

What's driving change in our communities?

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Shamubeel Eaqub, CFA

Chief Economist
Simplicity

shamubeel.eaqub@simplicity.kiwi

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Key points



Economic and social context



Culture & institutions pillars of prosperity



Cohesion fraying; trust in decline

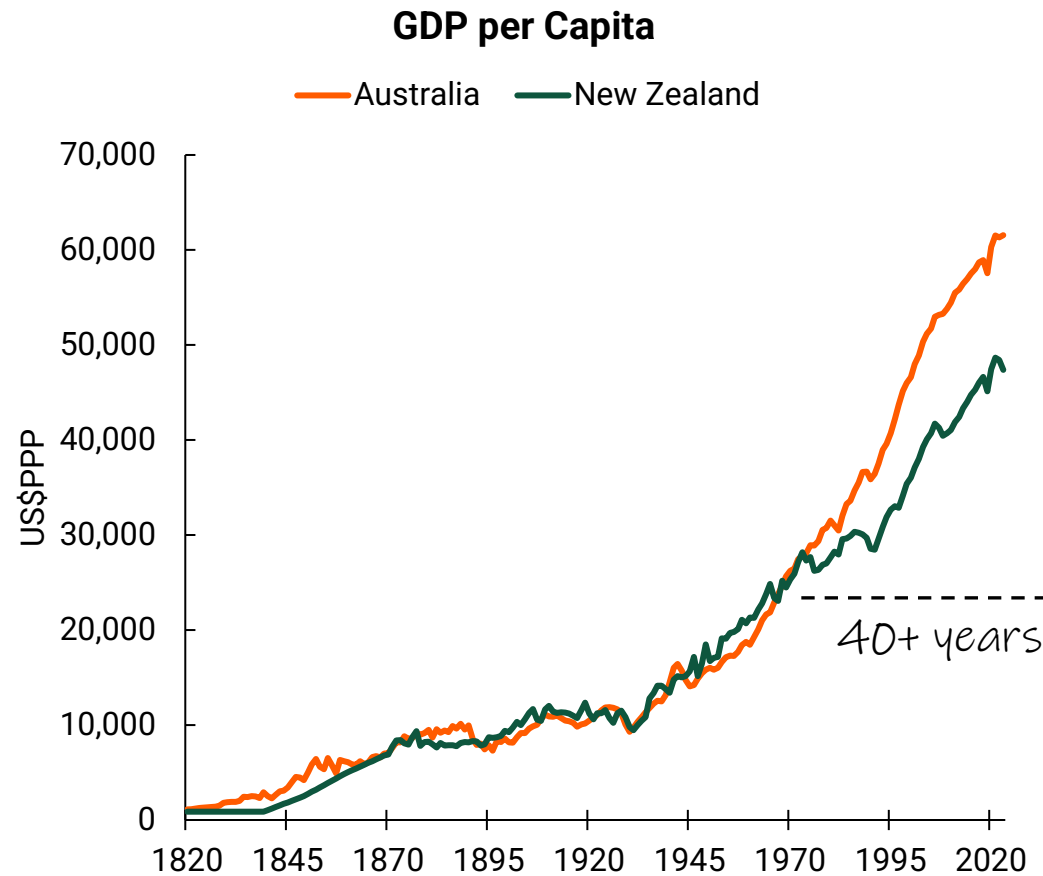


Charities barely holding; must earn trust with donors & community



Purpose and process key.

