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Honest, genuine and community-minded leaders focused on the public interest score highest for Trust

A special Roy Morgan survey on 'Trust' and 'Distrust' of government and business leaders conducted in March shows being honest and genuine is the most valued trait for leaders with a high level of Trust. This trait was mentioned by over a quarter (27%) of respondents in relation to political leaders and even more, 30%, for business leaders according to the survey of 974 Australians aged 14+.

Another personality trait to rate highly was being community-minded and with a focus on the public interest mentioned by 15% of respondents for political leaders and 12% for business leaders.

Other personality traits to rate highly include being sensible or knowledgeable, having a good performance and being competent at the job, having integrity and sincerity, using evidence-based arguments, being transparent to the public and demonstrating good management of the Coronavirus.

Top 5 traits of political & business leaders that people 'Trust'

Top 5 traits of political leaders people 'Trust'	
1	27% - Honest/genuine
2	15% - Community-minded/focus on public interest
3	7% - Sensible/knowledgeable
4	6% - Good performance/competent
5	5% - Has integrity/sincerity
Top 5 traits of business leaders people 'Trust'	
1	30% - Honest/genuine
2	12% - Community-minded/focus on public interest
3	7% - Evidence-based
4	6% - Has integrity/sincerity
5	5% - Sensible/knowledgeable

Source: Roy Morgan Snap SMS survey conducted on March 18-19, 2020.

Base: Australians aged 14+. n=974.

Distrust of leaders driven by dishonesty and focusing on own interests rather than community

In contrast the traits that drive 'Distrust' include being dishonest/doesn't tell the truth/dodgy mentioned by 26% as a key reason to 'Distrust' political leaders and 27% for business leaders.

Another key driver of 'Distrust' which is particularly evident for business leaders with high 'Distrust' is Focusing on their own interests/having their own agenda/being selfish mentioned by 33%. This was also the second largest trait driving 'Distrust' in political leaders at 19%.

Other personality traits to contribute to a high level of 'Distrust' in a leader include not being community-minded/not putting the public interest first, ineffective management/administration/lack of leadership, greedy/after huge profits, not representing Australia well, unethical/questionable practices, corruption, not being transparent to the public, being power-hungry and not being environmentally responsible.

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Top 5 traits of political & business leaders that people 'Distrust'

Top 5 traits of political leaders people 'Distrust'	
1	26% - Dishonest/doesn't tell the truth/dodgy
2	19% - Focus on own interest/have own agenda/selfish
3	15% - Not community-minded/not putting public interest first
4	11% - Ineffective management/administration/lack of leadership
5	11% - Greedy/after huge profits
Top 5 traits of business leaders people 'Distrust'	
1	33% - Focus on own interest/have own agenda/selfish
2	27% - Dishonest/doesn't tell the truth/dodgy
3	19% - Greedy/after huge profits
4	18% - Not community-minded/not putting public interest first
5	12% - Unethical/questionable practices

Source: Roy Morgan Snap SMS survey conducted on March 18-19, 2020.

Base: Australians aged 14+. n=974.

[New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern](#) was rated as having the highest 'Net Trust Score' of all political leaders – meaning the 'Trust' felt toward the New Zealand leader far outweighs the 'Distrust'.

The key traits mentioned by those who 'Trust' Ardern include being honest and genuine (25%), being community-minded/focused on the public interest (13%), being transparent to the public (7%), having integrity and sincerity (7%), making evidence-based decisions (7%) and making the right decisions (4%).

[Businessman and entrepreneur Dick Smith](#) was rated as having the highest 'Net Trust Score' of all business leaders and the key traits associated with Smith by those who 'Trust' him include being honest and genuine (25%), being community-minded/focused on the public interest (13%), keeping his promises (8%), representing Australia well (4%) and reflecting my values (4%).

