

Crisis of confidence about politicians?

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International GfK survey on the confidence people have in political and business leaders and organizations

Nuremberg, 10 August 2004 - It is bad news for politicians and their image in Europe as well as in the USA. GfK Ad Hoc Research Worldwide questioned people in 19 European countries and the USA and found that the majority of the approx. 1,000 respondents in each country believed that politicians were not trustworthy. Managers of big companies and journalists fared little better in the survey, while teachers and doctors proved the real champions when it comes to the issue of trust.

In all of the countries where GfK Ad Hoc Research Worldwide carried out the survey, the majority of respondents indicated that they trusted teachers and doctors more than any of the other professions listed. The armed forces, police and the clergy come next and are seen as trustworthy by the majority of people in most of the countries surveyed. However, in Russia, Romania and the Czech Republic, the image of the police is not quite as good. Although positive, trust in the clergy in the Czech Republic, Spain, France and Belgium is below average.

Overall, managers and political, social and commercial organizations are regarded particularly favourably in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Turkey, where the outcome was above average. Hungarians, Greeks and the French are particularly critical of their leaders.

Politicians: the least trustworthy

Only one in six respondents in the 20 countries surveyed believes that politicians are trustworthy. The image of politicians is best in the Netherlands, Turkey, Spain and Switzerland, where three in ten citizens said they trusted their political leaders. Politicians have a particularly bad reputation in Germany, Poland and Italy, where fewer than one in ten people expressed a positive view. The situation is little better in the Czech Republic, France and Russia. Around one in ten respondents in these countries thought that politicians could be trusted.

The great and the good in management and journalism: distrusted by the majority of people

The verdict on managers of big companies was not quite as harsh. Three in ten people said they trusted them. However, only in Denmark, Finland and Turkey did over fifty per cent of respondents believe managers to be trustworthy. In Germany and Poland, business leaders were generally given poor marks, with only around one in five considering them trustworthy.

Many people in Europe and the USA also doubt the trustworthiness of journalists. More than six in ten respondents expressed their doubts. However, the level of trust in journalists was above average in Romania, Poland, Spain and Belgium. In the UK, Denmark and Italy people are particularly distrusting of journalists.

The attitude towards lawyers is divided in the truest meaning of the word. For each citizen who trusts lawyers, there is one who does not. Lawyers are held in high regard especially in Sweden and Finland. In Greece, Italy and the USA most people do not trust them.

The survey

GfK Ad Hoc Research Worldwide uses the Trust Index to establish the trust people have in professionals such as lawyers, journalists, the clergy, teachers, managers, medics, the armed forces, politicians and the police. In April and May 2004, GfK Ad Hoc Research Worldwide questioned a total of 20,818 respondents in 19 European countries and the USA. A similar survey was carried out six months earlier. However, this first survey only included doctors, journalists, lawyers, the clergy, managers and politicians.

The GfK Group

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