Slipping



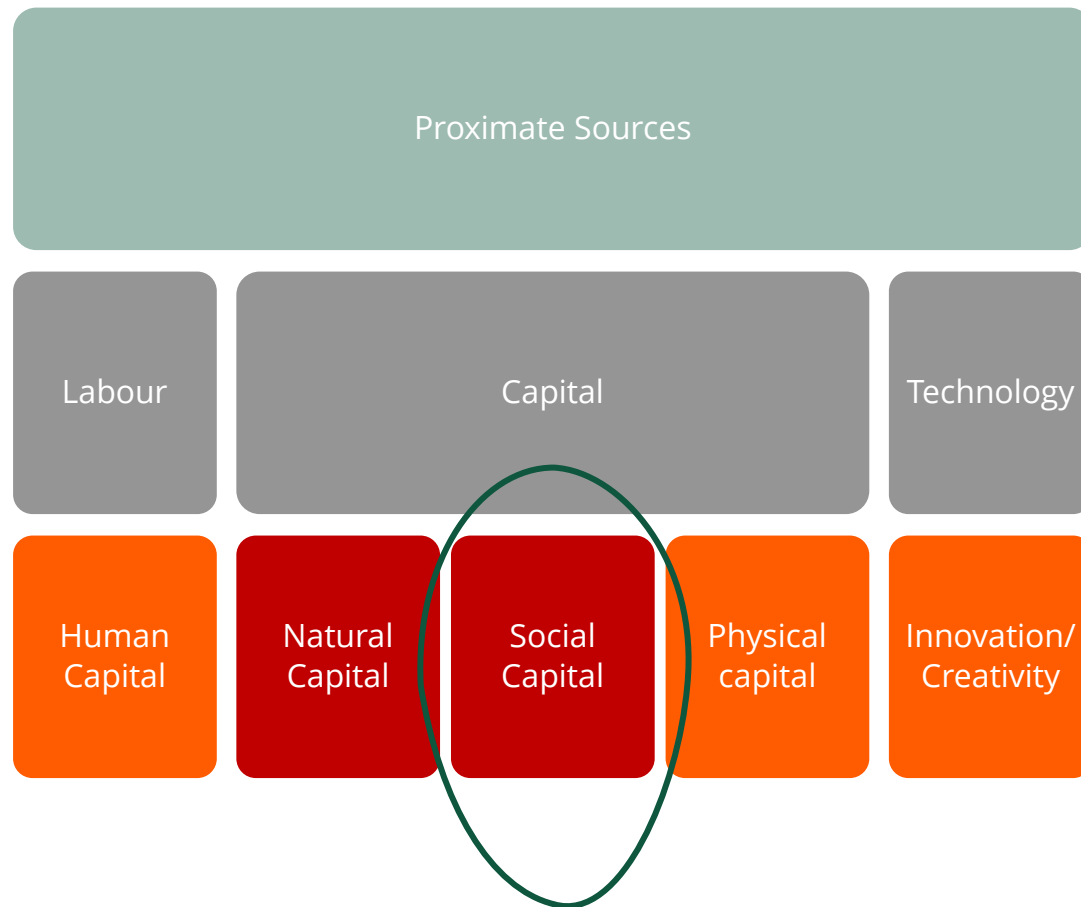
Source: Maddison Database, IMF, Simplicity Research Hub



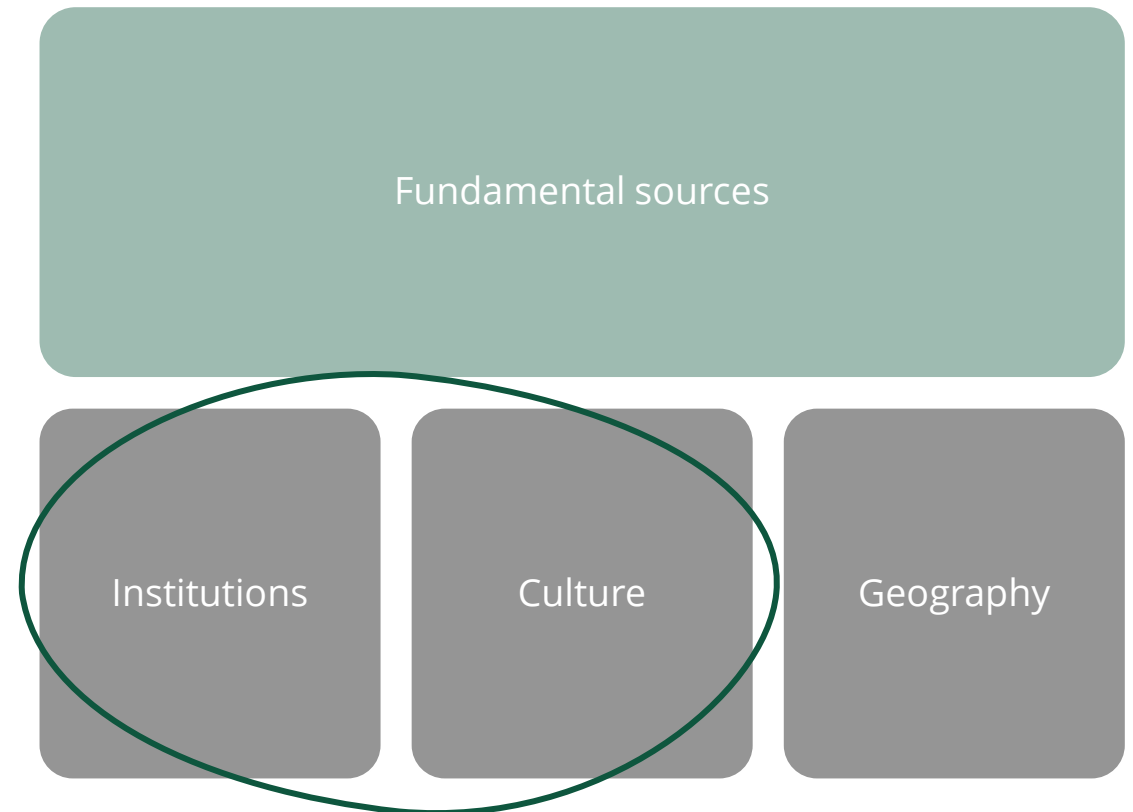
Source: Statistics New Zealand, Simplicity Research Hub

