

# BUILDING TRUST IN LEADERS

## Featured in this report:

- Advice on how to build trust
- New insights from Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor
- Why trust in leaders matters

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# Business leaders sit at the bottom of the list of trusted professions

New insights from Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor provide valuable context for those wanting to boost trust in leadership within their own organisations.

- Since the first Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor in 2018, there has been no evidence of a widespread decline in the public's trust in organisations and institutions. Quite the opposite, in fact. We have seen a slow but steady rise in trust, despite external headlines for nearly all sectors measured.

## But can the same be said for our trust in leaders?

- While we are happy to report we have not seen a decline in levels of trust in business leaders from the general public, that is about as much positivity as we can give. Languishing towards the bottom of the list, business leaders are about as trusted as bankers and advertising executives.
- **Only 23% of the global public say business leaders are trustworthy – and this has barely changed since 2018.**
- Though employees are generally more positive about their own leaders, this data provides a good reminder that trust needs building and maintaining. Leaders must work hard to build trust within their organisations, they cannot take for granted that it will already exist.

## Global trustworthiness (%) trends in 2018–2022

Please look at this list of different types of people. In general, do you think each is trustworthy or untrustworthy in your country?

	2022 Trustworthy (%)	2021	2019	2018
Doctors	58%	64%	57%	55%
Scientists	57%	61%	59%	59%
Teachers	51%	55%	53%	52%
Armed Forces	42%	44%	44%	43%
Ordinary men/women	37%	38%	38%	37%
The police	37%	40%	38%	39%
Judges	35%	37%	33%	32%
Lawyers	29%	30%	28%	25%
Television newsreaders	28%	27%	25%	24%
Pollsters	27%	25%	23%	23%
Clergy/Priests	26%	26%	24%	21%
Civil servants	26%	25%	23%	24%
Journalists	25%	23%	22%	21%
Bankers	24%	23%	21%	20%
<b>Business leaders</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Advertising executives	17%	15%	13%	13%
Government ministers	16%	15%	13%	12%
Politicians generally	12%	10%	10%	9%

Source: Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index: Scores presented here are based on a 22-country average covering only those countries which have participated in all previous waves of the survey. The figures differ slightly from the 28-country average presented elsewhere. Note that Russia was included in previous waves but has been omitted from 2022, meaning the 2022 figures do not reflect the same sample as 2021 or previous waves.

# Very few Brits trust leaders to tell the truth

## The Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor took a closer look at trust in Corporate Leaders, from which we've cut data for workers in Great Britain.

- Only around 1 in 5 of the Great British public trust business leaders to tell the truth, with nearly half actively mistrusting them. This leaves around a third who are undecided – many of these will feel they don't know enough to commit or perhaps think it depends on the leader or the business.
- An even smaller proportion of the Great British public trust business leaders when it comes to environmental matters (18%) although half say business leaders have a responsibility to speak out on social and political issues affecting Great Britain.

