

14 reasons why Jacinda Ardern is such a successful leader, according to the experts

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As she wins her second term as New Zealand's prime minister with a landslide number of votes

By now, you'll likely have seen the news that Jacinda Ardern has won a second term as the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

The win came as her opponent Judith Collins decided to concede. Unsurprisingly, initial vote counts indicate that Ardern was on course to win by a landslide victory.

After Ardern's victory was announced, Collins said: "To PM Jacinda Ardern, who I have phoned before, congratulations on your result. It is, I believe, an outstanding result for Labour."

Of the 70% of votes that had been counted pre Collins conceding, Ardern had a huge 46% in total.

But what is it, exactly, about Jacinda Ardern that makes her such a successful leader? Well, she's New Zealand's youngest ever female prime minister. In 2018, she became the second world leader to give birth while in office. Later that year, she gave a speech at the Nelson Mandela Peace summit with three-month-old Neve in her lap.

Besides the fact she's clearly exceptionally skilled at multitasking, she's been applauded for how well she's responded to the Coronavirus pandemic. In comparison to other countries, New Zealand has acted swiftly and strictly. They've also done best in delaying of the spread of the virus. The country has around five million citizens and yet, in total, has just 25 deaths.

In a recent scientific study, researchers found that female leaders (including Ardern) acted 'more quickly and decisively' to stop the spread of Coronavirus. Ardern even voluntarily took a 20% pay cut to 'close the gap' between herself and those affected by COVID pay cuts and received a phone call from Queen Elizabeth earlier this year in praise of all her hard work.

We picked the brains of a whole range of industry professionals, including a human rights activist, a professor, a CEO and several leadership authors, to get their thoughts on exactly what it is that makes Ardern such a powerhouse. Keep reading.

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1. She roots for solidarity

“There are many factors which demonstrate that Jacinda Ardern is a great leader, but from a human rights perspective it was her masterful handling of the Christchurch shootings which really stood out. Around the world – from Brazil, India, Turkey, to even the USA and the UK – we have seen the rise of nationalism and populism.

Nationalist and populist rhetoric typically comes at the expense of minorities and the already disenfranchised, be that on grounds of gender, faith, race, caste, or sexuality, within those countries.”

“When faced with a white supremacist attack on New Zealand’s Muslim community, Jacinda Ardern preached social cohesion and solidarity. Following Jacinda Ardern’s lead, the people of New Zealand stood side by side with the victims of the atrocity. Demonstrating decisiveness, empathy and understanding Jacinda Ardern initiated a healing process following the shootings. She managed to bring New Zealand together at what could have been a hugely divisive moment for the country,” shares human rights activist Philip Baldwin.

2. She responds to challenging world events effectively

“Jacinda Ardern has been New Zealand’s leader through an earthquake, terrorist attack and Covid and has come through shining, where other leaders are criticised and tarnished. It has been shown that in countries where there is a woman leader, the response to Covid has been more effective, so she is in that group certainly,” explains Claire Collins, professor of leadership at Henley Business School.

3. She focuses on ‘we’, not ‘I’

“Watching her acceptance speech, it is clear that she embraces leadership differently from most of her national and international counterparts. She uses ‘we’ much more often than she uses ‘I’. She talks about the people that she is lucky to work with and those she serves, thus embodying a more servant leadership style than the usual individualistic authoritarian leader. And she talks about a country for all its citizens, not just for certain groups whose support she courts,” Collins continues.

4. She appears to be genuine

The rhetoric is different, but the really big difference I see in her, is that she seems to actually mean everything she says. That authenticity is rare in national leaders and that, to me, is why she has achieved this huge success,” Collins concludes.

5. She's a PR powerhouse

“The fact she's a PR powerhouse undoubtedly helps. She studied PR alongside politics at university. This means she'll be acutely aware that every word is under scrutiny. However, it's very hard to fake the tenets she does her job by, which are authenticity, empathy and kindness,” explains Emily Garnham, founder of PR firm Tartle Media.

6. Her approach is modern in a world of dated politics

“Ardern takes a thoroughly modern approach to leadership in a world where her peers still tout the old. These old habits include showing strength, never admitting mistakes, and, if backed into a corner, distracting the press with another story.”

