# Pressure on employees to compromise ethical standards has risen, reveals new survey from Institute of Business Ethics

**Thursday 5 July, 2018**

## Nearly one in three employees have been aware of misconduct at work, but employees are now more likely to speak up about it than in 2015.

**5th July 2018 : One in six employees in Europe (16%) say that they have felt some form of pressure to compromise their organisation's ethical standards**, according to a survey released today by the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE). The number of employees experiencing this pressure has risen in all of the countries for which historical data is available.

*"This is a worrying development,"* says Philippa Foster Back CBE, Director of the IBE. *"Employees are under more stress to deliver than ever before, and this is increasing the pressure to then cut ethical corners. These figures should be seen as a warning sign to organisations that they need to be more supportive of their employees when it comes to making ethical decisions."*

The *Ethics at Work: 2018 survey of employees* is the only one of its kind covering Europe which provides real insight into employees' views on ethics across all sectors and job roles.

The Survey, first introduced in 2005, asks employees how they experience ethical dilemmas in their day-to-day working lives. It looks at whether they have witnessed misconduct; whether they have reported it; what stops them. It provides real insight into what supports employees in doing the right thing.

**Nearly one in three employees have been aware of legal or ethical misconduct during the past year at work (30%).** People treated inappropriately or unethically is the most frequent type of misconduct (46%) mentioned by those aware of misconduct[1], followed by misreporting hours worked (35%) and safety violations (30%).

But an encouraging result is that **employees are more likely to speak up about misconduct.**

Over half (54%) of employees who were aware of misconduct spoke up, which is an improvement on 2015. Employees in the UK were the most likely to have reported misconduct (67%) whilst respondents in Portugal were least likely to have done so (49%).

"*Global movements like #metoo and #timesup are having ramifications throughout the workplace,"* says Philippa Foster Back*, "not just in terms of people speaking up about harassment, but in feeling empowered to raise concerns about other issues. We hope that this is the beginning of speaking up being seen as business as usual."*

However, **attitudes of managers to petty fiddling have become more tolerant over time.** Three in ten (30%) of managers think petty fiddling is inevitable in a modern organisation. One in eight (13%) of managers even say it is acceptable to artificially increase profits in the books as long as no money is stolen.

*"People follow their leaders, and managers play a key role in defining an organisation's ethical culture,"* says Philippa Foster Back. "*Organisations need to make sure that managers especially are trained and supported in ethical decision-making, especially as pressure on all employees increases in the current climate."*

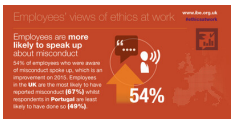
The survey data highlights the importance and impact of corporate ethics programmes. Employees who work in what the IBE identifies as a 'supportive environment for ethics' tend to have a higher opinion of honesty in their organisation; are less likely to have been aware of misconduct at work; and are more likely to have spoken up about misconduct if they have.

#ethicsatwork

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EDITOR'S NOTES

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### About the Ethics at Work survey

The IBE has surveyed British employees since 2005, but given that organisations are increasingly taking an integrated approach at the international level, we have expanded the number of countries included in the research to cover France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the UK within Europe.

The survey was completed by a total of 6,119 respondents across the eight European countries. It was comprised of a representative sample of about 750 working adults in each country who were aged 18+.

This report presents the findings of public research undertaken by ComRes on behalf of the IBE. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. The survey was undertaken between 5th and 25th February 2018, and full data tables for 2018 and 2015 are available at www.comresglobal.com

### Launch date and information

Join us on Thursday 05 July from 18:00 – 20:00 at Mary Ward House (5 - 7 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SN), as we unveil the results of this year's survey and analyse the challenges for organisations.

We are pleased to welcome Jo Morgan, Chief Ethics and Compliance Counsel of Rolls Royce plc, the Gold Level Supporter of Ethics at Work this year, to set the scene. She will be followed by Guendalina Dondé, IBE's Senior Researcher and author of the report to give us the key findings. Afterwards Guen will introduce a panel of our national partners from France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland who will explore the survey's findings from their national perspectives.

Please email events@ibe.org.uk if you would like to attend.

## The Institute of Business Ethics

The Institute of Business Ethics, whose purpose is to promote high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values, is an important partner to any business wanting to preserve its long-term reputation by doing business in the right way.

For over 30 years, the IBE has advised organisations on how to strengthen their ethical culture by sharing knowledge and good practice, resulting in relationships with employees and stakeholders that are based on trust.

The IBE is a registered charity funded by corporate and individual subscriptions. www.ibe.org.uk @ibeuk

### The author
### Guendalina Dondé

Guendalina Dondé is Senior Researcher at the Institute of Business Ethics. She writes and researches on a range of business ethics topics for the IBE.

Before joining the IBE, she collaborated in developing the code of ethics for the Italian Association of Management Consultants and worked for a European CSR Business Network in Brussels. She holds a Master's degree in Business Ethics and CSR from the University of Trento in Italy.

She is the author of the IBE survey report *Corporate Ethics Policies and Programmes: 2016 UK and Continental Europe Survey* and co-author of the 2017 IBE report *Setting the Tone: a New Zealand perspective on Business Ethics*, the 2017 TEI & IBE *Ethics and Compliance Handbook*, the 2016 IBE

*Codes of Business Ethics: examples of good practice* and of the French and Italian editions of the 2015 IBE survey *Ethics at Work: 2015 Survey of Employees.*

She is also responsible for reviewing corporate codes of ethics and related policies, benchmarking them against other organisations'.


## The IBE would like to thank the following IBE subscribers for their financial support for this project:

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- France: IÉSEG Center for Organizational Responsibility (ICOR)
- Germany: Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin
- Italy: Confindustria Assoconsult
- Portugal: Catolica Porto Business School
- Switzerland: The Stewardship Institute

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