[Unfortunately for Prime Minister Scott Morrison](#) he is the most prominent Australian political leader with a 'Net Distrust Score' with more feeling 'Distrust' towards the PM than 'Trust'. The key drivers of 'Distrust' for Morrison among those who 'Distrust' him effectively mirror the main drivers overall. These include being dishonest/doesn't tell the truth/dodgy (16%), focused on own interest/have own agenda/selfish (10%), not community-minded/not putting public interest first (8%), ineffective management/administration/lack of leadership (8%) and greedy/after huge profits (4%).

[Australian-born American domiciled businessman Rupert Murdoch](#) attracted the highest 'Net Distrust Score' of any businessman and the traits that people who 'Distrust' Murdoch mention include focusing on own interest/have own agenda/selfish (19%), dishonest/doesn't tell the truth/dodgy (11%), not community-minded/not putting public interest first (9%), greedy/after huge profits (8%), power-hungry (4%) and not environmentally responsible (4%).

People surveyed in Australia were asked 'Which government or business leaders do you trust. List as many as you can think of?' and then 'Why do you trust these government or business leaders?' also 'Which government leaders do you distrust. List as many as you can think of?' and then 'Why do you distrust these government or business leaders?'

By subtracting distrust from trust we arrive at a Net Trust Score (if trust outweighs distrust) or Net Distrust Score (if distrust outweighs trust).

Being honest and genuine is the key to building public trust for leaders

Roy Morgan has analysed thousands of verbatim responses with the most commonly cited reasons for having trust in political and business leaders relating to a belief these leaders are honest and genuine. Over a quarter of respondents identified being honest and genuine as a key characteristic of political leaders (27%) and business leaders (30%) that they trust.

'She's honest and open' – New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

'She appears genuine and compassionate' – New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

'They're authentic and genuine and really care about people' – Jacinda Ardern and Tanya Plibersek.

'Honest, compassionate, sincere and clear communication and good values' – New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Victorian Labor and the Australian Greens.

'They are open and honest without being infallible' – Dick Smith, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister Scott Morrison and David Attenborough.

'They have genuine policies which help the common man' – New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, the Chinese Government and the Cuban Government.

'They seem genuine and not trying to hide an agenda. The ones I don't trust have an obvious agenda that they don't admit to' – Bill Gates, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Australian Labor Party, Australian Greens, Labor MP Andrew Leigh, Canadian Government and Japanese Government.

'He is honest and open and has Australia's best interests at heart' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'He's an honest Christian man' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'Because I believe he has our best interests at heart' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'He is honest' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'He may not be the best Prime Minister but he seems to genuinely care and try to do his best' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'I believe Mr. Morrison is an honest and compassionate man' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'Being honest compared to the previous Prime Minister (Turnbull);' - Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'They present honestly rather than the Opposition's constant negativity and personal comments' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Liberal Party, mining entrepreneur Andrew Forrest.

'They do what they say. No lies and no tricks – just God's honest truth' – US President Donald Trump and Liberal Senator Jim Molan.

'They are honest and determined' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Liberal MP Craig Kelly and Rupert Murdoch.

'She provides measured and regular advice that seems genuine' – NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian.

'Honest' – Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese.

'He's sincere, honest, compassionate and likeable' – Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese.

'They speak honestly and directly' – Shadow Treasurer Jim Chalmers, Greens Leader Adam Bandt and Mark Dreyfus.

'Because they are honest and care about families and children' – Greens Senators Larissa Waters and Rachel Siewert.

'Because they tell you the truth and don't lie about what's happening' – One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson and Independent Senator Jacque Lambie.

'Both seem genuinely honest and willing to listen and seem to care. They both seem to have good BS meters' – Former Nationals Leader Barnaby Joyce and Shadow Health Minister Chris Bowen.

'Dan Andrews (Victorian Premier) is absolutely an honest man which is unusual in a politician.'

'His Government is honest, reliable and keeps the public informed' – Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews.

'Honest and sensible – both of them' – Mike Cannon-Brookes and Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews.

'Genuine. They answer questions directly without nonsense and political statements. They take action' – Celeste Barber, Penny Wong, Kristina Keneally, Dan Andrews, Mark Dreyfus and Andrew Constance.

