

Public Confidence in Australian Democracy

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Democratic Audit Discussion Paper 8/08
December 2008

Democratic Audit Discussion Papers
ISSN 1835-6559

Over three years ago the Democratic Audit assessed public confidence in Australian Democracy using data from the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) and the 2004 Australian Election Study (AES). That assessment concluded that respondents were satisfied with and proud of a general conception of Australian democracy but were mistrustful of politicians, the federal parliament, the legal system and the public service, which supported Pippa Norris' contention that citizens support democratic ideals while being critical of the practical workings of democracy.¹ Self-identified class appeared to be the most significant influence on levels of confidence in democracy, with working-class identifiers less likely to believe that government acts in their interests.

One of the most prominent issues of the 2007 federal election was the Liberal-National Coalition government's industrial relations reforms, with the Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions successfully campaigning on the issue and contributing to a change of government. Against this backdrop it is likely that these previous findings will be more pronounced in this study. The three-year period since the previous study has also been eventful in party political terms, with the Coalition winning a majority in the Senate for the first time in over two decades, and the demise of two notable 'anti-politician' minor parties, the Australian Democrats and One Nation.

Once again this study tests Norris's theory that although citizens support democratic ideals they are critical of how democracy works in practice. Elim Papadakis also recognises this distinction, arguing that the level of confidence in political institutions may be affected by contingent factors, such as support for the governing party, rather than indicating a lack of support for the political system.² Thus, declining confidence in democratic institutions does not necessarily augur ill for democratic ideals.³

¹ Norris, Pippa, 2001, 'Confidence in Australian democracy', in Marian Sawer (ed.) *Elections: Full, Free & Fair*, Leichhardt, NSW, Federation Press, p. 205.

² Papadakis, Elim, 1999, 'Constituents of confidence and mistrust in Australian institutions', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 34(1): 90.

³ Ibid.

Clive Bean defines confidence as: ‘evaluations of the effectiveness of organisations and institutions in performing their designated roles’.⁴ In the following sections general questions about democracy, citizen engagement and government are addressed, while the later sections address questions relating to political actors including politicians and public officials. This study uses data from the 2007 AuSSA and the 2007 AES. The AuSSA studies social attitudes and behaviours of Australians, using postal questionnaires requiring self-completion.⁵ Subsample A⁶ was taken from the 2007 Australian electoral roll, and consists of 2783 Australian citizens aged 17 years⁷ and over and enrolled to vote. The AES is timed to coincide with federal elections to measure political attitudes and behaviour, and also uses postal questionnaires requiring self-completion.⁸ In this study the sample was also taken from the 2007 Australian electoral roll, and consists of 1873 Australian citizens aged 18 years and over and enrolled to vote. Socio-demographic cleavages concerning age (18-34; 35-49; 50-64; and 65 and over), gender (female/male), education (no university degree/university degree), subjective class (middle-class/working-class), annual income (AuSSA data: \$31,199 and under; \$31,200 to \$77,999; and \$78,000 and over; AES data: \$30,000 and under; \$30,001 to \$80,000; and \$80,001 and over), and region of residence (rural/urban) were used in the analysis.⁹ This approach has been adopted in this study to examine

⁴ Bean, Clive, 2003, ‘Citizen Confidence in Social and Political Institutions in a Changing World’, paper presented at the Conference on Social Change in the 21st Century, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, November.

⁵ Phillips, T. et al. The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, 2007. [Computer file]. Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2008. Timothy Phillips and Deborah Mitchell of The Australian National University, Bruce Tranter of the University of Tasmania, and Juliet Clark and Ken Reed of Deakin University conducted the survey, which was produced by the Australian National University’s Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute. The data was made available through the Australian Social Science Data Archive. *Phillips et al. as the original analysts and collectors of the data bear no responsibility for this paper’s analysis or interpretation of the data.*

⁶ AuSSA 2007 uses three survey instruments (Version A, B and C) and includes both the International Social Survey Program’s Role of Government and Leisure Time and Sports modules. Subsample A contains the Role of Government module, which is most relevant to the present study.

⁷ Seventeen year-olds can provisionally enrol.

⁸ Bean, C. et al., Australian Election Study, 2007. [Computer file]. Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2008. Clive Bean of the Queensland University of Technology, Ian McAllister of The Australian National University, and David Gow of the University of Queensland conducted the survey, and the data was made available through the Australian Social Science Data Archive. *Bean et al. as the original analysts and collectors of the data bear no responsibility for this paper’s analysis or interpretation of the data.*

⁹ Bean, Clive, 2004, ‘Is There a Crisis of Trust in Australia’, in Shaun Wilson, Gabrielle Meagher, Rachel Gibson, David Denmark and Mark Western (eds) *Australian Social Attitudes: The 1st Report*, Sydney, UNSW Press, pp. 122-40.

whether there are significant differences in opinions between the socio-demographic sub-groups.

Democracy

The AES asked about satisfaction with Australian democracy,¹⁰ with large majorities ‘fairly satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ (see Appendix A). The associations between most of the socio-demographic variables and satisfaction with Australian democracy are very weak. Class has the strongest association of any of the variables followed by income: middle-class identifiers/higher income-earners appear to be slightly more proud of Australian democracy than working-class identifiers/lower income-earners. Surprisingly there is also a small gender difference, with higher proportions of women ‘fairly satisfied’ and higher proportions of men ‘very satisfied’.

