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Insights

Rebuilding trust in government

Four signals that can help improve citizen trust
and engagement

About the authors

William D. Eggers | weggers@deloitte.com

William D. Eggers is the executive director of Deloitte's Center for Government Insights, where he is responsible for the firm's public sector thought leadership. His most recent book is *Delivering on Digital: The Innovators and Technologies that Are Transforming Government* (Deloitte University Press, 2016). His other books include *The Solution Revolution*, the *Washington Post* best-seller *If We Can Put a Man on the Moon*, and *Governing by Network*. He coined the term Government 2.0 in a book by the same name. His commentary has appeared in dozens of major media outlets including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*.

Bruce Chew | brchew@deloitte.com

Bruce Chew is a managing director with Deloitte Consulting LLP in the US strategy service line Monitor Deloitte. For more than 20 years, his work has focused on strategy development and implementation and the building of organizational capabilities. Chew has worked with the federal government, universities, and companies across a broad range of industries. Chew holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and a PhD from Harvard University after graduating from the University of Michigan.

Joshua Knight | joknight@deloitte.com

Joshua Knight has over 13 years of experience working on public sector customer experience strategy and transformation efforts. His focus is on helping public sector leaders define how to design, manage, and measure better experiences for public customers and employees. He has advised government agencies across sectors with building comprehensive customer experience measurement programs, developing governance models for customer experience teams and offices, transforming digital assets, improving communication about federal programs, and generating customer insights to build and scale CX initiatives.

Robert Krawiec | rkrawiec@deloitte.com

Robert Krawiec is a Deloitte Consulting LLP principal and the leader of the Government & Public Services Advertising, Marketing and Commerce practice. He specializes in top management issues critical to long-term results with a focus in the areas of enterprise strategy, customer strategy, and innovation. He serves clients in the commercial, federal, and nonprofit health sectors.

Mahesh Kelkar | mkelkar@deloitte.com

Mahesh Kelkar is the smart cities research leader for the Deloitte Center for Government Insights. His research focuses on understanding the impact of technology, innovation, and policy on the future of cities. He closely tracks the federal and state government sectors and focuses on conducting in-depth research on the intersection of technology with government operations, policy, and decision-making.

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A crisis of trust

A S THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic swept the globe, citizens all over the world looked to their governments to provide economic relief, contain the virus' spread, and provide a steady flow of information. For the first time in two decades, government was the most trusted institution globally, according to a May 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer report.[1]

An unprecedented global crisis was unfolding, and the "rallying around the flag" effect was clearly visible in the data.[2] Governments that had the most success addressing the pandemic saw this reflected in high trust ratings.

But this sudden surge in trust was not seen everywhere. In the United States, trust in the federal government was at only 20% in August 2020—a slight increase from 2019 (17%), but still near historic lows.[3] This is not a recent phenomenon—public trust in the US federal government has been declining for decades.[4] A majority of citizens also say they are dissatisfied with how the federal government has handled the pandemic.[5] Even trust in state and local governments, which have traditionally enjoyed a higher level of public trust, significantly declined during the pandemic.[6] A recent Deloitte survey of 4,000 Americans found that citizens' perception of

FIGURE 1

Trust in the US federal government has been declining for decades

US adults who say they trust the federal government to do what is right either "just about always" or "most of the time" percentage.
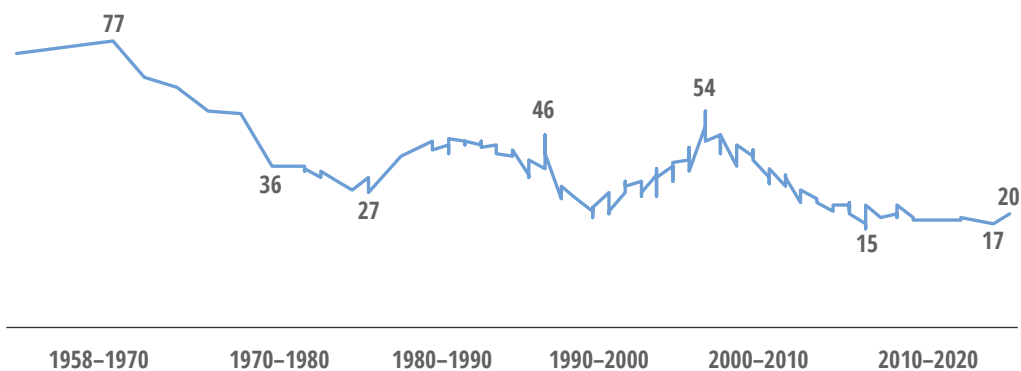
Note: The vertical spikes indicate multiple trust scores captured during the year at various points by different sources.
Source: Pew Research Center, "Americans' views of government: Low trust, but some positive performance ratings," September 14, 2020.

their trust in the US federal government was the lowest in comparison with state and local government and other commercial entities. Not surprisingly, "scientists" emerged as the most trusted group in the survey.[7] In a January 2021 Deloitte and Fortune survey business CEOs said "restoring trust in government" is their top priority for the Biden-Harris administration over the next two years.[8]

Americans' trust in each other (social trust) has also plummeted. Just over three-fourths of US adults believe Americans have too little or far too little confidence in their fellow citizens.[9]

In short, America is experiencing a crisis of trust. Rebuilding trust in government is imperative for governments to deliver on their various missions such as policymaking, regulating markets, enforcing rules and compliance, and protecting citizens.

Although government interactions with citizens play a big role in building greater public trust, they might not be the only factor driving down public trust. The 2020 trust barometer report states that disillusionment with rising inequality can undermine public trust. Moreover, there is a growing disparity in trust between informed and mass public, in part due to rampant growth in misinformation, disinformation, and fake news.[10] These external factors dent public confidence in government institutional processes, systems, data-collection initiatives, and much more.

Research indicates that trust is not fixed. It can be improved, and the American people are desirous of change: More than 84% of Americans believe political trust can be improved, while 86% believe social trust can be improved.[11]

Rebuilding trust in government depends as much on the perceptions of citizens as the capabilities of government. That is to say that governments must work both to increase perceptions of its trustworthiness as well as the organizational capabilities to actually deliver services, products, and experiences worthy of trust. This study, the first in a series on government trust, will focus on the former challenge: measuring and improving citizens' trust in government.

While our focus in the study is on the United States, the strategies suggested would also be applicable in other parts of the world. Our research suggests governments can build and sustain citizen trust by focusing on four areas: **humanity**, **transparency**, **capability**, and **reliability**. Understanding how different types of government agencies interact with their customers—a lens we term *retail to regulator*—can help them rebuild trust in the midst of the complexity of different government operations and missions.

