

Marketing specialists... mistrusted

Nuremberg, Germany: An international GfK survey on the extent to which citizens trust various professional groups and organizations has found that while fire-fighters enjoy the highest levels of trust internationally, marketing specialists and the clergy have suffered a considerable deterioration in their reputation, and trust in politicians has also fallen once again. And more bad news for the advertising and media sectors... Over half of respondents expressed criticism of lawyers, bankers, trade unions, journalists, marketing specialists, managers advertising experts and politicians. Conversely, the reputation of the police and judges has improved significantly. Bankers have also seen a slight recovery in their image at international level. These are the findings of the *GfK Trust Index 2010*, which has been conducted by GfK Custom Research in 19 countries.



Fire-fighters also rank in first place in Germany, with 97% regarding them as trustworthy, while doctors enjoy the second highest level of popularity at almost 87%, closely followed by the police (86%). Judges have particularly improved their reputation: this year, 83% of the population profess to trust them, whereas the figure was just 79% in the previous year. In contrast, employees of financial institutions have fallen in the rankings, with just 57% of citizens claiming to have confidence in them in 2010.

Since the beginning of the financial crisis in September 2008, bankers have seen a drop of 15 percentage points in terms of trust levels. However, in view of the overall figure for all surveyed countries, this professional group has a relatively good reputation in Germany. Meanwhile the standing of the clergy here in Germany has worsened considerably. Whereas its members still inspired confidence in 72% of Germans last year, this figure has now dropped back to just under 55%. The scandals relating to abuse of children and young people in church schools and by priests has greatly unsettled the population. Internationally, but also in Germany, politicians bring up the rear in the trust rankings, with just 14% of Germans expressing respect for this professional group.

Police enjoy greater trust internationally; clergy experience a decline in confidence levels

A total of 94% of all citizens in the countries surveyed have confidence in fire-fighters. The service enjoys the highest credibility in Sweden (98%) and the lowest in Romania (91%). Teachers and doctors come in second place, each at 84% followed by postal workers (82%) and the military (81%). Although police officers remain in sixth place, the same position last year, they have markedly improved their reputation: at 75%, 14% more citizens have confidence in them than in 2009. However, the service's reputation varies considerably from country to country. In Germany and Italy (86% in each) and Sweden (83%) this professional group enjoys the highest levels of trust. Conversely, in France (59%), Bulgaria (55%) and Romania (53%) police officers have to fight for their credibility.

More than half of respondents in all surveyed countries have faith in environmental protection organizations, judges, charities, civil servants, the clergy and market research organizations. Following the abuse scandals in the Catholic Church which received international attention, the clergy's image has deteriorated markedly in almost all countries. Just 58% of the population in total have confidence in the group, which is 8% less than in the prior year. The clergy is judged particularly poorly by the French, at 33%, whereas it achieves the best ratings in Romania (86%).

Politicians in last place

Over half of respondents expressed criticism of lawyers, bankers, trade unions, journalists, marketing specialists, management advertising experts and politicians.

As in previous years, politicians are bottom of the rankings and their approval rating has fallen by another 4% compared with the previous year, to stand at just 14%. Although political leaders are also in last place in the Netherlands, at 32% the level is still considerably higher than average. Politicians receive the second highest rating in Sweden, with 25%, whereas in Italy 93% of citizens do not trust their leaders, and only 7% do have faith in them. Similarly, this professional group fares badly in France and Hungary, with approval ratings of just 8% and 9% respectively.

Although the international financial market crisis is far from over, bankers have seen a revival in their reputation at international level. After just 37% of citizens professed to have confidence in them in the previous year, they are now trusted again by 42% of citizens. However, the results for individual countries vary considerably. Germans (57%), Swedes (56%) and Poles (54%) have the most faith in bank employees, while the profession is least popular in Italy (24%), France (27%) and Romania (28%). It is interesting to note that the trust values have fallen overall for both western and Eastern Europe. However, no trend in either direction can be observed within these regions.

The survey

GfK Custom Research used the GfK Trust Index in spring 2010 to determine the levels of trust that citizens have in the following 20 professional groups and organizations: advertising specialists, bankers, civil servants, charities, clergy, doctors, environmental protection organizations, fire service, journalists, judges, lawyers, managers, marketing specialists, market researchers, military, police, politicians, postal workers, teachers and trade unions. For this year's Trust Index, GfK Custom Research surveyed a total of 18,800 respondents in 15 European countries and the USA, Brazil, Colombia and India in February and March 2010. The survey has been conducted on an annual basis since 2003.

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