The AES also asked respondents for their opinions about having a democratic political system as a way of governing Australia,¹¹ with weak associations in relation to every socio-demographic variable except region (see Appendix B). While respondents across all socio-demographic sub-groups are overwhelmingly positive about the idea of a democratic political system, older Australians, males, university graduates, middle-class identifiers and higher income-earners are even more so. Finally, while most AES respondents across all of the socio-demographic sub-groups are critical of the idea of having a strong leader governing without parliament and elections,¹² Australians without a university degree, working-class identifiers and lower income-earners are not as critical (see Appendix C).

Citizen Engagement

¹⁰ Question: On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia?

¹¹ Question: What do you think of each of the following types of political system as a way of governing this country ... Having a democratic political system? Response categories: very good; fairly good; fairly bad; and very bad.

¹² Question: What do you think of each of the following types of political system as a way of governing this country ... Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections? Response categories: very good; fairly good; fairly bad; and very bad.

AuSSA respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with statements including, ‘People like me don’t have any say about what government does’ and ‘The average citizen has considerable influence on politics’.¹³ Regarding the first statement, there are weak to moderate associations in relation to education and class, with respondents without university degrees and working-class identifiers feeling more strongly that people like themselves do not have any say about what the government does (see Appendix D). There are also significant, albeit very weak, associations with the other socio-demographic variables. Older Australians, males, lower-income earners and rural residents also expressed higher levels of agreement with the first statement. Regarding the second statement, there are only two significant associations, which are also very weak (see Appendix E). Once again males and working-class identifiers are more critical, more strongly disagreeing that the average citizen has considerable influence on politics.

Government

On the question of whether experts or government are best for making decisions for the country,¹⁴ there are significant associations in relation to age group and region, with younger Australians and urban residents more critical of government as decision makers compared with experts (Appendix F). Yet majorities across all of the socio-demographic sub-groups favoured the government as decision makers. Three other questions in the AES also assess the government: whether the government looks after themselves (see Appendix G);¹⁵ whether the government is run by big interests (see Appendix H);¹⁶ and the performance of the government in Canberra over the past three

¹³ Response categories: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree or disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; and Can’t choose.

¹⁴ Question: What do you think of each of the following types of political system as a way of governing this country ... Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country? Response categories: very good; fairly good; fairly bad; and very bad.

¹⁵ Question: In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time? Response categories: Usually look after themselves; Sometimes look after themselves; Sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing; and Usually can be trusted to do the right thing.

¹⁶ Question: Would you say the government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people? Response categories: Entirely run for the big interests; Mostly run for the big interests; About half and half; Mostly run for the benefit of all; and Entirely run for the benefit of all.

years (see Appendix I).¹⁷ While once again the associations are weak, working-class identifiers and lower income-earners are more likely to believe that the government looks after themselves and is run by big interests, and to be critical of the government's performance over the past three years. There is also some (weak) evidence of a rural-urban divide, with rural residents slightly more likely to believe that the government looks after themselves and is run by big interests. Finally, university graduates are more critical of the government's performance over the past three years. Across all the subgroups, small majorities believed that the government looks after themselves yet also believed that the government had done a good job over the past three years. Thus respondents seemed to be making subtle distinctions in their evaluations, rather than being uniformly critical on every measure. Respondents were split on the question of whether the government is run by big interests.

Two similar items in the AES were combined: whether it makes a difference who is in power and whether who people vote for make any difference to what happens.¹⁸ There is only a significant gender difference, with women more likely to believe that it does make a difference who is in power and who people vote for (see Appendix J).

Politicians

More AuSSA respondents disagreed than agreed with the statement, 'People we elect as MPs try to keep the promises that they have made during the election',¹⁹ across all the socio-demographic subgroups (see Appendix K). However, about a third of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. There are very weak associations with class, education and age group. While the age-related patterns are not straightforward, the working class and those without a university degree are more likely to disagree.

¹⁷ Question: Now thinking about the performance of the government in Canberra in general, how good or bad a job do you think the government in Canberra has done over the past three years? Response categories: A very good job; A good job; A bad job; and A very bad job.

¹⁸ The inter-item correlation coefficient is 0.659 and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient 0.794. The items are equally weighted on the new scale from 1-5, such that responding most negatively on both items will receive a score of 1 and responding most positively on all both items will receive a score of 5.

¹⁹ Response categories: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree or disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; and Can't choose.

Overall, AES respondents generally believe that federal politicians do not know what ordinary people think, however there were with significant differences in the levels of scepticism in relation to every variable except gender (see Appendix L). Younger Australians, university graduates, higher-income earners, middle-class identifiers and urban residents are more balanced and less critical in their views, while other groups appear to be more disaffected. Despite these criticisms, most AuSSA respondents believe that only some/a few to almost no Australian politicians are involved in corruption (see Appendix M). There were very weak associations with every variable except region, with older Australians, males, university graduates, middle-class identifiers, and higher-income earners more trusting in the integrity of politicians.

Public Officials

Three questions in the AuSSA measure the integrity and professionalism of public officials: how often public officials deal fairly with people like you; whether the treatment people get from public officials in Australia depends on who they know; and how many public officials in Australia are involved in corruption. Combining these items to form a new trust in public officials scale²⁰ reveals that overall, respondents were close to neutral on the issue of trust, although there were significant differences in relation to every variable except region (see Appendix N). Older Australians, males, university graduates, middle-class identifiers, are higher-income earners are more trusting, which is unsurprisingly given that members of these groups are more likely to be public officials.