Defining trust and the four trust signals

EVERY RELATIONSHIP FEATURES trust: employer-employee, customer-supplier, and so on. Trust is a perceptual phenomenon in that it resides in the "eye of the beholder": We are willing to put our trust in others because we have faith that they have our best interests at heart, will not abuse us, and will safeguard our interests—and that doing so will result in a better outcome for all.[12] So a citizen's trust in government can be defined as citizens' confidence in the actions of a "government to do what is right and perceived fair."[13]

Trust can be built and sustained by demonstrating two foundational attributes—delivering on the promise, all the time, with *competence*, and doing

so with good *intent*. Competence refers to the ability to execute, to follow through on what you say you will do. Intent refers to the meaning behind a leader's actions: taking action from a place of genuine empathy and true care for the wants and needs of stakeholders. To know more, please see the Deloitte study *The value of resilient leadership*.[14]

The two foundational attributes of competence and intent can be demonstrated through four unique trust signals: humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability (figure 2). As shown, the trust signals of humanity and transparency demonstrate intent while capability and reliability show an organization's competence. These trust

Four trust signals contribute to greater trust
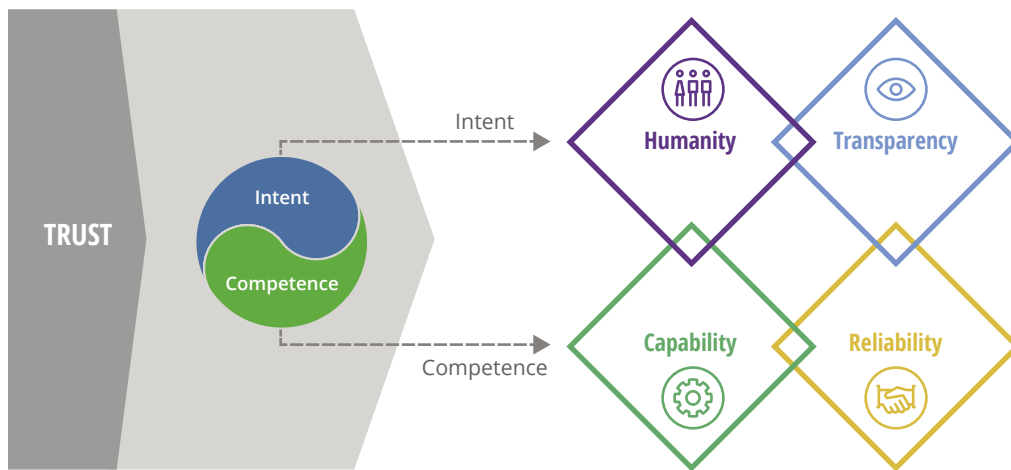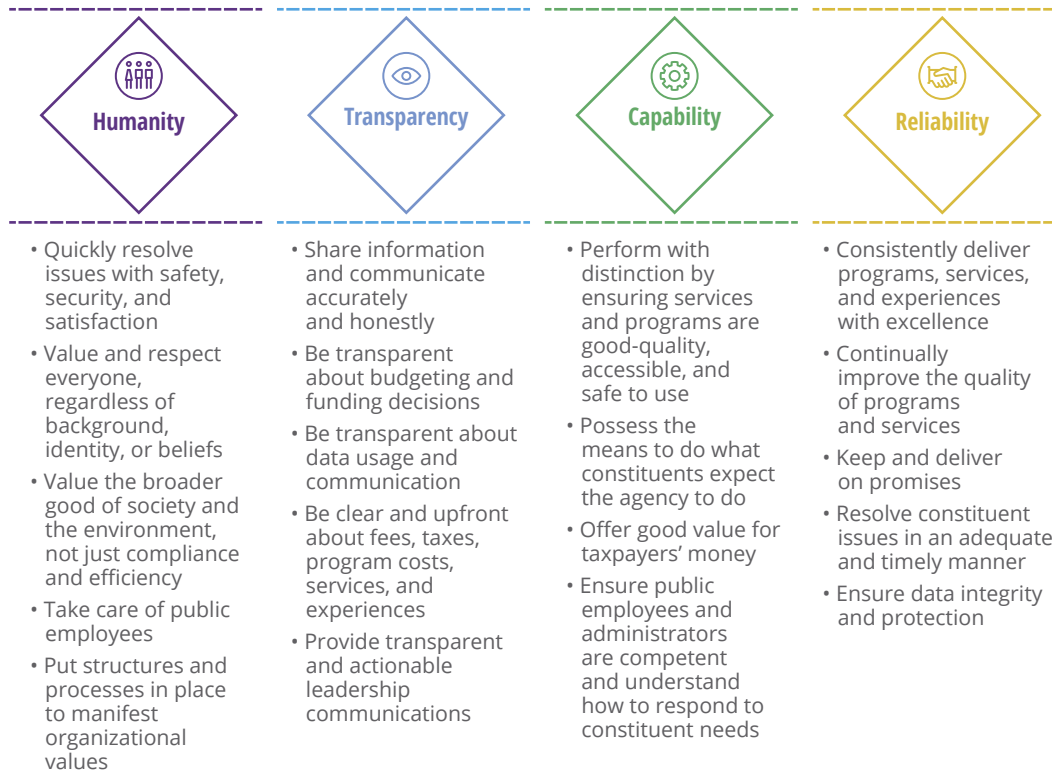

Source: Deloitte analysis.

signals, which have been statistically validated as significant contributors of trust for customers and employees, can be measured and, importantly for government, improved through specific actions and activities (figure 3).[15] More importantly, our research further shows that the four trust signals are strong predictors of key constituent behavior, sentiment, and self-reported trust.[16]

By focusing on these four signals, governments can instill confidence and improve public trust:

- **Humanity** addresses the perception that the government genuinely cares for its constituents' experience and well-being by demonstrating empathy, kindness, and fairness.

- **Transparency** indicates that the government openly shares information, motives, and choices related to policy, budget, and program decisions in straightforward language.

- **Capability** reflects the belief that the government can create high-quality programs and services and has the ability to meet expectations effectively.

- **Reliability** shows that the government can consistently and dependably deliver high-quality programs, services, and experiences to constituents across platforms and geographies.

FIGURE 3

Sample actions government agencies can take to increase trust

Humanity	Transparency	Capability	Reliability
• Quickly resolve issues with safety, security, and satisfaction	• Share information and communicate accurately and honestly	• Perform with distinction by ensuring services and programs are good-quality, accessible, and safe to use	• Consistently deliver programs, services, and experiences with excellence
• Value and respect everyone, regardless of background, identity, or beliefs	• Be transparent about budgeting and funding decisions	• Possess the means to do what constituents expect the agency to do	• Continually improve the quality of programs and services
• Value the broader good of society and the environment, not just compliance and efficiency	• Be transparent about data usage and communication	• Offer good value for taxpayers' money	• Keep and deliver on promises
• Take care of public employees	• Be clear and upfront about fees, taxes, program costs, services, and experiences	• Ensure public employees and administrators are competent and understand how to respond to constituent needs	• Resolve constituent issues in an adequate and timely manner
• Put structures and processes in place to manifest organizational values	• Provide transparent and actionable leadership communications		• Ensure data integrity and protection

Source: Deloitte analysis.

DELOITTE TRUST IN GOVERNMENT SERIES AND FEDERAL TRUST SURVEY

This is the first in a multipart series that analyzes how governments can build, sustain—and in some cases—recoup trust. What does trust mean to different stakeholders a government serves? What levers can government leaders use to build, monitor and nurture trust? How do you truly measure trust and the impact of a trust event?

For the first study in this series, in November 2020, Deloitte surveyed 4,000 American citizens to understand their levels of trust in the US federal government. We asked citizens about their views on how 39 different federal agencies and departments performed on the four trust signals: humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability.[17]

A summary of the survey results can be found here.

Understanding government's roles and archetypes

SURVEYS MEASURING TRUST tend to distill myriad citizen interactions and touchpoints into a single all-encompassing question: Do you trust the government? But government is not a monolith.

Imagine the interactions an average person might have with different public services. Citizens might use public transit to drop their kids off at a public school, use the postal service, visit the motor vehicle office to renew their driver's license, file their state and federal taxes, email the local council member about a neighborhood park closure, and much more. All these interactions are with various government agencies, but each is likely to provide a

very different experience.[18] This is why governments can't address trust and confidence issues with a one-size-fits-all approach. Trust will work differently depending on the government mission area. Deloitte's retail-to-regulator (R2R) framework categorizes government mission areas into six broad archetypes (figure 4).[19]

Agencies can fall anywhere on the R2R spectrum and, depending on their position, will have different relationships with their constituents. Keep in mind that different units within a department may appear at different places on the spectrum, depending on their mission.

