

2023 Edelman Trust Barometer

Top 10

01 Australia is on a path to polarisation

Polarisation is a central theme globally in this year's Trust Barometer, with Australia currently straddling the boundary between 'moderately polarised' and 'in danger of severe polarisation'. Almost half of Australians (45%) say the nation is more divided today than in the past, with the rich and powerful identified as the major dividing force (72%), followed by hostile foreign governments (69%), journalists (51%), and government leaders (49%).

02 Australia's social fabric is weakening

More than half (61%) of respondents think the lack of civility and mutual respect today is the worst they have ever seen, with only a quarter of Australians (24%) willing to help someone in need who strongly disagreed with their view on a societal issue, and only 21% would be willing to live in the same neighborhood as them, 19% would be willing to work with them.

03 Government enters the realm of 'distrust'

Government joins media in the realm of 'distrust' for the first time since 2020, declining seven points in just the last year to 45%. To mirror this, trust in Australia's institutional leaders continues to lack, with journalists (36%), CEOs (39%) and government leaders (41%) all distrusted for a second consecutive year. Both government and media institutions continue to fuel a cycle of distrust.

04 No news source in Australia is trusted

Media remains the most distrusted institution in Australia. The media are seen as a source of misleading or false information by 48% in Australia, versus 37% of respondents who felt the media are a reliable source of trustworthy information. No news source is trusted in Australia - with traditional media only trusted half of Australians (50%, up 2 points vs 2022), owned media by 31% (down 2 pts), and social media by 25% (down 1 pt)

05 Economic optimism has collapsed globally

Amid the rising cost-of-living, interest rates and energy prices, only 30% of Australians believe they will be better off financially in 5 years, down 13 points from 2021 (43%). In a common unifying thread from across the globe, an enormous 83% of employed Australians are worried about job loss, and 69% of the general population are concerned about inflation.

06 There are new fears, bigger than us

Several geopolitical issues are causing worry amongst Australians - including nuclear war (68%), climate change (61%), energy shortages (59%) and food shortages (54%).

07 Business remains the only institution seen as competent and ethical

Business remains the only institution seen as ethical and competent - with employers remaining the most trusted. In Australia, 75% said they trust their employer to 'do what is right' more than business, government, NGOs and media.

08 Heightened expectations for leaders

The expectation for business to take a stand on social issues is putting even greater onus on CEOs to lead the change and be visible in doing so. In Australia, CEOs are expected to publicly take a stand on the treatment of employees (91%), climate change (78%), discrimination (75%), the wealth gap (74%) and immigration (66%).

09 CEOs should water their own backyard

The core expectations for CEOs hit even closer to home. The majority of Australians say CEOs are obligated to pay a fair wage (89%), pay fair corporate taxes (83%), retrain employees (79%), and ensure their home community is safe and thriving (79%), indicating that the path forward starts with business looking after their own backyard and those within it.

10 There is still an opportunity to correct course

Unlike some of western counterparts, Australia still has an opportunity to correct course and restore unity and trust before becoming severely polarised. The report highlights four actions that are key to navigating a polarised world: business must continue to lead; collaborate with government; restore economic optimism; advocate for truth.

To learn more about the Edelman Trust Barometer, visit www.edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer #TrustBarometer

All data is based on general population sample unless otherwise noted.