Respondents were almost evenly split between categories of agreement, disagreement and neither in relation to the statement ‘Most public servants can be trusted to do what is best for the country’.²¹ There are very weak associations with class and education, with working-class identifiers and non-degree holders slightly more distrustful (see

²⁰ The inter-item correlation coefficients are all positive and greater than 0.321, and the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient based on standardised items is 0.614. Thus, the tests of unidimensionality and reliability are satisfied in constructing a new political trust scale from these items. The items are equally weighted on the new scale from 1-5, such that responding most negatively on all three items will receive a score of 1 and responding most positively on all three items will receive a score of 5.

²¹ Response categories: Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree or disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; and Can’t choose.

Appendix O).

Conclusion

Once again respondents are satisfied with a general conception of Australian democracy and positive about the democratic political system, but indications of citizen engagement are not strong and the evaluations of government, politicians and other public officials are negative. Again, there is strong evidence supporting Norris' contention that citizens support democratic ideals while being critical of the practical workings of democracy. Of the socio-demographic variables considered in this study, self-identified class is the strongest influence on levels of confidence in democracy, both as an ideal and in practice. The other variables directly related to class – income and tertiary education – were also consistently influential. Given the salience of class-related political issues during the last term of government and government control over the 'House of Review', these findings are even less surprising.

Appendix A

Cross-tabulations of satisfaction with Australian democracy by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Satisfaction				<i>Total</i>
	Not at all satisfied	Not very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	
Age					
18 – 34	5 (1.7)	31 (10.7)	203 (69.8)	52 (17.9)	291
35 – 49	7 (1.5)	62 (13.5)	284 (61.9)	106 (23.1)	459
50 – 64	20 (3.5)	75 (13.0)	349 (60.7)	131 (22.8)	575
65 and over	8 (1.9)	34 (8.3)	269 (65.5)	100 (24.3)	411
Gender					
Female	18 (1.9)	107 (11.2)	649 (68.0)	180 (18.9)	954
Male	29 (3.4)	106 (12.3)	491 (57.1)	234 (27.2)	860
Education					
No uni. degree	35 (2.7)	155 (11.9)	814 (62.5)	298 (22.9)	1302
University degree	6 (1.3)	57 (12.6)	287 (63.6)	101 (22.4)	451
Class					
Middle class	14 (1.6)	74 (8.2)	573 (63.5)	242 (26.8)	903
Working class	16 (2.2)	109 (15.2)	455 (63.4)	138 (19.2)	718
Income					
\$30,000 and under	14 (3.1)	57 (12.8)	296 (66.4)	79 (17.7)	446
\$30,001 to \$80,000	22 (3.1)	88 (12.4)	429 (60.6)	169 (23.9)	708
\$80,001 and over	5 (0.9)	55 (10.3)	340 (63.7)	134 (25.1)	534
Region					
Rural	26 (3.4)	96 (12.5)	474 (61.6)	174 (22.6)	770
Urban	21 (2.0)	122 (11.4)	676 (63.2)	250 (23.4)	1069

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between satisfaction with Australian democracy and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.055	.032	1.732	.087
Gender	.092	.043	2.119	.034*
Education	.005	.050	.090	.928
Class	-.232	.045	-5.076	.000*
Income	.118	.036	3.293	.001*
Region	.050	.043	1.150	.250

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix B

Cross-tabulations of opinions of a democratic political system by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Satisfaction				<i>Total</i>
	Very Bad	Fairly Bad	Fairly Good	Very Good	
Age					
18 – 34	5 (1.8)	20 (7.0)	96 (33.7)	164 (57.5)	285
35 – 49	21 (4.6)	26 (5.8)	115 (25.4)	290 (64.2)	452
50 – 64	25 (4.6)	14 (2.6)	100 (18.2)	410 (74.7)	549
65 and over	13 (3.4)	18 (4.7)	72 (18.8)	281 (73.2)	384
Gender					
Female	40 (4.4)	44 (4.8)	231 (25.3)	599 (65.5)	914
Male	25 (3.0)	40 (4.8)	164 (19.7)	602 (72.4)	831
Education					
No uni. degree	60 (4.8)	75 (6.0)	283 (22.7)	828 (66.5)	1246
University degree	3 (0.7)	8 (1.8)	103 (23.1)	332 (74.4)	446
Class					
Middle class	18 (2.0)	24 (2.7)	192 (21.7)	651 (73.6)	885
Working class	31 (4.5)	53 (7.7)	168 (24.6)	432 (63.2)	684
Income					
\$30,000 and under	23 (5.6)	28 (6.8)	109 (26.5)	252 (61.2)	412
\$30,001 to \$80,000	28 (4.0)	37 (5.3)	155 (22.2)	477 (68.4)	697
\$80,001 and over	7 (1.3)	18 (3.4)	109 (20.7)	393 (74.6)	527
Region					
Rural	27 (3.7)	42 (5.7)	164 (22.3)	501 (68.3)	734
Urban	40 (3.9)	46 (4.5)	237 (22.9)	710 (68.7)	1033

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions of a democratic political system selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.174	.036	4.805	.000*
Gender	.144	.047	3.041	.002*
Education	.221	.055	4.144	.000*
Class	-.248	.048	-4.930	.000*
Income	.192	.039	4.810	.000*
Region	.015	.048	.313	.754