FIGURE 4

Government actions fall on a broader spectrum of six archetypes

Retailer
Offer goods and services to external customers or staff in a competitive environment, e.g., United States Postal Service (USPS).

Retailer-like
Provide a service, often for a fee, but no competitive alternative exists, e.g., Passport Services, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

Innovator
Drive new ways of thinking and doing; or support the innovation of others through investment, e.g., National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Educator
Impart knowledge, skills, and resources to inform, influence, or drive an outcome, e.g., Census Bureau, Voice of America.

Regulator
Develop rules and regulations that effectively deter undesired or illegal behaviors, e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Enforcer
Enforce rules and regulations by detecting wrongdoing and enacting consequences, e.g., U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Law enforcement agencies.

Source: Deloitte analysis.

Spectrum position helps to determine which actions will most impact trust. For example, strategies to build greater trust between citizens and law enforcement agencies (the enforcer archetype) will likely differ significantly from those at public transit agencies (the retailer archetype).

Like using a sound-mixing console, leaders can fine-tune their agency's trustworthiness by adjusting the four trust levers of humanity,
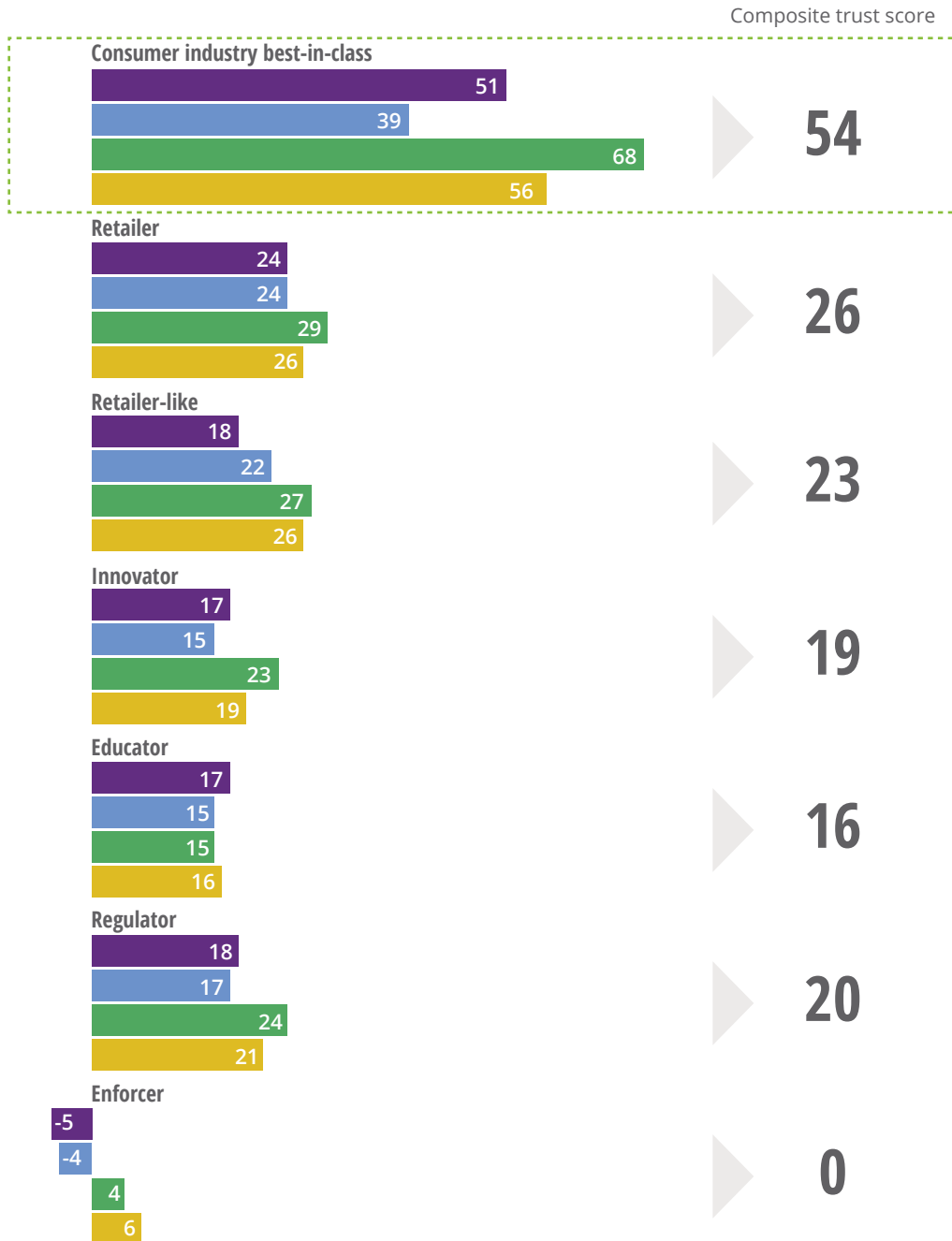
transparency, capability, and reliability. Which levers are the most critical will depend on the organization's position on the R2R spectrum.

The Deloitte Federal Trust survey shows a large variance in trust perception across the R2R spectrum. Citizens have higher trust in high-touch agencies at the retail end of the spectrum. However, high-touch agencies in the enforcer archetype, such as federal enforcement agencies, are the least trusted across the spectrum (figure 5).[20]

FIGURE 5

Trust signal scores across the six federal archetypes and consumer industry best-in-class

■ Humanity ■ Transparency ■ Capability ■ Reliability

Composite trust score

Consumer industry best-in-class
- 51
- 39
- 68
- 56

54

Retailer
- 24
- 24
- 29
- 26

26

Retailer-like
- 18
- 22
- 27
- 26

23

Innovator
- 17
- 15
- 23
- 19

19

Educator
- 17
- 15
- 15
- 16

16

Regulator
- 18
- 17
- 24
- 21

20

Enforcer
- -5
- -4
- 4
- 6

0

Source: Deloitte analysis.

However, compared with the consumer industry "best-in-class" scores,[21] we see a different trust story emerging at the federal level. All federal R2R archetypes lag the consumer industry significantly. Also, federal agencies have large gaps in humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability trust signal scores in comparison with the consumer industry best-in-class brand. This across-the-board deficit points to a long, arduous journey for many federal agencies, especially the enforcer agencies, in building higher levels of trust.

(See the sidebar "Understanding the Deloitte Federal Trust survey data" to learn more about the methodology and cross-industry benchmarking.)

The survey provides another interesting insight: The overall US government trust perception is far less than the sum of its parts (figure 6.) This means that citizens rate individual federal agencies higher on the four trust signals compared with how they rate the US government as a whole.

