

Society does not trust its leaders and institutions. V7

What is the purpose of this article?

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.

This article applies to all companies, ranging from pre-revenue through to long established global companies.

This article does not provide tax, legal or financial advice.

You must do your own research and fact-based analysis using current and relevant information.

AI did not write this article. 100% human written.

What are the critical learnings in this article?

- 1) Criminal behaviour is common in US public companies. The majority of people believe government and business leaders purposefully try to mislead people.
- 2) Accountants are under pressure to commit unethical behaviour and have done so.
- 3) Most young Americans have a bleak (my words) view of the future.
- 4) 70% of people globally are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone who is different from them.
- 5) 68-70% of people globally, think that government leaders, business leaders, journalists, and reporters purposefully mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations.

I wonder how society can survive when the population doesn't trust leaders and institutions and believes leaders are only looking after themselves.

How common is criminal behaviour in US Public Companies?

Criminal behaviour is common in US public companies. 10% of public companies commit securities fraud every year.¹

My observations

- 1) This was data leading up to 2022. Have things changes since the 2024 US Presidential election?
- 2) What is the overall percentage of US public companies committing criminal acts each year? Securities Fraud is only one example.
- 3) Where were the boards of directors?

Are accountants under pressure to commit unethical behaviour?²

- 1) Accountants are under pressure to commit unethical behaviour and have done so. 55% of accountants have witnessed unethical behaviour in their career. 24% have been pressured to behave unethically in a three-year period.
- 2) 40% of accountants said the top area for ethical challenges was leadership and culture.

My observations

What are the values, morals, and ethics of accounting firm leaders?

How do young Americans (18-29 yrs old) view the future?³

Most young Americans have a bleak (my words) view of the future. 59% say the country is on the wrong track.

- 1) Only 15% trust the federal government and 39% trust the military.
- 2) Only 33% say they trust that the 2026 elections will be conducted fairly.
- 3) Only 29% say they will be better off than their parents.
- 4) Approval ratings for President Trump, the Democrats and the Republicans are similarly low: 25%-26%
- 5) The majority believe both political parties care more about elites than people like them.
- 6) What's the most important qualities of a congressional candidate that would make young American vote for the candidate: 37% said a candidate who shares their values.

Do people think the next generation will be better off?

32% of people globally⁴ and in Canada⁵ think the next generation will be better off.

Do people trust some who is different from them?

70% of people globally are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone who is different from them.⁶ 73% in Canada.⁷

Do people help leaders who are different from them?

34% of people globally would put less effort to help a team leader with different political beliefs succeed.⁸ 31% in Canada.⁹

Who do people trust?

77% of people globally trust scientists, 53% CEOs and 47% government leaders.¹⁰ In Canada, 78% trust scientists, 44% trust government leaders and 37% trust CEOs.¹¹ I wonder why Canadian trust in CEOs is lower than the global average.

Do people believe that hostile activism is a viable means to drive change?

1) Globally 53% of people ages 18-34 believe that hostile activism is a viable means to drive change.¹² In Canada 67% of people ages 18-34 believe that.¹³ I wonder why more young people in Canada believe in hostile activism than the global average.

How do people view the wealthy?

1) 65% of people globally believe the wealthy's selfishness causes many of our problems.¹⁴ 61% in Canada believe that.¹⁵
2) 67% of people globally believe that the wealthy don't pay their fair share of taxes.¹⁶ 73% in Canada believe that.¹⁷

Do people think that leaders lie to them?

68-70% of people globally, think that government leaders, business leaders, journalists, and reporters purposefully mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations.¹⁸ In Canada, 62% to 67% of people believe that.¹⁹

What are your next steps?

- 1) Define the words/concepts you're using, in a glossary. I've seen major confusion when the same words mean different things to different people.
- 2) Conduct an anonymous survey of your board of directors, CEO, and C-Suite to learn their perception of how important it is that employees, customers and society trust.
- 3) Discuss the results of the anonymous survey and decide whether or not to continue.
- 4) Survey your board of directors, CEO, C-Suite, employees and other members of your company's ecosystem, to learn the degree of trust in the board of directors, CEO, and C-Suite.
- 5) Discuss the results, in terms of: what are the symptoms, what are the problems, what are the underlying root causes.

Footnotes

¹ "How pervasive is corporate fraud", Alexander Dyck (University of Toronto), Adair Morse (University of California-Berkeley), Luigi Zingales (University of Chicago)
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11142-022-09738-5>

² "The new era of ethical challenges for accountants", Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Oct 14 2024
<https://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/professional-insights/global-profession/ethical-challenges.html>

³ National Poll by Harvard Youth Poll 2026 Spring
<https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/52nd-edition-spring-2026>

⁴ Page 10 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report
https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2026-01/2026%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_Final.pdf

⁵ Page 6 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report
<https://www.edelman.com/ca/trust/2026/trust-barometer>

⁶ Page 17 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report

⁷ Page 12 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report

⁸ Page 16 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report

⁹ Page 17 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report

¹⁰ Page 10 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report

¹¹ Page 49 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report

¹² Page 07 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report

¹³ Page 12 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report

¹⁴ Page 13 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report

¹⁵ Page 11 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report

- ¹⁶ Page 11 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report
- ¹⁷ Page 17 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report
- ¹⁸ Page 10 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report
- ¹⁹ Page 15 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Canada Report

DRAFT