## How does trust differ by generation?

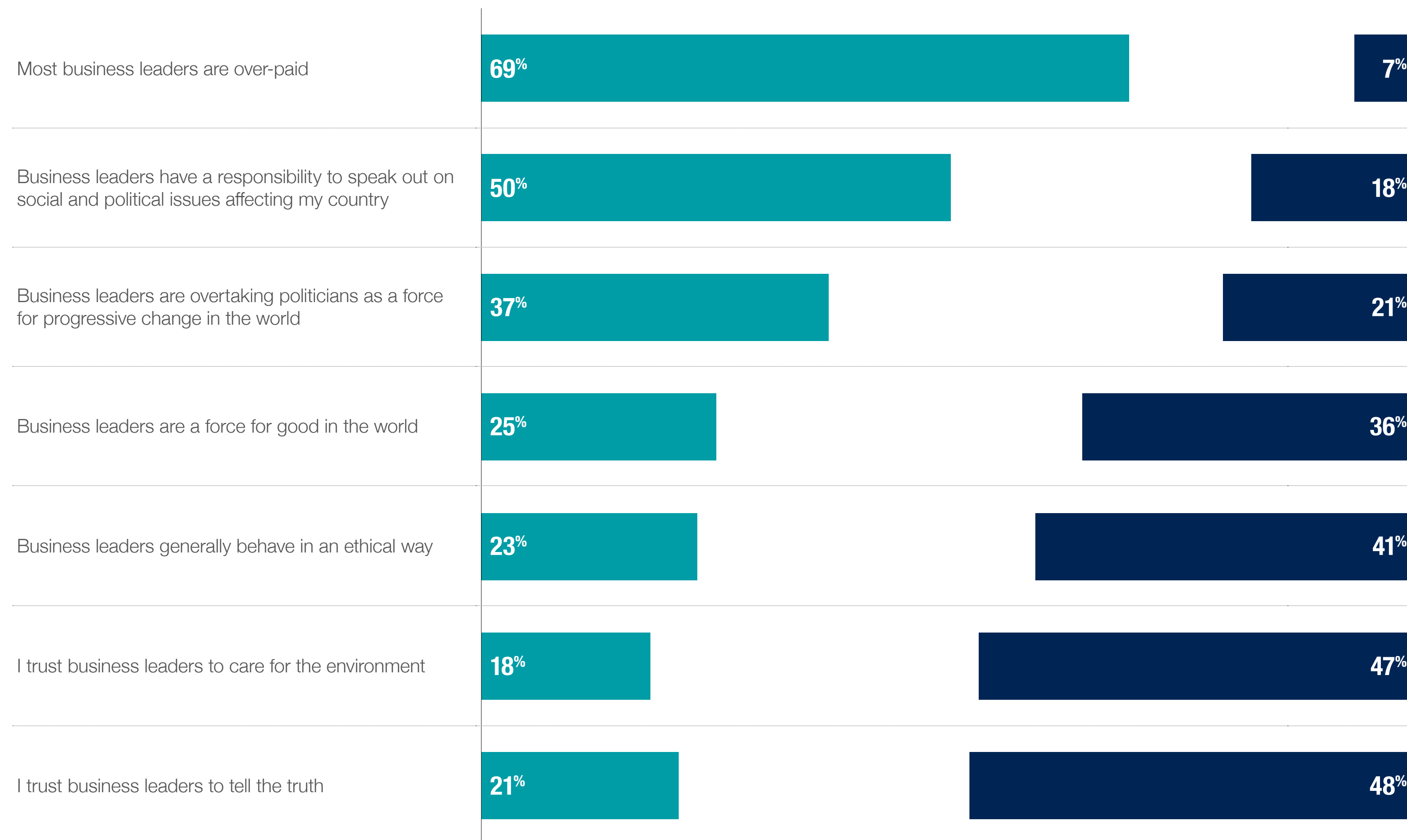
- It is also interesting that, across the world, younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z) are more likely than their older counterparts (Baby Boomers and Gen X) to believe that business leaders tell the truth, act in an ethical way and are a force for good in the world.
- We see greater consistency between the generations on the question of whether business leaders have a responsibility to speak out on the social and political issues affecting their country. Half the population in Great Britain say leaders should speak out.



Read more in the **Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor Report** with commentary from Matthew Painter, Managing Director, Ipsos Corporate Reputation.

## Perception of business leaders in Great Britain

Key: ■ Agree ■ Disagree



Source: Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor 2022 – 1,000 adults aged 18–74 in Great Britain, interviewed online 26 August – 9 September 2022

# Trust has a significant impact on work outcomes

Trust has long been seen as one of the most important forms of capital leaders have today – and rightly so.

- The value of trust cannot be taken lightly in the creation of positive outcomes at work. Research published on Harvard Business Review found that stress is 74% lower and productivity is 50% higher in companies with high levels of trust compared to low-trust companies.
- Our research shows that in the UK, 2 in 3 workers trust the decisions their organisation's senior leaders make, and those who don't are six times more likely to say they intend to leave in the next year.
- Employees are also 54 points more likely to recommend their employer as a place to friends and family when they believe communication at work is open and honest.



**2 in 3**  
UK workers trust the decisions their organisation's senior leadership make



Those who don't trust senior leaders' decisions are

**6x**  
more likely to say they intend to leave in the next year



**54pt**  
boost in employer advocacy among those who believe communication is open and honest



# Empathy, authenticity and visibility are the best ways leaders can build trust

Louise Breed, MD of Client Services at Ipsos Karian and Box, shares her take on the three core areas to focus on building trust in leaders:

## Empathy

- Across our research, advocacy and trust are strongly linked to how empathetic senior leaders are (specifically, do they consider “people like me” when they make decisions?).
- While some will say leaders are either born empathetic or not, there is much leaders can do to hone their skills in this space. Active listening, seeking out alternative perspectives and taking a personal interest are all good places to start.

## Authenticity

- Perceptions of authenticity are built through self-awareness, how transparently leaders communicate and how consistently they show up at work.
- Employees are very quick to see through a leader’s ‘stage persona’ if their day-to-day behaviours do not align.



