Decline of Trust in Institutions

A decline in trust in American institutions is both a contributing factor in and a victim of information disorder. In 2019, a Pew Research study showed that the public’s trust in both the federal government, news media, and in their personal circles have decreased. Prior to the pandemic, a majority of the respondents said they trusted medical doctors, researchers and scientists, but trust in scientists and medical researchers declined. In an essay published in 2020, Richard Edelman, CEO of the communications firm Edelman, said “every institution must play its part in restoring facts to their rightful place at the center of public discourse as the essential step to emerging from information bankruptcy.”

Reading Resources:

- The elites have failed (Vox)
- How to Put Out Democracy’s Dumpster Fire (The Atlantic)
- Outgoing Washington, Post editor Marty Baron reflects on the state of American journalism (PBS NewsHour)
- The ongoing fight against racism in newsrooms (Jon Allsop, Columbia Journalism Review)
- Americans have lost faith in institutions, That’s not because of Trump or ‘fake news’ (Bill Bishop, Washington Post)
- Crisis in Democracy: Renewing Trust in America (Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy)
- 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer (Report)
- Most Americans—especially Millennials—say libraries can help them find reliable, trustworthy information (Pew Research Center)
- The Global Trust Crisis (Foreign Policy)