

Fewer than half of employees in Europe feel trusted at work

*Trust is more than a positive feeling. Employees experience it as specific actions by managers and other team members. **Allyson Zimmermann** describes a recent survey showing how lack of trust at work affects five countries, including the UK. She writes that managers have an important role to play in making employees feel trusted. Trust, she argues, often leads to employee innovation and engagement, and contributes to positive business outcomes.*

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, European employers have an opportunity to better support their employees through this moment and beyond. Our [new report](#) explores how people in five countries in Europe experience trust at work, not from the manager's lens, but from a worker's perspective of feeling 'trusted' to do their job well. The report finds that fewer than half (46%) of employees experience being trusted at work, with women less likely to feel trusted than men (women 43% and men 49%).

More than 1,700 full-time employees were surveyed in five countries: the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and France, across a wide range of functions, industries, and ranks within their organisations. The United Kingdom has the highest levels of feeling trusted *often* or *always* at work (50%), followed by the Netherlands (48%), Sweden (48%), Germany (39%) and France (36%). Thirty-six per cent of employees in non-management positions compared to **54%** of those in management positions report that they *often* or *always* experience being trusted at work.

The study defines trust as more than a positive feeling, but as specific actions that employees experience in daily interactions with managers and team members. And feeling trusted at work provides beneficial outcomes for employees and for teams and operational functions.

The existence of trust and increasing trust often lead to employee innovation, e.g., thinking up new ideas, processes and solutions, and employee engagement, when they are emotionally invested in a company's overarching mission and take pride in their work. Trusted employees consequently go above and beyond to achieve group objectives, work more constructively together and solve potential conflicts.

Almost half (45%) of employee experiences of inclusion are [explained](#) by managers' inclusive leadership behaviours. The feeling of trust for an employee will depend on the actions of a manager or colleague who can grant that trust. If managers are not allowing employees these opportunities, they will contribute to them not feeling a valued member of the team.

Inclusive leadership is [key](#), and two factors have the most influence on employees feeling trusted. The first is how a manager leads and shows '[outward](#)' behaviours, i.e., by making employees feel empowered, acting as a visible ally, and fostering employee ownership over their work. The second is that the experience of being trusted almost triples when an employee's team is more cohesive, working towards a common goal. Seventy-two per cent of people report experiencing a high level of trust when their team is more cohesive, but only 25% of them experience the same level of trust when their team is less cohesive.

Our 2019 [report on workplace inclusion](#) identified five hallmarks of an inclusive work environment: being trusted, feeling valued, being able to be authentic (bringing one's whole self to work) and psychologically safe, having latitude (i.e., freedom to make decisions, without fear of making mistakes), and feeling secure enough to address tough issues or take risks.

Trust at work is critical to business outcomes and the organisations that fail to create a culture of trust are missing out on employee engagement and innovation.

Fewer than half of employees feeling trusted should be a red flag for leaders, and they must urgently address the situation. Ask your teams, “do you feel trusted?”; “how do you feel trust from your manager?” It is essential that we understand the day-to-day experiences of employees so we can unlock potential and remove obstacles to workplace engagement.

Leaders must lead inclusively, have fair policies and procedures and a supportive work environment to promote trust in their organisational cultures.



Notes:

- *The post gives the views of its authors, not the position of LSE Business Review or the London School of Economics.*
- *Featured [image](#) by [SCY](#), under a [Pixabay](#) licence*
- *When you leave a comment, you're agreeing to our [Comment Policy](#)*