FIGURE 6

Trust signal scores of 39 federal agencies (aggregate) vs. US government

■ Humanity ■ Transparency ■ Capability ■ Reliability

Aggregate of federal agencies

Signal	Score
Humanity	15
Transparency	15
Capability	21
Reliability	20

Composite trust score

18

Composite trust score

-26

US government

Signal	Score
Humanity	-31
Transparency	-31
Capability	-15
Reliability	-25
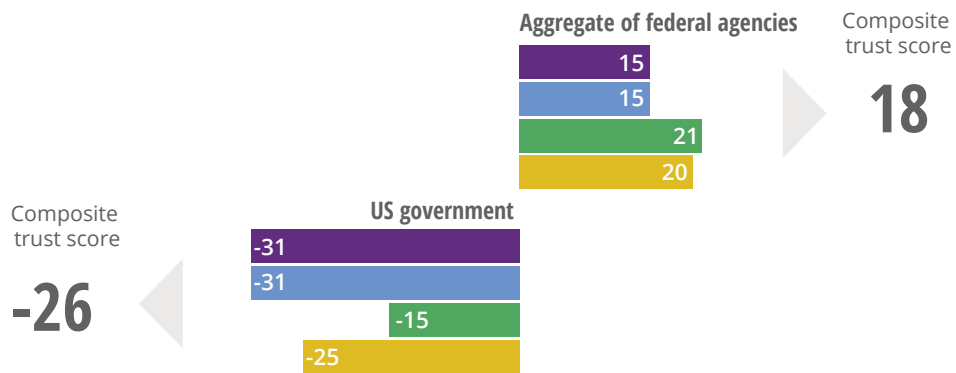
Source: Deloitte analysis.

UNDERSTANDING THE DELOITTE FEDERAL TRUST SURVEY DATA

The survey methodology breaks down trust into four integrated signals: humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability. Based on our analysis of the survey data, each of these signals is a critical contributor to trust.

Each trust signal and the composite trust score (average of four trust signal scores) can be measured on a scale of -100 to +100. Each survey response falls into one of the three distinct categories: low-trust, mid-level trust, and high-trust. The final trust signal score is the difference between high-trust and low-trust responses. As a theoretical argument, the highest possible trust score is +100 (all the responses in the high-trust category), and the lowest possible trust score is -100 (all the responses in the low-trust category).

What is a good or a bad trust score?

But such scores can rarely be achieved in the real world. So, what does it mean if a federal agency's or government's trust signal score is 30? Is it good or bad? Is there a comparable benchmark that could tell us the highest possible trust across industries and sectors?

Comparable data from the retail, food, beverages, restaurants, airlines, automotive, and other sectors yields a benchmark score for each trust signal. This provides a comparable benchmark for federal agencies, albeit with some limitations, on what constitutes a good trust score.

For instance, the retail sector trust scores can be compared with the federal retailer agencies' trust scores. Although both have different missions, customer experience (CX) and service delivery are typically important levers of trust for both. The federal retailer agencies do better on trust than the retail sector average, but their score lags the retail sector best-in-class scores (figure 7). This indicates that federal retailer agencies' performance on trust signals are comparable with similar commercial counterparts, but that significant opportunities for improvement remain.

FIGURE 7

Trust signal score comparison between retail sector best-in-class, retail sector average, and federal retailer agencies
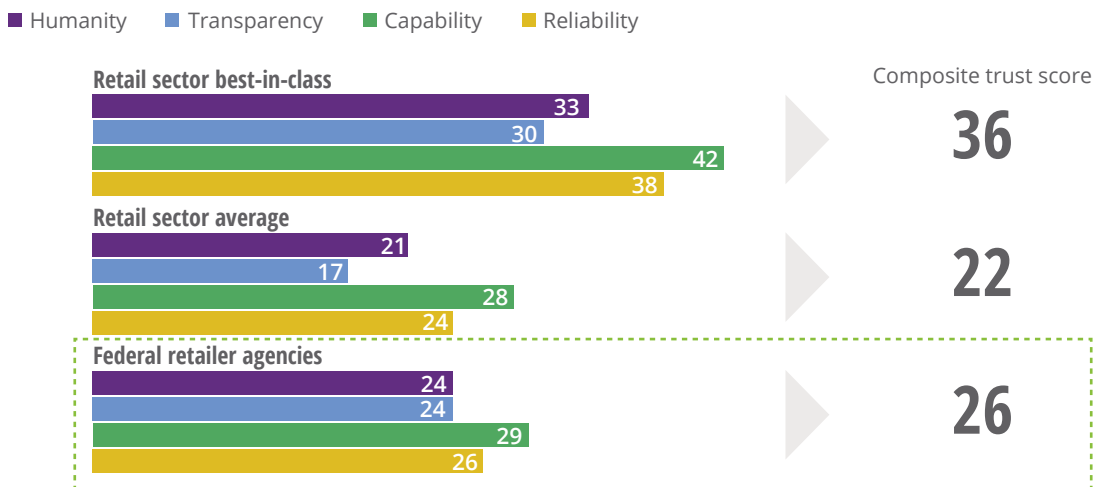
Source: Deloitte analysis.

How to build greater trust in government:

Lessons from the trenches

ET'S EXPLORE HOW government agencies can improve trust based on their position on the R2R spectrum.

Retailer archetype

The government retailer archetype offers services in a competitive environment. Citizens who use these services can compare them with similar commercial or governmental services and opt out if not satisfied.

In these choice-based transactions, the citizen as customer needs to have confidence that government has good intent and is a competent provider. Because the customer can compare and try other providers, capability and reliability trust

signals are particularly important for this archetype—though the humanity trust signal is also critical for many services such as health care.

As in the commercial sector, citizens form their perceptions on these important signals in large part through their experience interacting with the service or product provider. Customer experience (CX) is an important driver of satisfaction—and consequently, trust—at such organizations.

The Deloitte Federal Trust survey indicates that federal retailer agencies do better than all other federal archetypes on every trust signal and, in fact, greater than retail sector average trust scores (see the sidebar "Understanding the Deloitte Federal Trust survey data"). Improving further on capability and reliability should lead to an even better trust perception with citizens (figure 8).[22]

FIGURE 8

Trust signals and overall trust score for federal retailer agencies
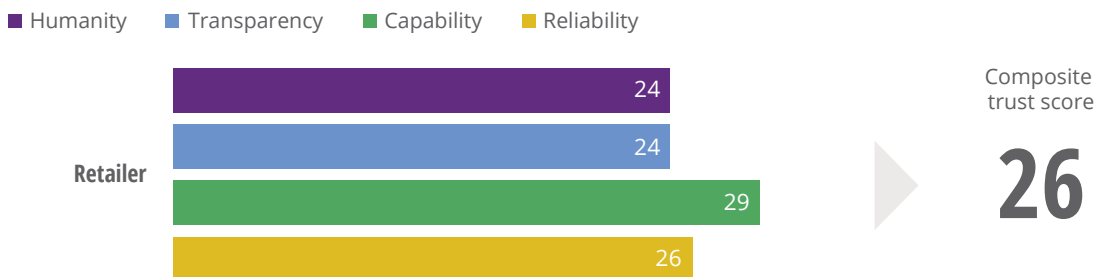
Source: Deloitte analysis.

This relatively strong overall performance hides a wide range of performance across agencies within the group. In fact, in this survey, retailer agencies showed the widest spread from top to bottom performer of all the government archetypes, though retailer-like is a very close second.

For retailer agencies, customers form an impression of trust shaped by repeated transactions and their experiences. Below we explore how the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) improved trust in its services by focusing on CX.

CX-ENABLED TRUST AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

With an increasing number of returning veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and an aging veteran population, there were long wait times at VA health facilities.[23] In 2014, it was reported that veterans who were referred through the Veterans Choice Program had to wait 70 calendar days for routine care—more than double the 30-day standard mandated by law. This has challenged patients' trust in the VA in terms of both competence and intent.

