



Brand South Africa

Research - Internal Analysis 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer

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1. Introduction

The 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer themed “The Cycle of Distrust” is the 22nd Annual Edelman Trust report released by Edelman- a global communications firm that collaborates with business and organisations to evolve, promote and protect brand and reputation. Findings in the report reveal that government and media are behind fuelling a circle of distrust. Therefore, there is a notable decline for government and media whilst business is still the only trusted institution.

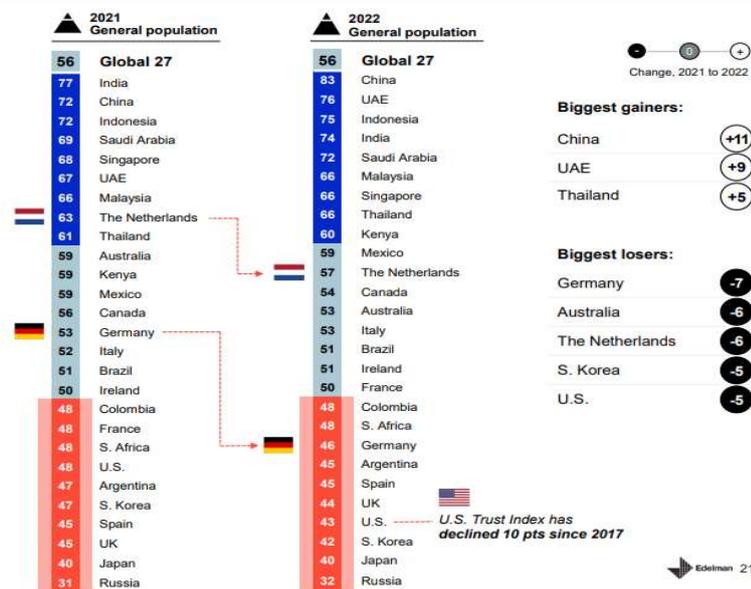
Similar to the findings made in the 2021 report, this year’s report indicates that trust continues to fall in democracies, with 9 countries being at an all-time low. This is reflective on developing countries lacking economic optimism. As one of the most powerful economies in the world, the report shows that the United States Trust Index has declined by 10 points since 2017. South Africa’s trust score in the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer is 48, similar to the score it held in the 2021 report. Although the country still falls under the “distrust” category, it reflects its ability to remain resilient with a much better score, which is stronger than the weak position it held in 2020 (42), however, moved to 48 in 2021.

2. Global Trust Findings in Countries and Institutions

Globally, the report finds that of the 27 countries surveyed, countries which are considered as the “biggest gainers” are China, UAE and Thailand. This is indicated in the table where China moved from a global score of 72 in 2021 to 83 in 2022, UAE from 67 in 2021 to 76 in 2022, and Thailand from 61 in 2021 to 66 in 2022. On the other hand, the “biggest losers” are Germany declining from 53 in 2021 to 46 in 2022, Australia 59 to 53, the Netherlands from 63 to 57, South Korea from 47 to 42, and the United States from 48 to 43.

It is important to note that China had dropped by 18 points in the 2021 report, which resulted to the decline costing the country its top position it held for the longest time since the establishment of the Edelman Trust Annual reporting in 2001. However, it is evident that China redeemed itself by reclaiming its position in 2022, followed by the UAE, Indonesia, India and Saudi Arabia.

The snapshot below presents findings of the 27 countries highlighted in the report, indicating a year-to-year change in points between 2021 and 2022:



Source: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer

As presented in the table above, it is evident that:

The top five countries best performing countries by score are:

- China - 83

- UAE-76
- Indonesia -75
- India - 74
- Saudi Arabia 72

And the top five worst performing countries by score are:

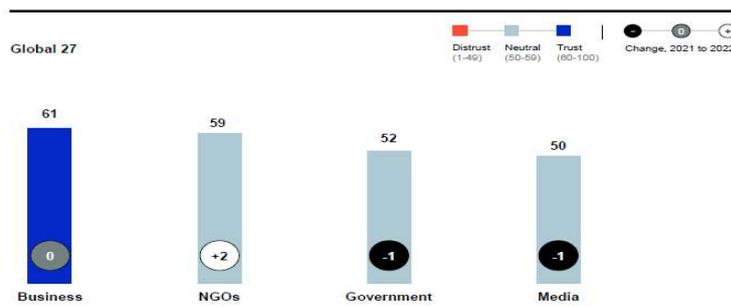
- Russia - 32
- Japan - 40
- South Korea - 42
- United States - 43
- United Kingdom- 44

2.1 Global trust in institutions

Reflecting on the findings made in 2020 during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, government was the most trusted institution. However, due to the lack of the respondent's satisfaction in government efforts to contain the pandemic and a better handle on the changing dynamics influenced by the virus, government lost its leading position to business towards January 2021.