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix C

Cross-tabulations of opinions about having a strong leader governing without parliament and elections by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions				<i>Total</i>
	Very Bad	Fairly Bad	Fairly Good	Very Good	
Age					
18 – 34	134 (47.3)	93 (32.9)	42 (14.8)	14 (4.9)	283
35 – 49	243 (54.1)	108 (24.1)	69 (15.4)	29 (6.5)	449
50 – 64	329 (63.8)	85 (16.5)	73 (14.1)	29 (5.6)	516
65 and over	186 (57.2)	50 (15.4)	58 (17.8)	31 (9.5)	325
Gender					
Female	480 (55.7)	188 (21.8)	130 (15.1)	63 (7.3)	861
Male	442 (56.6)	162 (20.7)	131 (16.8)	46 (5.9)	781
Education					
No uni. degree	598 (51.6)	253 (21.8)	210 (18.1)	98 (8.5)	1159
University degree	295 (68.3)	91 (21.1)	37 (8.6)	9 (2.1)	432
Class					
Middle class	506 (60.4)	185 (22.1)	98 (11.7)	49 (5.8)	838
Working class	310 (48.8)	143 (22.5)	133 (20.9)	49 (7.7)	635
Income					
\$30,000 and under	179 (46.6)	77 (20.1)	81 (21.1)	47 (12.2)	384
\$30,001 to \$80,000	365 (55.5)	142 (21.6)	110 (16.7)	41 (6.2)	658
\$80,001 and over	316 (62.1)	121 (23.8)	56 (11.0)	16 (3.1)	509
Region					
Rural	387 (57.2)	141 (20.9)	109 (16.1)	39 (5.8)	676
Urban	544 (55.1)	211 (21.4)	156 (15.8)	76 (7.7)	987

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions about strong leaders and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	-.059	.033	-1.798	.072
Gender	-.015	.042	-.345	.730
Education	-.348	.046	-7.582	.000*
Class	.217	.042	4.966	.000*
Income	-.212	.034	-6.040	.000*
Region	.044	.042	1.039	.299

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix D

Cross-tabulations of opinions of whether respondents feel that they have a say about what government does (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age						
17 – 34	28 (5.6)	121 (24.3)	101 (20.3)	165 (33.1)	83 (16.7)	498
35 – 49	41 (5.3)	204 (26.6)	157 (20.4)	245 (31.9)	121 (15.8)	768
50 – 64	30 (3.6)	207 (25.2)	144 (17.5)	261 (31.8)	180 (21.9)	822
65 and over	9 (1.6)	92 (16.5)	104 (18.6)	235 (42.0)	119 (21.3)	559
Gender						
Female	61 (4.4)	341 (24.5)	271 (19.5)	472 (33.9)	248 (17.8)	1393
Male	48 (3.8)	285 (22.4)	239 (18.8)	438 (34.5)	260 (20.5)	1270
Education						
No uni. degree	53 (2.7)	396 (20.0)	385 (19.4)	724 (36.5)	423 (21.4)	1981
University degree	55 (8.7)	222 (35.1)	116 (18.4)	168 (26.6)	71 (11.2)	632
Class						
Middle class	73 (5.5)	401 (30.0)	276 (20.6)	416 (31.1)	172 (12.9)	1338
Working class	29 (2.7)	172 (16.1)	181 (16.9)	407 (38.0)	282 (26.3)	1071
Income						
\$31,199 and under	40 (3.4)	233 (19.8)	213 (18.1)	413 (35.1)	276 (23.5)	1175
\$31,200 to \$77,999	43 (4.5)	236 (24.7)	201 (21.0)	235 (34.0)	152 (15.9)	957
\$78,000 and over	22 (6.4)	119 (34.7)	62 (18.1)	100 (29.2)	40 (11.7)	343
Region						
Rural	31 (3.6)	180 (20.7)	163 (18.7)	293 (33.7)	203 (23.3)	870
Urban	78 (4.3)	451 (24.9)	348 (19.2)	623 (34.5)	308 (17.0)	1808

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

Measures of association between respondents' feelings of whether they have a say and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.120	.021	5.740	.000*
Gender	.059	.029	2.062	.039*
Education	-.348	.031	-10.425	.000*
Class	.339	.028	11.797	.000*
Income	-.192	.025	-7.497	.000*
Region	-.114	.030	-3.741	.000*

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix E

Cross-tabulations of opinions of whether the average citizen has considerable influence on politics (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age						
17 – 34	53 (10.8)	226 (45.8)	123 (24.9)	78 (15.8)	13 (2.6)	493
35 – 49	95 (12.4)	341 (44.5)	163 (21.3)	150 (19.6)	17 (2.2)	766
50 – 64	125 (15.2)	356 (43.3)	180 (21.9)	148 (18.0)	14 (1.7)	823
65 and over	50 (9.1)	272 (49.3)	117 (21.2)	100 (18.1)	13 (2.4)	552
Gender						
Female	140 (10.1)	622 (44.8)	330 (23.8)	265 (19.1)	30 (2.2)	1387
Male	188 (14.9)	577 (45.7)	256 (20.3)	215 (17.0)	27 (2.1)	1263
Education						
No uni. degree	241 (12.2)	892 (45.3)	468 (23.8)	330 (16.8)	39 (2.0)	1970
University degree	79 (12.5)	288 (45.6)	107 (16.9)	143 (22.6)	15 (2.4)	632
Class						
Middle class	146 (10.9)	585 (43.8)	302 (22.6)	282 (21.1)	22 (1.6)	1337
Working class	148 (13.9)	502 (47.2)	224 (21.1)	158 (14.9)	31 (2.9)	1063
Income						
\$31,199 and under	148 (12.6)	513 (43.8)	294 (25.1)	187 (16.0)	28 (2.4)	1170
\$31,200 to \$77,999	116 (12.2)	452 (47.4)	184 (19.3)	183 (19.2)	18 (1.9)	953
\$78,000 and over	42 (12.2)	152 (44.3)	66 (19.2)	78 (22.7)	5 (1.5)	343
Region						
Rural	116 (13.4)	366 (42.2)	200 (23.1)	164 (18.9)	21 (2.4)	867
Urban	212 (11.8)	840 (46.7)	389 (21.6)	323 (17.9)	36 (2.0)	1800