“On a political stage where her peers include Donald Trump – the opposite of empathetic – it's really not hard to see why Jacinda Ardern is such a breath of fresh air. Even some of her domestic critics are enjoying the world's attention being on New Zealand,” Garnham continues.

7. She's aware of her strengths, but also acknowledges her weaknesses

“From afar, Jacinda Arden appears aware of her strengths, but also in acknowledgment of her weaknesses. No-one had any idea how to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. She took the advice of the epidemiologists quickly. Then, she acted decisively and seems to have done well in keeping New Zealand relatively COVID free,” explains women's empowerment expert Suzanne Pool, author of *Discipline* (£12.99, Panoma Press).

8. She listens to expert advice, and then acts on it

“Acknowledging where expert advice and support is required, listening attentively and then acting on that advice quickly and with commitment are the signs of a good leader. The actions are almost certainly not popular, they may not necessarily follow with the crowd either; these are characteristics of effective leadership – and what make Jacinda stand out. She sought knowledge from those more knowledgeable on the subject than she was. Then, she acted quickly to protect and keep her country safe. Much respect to her,” shares Suzanne.

9. When she acts, she acts quickly

“In crisis—and she’s dealt with many—Arden has shown that she has the ability to act quickly and robustly. She acts with compassion but also strength to counteract the threats New Zealand faces. Further, she maintains full control of managing the crisis, rather than delegating it to members of her team,” comments Pranav Bhanot, political advisor and author of *Get Me Elected. Practical Strategies, Tips and Tactics For Election Success*.

10. She appears warm and down to earth

“At the same time as managing any major issues, she’s managed to maintain a warm, down-to-earth and human approach to her leadership, which has clearly resonated well,” Pranav continues.

“Leaders who look like they are in control and make electors feel safe while at the same time coming across as relatable and personable appeal to voters. Arden has struck the right balance. This has resulted in her re-election with a sweeping majority. Few global politicians have been able to strike this balance in recent years,” he concludes.

11. She’s created a relationship of trust with her people

“In the world of politics, Jacinda Ardern is the leader who is walking the talk when it comes to relying upon the power of trust, rather than trusting in power,” explains Dr John Blakey, author of *The Trusted Executive*, global CEO coach and founder of The Trusted Executive Foundation.

“Jacinda epitomises the Nine Habits of Trust model. In particular, she role-models the habits of being kind, humble and consistent. She keeps herself on the same level as those she leads. She makes consistent decisions based on a clear set of values. Jacinda has a winning formula for inspiring trust from which other political leaders could learn a great deal.”

“As part of my doctoral research at Aston Business School, I can report it is a scientific truth that the trustworthy behaviour of CEOs (and all leaders) and their

teams is a predictor of the perceived trustworthiness. If you are a leader, your behaviour matters. It does start with you. If as a leader you role-model the Nine Habits of Trust then the rest of the organisation (or government) will inevitably follow. It is the single biggest key to building a high trust culture.”

12. She embraces diversity

Cheryl MacDonald, CEO and founder of UK-based yoga franchise [YogaBellies](#), says: “The fact that she embraces diversity is key. She has more gay and gender-neutral people in her parliament than anywhere else in the world, which speaks volumes.”

13. She’s an inspiration to many

“As a female leader myself, Jacinda has all the characteristics that I hope to embody in leading YogaBellies. She’s competent, while also showing a human side. She’s proving that caring about and supporting people shouldn’t hold you back, rather, empower you. I think she’s shaping the future of leadership both in politics and in business. I wish that we all had a Jacinda to lead us,” Cheryl concludes.

14. She’s agile

“Jacinda Ardern has many attributes of an agile leader that have proven successful in her first term and defined her character. In recent and more disruptive times, leaders must use disruptive thinking. We need to let go of much that was precious in the old world if we want to embrace the new,” Nicky Little, director at leadership, talent and engagement consultancy Cirrus adds.

“An example of this earlier this year was Jacinda’s decision host a press conference aimed specifically at children, saying the young need extra help understanding the global coronavirus pandemic. Leaders have a fundamental role to play in understanding and creating an environment where individuals can break free from old assumptions and rethink how best to meet future challenges.”