But now, after just five years, the VA boasts one of the more remarkable turnaround stories in the federal government. A May 2020 survey put veterans' trust in the VA's outpatient services at an all-time high of 90%, despite a raging pandemic.[24] That same month, the VA won a Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal—considered the Oscars of government service—for its Connected Care telehealth program.[25]

This transformation was largely due to a cultural shift at the VA that focused on leading with *trust*.

In 2015, the department launched a Veterans Experience Office, followed by its Veterans Signals (VSignals) program in 2017.[26] The latter collects online feedback from veterans, eligible dependents, caregivers, and survivors after outpatient services.[27]

By April 2020, VSignals had collected more than 4 million survey responses and 1.8 million comments.[28] This data allowed the VA to measure service attributes that link to the trust signals, including transparency, empathy (humanity), and effectiveness and ease of use (capability and reliability) to improve CX and citizen trust in government.[29]

By demonstrating empathy while providing a quality experience to veterans, the program proved especially useful for identifying veterans in crisis. The VA intervened in 691 suicide and 343 homelessness crises, using tools based on artificial intelligence (AI) that analyze comments in real time and route concerns to local VA offices and crisis hotlines.[30]

Also, veterans' most common pain points had nothing to do with health care itself. Instead, they revolved around scheduling and rescheduling appointments, confusion over which part of the hospital to visit, and lack of facilities in waiting rooms. The program listened to this feedback and made many internal shifts, such as appointment scheduling changes, reorienting waiting rooms, and having volunteers greet and guide veterans when they enter a facility. These simple tweaks went a long way in improving the patient experience while boosting overall capability.[31]

The success at the VA provides important lessons for governments in building trust:

- *Measure* **what matters.** By measuring the attributes that drive trust and linking them to behavior changes, the VA could improve its ability to deliver a world-class patient experience—enabled by new tools and emerging technologies.

- **Focus on *CX*.** CX plays a vital role in driving trust in public services and can have a cascading effect on other government areas. More importantly, a focus on CX can help provide a consistent and reliable experience across geographies.

- **Deliver services with *empathy*.** Demonstrating empathy can go a long way toward improving trust. Through the VSignals program, the VA evolved into an "empathetic" organization that was laser-focused on the veteran experience and well-being.

Retailer-like archetype

The retailer-like archetype can be characterized as an organization that offers services, often for a fee, but does not operate in a competitive environment. In short, it has a monopoly over the services provided. Citizens generally have a transactional relationship with such government organizations, but disruptions in service delivery can cause dissatisfaction and erode trust.
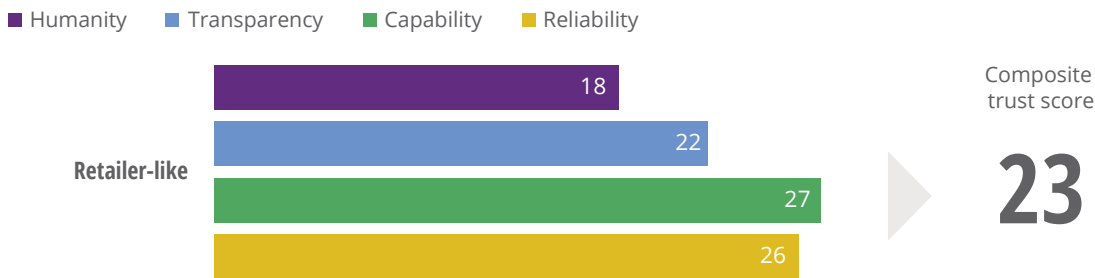
Typical motor vehicle, driver-related, and passport services provide a familiar example of government's retailer-like services. Capability and reliability are again important trust signals to focus on within this archetype, but so are humanity and transparency. Being required to use the services of a monopoly provider may naturally raise concerns about the provider's intent and priorities.

Overall, federal retailer-like agency scores present a similar profile to those of retailer agencies but run two to six points lower. The exception is the humanity score, which is a full six points lower at 14 (figure 9).[32]

Recall that the humanity score reflects the perception that an agency "genuinely cares for its constituents' experience and well-being by demonstrating empathy, kindness, and fairness." When citizens consider what a service provider genuinely cares about, they look beyond assertions to the provider's actions. Imagine a person who needs, or is required, to avail themself of a service from a retailer-like agency.

FIGURE 9

Trust signals and overall trust score for federal retailer-like agencies

■ Humanity ■ Transparency ■ Capability ■ Reliability

Retailer-like

Humanity	18
Transparency	22
Capability	27
Reliability	26

Composite
trust score

23

Source: Deloitte analysis.

Now imagine that agency requires the person to travel a long distance at an inconvenient time and stand a long time in line, only to be told that there is a problem with their paperwork and another visit will be required. One can forgive this individual for having doubts about the degree to which anyone genuinely cares about their experience. But even without the stimulus of having to compete for customers, some retailer-like agencies have significantly improved in terms of perceived competence and intent.

IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY AND CX AT DMVS

In 2018, only 63% of US adults said they had a "great deal" or "fair amount" of trust in state government. But trust in local government for the same group was 72%—nearly 10 points higher.[33] This discrepancy is not necessarily a reflection of competence but is rather an example of a phenomenon known as the "paradox of distance."[34]

Trust tends to be the highest at the local level, where citizens can witness government service delivery firsthand, interact with service providers, and directly link services to performance. In higher levels of government, citizens are more removed from the process, often leading to a higher level of dissatisfaction and distrust.

As one of the most visible services delivered by the state government, state Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMVs) across the country have faced immense pressures with modernization. COVID-19, outdated computer systems, enormous backlogs, and increasing customer wait times have put tremendous strain on state DMVs. An October 2020 deadline to comply with the REAL ID Act has only added to their challenges.[35]

Despite this, some states have transformed the perception of their local DMV from a sitcom staple of uncaring unreliability and unending wait times to a competent and trusted service provider by making more services available online, modernizing infrastructure, and bringing services to customers.

Consider the modernization efforts at Nebraska DMV, which transformed its capabilities by moving from 95 separate mainframe databases to an efficient, modern enterprise to keep up with the changing demand.[36] Even during the pandemic, DMVs across states are improving service delivery to provide a better, more reliable CX. For example, recently the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration launched a new system, Customer Connect, that replaces its legacy system, pushing several more services online, reducing paperwork, and providing secure transactions.[37] To address

long wait times and limited service hours, Virginia DMV, through its mobile operation services such as DMV 2 Go, has brought essential services to driver's doorsteps.[38] Similarly, Colorado DMV has introduced self-service kiosks in public areas such as supermarkets, saving citizens in-person visits to the DMV.[39]

Digital driver's licenses are another innovation. Several states are in the process of piloting digital licenses.[40] For instance, Colorado residents can download an app that allows them to use their phones as a form of identification at certain establishments, such as bars, restaurants, and banks. Aside from the obvious convenience, the program builds trust in the ID itself as it reduces counterfeit ID fraud and allows law enforcement agencies to validate data and identity quickly.[41]

DMVs provide valuable lessons for improving public trust through CX:

- **Digital services can enhance *capabilities*.** DMVs have moved multiple services online to provide a seamless experience between online and in-person services, demonstrating a more modern and capable organization. This has helped to improve CX and trust in the DMV.

- ***Reliability* across platforms is vital.** DMVs have also provided reliable services across multiple channels, including in-person, online, and self-service kiosks.

- ***Humanity* has to be demonstrated.** For individuals to believe that an agency genuinely cares, the agency must take action to show that it values its customers' well-being and positive experience. To do this most effectively, it must understand and empathize with customers even if there are no competitors to take them away.

Innovator archetype

The innovator archetype describes organizations that drive new ways of thinking and delivering on mission. These organizations often support innovation within or outside the government through investments and grants programs. Agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency can be categorized as innovator organizations.