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions of whether the average citizen has influence and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	-.008	.022	-.361	.718
Gender	-.106	.030	-3.506	.000*
Education	.030	.036	.811	.417
Class	-.112	.032	-3.506	.000*
Income	.008	.027	.291	.771
Region	-.023	.032	-.722	.470

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix F

Cross-tabulations of opinions about having experts rather than government making decisions by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions				Total
	Very Bad	Fairly Bad	Fairly Good	Very Good	
Age					
18 – 34	61 (21.5)	103 (36.3)	100 (35.2)	20 (7.0)	284
35 – 49	133 (30.4)	148 (33.8)	123 (28.1)	34 (7.8)	438
50 – 64	213 (41.4)	140 (27.2)	129 (25.1)	32 (6.2)	514
65 and over	125 (40.5)	80 (25.9)	82 (26.5)	22 (7.1)	309
Gender					
Female	285 (33.7)	260 (30.7)	237 (28.0)	64 (7.6)	846
Male	267 (35.0)	234 (30.7)	213 (28.0)	48 (6.3)	762
Education					
No uni. degree	393 (34.7)	341 (30.1)	317 (28.0)	83 (7.3)	1134
University degree	143 (33.3)	145 (33.7)	118 (27.4)	24 (5.6)	430
Class					
Middle class	289 (34.8)	259 (31.2)	226 (27.2)	56 (6.7)	830
Working class	197 (31.7)	193 (31.1)	180 (29.0)	51 (8.2)	621
Income					
\$30,000 and under	122 (33.5)	105 (28.8)	105 (28.8)	33 (9.1)	364
\$30,001 to \$80,000	219 (33.5)	206 (31.5)	177 (27.1)	51 (7.8)	653
\$80,001 and over	170 (33.7)	174 (34.5)	139 (27.6)	21 (4.2)	504
Region					
Rural	254 (38.1)	206 (30.9)	164 (24.6)	42 (6.3)	666
Urban	305 (31.7)	295 (30.7)	290 (30.1)	72 (7.5)	962

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions about experts making decisions and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	-.139	.029	-4.736	.000*
Gender	-.030	.039	-.765	.444
Education	-.014	.044	-.330	.741
Class	.062	.041	1.515	.130
Income	-.049	.033	-1.491	.136
Region	.121	.039	3.088	.002*

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix G

Cross-tabulations of opinions about whether the government looks after themselves by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions				Total
	Usually look after themselves	Sometimes look after themselves	Sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing	Usually can be trusted to do the right thing	
Age					
18 – 34	64 (22.1)	113 (39.1)	79 (27.3)	33 (11.4)	289
35 – 49	126 (28.1)	146 (32.5)	125 (27.8)	52 (11.6)	449
50 – 64	178 (31.6)	150 (26.6)	152 (27.0)	83 (14.7)	563
65 and over	107 (26.9)	80 (20.1)	117 (29.4)	94 (23.6)	398
Gender					
Female	254 (27.3)	278 (29.8)	278 (29.8)	122 (13.1)	932
Male	251 (29.7)	229 (27.1)	214 (25.4)	150 (17.8)	844
Education					
No uni. degree	382 (30.0)	347 (27.3)	345 (27.1)	198 (15.6)	1272
University degree	102 (22.9)	144 (32.4)	132 (29.7)	67 (15.1)	445
Class					
Middle class	203 (22.9)	284 (32.0)	248 (28.0)	152 (17.1)	887
Working class	237 (33.8)	188 (26.8)	188 (26.8)	88 (12.6)	701
Income					
\$30,000 and under	158 (36.6)	95 (22.0)	111 (25.7)	68 (15.7)	432
\$30,001 to \$80,000	204 (29.2)	204 (29.2)	192 (27.5)	99 (14.2)	699
\$80,001 and over	113 (21.5)	176 (33.5)	147 (28.0)	89 (17.0)	525
Region					
Rural	240 (32.1)	207 (27.7)	189 (25.3)	112 (15.0)	748
Urban	275 (26.1)	304 (28.8)	310 (29.4)	165 (15.7)	1054

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions about whether the government looks after themselves and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.074	.028	2.699	.007*
Gender	.010	.036	.268	.788
Education	.067	.040	1.664	.096
Class	-.155	.038	-4.104	.000*
Income	.096	.031	3.117	.002*
Region	.087	.036	2.402	.016*