Why as an economist?

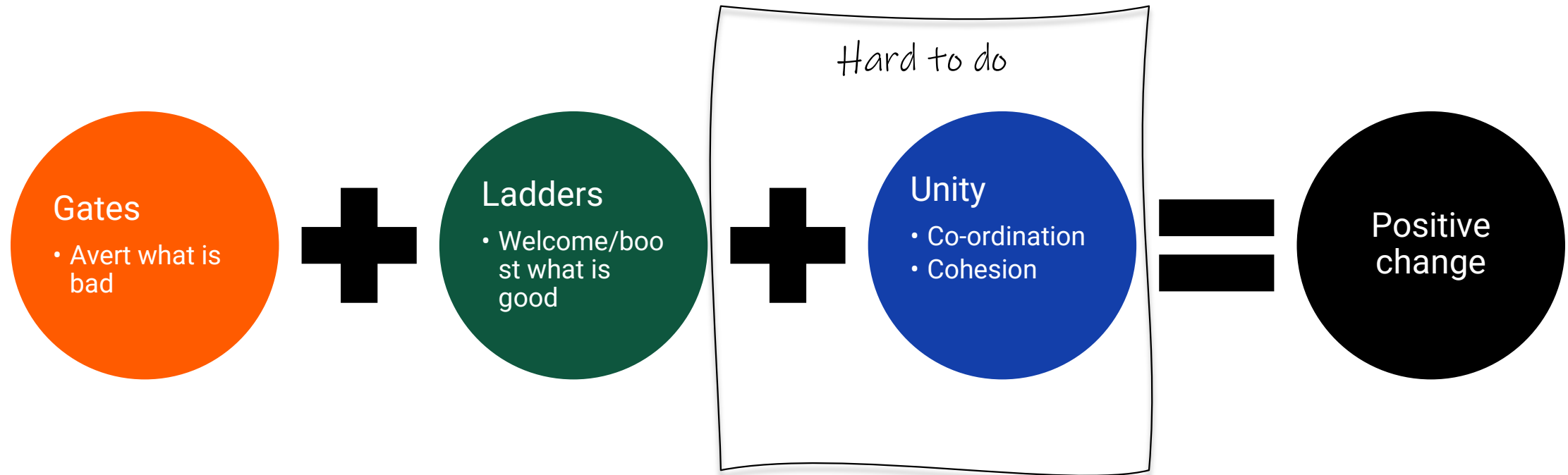
Describes economy



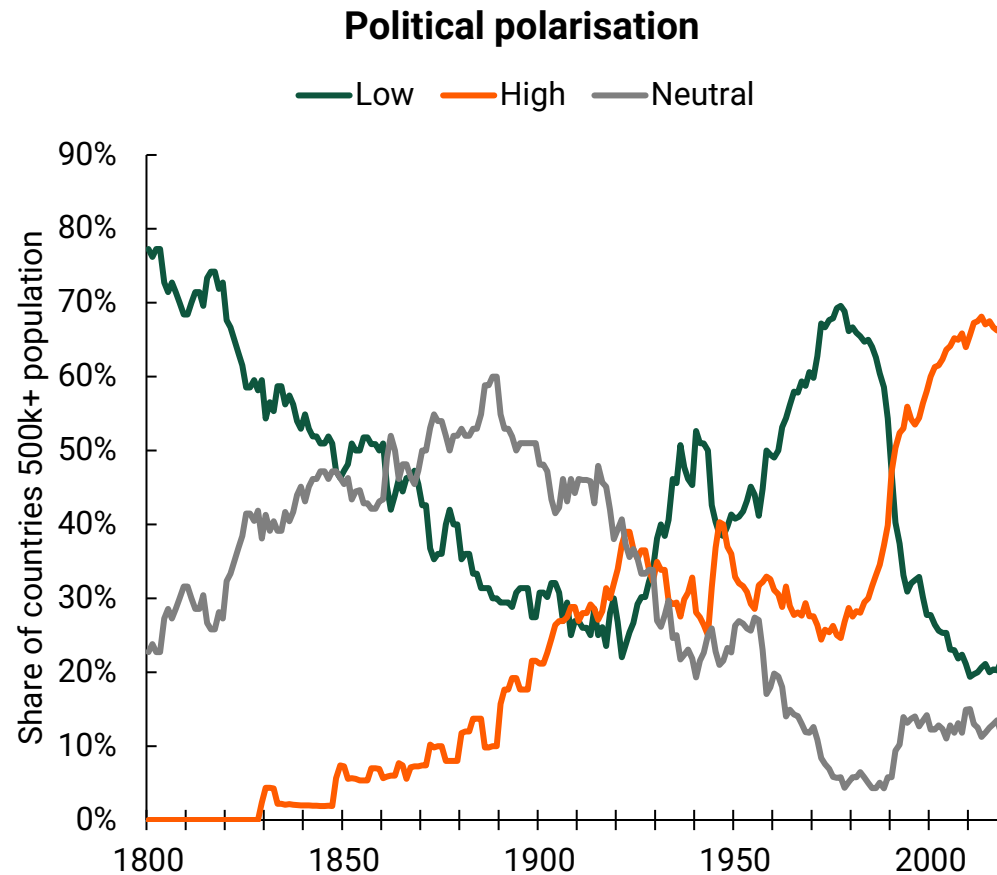
Causes prosperity



Theory of (enduring positive) change



Growing discontent

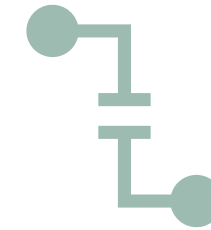


Source: Polity Project, Simplicity Research Hub



Source: Roy Morgan, Simplicity Research Hub

Unicorns and consequences

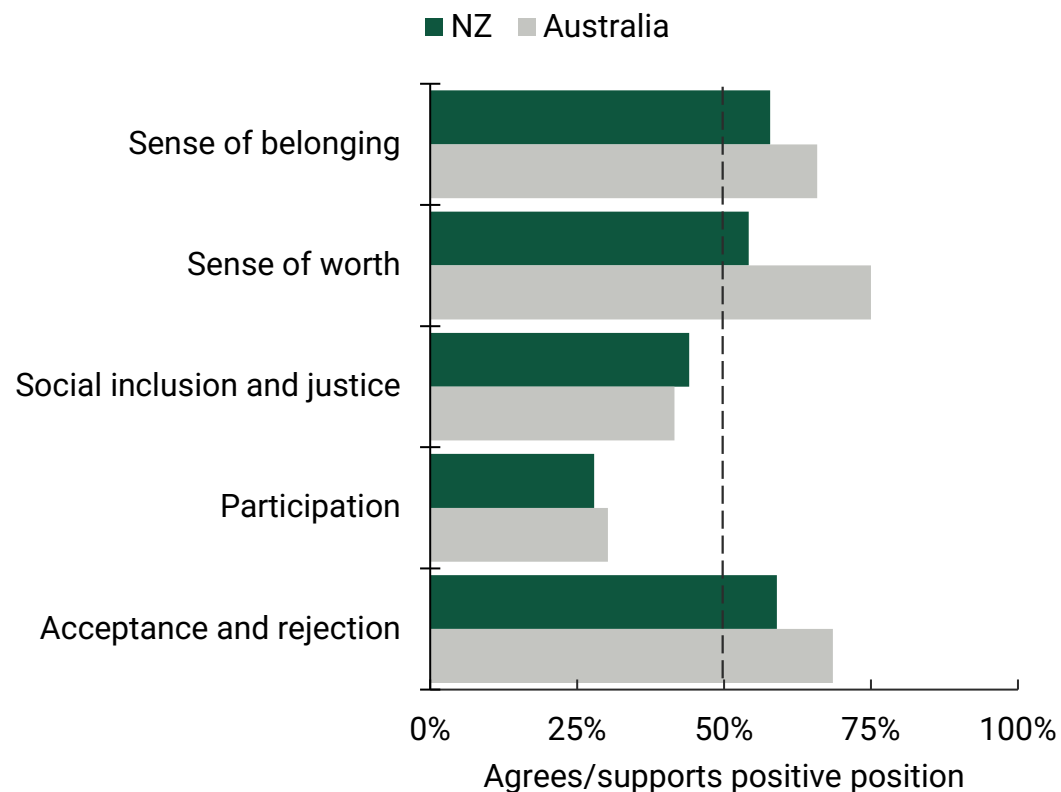


Politics

Unorthodox/less durable policy
Institutions under attack
Fiscal pressures
No centre/fractured

It's a wider story

Social Cohesion Measures: NZ & Australia



Highlights