## Visibility

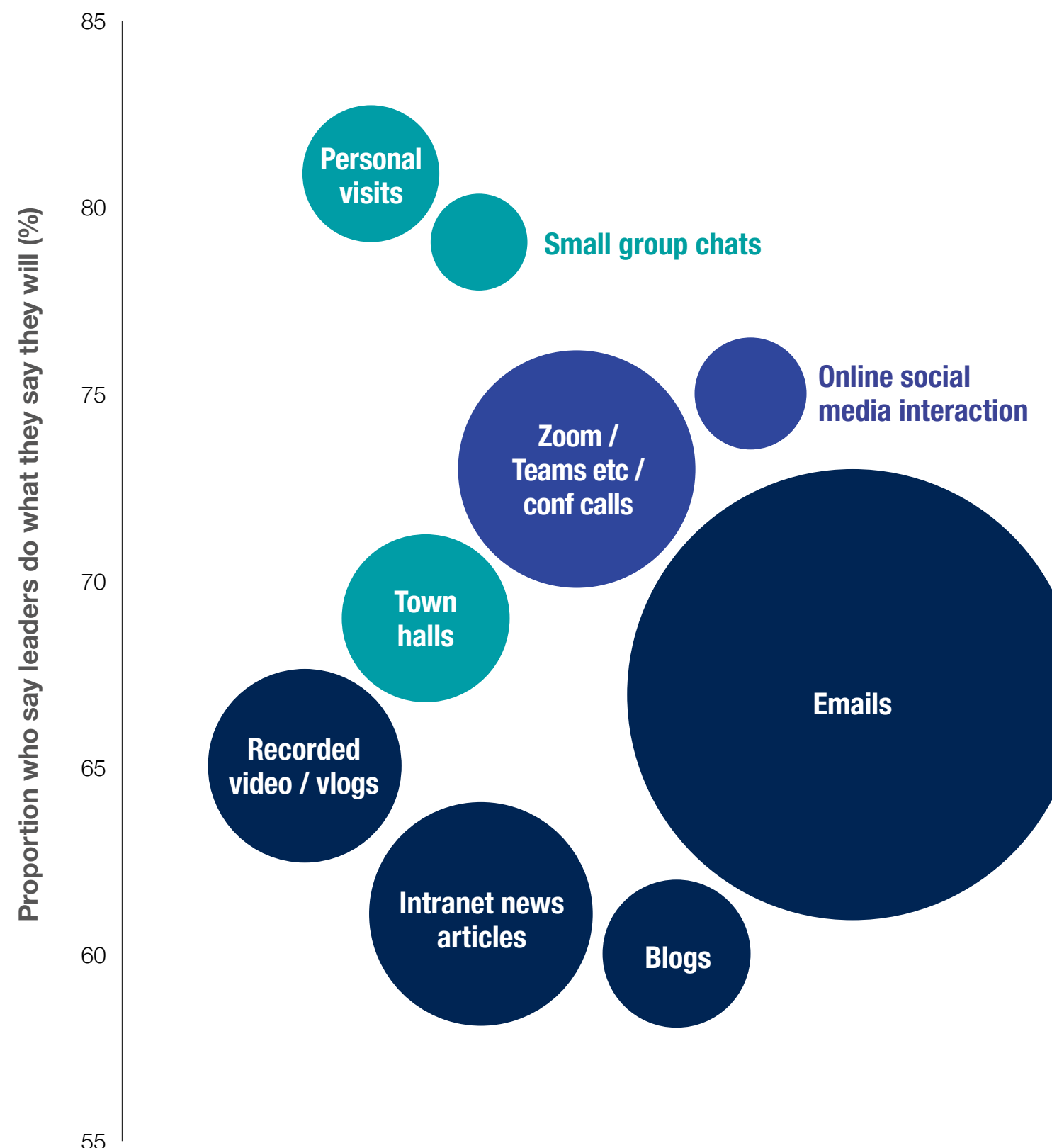
- The pandemic saw a significant uplift in leader trust within many organisations, as leaders stepped up to the plate and communicated regularly and openly with their colleagues to keep them informed of how the organisation was responding to the pandemic and the support available for employees. The overnight shift to digital video conferencing platforms enabled leaders of office workers to cross geographic divides and get in front of geographically dispersed colleagues with ease, thereby increasing visibility.
- We've seen a drop in this over the past 18 months, and correspondingly a dip in trust for many organisations, as leaders default back to email updates and blogs. Focusing on channels that enable visibility and two-way interactivity can really help to boost trust.



## How leaders communicate with their people, and its impact on employee trust

Key: ● Face-to-face ● Virtual social media ● One way

●●● The size of the bubble represents the proportion of leaders who rely on this channel



## What the data says

- When we look at communications channels, employees who experience face-to-face communications (virtual or in real life) from leaders rate them as much more trustworthy.
- While blogs, newsletters and round-up emails are a firm favourite of many leaders, they cannot live up to the impact of more two-way channels where leaders and employees can strike up conversation and debate.



Listen to more advice from Louise Breed on trust via **The Ben Morton Leadership Podcast**

**If you're looking to build trust in leadership at your organisation, get in touch to see how we can help.**

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