

Presidential candidates may be psychopaths – but that could be a good thing

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Top 20 Percent		Fearless Dominance ≥ 68 for men, ≥ 62.4 for women			Self-Centered Impulsivity ≥ 69 for men, ≥ 62 for women				Coldheartedness ≥ 18 for men, ≥ 15 for women	
		SI	F	STI	ME	RN	BE	CN	C	TOTAL
Saddam Hussein		26	27	26	25	17	25	17	26	189
Henry VIII		28	25	14	25	20	28	16	22	178
Idi Amin		24	25	27	22	12	19	20	27	176
Adolf Hitler		26	10	15	27	18	28	18	27	169
William the Conqueror		27	25	27	22	15	18	12	19	165
Saint Paul		23	22	27	13	16	25	16	15	157
Jesus		22	18	27	12	23	28	18	9	157
Winston Churchill		28	25	20	18	17	22	13	12	155
Napoleon Bonaparte		20	13	25	22	18	26	9	20	153
Emperor Nero		21	22	19	15	21	28	8	17	151
Oliver Cromwell		14	17	14	18	11	21	19	22	136
Margaret Thatcher		26	10	25	13	11	24	13	14	136
George Washington		26	22	25	13	8	17	7	14	132
Elizabeth I		26	14	15	16	12	25	9	13	130
Abraham Lincoln		26	15	26	9	10	10	10	17	123
Mahatma Gandhi		22	13	21	9	13	17	11	13	119
2016 CANDIDATES	Donald Trump	27	20	21	26	18	17	20	22	171
	Ted Cruz	24	18	19	26	18	15	15	21	156
	Hillary Clinton	25	15	17	25	18	17	16	19	152
	Bernie Sanders	22	14	18	17	15	14	14	15	129

Credit: University of Oxford

A new study of psychopathic traits by Oxford University psychologist discovers that Donald Trump ranks above Adolf Hitler and only just below Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein and Henry VIII. Hillary Clinton ranks between Napoleon and Nero.

The current race to the White House has not been short of people questioning the candidates' states of mind. But what happens if you take a more scientific approach?

Oxford University's Dr Kevin Dutton has been exploring the [psychopathic traits](#) of the US presidential hopefuls and historical figures using a standard psychometric tool – the Psychopathic Personality Inventory – Revised (PPI-R).

Dr Dutton has spent much of his career looking at psychopaths and researching psychopathic traits, identifying those which can be of benefit and those which can lead to incarceration. He contends that being a psychopath is not an all-or-nothing affair. Instead, psychopathy is on a spectrum along which each of us has our place. There are several professions which seem to attract more than their fair share of those high on the psychopathic scale, among them business, surgery, the law, military and... politics.

Over the past few years, Dr Dutton has contacted the official biographers of many historical leaders and asked them to fill out, on their subject's behalf, an abbreviated version of the Psychopathic Personality Inventory – Revised (PPI-R). As it unfolds, the 'league table' shows that the vast majority are high scorers – including Winston Churchill – especially on the positive aspects like social influence,

fearlessness and coolness under pressure. However, analysis also reveals that leaders who possess psychopathy's [negative traits](#) – such as self-centredness, impulsivity and a lack of empathy – tend not to do so well in office.

Further to analysing political leaders, Dr Dutton recently turned his attention to the contenders for the US presidency. Working with an anonymous, highly respected and seasoned political correspondent, Dutton has analyzed the psychopathic traits of the then presidential hopefuls Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders. Like the historical biographers, the correspondent filled out the PPI-R short version for each of the candidates.

Dr Dutton explained: 'The PPI-R does not say that someone is or is not a psychopath. It scores them on eight traits that contribute to a psychopathic character. Some of those traits, such as fearlessness or stress immunity, can be positive. Others, such as blame externalisation or being unconcerned about the future, are more likely to be negative. One, cold-heartedness, can contribute to good and bad leadership.

'Both great and terrible leaders score higher than the general population for psychopathic traits, but it is the mix of those traits that determines success. For example, someone who scores highly for being influential, fearless and cold hearted could be a decisive leader who can make dispassionate decisions. If those traits are accompanied by a high score on blaming others, they might be a genocidal demagogue.'

The results clearly show Donald Trump to be higher scoring than rivals, achieving a total score on a par with Hitler and Idi Amin. Of particular interest, Trump outscored the other candidates in 'fearless dominance', the area associated with successful presidencies, and in 'self-centred impulsivity', the set of traits considered negative.

Dr Dutton said: 'It is interesting that these scores reflect both the praise and the criticism that Trump and Clinton receive. In the end, while both score relatively highly, it will be up to voters to decide whether their mix of positive and negative traits should send them to the Oval Office or the psychiatrist's office.'

Provided by University of Oxford

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