

Finding best practices in trust

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“Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.” William Shakespeare’s advice in *All’s Well that Ends Well* still applies today. After the 2008 financial crisis, it appears that people took his advice, particularly about trust. Citizens lost trust in their government and economic institutions. As a result, measuring trust, which is hard to earn and easy to lose, is now a priority for many institutions and OECD countries. How can you safely and accurately quantify a level of trust—the confidence between two people or a person and an institution? The *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust* sets out to do just that.

There is a wide range of areas to evaluate trust levels, but we will look more closely at interpersonal trust, which can be general or limited–general for persons unknown and limited for people with existing relationships. For example, your mail delivery person or grocery store employees will fall under the category of general trust while co-workers and friends under that of limited trust.

Interestingly, policies that ensue from trust evaluation results most often come from interpersonal trust questions such as, “Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?” Trust-measuring surveys that are conducted for policy development and international comparability should always focus their first five questions on interpersonal trust.

Strategies and guidelines like this make for better quality trust data. And that makes for better policies, and, hopefully, lives that bear out that well-known phrase of Shakespeare’s: all’s well that ends well.

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References

OECD (2017), OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust, OECD Publishing, Paris.
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