# People from poorer backgrounds are seen as more trustworthy than the wealthy, new research reveals



Recent research from the University of British Columbia has brought to light an intriguing perception: individuals raised in lower-income environments are often deemed more trustworthy than those from wealthier backgrounds. The study, involving 1,900 participants who engaged in a series of trust experiments, revealed consistent evidence that social background significantly influences trust dynamics.

Participants played a trust game, interacting with profiles that depicted individuals from various financial backgrounds. Findings indicated a robust tendency to rate those from poorer upbringings as more moral and reliable. Dr Kristin Laurin, the study's lead author, emphasised that while participants exhibited some trust towards lower-class individuals, they were often hesitant to fully believe these individuals would uphold that trust. This complex interplay of perception raises important questions about how socio-economic factors shape interpersonal relationships.

The implications of this research suggest that personal history profoundly impacts social interactions. Dr Laurin recommended that individuals from wealthy backgrounds might benefit from downplaying their financial history in situations where trust is key. In contrast, for those with humble beginnings, highlighting their origins could foster stronger connections. This advice reflects broader societal themes where trust is often viewed through the lens of socio-economic status.

This phenomenon resonates with findings from other studies that delve into the moral consequences of wealth. Research from the University of Agder highlighted a trend wherein affluent individuals exhibited lower levels of empathy, further corroborating the notion that wealth can be linked to diminished moral standards. The synergy between financial status and perceived trustworthiness has deep roots in psychological literature, revealing that such perceptions have lasting effects beyond mere economic conditions.

Moreover, the intersection of socio-economic status and moral judgment has been the subject of considerable debate in both academic and popular contexts. A prior study reinforced these findings, demonstrating that participants consistently rated wealthier individuals as less trustworthy, an indication that perceptions of morality are often stratified by financial background. Such conclusions align with classic storytelling tropes, where characters with financial struggles—like the Weasleys in the Harry Potter series—often emerge as more virtuous allies compared to their wealthier counterparts, such as the Malfoys.

The broader societal implications of these studies merit consideration. Trust, a cornerstone of interpersonal relationships, can significantly affect various aspects of social life, including workplace dynamics and romantic partnerships. Dr Laurin aptly pointed out that without trust, these relationships can falter, ultimately leading to social fragmentation. Therefore, understanding the origins of trust—including the lingering effects of childhood socio-economic status—becomes paramount.

As we navigate an increasingly complex social landscape, these insights invite us to reevaluate our perceptions of trust and morality. By acknowledging the inherent biases associated with wealth, we are better equipped to foster inclusive relationships and recognise the potential for virtue in diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This evolving understanding not only reshapes our individual interactions but can also influence broader societal attitudes toward trust and moral behaviour.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-14738577/People-grew-poor-deemed-trustworthy-money.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/06/220628103257.htm), [[5]](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.846510/full)
2. Paragraphs 4-5: [[2]](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/202103/how-wealth-affects-personality), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/oct/05/rich-people-are-generally-less-sympathetic-due-to-their-upbringing-says-research), [[6]](https://www.statista.com/statistics/637420/worldwide-trust-trustworthy-people/)
3. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-14738577/People-grew-poor-deemed-trustworthy-money.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8562457/)
4. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-14738577/People-grew-poor-deemed-trustworthy-money.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/06/220628103257.htm)
5. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-14738577/People-grew-poor-deemed-trustworthy-money.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/202103/how-wealth-affects-personality)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-14738577/People-grew-poor-deemed-trustworthy-money.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/202103/how-wealth-affects-personality> - This article explores the psychological impact of wealth on personality traits, arguing that individuals from affluent backgrounds often exhibit traits associated with lower trust levels. It emphasizes the difference in morality and social behavior between those raised in wealth and those from less privileged backgrounds, aligning with recent studies indicating that socio-economic status influences perceptions of trustworthiness.
3. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/06/220628103257.htm> - A recent study published by researchers at the University of British Columbia investigates how social background affects trustworthiness perceptions. Participants rated individuals from wealthier backgrounds as less trustworthy than those from poorer ones. This aligns with findings that childhood socio-economic status has lasting effects on interpersonal trust and moral judgment.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/oct/05/rich-people-are-generally-less-sympathetic-due-to-their-upbringing-says-research> - This article discusses research on the relationship between wealth and moral behavior, stating that individuals from wealthy backgrounds often lack empathy and are viewed as less trustworthy. This supports the idea that poverty is linked to higher moral standards, a theme echoed in various psychological studies highlighting the virtues associated with lower socio-economic backgrounds.
5. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.846510/full> - In this comprehensive study examining trust dynamics, researchers found that socio-economic backgrounds significantly influence perceived morality and trustworthiness. Specifically, individuals raised in lower-income households were considered more trustworthy, corroborating earlier findings that social stratification impacts moral evaluation and inter-personal trust interactions.
6. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/637420/worldwide-trust-trustworthy-people/> - This resource provides statistical insights into general public perceptions of trustworthiness across different socio-economic groups. Findings suggest a notable correlation between economic status and the likelihood of being perceived as trustworthy, aligning with academic research that indicates lower-income individuals are often regarded as more moral and ethical.
7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8562457/> - A study available through the National Institutes of Health examines the effects of socio-economic factors on moral decision-making and trust. It shows that individuals from less affluent backgrounds are often perceived as more trustworthy, reinforcing the notion that financial hardship may cultivate ethical behaviors and enhance social trust dynamics.