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix H

Cross-tabulations of opinions of how the federal government is run by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions					<i>Total</i>
	Entirely run for big interests	Mostly run for big interests	About half and half	Mostly run for benefit of all	Entirely run for benefit of all	
Age						
18 – 34	8 (2.7)	100 (34.4)	126 (43.4)	53 (18.2)	4 (1.4)	291
35 – 49	36 (7.8)	149 (32.5)	197 (42.9)	75 (16.3)	2 (0.4)	459
50 – 64	54 (9.5)	168 (29.4)	232 (40.6)	110 (19.3)	7 (1.2)	571
65 and over	34 (8.3)	109 (26.7)	172 (42.1)	88 (21.5)	6 (1.5)	409
Gender						
Female	73 (7.7)	274 (28.8)	426 (44.8)	172 (18.1)	6 (0.6)	951
Male	68 (7.9)	271 (31.6)	331 (38.6)	172 (20.1)	15 (1.8)	857
Education						
No uni. degree	114 (8.8)	386 (29.7)	547 (42.1)	229 (17.6)	22 (1.7)	1298
University degree	21 (4.7)	143 (31.8)	180 (40.1)	105 (23.4)	0 (0.0)	449
Class						
Middle class	41 (4.6)	246 (27.4)	381 (42.4)	217 (24.1)	14 (1.6)	899
Working class	71 (9.9)	241 (33.7)	301 (42.0)	96 (13.4)	7 (1.0)	716
Income						
\$30,000 and under	58 (13.1)	142 (32.0)	177 (39.9)	60 (13.5)	7 (1.6)	444
\$30,001 to \$80,000	47 (6.6)	214 (30.3)	309 (43.7)	127 (18.0)	10 (1.4)	707
\$80,001 and over	23 (4.3)	149 (28.1)	220 (41.4)	137 (25.8)	2 (0.4)	531
Region						
Rural	82 (10.7)	234 (30.4)	296 (38.5)	149 (19.4)	8 (1.0)	769
Urban	61 (5.7)	319 (30.0)	465 (43.7)	202 (19.0)	16 (1.5)	1063

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions of how the federal government is run and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.027	.028	.967	.333
Gender	-.003	.037	-.075	.941
Education	.074	.043	1.727	.084
Class	-.253	.038	-6.566	.000*
Income	.171	.031	5.364	.000*
Region	.084	.037	2.246	.025*

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix I

Cross-tabulations of opinions about the government's performance over the past three years by selected socio-demographic variables (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions				<i>Total</i>
	Very Bad Job	Bad Job	Good Job	Very Good Job	
Age					
18 – 34	23 (8.0)	68 (23.7)	154 (53.7)	42 (14.6)	287
35 – 49	38 (8.4)	105 (23.3)	237 (52.5)	71 (15.7)	451
50 – 64	52 (9.1)	107 (18.8)	310 (54.5)	100 (17.6)	569
65 and over	40 (9.9)	79 (19.5)	212 (52.2)	75 (18.5)	406
Gender					
Female	78 (8.3)	188 (20.1)	525 (56.0)	146 (15.6)	937
Male	85 (10.0)	181 (21.3)	424 (49.8)	161 (18.9)	851
Education					
No uni. degree	100 (7.8)	244 (19.0)	712 (55.5)	227 (17.7)	1283
University degree	56 (12.6)	114 (25.7)	206 (46.4)	68 (15.3)	444
Class					
Middle class	66 (7.4)	153 (17.2)	479 (53.7)	194 (21.7)	892
Working class	65 (9.2)	169 (23.8)	388 (54.6)	88 (12.4)	710
Income					
\$30,000 and under	50 (11.3)	97 (22.0)	239 (54.2)	55 (12.5)	441
\$30,001 to \$80,000	47 (6.7)	161 (22.9)	373 (53.1)	122 (17.4)	703
\$80,001 and over	38 (7.2)	100 (19.0)	281 (53.3)	108 (20.8)	527
Region					
Rural	71 (9.3)	152 (19.9)	403 (52.7)	138 (18.1)	764
Urban	91 (8.7)	219 (20.9)	565 (53.9)	173 (16.5)	1048

Source: AES data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions about the government's performance and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.040	.030	-1.316	.188
Gender	-.004	.039	-.106	.916
Education	-.176	.045	-3.853	.000*
Class	-.213	.040	-5.180	.000*
Income	.120	.033	3.562	.000*
Region	-.019	.040	-.480	.631

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix J

Opinions about whether it makes a difference who is in power and who people vote for,
Sub-Grouped According to Selected Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables	Opinions			
	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Age				
18 – 34	292	3.9178	.94164	.05511
35 – 49	460	3.8902	.93842	.04375
50 – 64	572	3.8741	.97646	.04083
65 and over	409	3.9792	1.04327	.05159
Gender				
Female	952	3.9706	.97453	.03158
Male	859	3.8306	.97528	.03328
Education				
No uni. degree	1298	3.8744	1.01607	.02820
University degree	453	3.9415	.87896	.04130
Class				
Middle class	903	3.9308	.92269	.03071
Working class	719	3.8693	1.01260	.03776
Income				
\$30,000 and under	446	3.8464	1.09260	.05174
\$30,001 to \$80,000	709	3.8717	.96611	.03628
\$80,001 and over	535	3.9589	.87366	.03777
Region				
Rural	766	3.8845	1.00523	.03632
Urban	1068	3.9110	.96545	.02954

