



Trust in Government, Expertise, and Managing the Covid-19 Pandemic in Australia and New Zealand

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Trust, and Trust in Government



- Trust is belief an actor will not systematically exploit power, resource and knowledge disparities
- Used interchangeably with ‘confidence’
- Trust facilitates exchange in capitalist economies
- Trust in government can assist in paying of taxes, following government directives, income redistribution

Why Study Trust in Government?



- Some studies suggest trust in government is declining across countries
- Has trust in government been affected by COVID-19, and the management of the pandemic crisis?
- How does trust affect use of the CV-19 app?
- What are the implications for policy and public administration?

Trust in Govt in Australia and NZ *Increased*



- Online panel survey of 500 in Australia and NZ and WA (453), July 2020
- Government is generally trustworthy.
 - **Aus 80%, NZ 83%, WA 83%.**
 - **2009 Aus 49%, NZ 53%.**
- The PM is generally trustworthy.
 - **Aus 76%, NZ 83%, WA 77%.**
- Federal (central) government is generally trustworthy.
 - **Aus 72%, NZ 78%, WA 75%.**

Trust in Expertise



- How much confidence do you have that public health scientists act in the best interests of the public?
 - **Aus 85%, NZ 87%, WA 90%.**
- The management of the Covid-19 pandemic has increased my trust in scientific experts
 - **Aus 78%, NZ 77%, WA 82%.**

Management of CV19 and Trust in Government



- The management of the Covid-19 pandemic:
- ...by the federal (central) Government has increased my trust in the federal (central) government.
 - **Aus 72%, NZ 78%, WA 72%.**
- ...by the State Government has increased my trust in state government.
 - **Aus 75%, WA 74%.**
- ...by the health services has increased my trust in the health system.
 - **Aus 81%, NZ 77%, WA 85%.**

Use of the Covid app



- Do you use the COVIDSafe app?
 - **Aus 44%, NZ 24%, WA 42%.**
- Do you believe the COVIDSafe app is in the best interests of the public?
 - **Aus 67%, NZ 71%, WA 61%.**

What predicts CV-19 App use? Trust in Government is key



- Income (Aus) and income and education (NZ) predict use
- But trust is more important than demographics
- Aus: trust in govt and change in trust in health system predict CV19 use
 - but not change in trust in govt
- NZ: trust in government and change in trust in govt predicts use in NZ
 - but not change in trust in health system

Expertise and CV-19 App Use



- Confidence in ‘public health scientists’ is highly significant predictor of app use in Australia but *not* in NZ
- So perceived expertise may be more important in Australia, while NZers focus on trust in govt

Trust in Government and CV19: Implications



- Particularly in crisis situations, how the government manages situations will affect trust
- Prima facie, management of CV19 has *dramatically* increased trust in govt
- BUT trust also impacts on how government can manage crisis
- Trust is ***an important*** predictor of success (adoption) of policy tools – such as CV19 app
- Trust in experts important in Australia

Conclusion



- Survey captures a crisis moment: ‘rally around the flag’ effect?
- Hence boost in trust may not be long term
- But crisis may be when good government *really* matters: leadership and expertise needed to rise to the occasion
- Expertise respected more in a crisis? Has the death of expertise been overstated?



Questions?