Similar to the findings made in the 2021 report, business is still the most trusted. However, in the 2022 report, trust in business declines in 11, gains in 11 of the 27 countries. In terms of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), trust rose in 16 of 27 countries. Whereas Media trust declined in 15 of 27 countries. Trust in Government fell in 17 of 27 countries. The overall data shows that there are no countries in which government is trusted and business is not. Business is more trusted than government in 23 of 28 markets.

The snapshot below provides an overview of global trust in the four institutions:



Source: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Annual Report

It is important to note that part of the reasons why business institutions found themselves being at the top is because sector had successfully mandated the dynamics of jobs skills, sustainability, quality of information and return to work safely, which resulted to boosting the confidence of citizens in the private sector.

As the report indicates that there is an overall cycle of distrust, Government and Media are found to be a dividing force globally, whereas Business and NGO’s are a unifying force in society.

3. 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer findings on South Africa and Domestic Perceptions Study

According to the survey, business has taken over NGO’s as the most trusted institution in South Africa, while media and government are still seen as distrusted, unethical and incompetent. The rise of business becoming the most trusted institution in South Africa comes after a number of private organisations took steps to protect their employees and local communities during the pandemic.

The table below presents South Africa’s respondents trust in all four institutions evaluated in the report:

2022 Edelman Trust Barometer: Trust in South Africa’s four institutions		
Institution	Score	Year to Year Change
Business	63	+2
NGO’S	63	+3
Media	41	-1
Government	26	-1

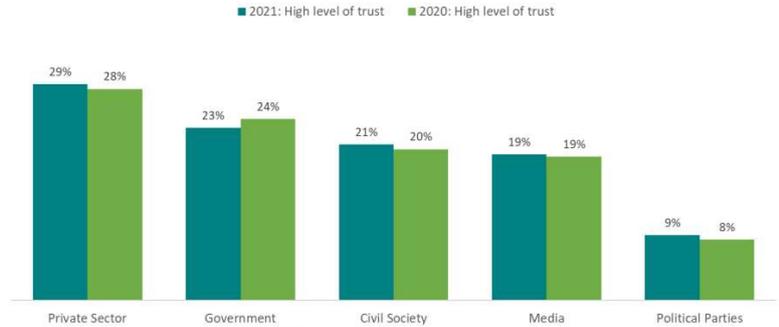
As presented in the table above. In South Africa, the business sector still maintains its leading position with the highest score in trust, followed at second place by NGO’s, Media at third place, and Government performing at the lowest.

Brand South Africa’s Domestic Perceptions Research Programme also measures domestic trust in the private sector, government, media, civil society and political parties.

A comparison between the findings made in the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer and Brand South Africa’s 2022 Brand South Africa’s Domestic Perceptions Annual Review has almost the same findings. The Domestic Perceptions Annual Report finds that the Private Sector ranks the highest at 29%, a slight increase compared to the 28% in 2021. Followed by Government at second place with a score of 23%, a one percent drop compared to the 24% in 2021.

Civil Society occupies the third position with an overall score of 21%, a one percent increase compared to the 20% attained in 2021. With media remaining at the same score as 2019, at 19%, and Political Parties with an overall score of 9%, a one percent increase compared to the 8% in 2021.

The table below substantiates the information unpacked above:



Source: 2022 Brand South Africa Domestic Perceptions Annual Review

Although Government is the second most trusted sector as measured by the Domestic Perceptions Study, as opposed to being the least trusted in the Edelman Trust report. It is still evident that the reputation of government’s around the world needs intervention by means of living up to the expectations of citizens and promises made to the people.

The backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic has evidently exacerbated the trust gap between citizens and the government. It is in this case that the CEO of Edelman Trust, Jordan Rittenberry made a statement in the 2021 report, “As the pandemic puts trust to test, business has a clear mandate to help society navigate the COVID-19 storm and take the lead on driving change, with private sector organisations expected to fill the void left by government.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic is still a reality in many countries across the globe, the statement quoted above, supported by the existing data which also reflects back the 2021 results. It is

clear that although government has made effort to in response to the fight against the pandemic, civilians have more trust in business as their only hope to levelling the fight against the pandemic and being provided with employment security.

The dwindling reputation of government's around the world has affected how civilians perceive government institutions in their respective countries. Overall, governments are seen as not being able to solve societal problems which has a great impact on the perception created around public institutions. The results in the survey indicate that majority of respondents do not see positive results of public leaders/politicians taking leadership roles through coordinated cross-institutional efforts to solve societal problems. This also includes the ability of public leaders to successfully execute plans and strategies that yield results.

With no doubt, corruption, maladministration, lack of insufficient services, etc. by governments have a big role to play in the distrust fuelled in countries.

References

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