



Press Release

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Firefighters are the most trusted group

International GfK survey on the extent to which citizens trust various professional groups and organizations

Nuremberg, June 5, 2009 – The fire service enjoys by far the highest levels of trust internationally. On the other hand, there has been a considerable decrease in the trust placed in bank employees. The only groups considered even less trustworthy are managers of major companies, advertising experts and politicians. These are the findings of the GfK Trust Index survey for spring 2009, which has been carried out in 17 countries by GfK Custom Research.

With a total of 92%, the citizens of virtually all countries participating in the survey considered firefighters the most trustworthy group. Poland was the only country to record lower levels of trust. Teachers are ranked in second place, with 85% (previous year: third place), and postal workers, doctors and the armed forces come in third, each with 81%.

In Western Europe, teachers (83%) swap places with doctors (85%). Postal workers come fourth in the list (82%), followed by the armed forces (77%) and the police (76%).

In Germany too, firefighters and doctors occupy the two top spots, at 98% and 89% respectively. However, the picture changes for the subsequent positions: the police and postal services are ranked third and fourth, while teachers only come fifth.

Clergy and the police in the upper mid-range

More than half of all respondents place their trust in the clergy, environmental protection organizations, the police, charitable organizations, judges, civil servants and market researchers, although there are significant differences between the different countries: the church has a particularly good reputation in Romania, Poland and Germany, with three quarters of those surveyed believing it to be trustworthy, whereas Greek and French citizens trust it the least, at 26% and 36% respectively. There is also a mixed picture concerning the police: around three quarters of people in

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Western Europe have confidence in police officers (with the exception of Greece, where the figure is 40%). However, this professional group is seen as trustworthy by only half of all those surveyed in Eastern Europe, and only by around one third of those in Russia.

The situation is similar for the reputation of judges. A total of 57% of all respondents perceive this professional group to have a positive image. The figure is as high as 86% in Poland, whereas it drops to 31% in Bulgaria.

Trust in market researchers tends to be slightly higher in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. Polish citizens have the highest level of confidence in this professional group (83%), while the Greeks (47%) and Americans (48%) have the least.

Poland is also the country where charities are accorded the most trust. The lowest levels of confidence in this group were recorded in Italy.

Civil servants have a very different reputation depending on the country in question: while just under 80% of Swiss citizens believe this profession to be trustworthy, only one in four in Greece gave a similar response.

Citizens accord politicians the least trust

More than half of all those surveyed expressed mistrust of lawyers, trade unions, journalists, marketing experts, bank employees, managers of major companies, advertising experts and politicians.

As in previous years, politicians brought up the rear in terms of trust levels, with only 18%, and even dropping as low as 15% in Western Europe. The image of politicians is particularly poor in Greece (6%), Hungary (8%), France (10%) and Italy (also 10%). In the USA, political leaders form the least-trusted group; however, at 21%, the percentage of citizens who do perceive them as trustworthy is still significantly higher than in Western Europe.



Professional group	All countries 2009	All countries 2008	Country with the highest trust value		Country with the lowest trust value	
% of respondents who trust the various professional groups						
Fire service	92	89	Sweden	98	Poland	71
Teachers	85	81	Poland	96	Greece	71
Postal workers	81	82	Switzerland	95	Italy	66
Doctors	81	78	Spain/Portugal/Czech Republic	92	Greece	63
Armed forces	81	77	Portugal	89	Poland	52
Clergy	66	62	Romania	88	Greece	26
Environmental protection organizations	64	61	Portugal	88	Italy	53
Police	61	58	Germany	88	Russia	37
Charities	60	53	Poland	79	Italy	38
Judges	57	57	Poland	86	Bulgaria	31
Civil servants	57	52	Switzerland	79	Greece	27
Market researchers	55	54	Poland	83	Greece	47
Lawyers	47	46	Germany	73	Greece	24
Trade union representatives	43	42	Switzerland	63	Italy	27
Journalists	41	41	Portugal	66	Greece	20
Marketing professionals	39	38	Portugal	71	France	24
Banks	37	45	Switzerland	68	Russia	25
Top managers	33	36	Poland	73	Germany	15
Advertising professionals	28	32	Poland	59	France	14
Politicians	18	17	Sweden	38	Greece	6

Source: GfK Trust Index for spring 2009, GfK Custom Research

Levels of trust in bankers have fallen considerably

Compared with the previous year, the proportion of people according trust to bank employees decreased by a total of 8 percentage points, from 45% to 37%. While the decline in trust was rather more moderate in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it was more drastic in some Western European countries and the USA: the sharpest drops were recorded in Sweden and the UK. In spring 2008, 72% of Swedish citizens still had faith in the employees of the banking sector, whereas today, this stands at just under 50%. There was a similarly large decrease in the UK: one year ago, over half of respondents still believed bankers to be trustworthy, and today, only one in three expresses this opinion. Similarly, the proportion of people surveyed who had a positive image of this professional group declined by 20% in the USA, with over 60% expressing trust in employees of financial



institutions in 2008, compared with 40% today. Bank employees have also suffered a loss of credibility in Germany, albeit to a lesser extent. One year ago, just under three quarters of Germans trusted the banks, compared with just 63% today. However, this is still significantly above the average for Western Europe, where only 40% view this professional group positively. Switzerland is the only country where trust in the banks is higher than in Germany: here, 68% of respondents considered bank employees to be trustworthy (previous year: 77%).

The survey

GfK Custom Research used the GfK Trust Index in spring 2009 to determine the levels of trust that citizens have in the following 20 professional groups and organizations: doctors, bank employees, civil servants, the fire service, trade union representatives, journalists, the clergy, teachers, marketing experts, market researchers, the armed forces, the police, politicians, postal workers, lawyers, judges, top managers, environmental protection organizations, advertising experts and charities. For this year's Trust Index, GfK Custom Research surveyed a total of 17,295 respondents in 16 European countries and the USA in February and March 2009, with financial support from GfK-Nürnberg e.V.

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The GfK Group

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