ Professors Michael Bang Petersen, Mathias Osmundsen, and Kevin Arceneaux "A 'Need for Chaos' and the Sharing of Hostile Political Rumors in Advanced Democracies". In 2019 won the award for best paper in the Political Psychology division of the American Political Science Association.

⁴ <https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/46th-edition-fall-2023>

⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/02/28/representative-democracy-remains-a-popular-ideal-but-people-around-the-world-are-critical-of-how-its-working/>