- 82% sense of belonging in nation [85% Aus]
- 66% neighbours help each other [82%]
- 57% courts & elections are fair [55% & 38%]

Lowlights

- 25% skipped meals because of money [13%]
- 32% support a 'strong leader'
- 49% immigrants do not make good citizens [8%]

Source: The Helen Clark Foundation, Scanlon Foundation Research Institute

Fractured across different dimensions

	Domain of social cohesion					Total
	Sense of belonging	Sense of worth	Social inclusion & justice	Participation	Acceptance & rejection	
Cross-section						
Financial comfort	■	■	■	■	■	■
Political allegiance	■	■	■	■	■	■
Work participation	■	■	■	■	■	■
Ethnicity	■	■	■	■	■	■
Age	■	■	■	■	■	■
Housing tenure	■	■	■	■	■	■
Diversity in close friends	■	■	■	■	■	■
Religiousness	■	■	■	■	■	■
Number of children in family	■	■	■	■	■	■
Gender	■	■	■	■	■	■
Number of adults in family	■	■	■	■	■	■
Region	■	■	■	■	■	■
NZ/foreign born	■	■	■	■	■	■

Diverging views:

- Poverty
- Political views
- Unemployment/part time
- Ethnicity
- Age

Polarisation of views:

Low ■

Medium ■

High ■

So what?

Its not:

- Being the same
- Wishing away confrontation
- Wishing away politics

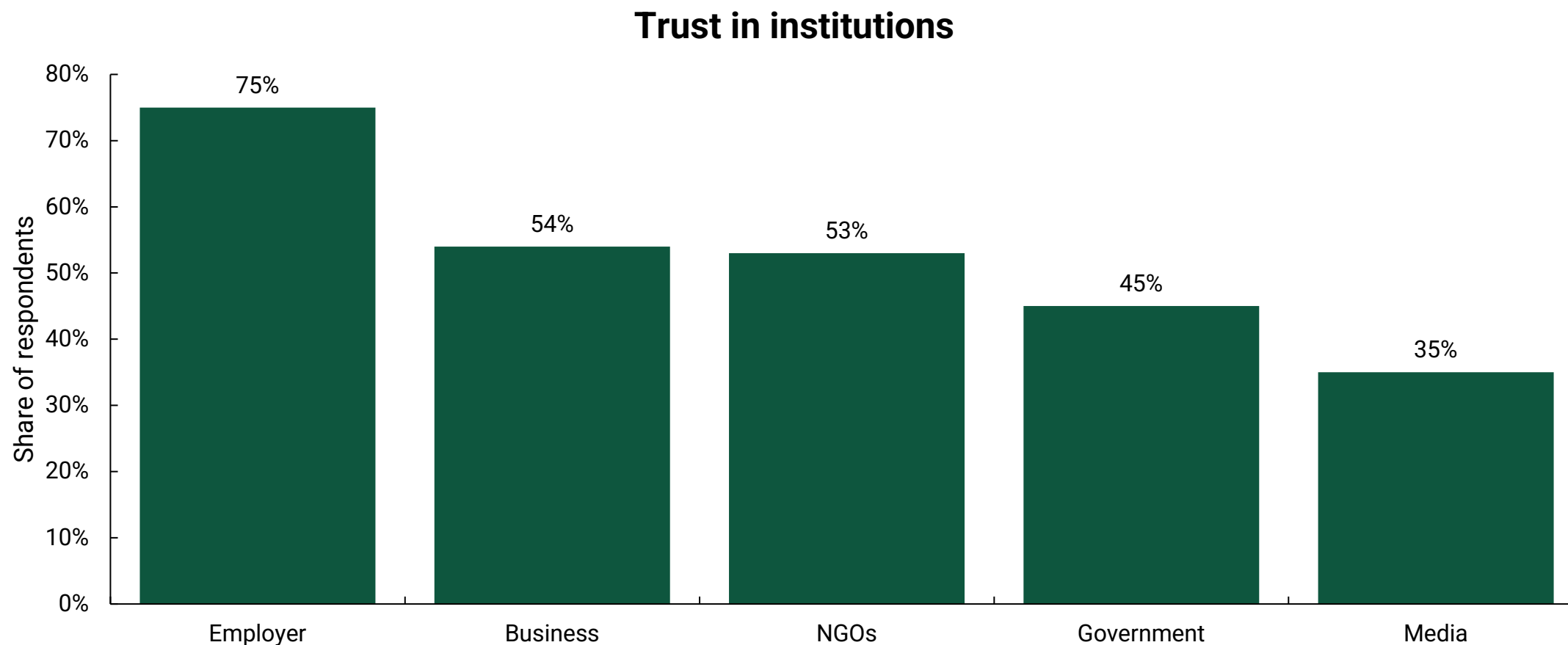
It could be:

