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## **Edelman Trust Barometer: Japan Trust Index Falls Amid COVID-19 Pandemic Japan Bucks Trend of Trust Advances in All Other Markets**

*Japan Only Market Surveyed Where Trust in Both Government & Business Decline*

May 14, 2020 – TOKYO – The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring update: Trust and the COVID-19 Pandemic reveals Japan is the only market surveyed where trust in both government and business has fallen since January, bucking the trend in other markets for record rises in trust amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the 11 markets included in the survey, the Trust Barometer Index (61) jumped 6 points, leaving Japan (40) as the least trusting and sole market where trust fell (2 points).

The survey showed that outside Japan, trust in government (65 percent) surged 11 points making it the most trusted institution for the first time.

Government trust increased by double digits in six of the 11 markets surveyed, including the UK (24 points), Canada (20 points), Germany (19 points) and South Korea (16 points). In stark contrast, in Japan trust in government (38 percent) slid 5 points.

Despite this lack of trust, government does have a mandate to lead in Japan. Consistent with other markets, Japanese respondents do want government to lead in all areas of the pandemic response: containing the pandemic (73 percent); helping people cope with the pandemic (75 percent); informing the public (71 percent); providing economic relief and support (86 percent); and getting the country back to normal (82 percent).

Intriguingly, where trust in national governments is lacking, local government is more trusted with the biggest gaps occurring in the U.S. (20 points), Japan (15 points) and France (11 points). In Japan, 52% said they trusted local government leaders to tell the truth about the pandemic versus 35 percent for national leaders.

More than 4 out of 5 Japanese respondents feel pandemic-related restrictions on their freedom of movement are now entirely reasonable and appropriate, the second highest among markets surveyed. However, only 44% are also more willing to give up their personal health and location tracking information to the government than normal to help contain the spread of the virus, the lowest among markets polled.

“While Japan has relatively low numbers of confirmed COVID-19 infections and fatalities compared to the size of its population, national leaders do not appear to be getting any credit for this,” said Ross Rowbury, President of Edelman Japan.

“By contrast it is interesting to see that local government leaders appear to be more trusted in Japan, perhaps because they are more able to make decisions that positively impact people’s everyday lives,” added Rowbury.



With public discussions in Japan now shifting to how and when restrictions will be lifted, the Japan Trust Barometer indicates that people favor a cautious approach. More than three-quarters of respondents in Japan; the highest proportion among surveyed markets, agreed that the government's highest priority should be saving as many lives as possible, even if it means the economy will sustain more damage and recover more slowly. By contrast, less than a quarter agreed that it is becoming more important for the government to save jobs and restart the economy than to take every precaution possible to keep people safe from the virus.

### **Trust & Business in Japan**

While business remains the least distrusted of the four institutions surveyed by Edelman, trust in business in Japan (46%) also slipped by 3 points. Underscoring the challenges business in Japan faces, trust in all sectors tracked fell.

Even though 60% of Japanese respondents believe CEOs should take the lead on addressing the pandemic rather than waiting for government to impose restrictions and demands on their businesses, only 13% say they are doing an outstanding job meeting the demands placed on them by the pandemic. Interestingly, just 1 in 3 Japanese people think CEO's first priority should be to use the power and resources of their companies to help the people of the country where they are headquartered before helping people in other countries where they do business; the fewest among the 11 markets.

"With a few notable exceptions, Japanese business leaders have mostly kept on the sidelines during the pandemic. But our data shows that people want them to take a lead in protecting employees and their business ecosystem from the virus and economic impacts." said Rowbury. "I am very heartened that the majority are not placing "Japan-first" expectations on businesses and instead want business leaders to focus on the global good over domestic interests", he added.

Businesses in Japan are also not meeting expectations in terms of putting people before profits, protecting their employee's financial wellbeing or helping their smaller suppliers and business customers. On average, less than 1 in 6 Japanese respondents think businesses are taking care of these key roles well or very well.

### **Trust & the Japanese Media**

Japanese respondents search for reliable and accurate information related to the pandemic has driven trust gains in traditional (6 points) and owned media (1 point). For the first time since 2018, traditional media (47 percent) is more trusted than search engines (44 percent).

Despite the rise in trust in traditional media, fewer than 1 in 5 Japanese people (versus 46% average for all markets) think the media is performing well in doing original, investigative reporting to help them understand the full story behind the pandemic and its potential lasting impact on the economy and on peoples' lives. And fewer than 1 in 8 think that media is doing well (versus 40% average) in not allowing political and ideological biases affect how they report pandemic news.

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**About The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring Update: Trust and the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring Update: Trust and the Covid-19 Pandemic is an update to the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer. The survey was conducted by Edelman Intelligence between April 15 and April 23, and sampled more than 13,200 respondents in 11 markets: Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, S. Korea, U.K. and U.S. 1,200 people were surveyed in each market, 100 of which were informed public. All informed public respondents met the following criteria: aged 25-64, college-educated; household income in the top quartile for their age in their country; read or watch business/news media at least several times a week; follow public policy issues in the news at least several times a week. For more information, visit <https://www.edelman.com/research/trust-2020-spring-update>