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## **Institutional Trust in Japan Deeply Affected by COVID-19 Pandemic, Edelman Trust Barometer Reveals**

*No “trust honeymoon” for PM Suga’s new administration as trust in government falls*

April 21, 2021 – TOKYO – The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that the Japanese population’s trust in institutions fell, reversing an upward trend before the outbreak of COVID-19. Japan’s Trust Barometer Index declined by two points (40) this year, versus a three-point increase last year (42).

The Japanese population’s trust in their own government now sits at just 37 percent, falling by 6 points from the previous year’s survey announced in January 2020. This result follows the “2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Spring update: Trust and the COVID-19 Pandemic”<sup>1</sup> released in May 2020, when amid record gains in trust in other countries, Japan was the only country where trust in government declined (by 5 points, from 43 percent to 38 percent). This continued decline in trust in government comes even after Prime Minister Suga formed a new administration in September 2020.

For the first time this year, we asked respondents to rate their trust in national governments of foreign countries. 56 percent rated Japanese national government as trusted, making it the fourth most trusted government behind only Canada (64 percent), Germany (61 percent) and Australia (60 percent). Breaking down the results by country, Japanese government is trusted in 12 of the 27 countries surveyed, the highest trust rates in India with 85 percent, and the lowest rates in South Korea with 16 percent.

The pandemic has also resulted in an infodemic—the survey reveals a global decline in trust in all news sources. Trust in all information sources has also plummeted to near record lows in Japan. Most notably, trust in traditional media marked a record low of 32 percent, and a decline by 9 points from the previous year. While trust in owned media showed the largest drop of 14 points (21 percent) and became the least trusted information source for the first time since 2018.

This year, the Trust Barometer measured how well respondents practice good information hygiene. We measured this across four parameters: whether respondents regularly engage with the news; engage with different points of view, avoiding echo chambers; verify information; and avoid spreading unvetted information. A person is considered to have good information hygiene if he or she does well in three or more areas. Only 19 percent of Japanese respondents made the cut, with 56 percent rated ‘poor’ for fulfilling one or none of the criteria. In contrast, the global average stands at 26 percent and 39 percent as having good and poor information hygiene, respectively.

While business remains the most trusted of the four institutions surveyed by Edelman, trust in business in Japan (46 percent) also slipped by 3 points. Underscoring the challenges business in Japan faces amid the COVID-19 pandemic, trust in all sectors tracked declined significantly.

Trust in “Brand Japan” (companies headquartered in Japan) remains relatively high at 60 percent globally, ranking fifth behind Switzerland, Germany, Canada and Australia. However, there is a cause for concern as globally trust in companies headquartered in Japan declined by 8 points since last year, which is the largest drop among the countries measured. Additionally, while Japanese people still trust the Japan Brand the most, trust levels dropped by 14 points to a record low of 50 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> In a survey conducted in 11 countries from April 15 to April 23, 2020.



In an increasingly uncertain world, trust continues to move local, with ‘my employer’ remaining as the most trusted institution in Japan (60 percent) and globally (76 percent). This year’s report reveals that the biggest opportunity to earn business trust is guarding information quality. 53 percent of respondents globally and 41 percent in Japan believe corporations need to fill the information void when the news media is absent. Communications from ‘my employer’ is the most trusted source of information with 66 percent in Japan needing to hear information repeated twice or less, exceeding the average of 61 percent globally by 5 points, beating national government (58 percent), traditional media (57 percent) and social media (40 percent). Respondents have higher expectations than just a year ago. The expectation for employers has shifted and in Japan ‘regular employee communications’ has become the most important followed by ‘keep workers, customers safe’, which also tops the list in the global data. In addition, while ‘prioritizing my family and their needs’ is the number one personal priority globally, in Japan ‘increasing my media and information literacy’ tops the list.

“Importantly, business and business leaders have a new mandate to lead and drive solutions to societal issues. In particular, Japan-headquartered companies and the Japanese government have a valuable trust credit overseas that they should actively expand. Finally, employers now have a huge opportunity, and responsibility, to deliver on the unique levels of trust placed in them by their employees. Our guidance to clients is to respond to this open invitation and drive progress and growth from a foundation of trust,” commented Edelman Japan President Barstow.

### **About Edelman**

Edelman is a global communications firm that partners with businesses and organizations to evolve, promote and protect their brands and reputations. Our 6,000 people in more than 60 offices deliver communications strategies that give our clients the confidence to lead and act with certainty, earning the trust of their stakeholders. Our honors include the Cannes Lions Grand Prix for PR; Advertising Age’s 2019 A-List; the Holmes Report’s 2018 Global Digital Agency of the Year; and, five times, Glassdoor’s Best Places to Work. Since our founding in 1952, we have remained an independent, family-run business. Edelman owns specialty companies Edelman Data & Intelligence (research) and United Entertainment Group (entertainment, sports, lifestyle). For more information please visit: [www.edelman.com](http://www.edelman.com)

### **About the Edelman Trust Barometer**

The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer is the firm’s 21<sup>st</sup> annual trust and credibility survey. The survey was powered by research firm Edelman Data & Intelligence (DxI) and consisted of 30-minute online interviews conducted between October 19 and November 18, 2020. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer online survey sampled more than 33,000 respondents, which includes 1,150 general population respondents across 28 countries and 200 informed public respondents in each country, except China and the U.S., which have a sample of 500 informed public respondents each and Nigeria which has 100 informed public respondents. 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/trust/>