- Leadership & political process
- More individual things:
 - Awareness
 - Stereotypes
 - Positive contact.

Your context

Reimagining our why and how

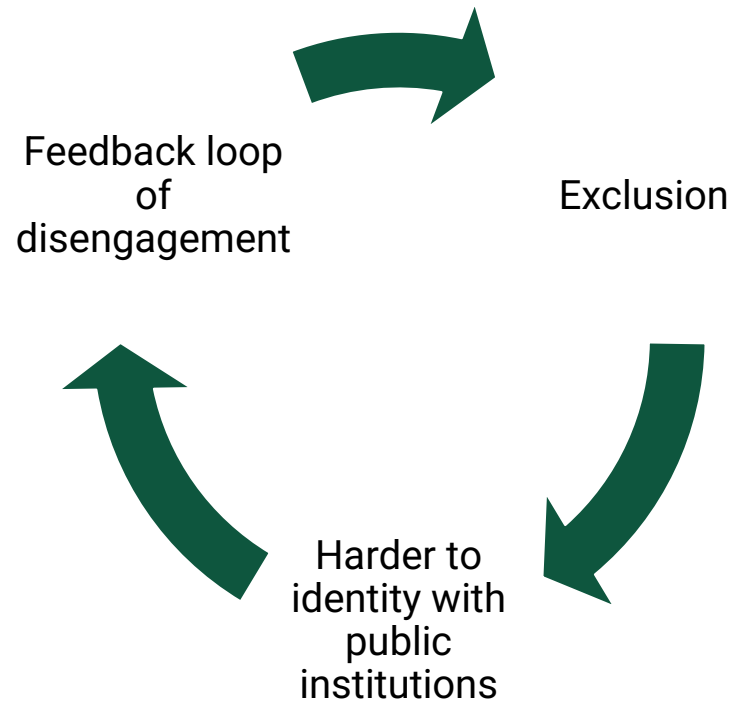
Rebuilding trust and cohesion



Source: Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer 2025

Trapped in a spiral; harness complexity

Doom loop?



Holding complexity



Economically complex

Innovative
Resilient



Culturally complex

Mediate conflict
Adapt institutions
Sustain coordination amidst diversity

Reimagining our place



What we do

Programmes

Targeted institutions



What works

How we arrange:

- Durable but adaptable institutional arrangements

What it achieves:

- Distributes power
- Foster broad participation
- Responsive to cultural change



Reimagining our why

Holding complexity

Supporting belonging

Enabling people to navigate change **together**.

Some ideas from the outside



Influence

Agenda setting
Social cohesion as a filter



Engage

Listening
Setting standards



Design

Connecting
Engaging
Evaluating



Develop

Partnering
Commissioning



Resource

Contracting
Co-funding
Targeting



Deliver

Nudging
Educating
Building
Providing
Reforming
Safeguarding
Preventing
Protecting



Control

Devolving

More in common?



Lessons for you



External context: complex & fragile societal landscape



How we act: trust building & maintaining



Its all political: bottom up vs top down



Idea 1: *“culture is not simply an added extra, or candy floss, [but] it is the main action, and as such cannot be removed from the product easily”.*



Idea 2: Fixed end goal vs *progress*.



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