Transparency and capability are central to the activities of innovator agencies, and improving on these two trust signals should be able to drive better overall trust. Additionally, since innovator organizations are often not citizen-facing, actively engaging in honest and regular communication is critical to improving confidence in their activities. In some cases, innovation teams are formed to tackle a short-term but complex problem at hand. But even for these temporary innovation teams, the trust parameters are similar in terms of both character and criticality.

The Deloitte Federal Trust survey indicates that innovator agencies have the overall trust score of 19 (figure 10). Compared with retailer-like organizations, innovator agencies almost match-up on humanity scores (perhaps reflecting perceptions regarding the nature of their mission).

But this is offset by a lower transparency score. The innovator's transparency score of 15 is the lowest of the non-enforcer average scores—though tied for that position with educators. What may be concerning about that score is that transparency is particularly important for innovator agencies, as discussed below. There is room for improvement on all four trust scores, but transparency may warrant particular attention for innovator agencies.[42]

FIGURE 10

Trust signals and overall trust score for federal innovator agencies

■ Humanity ■ Transparency ■ Capability ■ Reliability
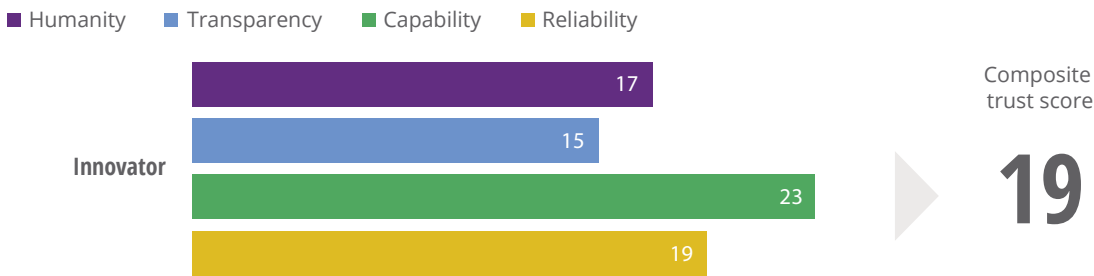
Source: Deloitte analysis.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT DURING A PROSPECTIVE Y2K MELTDOWN

Back in 1999, Y2K threatened not only local, state, and federal government systems but also private sector information systems running everything from power grids to Wall Street. System malfunctions could have had cascading and disastrous consequences for the US economy.[43] Trust was critical on two fronts: Institutions had to trust and act on the information regarding both the crisis and its solutions, and citizens had to trust that Y2K would be addressed so that they would not withdraw their funds from banks, hoard supplies, and so on.

It was a global challenge that needed a unified approach and strong federal government leadership to solve it.

President Bill Clinton appointed government veteran John Koskinen to lead the federal Y2K response. Koskinen quickly set up a small central team and decided to avoid a typical big, complex, and bureaucratic approach. The team realized that Y2K was more of a management issue than a deep technical issue. What was really needed was to build confidence in the government's Y2K strategy and string together a broad coalition that would include the private sector, academia, state and local governments, and trade associations. Such a

"network of networks" approach focused on using the systems in place to effect change instead of creating more bureaucratic authority.

To avoid panic and provide updates on the Y2K efforts to the public, Koskinen focused on direct, regular communications. The White House started Y2K Community Conversations that allowed people to hear from key service providers on efforts to prepare computers for the date change.[44] These conversations allowed citizens to voice their concerns and identify areas where more planning and preparations were required.[45]

In addition to communication, it was critical to make real progress on the ground. Koskinen knew that this global problem could not be solved by the government alone; it needed cooperation from other stakeholders. As Koskinen put it, "An important lesson from Y2K is that people are willing and sometimes even anxious to cooperate with the government when it is made clear that it is a real partnership."[46]

Making it clear to other stakeholders that the government's role in this was that of a facilitator and not a regulator enabled broader cooperation from stakeholders. For instance, some local gas stations were moving slowly in getting their gas pump payment systems Y2K-compliant. Instead of bringing the federal government's power to bear on

them, Koskinen's team sought out the Oil and Gas Industry Association's assistance. The association promptly got their members to threaten to discontinue gas deliveries to all stations whose pumps weren't Y2K-compliant.[47]

Although more than two decades old, the government's Y2K success is still highly relevant today, highlighting the importance of trust-building in solving big, complex problems. It has some important lessons for today's government leaders:

- *Transparency* **around actions.** Koskinen's team brought transparency around the Y2K response, which enabled the government to build confidence in different stakeholders.

- **Honest, regular** *communications***.** The team delivered regular, honest, and factual information to the public and other stakeholder groups. It also used multiple channels of communication to drive broader transparency.

- *Cocreating* **solutions with stakeholders to improve capabilities.** Koskinen's team realized that the US federal government did not have all the needed capabilities in-house and needed to tap into skills, resources, and

talent from the external ecosystem to achieve a common goal. Partnering with external stakeholders to cocreate solutions and influence people helped build trust.

Educator archetype

Organizations that fit the government educator archetype impart knowledge, skills, and resources to inform, influence, or drive specific outcomes. Citizens, businesses, and other government institutions often depend on these organizations to deliver critical information and help drive economic, health, and policy decisions.

The US Census Bureau is a good example of an educator organization. Given the importance of information flowing from these organizations, transparency, reliability, and capability are critical to trust.

The educator federal agencies in the Deloitte Federal Trust survey have a lower overall trust score (16) than all the other archetypes except enforcer (figure 11). Unlike all other groups, they show very similar scores across the four trust signals, with humanity at 17, transparency and capability at 15, and reliability at 16. They also have

FIGURE 11

Trust signals and overall trust score for federal educator agencies
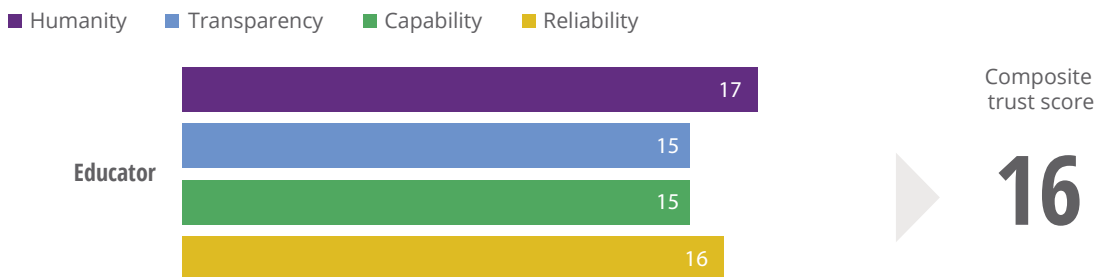
Source: Deloitte analysis.

the tightest range in scores from top to bottom overall.[48] This would suggest that there may be room to significantly improve trust if they can find a way to distinguish themselves in terms and times that matter.