Source: AES data, 2007

ANOVA summary tables for the age and income variables

Variables	Analysis of Variance				
	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F Test Statistic	Significance
Age	2.893	3	.964	1.010	.387
Income	3.613	2	1.806	1.905	.149

Source: AES data, 2007

*Significant at a 95% confidence level

t-tests for the gender, education, class and region variables

Variables	<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means				
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Gender	3.051	1809	.002*	-.13997	.04588
Education	-1.252	1749	.211	-.06708	.05361
Class	1.277	1620	.202	.06152	.04816
Region	-.572	1832	.568	-.02658	.04651

Source: AES data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix K

Cross-tabulations of opinions of whether politicians keep their promises (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions					<i>Total</i>
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age						
17 – 34	77 (15.7)	146 (29.8)	164 (33.5)	95 (19.4)	8 (1.6)	490
35 – 49	87 (11.4)	244 (31.9)	245 (32.0)	171 (22.3)	19 (2.5)	766
50 – 64	106 (12.9)	275 (33.6)	212 (25.9)	199 (24.3)	27 (3.3)	819
65 and over	51 (9.2)	180 (32.4)	139 (25.0)	158 (28.4)	28 (5.0)	556
Gender						
Female	168 (12.1)	452 (32.6)	415 (29.9)	319 (23.0)	34 (2.4)	1388
Male	156 (12.4)	397 (31.5)	351 (27.9)	307 (24.4)	48 (3.8)	1259
Education						
No uni. degree	252 (12.8)	650 (33.0)	561 (28.4)	441 (22.4)	68 (3.4)	1972
University degree	67 (10.7)	185 (29.6)	189 (30.2)	172 (27.5)	12 (1.9)	625
Class						
Middle class	125 (9.4)	425 (31.9)	396 (29.7)	354 (26.5)	34 (2.5)	1334
Working class	159 (15.0)	355 (33.5)	288 (27.2)	217 (20.5)	41 (3.9)	1060
Income						
\$31,199 and under	149 (12.7)	346 (29.6)	335 (28.6)	293 (25.0)	47 (4.0)	1170
\$31,200 to \$77,999	124 (13.1)	331 (34.9)	262 (27.6)	207 (21.8)	25 (2.6)	949
\$78,000 and over	29 (8.4)	108 (31.4)	105 (30.5)	95 (27.6)	7 (2.0)	344
Region						
Rural	116 (13.4)	265 (30.5)	242 (27.9)	212 (24.4)	33 (3.8)	868
Urban	213 (11.9)	589 (32.8)	526 (29.3)	418 (23.3)	50 (2.8)	1796

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

Measures of association between opinions of whether politicians keep their promises and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.017	.022	3.235	.001*
Gender	.029	.029	.990	.322
Education	.077	.034	2.263	.024*
Class	-.122	.031	-3.964	.000*
Income	-.019	.026	-.734	.463
Region	-.016	.031	-.518	.605

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix L

Opinions of whether politicians know what ordinary people think, Sub-Grouped
According to Selected Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables	Opinions			
	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Age				
18 – 34	291	2.9759	.88830	.05207
35 – 49	458	2.8231	.93166	.04353
50 – 64	573	2.7277	1.03228	.04312
65 and over	408	2.7304	1.04722	.05185
Gender				
Female	951	2.7886	.97036	.03147
Male	857	2.7865	1.01503	.03467
Education				
No uni. degree	1294	2.7148	1.00339	.02789
University degree	452	3.0088	.91787	.04317
Class				
Middle class	902	2.9302	.93910	.03127
Working class	714	2.6541	1.00876	.03775
Income				
\$30,000 and under	443	2.5688	1.05360	.05006
\$30,001 to \$80,000	706	2.7960	.94278	.03548
\$80,000 and over	536	2.9944	.91405	.03948
Region				
Rural	766	2.7128	.99332	.03589
Urban	1068	2.8423	.99600	.03052

Source: AES data, 2007

ANOVA summary tables for the age and income variables

Variables	Analysis of Variance				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Test Statistic	Significance
Age	14.185	3	4.728	4.854	.002*
Income	43.937	2	21.969	23.622	.000*

Source: AES data, 2007

*Significant at a 95% confidence level

t-tests for the gender, education, class and region variables

Variables	<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means				
	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Gender	.047	1806	.963	.00218	.04671
Education	-5.480	1744	.000*	-.29401	.05365
Class	5.679	1614	.000*	.27609	.04861
Region	-2.747	1829	.006*	-.12946	.04713

