



Media Release

Inaugural Banking Trust Index for Singapore shows banks in Singapore are trusted; banks committed to do more to further customers' interests

Singapore, 5 March 2021 – The Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) today announced the results of the inaugural Banking Trust Index for Singapore (BTIS) conducted by Edelman Data & Intelligence. The BTIS is commissioned by the ABS, arising from a strong desire to understand the consumers' trust in banks and areas where banks could improve. The BTIS is the first standardised means of measuring public trust towards banks in Singapore. The results showed that banks in Singapore are trusted by the public, and highlighted areas in which banks could do more. Details of the survey results are set out in the [published report](#).

The survey took the views of more than 3,500 Singapore residents, involving 15 participating banks¹. It will be conducted annually in order for participating banks to monitor shifts in public sentiment, solicit feedback and identify areas for improvements over time.

Key findings

The banking industry achieved an Edelman Net Trust Score (ENTS) of 56, which represents a score in the upper quartile². The survey found that 63% of respondents had high trust in the banks, with 7% of the respondents having low trust (The ENTS is derived from the difference of these two percentages). The remaining 30% of the respondents were moderate in their views.

Banks' ability to offer a variety of products and services, use reliable and innovative technologies and stay financially resilient, had a positive influence on respondents' trust in banks. Respondents also trusted banks to handle customers' data with integrity, and their leadership and employees to operate with professionalism and ethics.

The report also suggested areas for improvement. Respondents felt that banks could be more forthcoming in acknowledging mistakes, take accountability for the conduct of their employees and adopt measures to ensure that mistakes do not recur. Respondents would trust banks even more, if they could continue to demonstrate that customers' interests are of the utmost importance. Lastly, respondents expect banks to serve a higher purpose by making a societal impact, beyond the provision of banking products and services.

Follow-up actions

The ABS Culture and Conduct Steering Group (CCSG)³, with its mandate to promote and elevate culture and conduct standards among banks in Singapore, is committed to further

¹ The 15 participating banks are Bank of China, Bank of Singapore, Citibank, Credit Suisse, DBS, Deutsche Bank AG, HSBC, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Limited Singapore Branch, JP Morgan, Maybank Singapore, Nomura Singapore, OCBC, Standard Chartered Bank, UBS AG, and UOB.

² The ENTS is a 200-point scale, ranging from negative 100 (if all respondents have low trust of banks) to positive 100 (if all respondents have high trust in banks).

³ The ABS CCSG was established in May 2019. The CCSG comprises members from 14 banks in Singapore. The CCSG serves as a platform for industry participants to (i) identify best practices in the area of culture and conduct and facilitate wider industry adoption; (ii) monitor trends and identify emerging conduct and culture issues; and (iii) collaborate with MAS on initiatives to promote strong culture and conduct within the banking industry.



entrench in the industry a culture where customers' interests are prioritised. Key focus areas of the CCSG and banks will include:

- Enhance accountability by implementing MAS' Guidelines on Individual Accountability and Conduct. Embedding a strong culture of responsibility in banks starts with individual accountability on the part of senior managers and employees, supported by a robust and conducive governance framework.
- Further entrench prioritisation of customers' interest within banks through initiatives including (i) publishing an industry guide on risk metrics that banks can adopt to measure culture and identify hotspots; and (ii) organising industry sharing sessions to raise awareness on how dilemmas could be managed.
- Continue to integrate environmental considerations in their business activities and risk management processes, and inject greater purpose to their business. This includes implementation of MAS' Guidelines on Environmental Risk Management.

Mr Samuel Tsien, Chairman, ABS, and Group CEO of OCBC Bank, said, "Banking is built on the bedrock of trust. Singapore banks operate in one of the world's best regulatory regime, which adds to the high trust level. The strong reputation of Singapore banks must be sustained through continuous commitment towards raising the culture and conduct standards with deliberate efforts as well as structured and robust frameworks. We will continue to work with MAS to ensure that this trust will never be misplaced."

Mr Ravi Menon, Managing Director, MAS said, "Trust is the most valuable currency for a financial institution. It is earned through right conduct – serving customers with integrity, fairness, and transparency. I am heartened that our banks have reached out to the public to understand their level of trust and identify areas for improvement, and have published the results. MAS is pleased that the survey indicates a high level of trust in our banks – this is a valuable commodity that the industry must preserve. The report has also highlighted several areas where the banks can do better, to further strengthen public trust. MAS will work with the banks on these areas and support their efforts to raise standards of culture and conduct."

About The Association of Banks in Singapore

The Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) plays an active role in promoting and representing the interests of the banking community in Singapore. In doing so, ABS works closely with the relevant government authorities towards the development of a sound financial system in Singapore. Since its establishment in 1973, ABS has promoted common understanding among its members and projected a unifying voice on banking issues. It has brought its members closer together through various guidelines and banking practices as well as the support of projects of mutual benefit to face the challenges of the financial and banking community in Singapore. Today, ABS has a membership of more than 150 local and foreign banks. More information on ABS is available on the website: www.abs.org.sg.

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APPENDIX

Methodology for the BTIS

ABS engaged Edelman to administer the survey that forms the basis for the BTIS. Respondents were surveyed on their perception of banks' trustworthiness, based on four key factors under Edelman's methodology – ability of the banks to provide banking services, integrity of the banks to be honest with the public, dependability of the banks to uphold promises, and the banks' purpose to make a positive impact on society. 3,502 Singapore residents were surveyed across 15 participating banks, from November to December 2020. The survey will be conducted annually, over a period of three years minimally, to allow banks to monitor shifts in public sentiment, solicit feedback and identify areas that need to be improved over time.