'I think they speak the truth and try to stick to their principles' – Former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese, Penny Wong, Independent Senator Jacquie Lambie, former Greens Leader Richard DiNatale, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and Vanessa Wallace.

'Dick is kind, he supports people and he made products to support our country' – Dick Smith.

'They are honest and you can believe what they say' – Former Labor Treasurer Wayne Swan, mining entrepreneur Andrew Forrest and Andrew Constance.

Distrust is driven by a reputation for being dishonest, dodgy and not telling the truth

When it comes to distrust it is the perception of being dishonest, dodgy and not telling the truth that is mentioned most frequently by respondents who lose faith in political and business leaders. These characteristics were mentioned by over a quarter of those expressing distrust in political leaders (26%) and also business leaders (27%).

'All proven liars – particularly Scott Morrison. He spins more than any other politician and will never give a straight answer and admit when he stuffed up' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'Simple. They are dishonest and look after their own self-interests first, followed by their friends, partners and mates and led from the top' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'They're proven liars led from the top' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

'Primarily because it's not possible to trust the honesty, sincerity, or ethics of their utterances because of their collective lack of principle' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the Liberal Government.

'Full of spin and lies' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton.

'They've not been upfront and they feed the people untruths' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, Home Minister Peter Dutton, Centrelink and the Australian Tax Office.

'They're not trustworthy, genuine or authentic' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton, former Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi, former Nationals Leader Barnaby Joyce, Senator Michaelia Cash, Michael Ferguson, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Donald Trump.

'Because they lie consistently and don't have any worthwhile policies' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton, Finance Minister Mathias Cormann, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, Senator Michaelia Cash and former Deputy Nationals Leader Bridget McKenzie.

'They lie often' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton, Rupert Murdoch and US President Donald Trump.

'Because they lie and are only looking out for themselves and not the people they are meant to serve' – the Federal Government.

'It is clear they lie and deceive people. They misuse information and misrepresent scientific facts' – The Liberal Government.

'Because of persistent and blatant lies' – The Federal Government.

'Because they constantly lie' – All of them, especially the Australian Government.

'Because the lie and screw the ordinary Australians everyday' – The Nationals.

'The L-NP are liars and Gerry is untrustworthy' – the Federal Government and Gerry Harvey.

'They lie all the time for their own benefit rather than lead or deliver facts to the public' – Rupert Murdoch and the Federal Government.

'They lie consistently, they are self-serving and corrupt. In the cases of Morrison and Trump they are also utterly incompetent' – Prime Minister Scott Morrison, US President Donald Trump, Rupert Murdoch, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton, Energy Minister Angus Taylor, Attorney-General Christian Porter, former Nationals Leader Barnaby Joyce and US Presidential candidate Mike Bloomberg.

'They lie and fail to tell the truth and don't really care about Australians but serve their own selves or their corporations' – Rupert Murdoch, Peter Dutton, Clive Palmer, Alan Joyce, Michael McCormack.

'They all lie repeatedly' – Russia, China, US President Donald Trump, Clive Palmer and Saudi Arabia.

'Mostly because of their dishonesty and self-interest at the expense of others' – US Federal Government, Australian Government, NSW Government, Gina Rinehart and Rupert Murdoch.

'They are dishonest and selfish' – The Labor Party and the Liberal-National Parties.

'He doesn't appear to be trustworthy with what he does and say' – Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews.

'He doesn't stand for anything and he lies' – Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese.

'They don't tell the truth, they enrich their mates instead of acting in the public interest, they pursue a political agenda that I find abhorrent' – Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews, former Deputy Labor Leader Tanya Plibersek, Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese, Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin.

'They lie and cheat and are only interested in our money' – Do not have much faith in any of them.

'They are lying mongrels' – all of them.

'When they open their mouths they are lying' – most politicians.

'Because they lie and cover up for other people they have been elected to work for the people and yet they don't' – all of them.

'His history of deceitful behaviour and lying' – Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

'Because they all lie and are incapable of innovation' – Most Local Governments.

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About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 75 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
1,000	±3.0	±2.7	±1.9	±1.3