



Press Release

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Confidence in politicians and managers remains low International GfK survey on how far people trust various professional groups

Nuremberg, August 8, 2008 – People trust politicians less than any other group. Only 14% of respondents in Europe believe that their political representatives are trustworthy. The reputation of advertising experts and managers of major companies is also rather tarnished. Citizens in Europe believe that the fire service and doctors are the most trustworthy, followed by teachers and postal services. These are the findings of the latest GfK Trust Index survey carried out by GfK Custom Research.

More than 90% of respondents in Europe and the USA rely on the unwavering commitment and expertise of firefighters. At the same time, 83% of Europeans believe that doctors are particularly trustworthy and reliable. Almost as many participants in the survey from Europe expressed their trust in teachers. Only 14% of respondents, however, thought that politicians are trustworthy. Accordingly, this group brings up the rear in the rating of trust levels. They are joined at the bottom of the league table by advertising experts and managers of major companies. Only approximately a third of respondents rated these groups of professionals as trustworthy.

Italian and Greek politicians least trusted

The survey revealed a mixed picture for the different countries and regions. In Western Europe, the percentage of respondents who do not trust political leaders in their countries was as low as 13%. Politicians are held in particularly low regard in Italy (6%) and Greece (9%) as well as France and Germany (10% in both countries). In the USA, the political elite is also ranked lowest on the Trust Index. However, at 22%, the proportion of US respondents who trust their politicians is considerably higher than in Western Europe. Similar values were achieved by politicians in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Sweden.

The GfK Trust Index shows that managers of major companies and advertising executives also receive little trust in Western Europe. Around 70% of subjects mistrust these groups of professionals. The level of trust

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of German respondents in corporate high-flyers is particularly low. Only 15% trust managers of major companies. No other nation expressed such a high level of distrust.

Among the Western European countries, managers are most highly regarded in Spain, Portugal and Sweden. Here, no less than approximately 40% trust company bosses. The image of managers is even more positive in Central and Eastern Europe, where an average of around 50% of respondents believe that they are trustworthy. However, Russia represents an exception, with only some 25% trusting this group of professionals. In the USA, approximately a third of subjects thought that managers can be trusted. These professionals are therefore third lowest in the trust rankings.

With regard to the advertising industry, the French and Dutch expressed a particularly high level of distrust at 80%. This group of professionals also scored low in the USA and was rated last but one. The majority of the population rated advertising experts as trustworthy in only two Central and Eastern European countries, Romania and Poland.

The fire service remains in top place

As was the case in the last survey six months ago, firefighters were once again accorded the highest levels of trust. More than 90% of Western Europeans and Americans count on their fire service. In Central and Eastern Europe, the firefighters came in second place, scoring 80% in the Trust Index. In these regions, respondents believed that teachers are the most trustworthy group.

In Western Europe, doctors are the next most trusted group and follow in second place with a slight gap. Around 84% of respondents said that they trust this group of professionals, although Greece was an exception. Only 51% thought that doctors in their country are trustworthy. Postal workers (81%) came in third place, followed by teachers (79%).

In the USA, postal service providers rank in second place, receiving the same level of trust as doctors in Western Europe.

The police, armed forces and justice system

In Western Europe and the USA, approximately three quarters of respondents trust the police. Swedes (87%) and Germans (85%), in particular, think that the police are trustworthy. They are viewed far less favorably in Central and Eastern Europe, where only 47% expressed a positive opinion.



The level of trust given to the armed forces in Western Europe is similar to the police. In the USA, the armed forces scored 10 percentage points higher in terms of trust levels compared with the police, with around 83% expressing a positive opinion. This places the armed forces in third place in the USA, just ahead of teachers and doctors.

Judges and environmental agencies were rated as trustworthy by around 60% of respondents in Western Europe and the USA as well as Central and Eastern Europe. Swedes, the Dutch, Polish and Germans have a particularly high opinion of the courts.

Trust ratings for various professional groups (selection)

Spring 2008	Fire service	Doctors	Teachers	Postal services	Armed forces	Police	Law firms	Management of conglomerates	Advertising	Politicians
Percentage of respondents who trust the relevant professional groups										
Belgium	97	88	88	75	70	71	51	39	26	20
Germany	97	88	83	81	75	85	69	15	28	10
France	96	87	81	88	70	62	49	26	16	10
Greece	85	51	67	81	63	42	21	19	30	9
UK	85	82	78	76	77	74	47	37	27	18
Italy	95	76	71	71	79	78	36	30	34	6%
Netherlands	96	91	83	87	68	74	57	26	17	21
Portugal	94	87	88	89	80	75	43	41	40	14
Sweden	99	91	89	91	72	87	70	40	24	19
Switzerland	95	87	82	91	65	83	58	25	31	21
Spain	91	88	86	89	67	75	53	42	34	19
Western Europe	94	84	79	81	73	75	51	28	27	13
Bulgaria	85	68	75	81	69	49	29	45	49	9
Poland	64	76	93	14	51	36	27	63	52	27
Romania	94	75	85	89	90	53	42	46	58	14
Russia	81	61	73	82	73	31	45	28	21	16
Czech Republic	94	92	92	88	70	58	49	36	33	11
Turkey	92	93	95	91	88	72	61	48	44	22
Hungary	95	86	81	90	78	70	60	47	44	17
Central/Eastern Europe	80	78	87	56	68	47	38	52	50	19
Europe overall	91	83	82	76	73	69	48	33	32	14
USA	93	80	81	85	83	73	38	34	25	22

Source: GfK Trust Index, GfK Custom Research



Market researchers, the clergy and lawyers

Market researchers, the clergy, charities and law firms also scored a marginal majority in Western Europe. It is notable that the clergy are held in particularly high esteem in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Sweden, the USA, Germany and Portugal. An above-average number of Germans also hold law firms in high regard (69%). Only law firms in Sweden achieved a similarly high value in the trust stakes.

The survey

GfK Custom Research used the GfK Trust Index in spring 2008 to determine the levels of trust people have in the following 20 professional groups and organizations: doctors, banking industry, public sector services, fire service, trade unions, the press, the clergy, teachers, management of conglomerates, marketing, market research, the armed forces, politicians, the police, postal services, law firms, the justice system, environmental organizations, advertising and charities. For this year's Trust Index, GfK Custom Research surveyed a total of 19,760 respondents in 19 European countries and the USA during the period March to April 2008 with financial support from GfK-Nürnberg e.V.

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The GfK Group

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