BUILDING REAL-TIME SYSTEMIC TRANSPARENCY USING OPEN, DIGITAL TOOLS IN TAIWAN

By September 2020, as global COVID-19 cases surpassed 30 million, and several countries had begun to see new surges, life in Taiwan looked shockingly normal. Despite being less than 100 miles from mainland China, where the virus originated, the island has had only 550 confirmed COVID-19 cases and seven deaths in its population of 23 million, as of this writing.[49] Furthermore, the island has seen only one suspected local transmission since April.[50]

So how did the country do it? By applying lessons learned from the deadly 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak, Taiwan was able to mount a timely response that focused on building trust amongst the constituency by focusing on two key aspects.[51]

First was *agility*. The Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) played a critical role in building the capability to respond to the crisis. When a whistleblower report warning of a new SARS-like virus in Wuhan began circulating on internet message boards in December 2019, Taiwan's medical officers took note and snapped into action. By January 1, the government had implemented travel restrictions and health screenings for people traveling from Wuhan.[52] Taiwan also dispatched military personnel to local production lines, rapidly turning its mask shortage around.[53] Within three months, Taiwan had become a world leader in mask production, and the country now boasts an 18 million mask daily output—nearly 10 times its prepandemic production capacity.[54] The CECC additionally activated public health protocols put in place after the 2003 SARS pandemic.[55]

Second was *transparency*. The CECC ensured broader transparency by delivering daily live-streamed press conferences. To prevent panic buying early in the pandemic, it published the stock level of masks at all 6,000 pharmacies in the country, refreshing the numbers every 30 seconds. Civilian "hacktivists" used this data to create apps that allowed citizens to track and locate mask stocks in real time. Anyone who found discrepancies in mask stock levels—or anything else that seemed fishy—was encouraged to report the information to a government hotline. This process of participatory accountability dramatically increased trust in the government.[56] In fact, more than 91% of citizens were satisfied with the CECC's response to the pandemic.[57] These hacktivists illustrate how transparency can connect to capability in innovative ways for educator organizations.

Taiwan's approach toward building trust provides some important lessons:

- **Build systemic transparency.** Taiwan's citizen-powered approach and open-source digital democracy approach has helped build broader institutional transparency in the country.[58] The CECC used these tools to provide real-time transparency during the pandemic, improving trust and confidence in government response.

- **Improve civic participation.** Digital tools and platforms can be used to enable a participatory democracy and cocreate solutions with citizens. It allows citizens to scrutinize government policies and helps to improve the reliability of solutions while also signaling humanity via a willingness to listen to the needs of citizens. The process, according to Taiwan's Digital Minister Audrey Tang, "is not about people trusting the government more. This is about the government trusting the citizens more."[59]

Regulator archetype

The government regulator archetype includes organizations that develop rules and regulations to deter undesired or illegal behavior. The Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) are two examples of the regulator archetype. Humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability are all important trust signals for the regulator archetype, and, for some missions, they are absolutely critical.

In the trust survey, regulator agencies have similar overall trust scores to the innovator archetype (figure 12). Their profile overall looks quite similar to that of the innovators. For the regulator cohort, the competence scores (capability at 24, reliability at 21) exceed the intent scores (humanity at 18, transparency at 17). With the exception of educators, where all signals scores were close, this pattern of competence exceeding intent scores is common to every archetype. In fact, again excepting educators, both the capability and the reliability scores are consistently higher than either humanity or intent scores.[60]

This may reflect a broad untapped opportunity to improve perceived humanity and intent. It may also, or alternatively, reflect the centrality of strong capabilities and a high degree of reliability to establish trustworthiness in government. Certainly, for regulators, these dimensions of competence are vital.

IMPROVING TRUST IN AIR TRAVEL POST THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS

On September 11, 2001, terrorists crashed two airplanes into the World Trade Center, killing 2,753 people.[61] The event shook the nation and led to a loss of trust in air travel. Following the attack, passenger travel declined almost 30% from the previous year, and the hemorrhaging airline industry faced an uncertain future.[62]

However, thanks to massive transformations in airport security and an infusion of cash from the federal government, the airline industry saw a near-total rebound by 2002.[63] This provides a powerful and concrete example of the value and feasibility of rebuilding trust when it falters.

FIGURE 12

Trust signals and overall trust score for federal regulator agencies
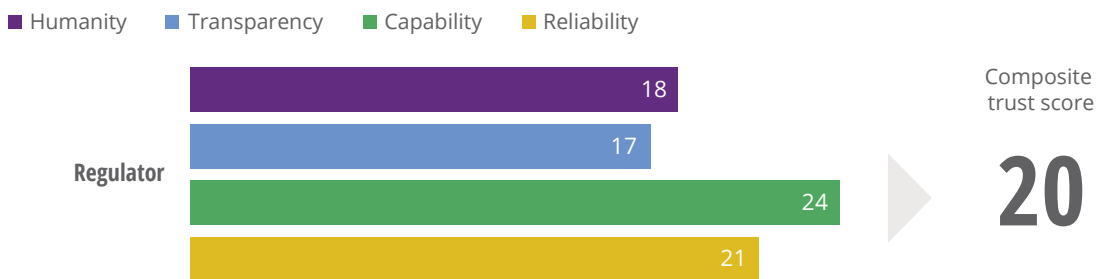
Source: Deloitte analysis.

Government organizations such as the FAA, the Department of Homeland Security, and the airline industry undertook several large changes that rebuilt trust in air travel post-9/11.

Physical security. In the United States, a new agency, the Transportation Security Agency, was started focused solely on airport security. New technology was brought in to scan passengers and bags, and cockpit doors were reinforced.[64] Physical security will remain important in the postpandemic era. But while post-9/11 security predominately focused on keeping dangerous objects off of planes, the focus will shift to one of minimal human intervention, using new technologies such as thermal cameras and touchless kiosks.[65]

A new era of digital identity scrutiny. The post-9/11 period saw a major push toward scrutinizing identity credentials at the airports. Looking ahead, biometrics will likely play a larger role: With electronic and biometric passports (passports embedded with a chip containing biometric information) now available in more than 150 countries worldwide, airlines and airports were turning to facial recognition and biometric systems to streamline the travel experience even before COVID-19.[66]

However, the next big push will likely be the use of digital travel credentials (DTC). A DTC solution includes an internationally managed ledger, enabled by blockchain technology, that could allow border officials and customs authorities to rapidly and securely screen travelers and check their information against existing records in the system.[67] In an early use case of DTC, the United Kingdom recently trialed digital "health passports" for select passengers traveling to the United States to enable safe postpandemic travel.[68] As people start getting vaccinated in different countries, such information can be digitally stored on a health pass instead of on paper.

Hygiene and sanitization. Sanitization and hygiene are critical to regaining passenger confidence in a post–COVID-19 world. Hong Kong's Airport Authority recently ran trials on a new technology called CleanTech, a pressure-sealed, full-body disinfection chamber. The technology is currently being used by employees in charge of quarantining passengers arriving into the country and is under consideration as a long-term measure. The agency has also employed intelligent sterilization robots to clean and disinfect public toilets and high-touch areas.[69]

IMPROVING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Airports and airlines should also take employees' physical safety as seriously as they do that of passengers—not only to prevent the virus' spread but also to win employee trust. Research shows 79% of employees who highly trust their employer are motivated to work, compared with only 29% of those who do not trust their employer.[70] The lessons provided in this article are about the human experience and how we as individuals relate to important institutions. They apply equally to citizens and employees.

Lessons from 9/11:

- **Empathize by prioritizing well-being and safety.** Post 9/11, the message was clear that the government cared about the safety and security of passengers and employees. There were some big visible changes in passenger processing and safety measures, which helped rebuild confidence in air travel.

- **Use technology to improve capabilities.** New passenger and luggage scanning technologies improved airport capabilities to ensure unwanted objects do not enter the airplane.

Enforcer archetype

The government enforcer archetype includes organizations that enforce rules and regulations by detecting wrongdoing and enacting consequences. Unlike the regulator archetype, the nature of citizen and business interactions with enforcer organizations may depend on the specific nature of their activities.

