

## Who do American adults really trust? Survey says: School principals.

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By Valerie Strauss

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Whom do American adults trust the most when it comes to providing fair and accurate information, caring about people and responsibly managing resources?

A new survey by the nonprofit Pew Research Center has an answer that may surprise you. It's not military or religious leaders.

The most trusted are K-12 public school principals, according to the survey and report with its details, titled, "Why Americans Don't Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Power and Responsibility." The report, which you can see in full below, says:

"Generally, the public has the most confidence in the way K-12 public school principals, military leaders and police officers operate when it comes to caring about people, providing fair and accurate information to the public and handling resources responsibly. Some 84% think principals care about the

students they serve 'some of the time' or 'all or most of the time,' 79% think police officers care about them at that level of frequency, and 73% have the same level of confidence in military leaders."

Religious leaders, journalists and local elected officials did somewhat worse, but even lower results came in for members of Congress and leaders of technology companies.

The survey looked at Americans' views on eight groups of people who hold powerful positions: members of Congress, local elected officials, K-12 public school principals, journalists, military leaders, police officers, leaders of technology companies and religious leaders. In all three categories — empathy, transparency and ethics — public school principals came out on top.

The survey was taken between Nov. 27 — Dec. 10, 2018, and the 10,618 respondents were a nationally representative panel of

randomly selected U.S. adults, Pew said. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

Questions were focused on public judgments about members of each of the eight groups regarding:

- Level of empathy
- Adequacy in performing a specific part of their job
- Stewardship of resources
- Ability to provide fair and accurate information to their constituents
- Frequency with which they behave unethically
- Frequency with which they face serious consequences when they act unethically

The results showed partisan and demographic differences in opinions about power and responsibility. Some of the results show:

- Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party are less likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to believe journalists perform key parts of their jobs “all or most of the time” or “some of the time.” For instance, three in

10 Republicans and Republican leaners (31 percent) believe journalists fairly cover all sides of an issue at least some of the time, while about three-quarters of Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party (74 percent) say the same — a 43-percentage-point difference in opinion between the two groups.

- Democrats and those who lean Democratic are more likely than their Republican counterparts to think K-12 public school principals consistently perform key aspects of their jobs. For instance, Democrats and leaners are more likely than Republicans and their leaners to believe that principals handle resources in a responsible way (87 percent vs. 76 percent) and to think that principals do a good job ensuring that students are developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (76 percent vs. 68 percent).
- Republicans generally give higher marks to military leaders than Democrats. For example, Republicans are 20 points more likely than Democrats to say military leaders handle the resources available in a responsible way some of the time or more often (89 percent vs. 69 percent).

- Black Americans and Hispanics are more skeptical than white people about the performance of police officers. Roughly seven in 10 white Americans (72 percent) say police officers treat racial and ethnic groups equally at least some of the time. In comparison, half of Hispanics and just 33 percent of black adults say the same.
- Women are more likely than men to have confidence in members of Congress and journalists doing their jobs much of the time.

Eighty-four percent of respondents said public school principals care about the students in their schools at least some of the time; 81 percent said school principals mostly handle their resources responsibly; 79 percent said they provide fair and accurate information to the public at least some of the time.

“K-12 public school principals do stand apart from some other powerful cohorts in the eyes of the public when it comes to admitting and taking responsibility for mistakes,” the report said. “By a two-to-one margin, more

U.S. adults say school principals take responsibility for their mistakes ‘all or most’ or ‘some of the time’ (65 percent) than say that principals take responsibility for mistakes ‘only a little’ or ‘none of the time’ (32 percent).”

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Link to report: <https://www.people-press.org/2019/09/19/why-americans-dont-fully-trust-many-who-hold-positions-of-power-and-responsibility/>

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