

# Top 10 Findings Trust Amid Insularity

01

## Trust is rising, but it is fragile

Australia's Trust Index increased 5 points, from 49% to 54%, moving from distrust into neutral. This lift masks deeper instability. Trust has stabilised at the surface, while underlying divides remain unresolved.

02

## Australia is splitting into two trust realities

Trust is no longer shared equally. High income Australians sit at 63% trust, while low income Australians sit at just 44%, a 19 point gap, the largest since 2021.

This divide means Australians are increasingly experiencing institutions in fundamentally different ways.

03

## The future feels less certain than ever

Despite rising trust, optimism remains low. Only 22% of Australians believe the next generation will be better off, well below the 32% global average. The idea of a fair go is under pressure.

04

## Economic anxiety is now a structural force shaping trust

Australians are increasingly focused on immediate risk. 60% are concerned about trade and tariffs impacting their employer, the highest level recorded. 54% are worried about job loss due to a potential recession. This shift from long term optimism to short term survival is reshaping how trust is formed.

05

## Trust is retreating from institutions to the local

Trust is not disappearing. It is relocating. Trust in government leaders has declined by 22 points, in foreign businesses by 20 points, and in media by 18 points. At the same time, trust in coworkers has risen by 9 points, and trust in personal networks by 8 points. Australia is moving from "we" to "me".

06

## Insularity is now the majority mindset

Nearly three quarters of Australians, 73%, are hesitant or unwilling to trust people who see the world differently. This is no longer a fringe response. It is the dominant mindset shaping how Australians engage with difference.

07

## Insularity is driving real world behavioural change

This mindset is no longer theoretical. It is behavioural. 42% would rather switch departments than work for someone with different values. 33% would put in less effort under a leader with different beliefs. 44% would support reducing foreign companies, even at higher cost. Insularity is now impacting productivity, collaboration, and economic openness.

08

## Grievance is rising, and insularity is amplifying it

More than half of Australians, 53%, now hold a moderate or high sense of grievance. Among those with an insular mindset, this sentiment is 20 points higher. Division is not just creating distance. It is deepening resentment.

09

## Institutions are expected to act, but are falling short

Australians expect institutions to bridge divides. 81% say government has a responsibility to broker trust, yet only around 30 to 36% believe it is doing so effectively. This expectation performance gap is one of the biggest risks to institutional trust.

10

## The opportunity sits with employers, but leadership must step up

Employers are the most trusted institution and have the smallest expectation performance gap, at 17 points. Leadership, however, is not yet keeping pace. 72% of Australians expect business leaders to help bridge division, yet only 36% believe they are doing so. This creates a clear mandate and a significant leadership opportunity.

To learn more about the Edelman Trust Barometer, visit [www.edelman.com/au/trust/2026/trust-barometer](https://www.edelman.com/au/trust/2026/trust-barometer) #TrustBarometer

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