Law enforcement and compliance agencies provide familiar examples that would typically fall into the enforcer category. All four trust signals are highly relevant for these organizations. For them, it is important to demonstrate the capability to enforce rules and detect wrongdoing, but doing this consistently, fairly, and transparently is equally important to building trust.

The Deloitte Federal Trust survey shows that enforcer agencies have a deep trust problem that is distinctly different from the patterns seen elsewhere (figure 13). Their overall trust score is zero, meaning that as many people expressed distrust as expressed trust. They are the only agencies that collectively score negatively on the humanity (-5) and transparency (-4) trust signals. The capability (4) and reliability (6) scores are also the lowest among all the archetypes by a wide margin.[71]

To be sure, there is a distribution of results across the agencies in this group. Not all have negative scores individually, but, as with educators, this is a relatively narrow spread from top to bottom performers. Thus, even the best scores for enforcers are quite low compared with most other agencies. These results are concerning, especially the negative scores for humanity and transparency. But these results are a snapshot at a moment in time, and agencies that act as enforcers have shown in the past that they do have the ability to enhance trust through their actions.

BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Trust in the police has fluctuated considerably in the last three decades. However, for the first time in three decades since Gallup started tracking it, public confidence in the police has fallen below 50%. In August 2020, only 48% of Americans had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the police, down by five points since 2019.[72]

Managing public trust in law enforcement is complex and challenging. While police are tasked with maintaining law and order, they are also one of the most visible and tangible public services that people interact with. Their actions on the ground can impact overall public trust in a city government.

FIGURE 13

Trust signals and overall trust score for federal enforcer agencies
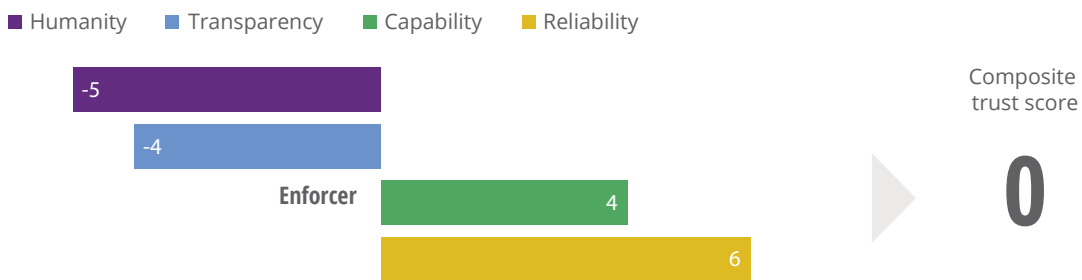
Source: Deloitte analysis.

Sexual violence crimes provide a powerful example of the importance of trust. Today, only 0.5% of sexual assault perpetrators are incarcerated, significantly lower than other crimes such as robbery and battery, where 2.0% and 3.3% of perpetrators are incarcerated, respectively.[73] Moreover, only 23% of sexual assault and rape cases are ever even reported.[74]

Government at all levels has made strides in reducing the taboo around reporting sexual assault cases and making law enforcement processes more empathetic to victims. In 2016, Congress passed the Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights Act to provide basic rights to victims such as a free forensic medical exam, preservation of physical evidence for 20 years, and updates on the progress of the investigation. Since then, multiple states have passed similar bills.[75]

At the local level, the focus has been on improving sexual assault reporting and avoiding case misclassification. For instance, in 2010, the New Orleans Police Department found a huge number of sexual assault cases tagged as "miscellaneous" in police records. After an internal audit, the department reclassified such records, leading to a nearly 49% jump in sexual assault cases over a five-month period.[76] The police chief held a press event explaining the spike, demonstrating the department's commitment to transparency.[77]

The department additionally worked with advocacy groups and academics to create a training program for detectives to engage in a more empathetic response to sexual assault victims. This was later expanded to include patrol officers, generally the first responders in such cases.[78] Such initiatives could help in improving the trust a victim might have in the law enforcement system.

In another example, almost a decade earlier, the Philadelphia police department had similar issues around sexual assault cases. In 1999, the Philadelphia police chief focused on reforming processes around classifying sexual assault cases and revising the policy around DNA testing and storage. More importantly, the police department worked closely with a community partner, the Women's Law Project, to review all sexual assault cases and make recommendations on reinvestigations. This allowed the department to build credibility and improve public confidence in its investigations.[79]

Several important lessons emerged from the local police department experience:

- *Human values* **are critical.** Behaviors and processes that are unbiased and fair go a long way in building public trust. Approaching victims and complainants with empathy and humanity can drive greater trust in law enforcement agencies.

- *Transparency* **drives trust.** Ensuring crime statistics are accurate and properly categorizing reports can help instill confidence in government's enforcement capability. Providing an explanation when data changes can also help to build trust.

Navigating the journey toward higher trust

TRUST-BUILDING IS NOT a one-off activity. It should be continuous and action-oriented. Building trust often requires changing the status quo and being laser-focused on constituent experience and perception.

What should government leaders do to start building greater trust?

1. **Identify an agency's archetype.** Assess and identify the appropriate R2R archetype in which a given agency fits. This can help identify key trust signals.

2. **Understand your current performance in those key areas.** Conduct research to establish your trust baseline, because the reality of trust is the perception of citizens.

3. **Focus on key trust signals.** Strengthen an agency's most relevant trust signals first. The exception to this rule may be when any one trust signal is extremely low. Critically low trust on any one dimension will undermine efforts elsewhere. This means no trust signal can be ignored.

4. **Consider what has worked for others.** Look to the experiences of other agencies, nongovernment organizations, and commercial enterprises to identify a portfolio of potential actions. A good starting point is this article's 16 actions that have been shown to help enhance trust (figure 3) and lessons from the experiences of government agencies of each archetype.

5. **Build strategies to strengthen key trust signals.** Building on the lessons of others, formulate strategies to shape activities, actions, policies, and behaviors that bolster an agency's most relevant trust signals. Just as important, build a communication plan to convey the authentic intent behind trust-focused initiatives.

6. **Sense and respond.** Build methods and feedback mechanisms to measure progress on key trust signals. Use this feedback to adjust strategies and make meaningful changes in processes and culture. This was done effectively at the VA through an enterprise-wide measurement system to actively manage trust.

7. **Use technology to catalyze change.** A key finding from our research is the capacity of technology to drive change. Innovation plays a key role in many trust transformations. From AI technologies employed at the VA to the use of digital democracy tools in Taiwan, the innovative use of technology can accelerate change and improve government response on the ground.

Government institutions today, across all levels, often struggle to build public trust. Because trust is perceptive, government institutions should demonstrate *competence* and *intent* to rebuild trust. That said, these are mere words if they cannot be transformed into government actions and policies.

We have seen how the four trust signals of humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability can help government leaders in building greater trust. More importantly, these four trust signals can be measured, tracked, and improved—helping to make trust central to government functioning.

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Acknowledgments

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Robert Krawiec
Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP
+1 860 572 9432 | rkrawiec@deloitte.com

Robert Krawiec is a Deloitte Consulting LLP principal and the leader of the Government & Public Services Advertising, Marketing and Commerce practice. He specializes in top management issues critical to long-term results with a focus in the areas of enterprise strategy, customer strategy, and innovation.

The Deloitte Center for Government Insights

William D. Eggers
Executive director | The Deloitte Center for Government Insights | Deloitte Services LP
+1 571 882 6585 | weggers@deloitte.com

William D. Eggers is the executive director of the Deloitte Center for Government Insights, where he is responsible for the firm's public sector thought leadership.

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