Source: AES data, 2007

*Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix M

Cross-tabulations of opinions about how many politicians in Australia are involved in corruption (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions					Total
	Almost all	Quite a lot	Some	A few	Almost none	
Age						
17 – 34	19 (4.2)	67 (14.7)	181 (39.7)	145 (31.8)	44 (9.6)	456
35 – 49	25 (3.5)	108 (15.2)	271 (38.1)	256 (36.0)	51 (7.2)	711
50 – 64	17 (2.2)	110 (14.4)	279 (36.4)	279 (36.4)	81 (10.6)	766
65 and over	9 (1.7)	61 (11.6)	210 (39.8)	192 (36.4)	55 (10.4)	527
Gender						
Female	40 (3.1)	190 (14.9)	496 (39.0)	448 (35.2)	98 (7.7)	1272
Male	31 (2.6)	160 (13.3)	451 (37.5)	427 (35.5)	133 (11.1)	1202
Education						
No uni. degree	51 (2.8)	266 (14.5)	720 (39.4)	623 (34.1)	169 (9.2)	1829
University degree	16 (2.7)	72 (12.0)	215 (35.9)	238 (39.7)	58 (9.7)	599
Class						
Middle class	25 (2.0)	151 (12.1)	460 (36.8)	491 (39.3)	123 (9.8)	1250
Working class	35 (3.5)	153 (15.4)	403 (40.7)	316 (31.9)	84 (8.5)	991
Income						
\$31,199 and under	36 (3.3)	165 (15.3)	402 (37.3)	378 (35.1)	96 (8.9)	1077
\$31,200 to \$77,999	24 (2.7)	124 (13.9)	380 (42.5)	285 (31.8)	82 (9.2)	895
\$78,000 and over	6 (1.8)	41 (12.6)	99 (30.5)	135 (41.5)	44 (13.5)	325
Region						
Rural	22 (2.8)	107 (13.6)	314 (39.8)	273 (34.6)	73 (9.3)	789
Urban	51 (3.0)	244 (14.4)	642 (37.8)	603 (35.5)	158 (9.3)	1698

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

Measures of association between perceptions of corrupt politicians and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.068	.024	2.866	.004*
Gender	.078	.031	2.481	.013*
Education	.088	.037	2.395	.017*
Class	-.143	.033	-4.297	.000*
Income	.067	.029	2.338	.019*
Region	.002	.034	.068	.946

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix N

Levels of Trust in Public Officials, Sub-Grouped According to Selected Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables	Level of Trust			
	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Age				
18 – 34	382	2.9053	.72393	.03704
35 – 49	619	2.9483	.72050	.02896
50 – 64	703	3.0270	.77454	.02921
65 and over	482	3.0652	.70087	.03192
Gender				
Female	1118	2.9574	.70600	.02111
Male	1082	3.0213	.76662	.02331
Education				
No uni. degree	1633	2.9047	.70663	.01749
University degree	256	3.2711	.75983	.03313
Class				
Middle class	1123	3.1175	.71993	.02148
Working class	875	2.8454	.71808	.02428
Income				
\$31,199 and under	945	2.9276	.73692	.02397
\$31,200 to \$77,999	804	2.9854	.73670	.02598
\$78,000 and over	295	3.2297	.71158	.04143
Region				
Rural	697	2.9699	.71202	.02697
Urban	1513	2.9943	.74761	.01922

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

ANOVA Summary Tables for the Age and Income Variables

Variables	Analysis of Variance				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Test Statistic	Significance
Age	7.496	3	2.499	4.628	.003*
Income	20.609	2	10.305	19.167	.000*

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

t-tests for the Gender, Education, Class and Region Variables

Variables	<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means				
	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Gender	-2.034	2198	.042*	-.06389	.03141
Education	-10.150	2157	.000*	-.36635	.03609
Class	8.389	1996	.000*	.27204	.03243
Region	-.725	2208	.468	-.02446	.03372

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level

Appendix O

Cross-tabulations of opinions of whether public servants can be trusted to do what is best for the country (raw counts followed by row percentages in brackets)

Variables	Opinions					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age						
17 – 34	46 (9.4)	105 (21.5)	205 (42.0)	121 (24.8)	11 (2.3)	488
35 – 49	75 (9.8)	214 (27.9)	266 (34.6)	198 (25.8)	15 (2.0)	768
50 – 64	95 (11.6)	232 (28.4)	251 (30.7)	226 (27.6)	14 (1.7)	818
65 and over	31 (5.5)	148 (26.5)	176 (31.5)	191 (34.2)	13 (2.3)	559
Gender						
Female	115 (8.3)	384 (27.7)	493 (35.6)	369 (26.7)	23 (1.7)	1384
Male	133 (10.5)	322 (25.5)	412 (32.6)	368 (29.1)	30 (2.4)	1265
Education						
No uni. degree	192 (9.7)	539 (27.3)	676 (34.2)	533 (27.0)	36 (1.8)	1976
University degree	53 (8.5)	153 (24.4)	216 (34.4)	191 (30.5)	14 (2.2)	627
Class						
Middle class	115 (8.6)	351 (26.3)	433 (32.4)	416 (31.2)	20 (1.5)	1335
Working class	105 (9.9)	298 (28.1)	372 (35.0)	262 (24.7)	25 (2.4)	1062
Income						
\$31,199 and under	107 (9.1)	287 (24.5)	425 (36.2)	332 (28.3)	22 (1.9)	1173
\$31,200 to \$77,999	93 (9.8)	267 (28.1)	309 (32.5)	268 (28.2)	14 (1.5)	951
\$78,000 and over	31 (9.0)	105 (30.6)	109 (31.8)	90 (26.2)	8 (2.3)	343
Region						
Rural	86 (9.9)	248 (28.6)	284 (32.8)	231 (26.7)	17 (2.0)	866
Urban	165 (9.2)	465 (25.8)	621 (34.5)	512 (28.5)	36 (2.0)	1799

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

Measures of association between trust in public servants and selected socio-demographic variables

	Symmetric Measures			
	Gamma Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Age	.039	.022	1.798	.072
Gender	.019	.030	.656	.512
Education	.076	.035	2.176	.030*
Class	-.076	.031	-2.438	.015*
Income	-.044	.027	-1.646	.100
Region	.049	.032	1.554	.120

Source: AuSSA data, 2007

* Significant at a 95% confidence level