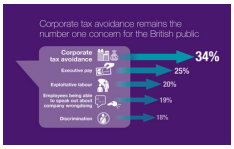
What do the British public think of business behaviour?

Thursday 10 December, 2015

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Latest survey from the Institute of Business Ethics

Tax avoidance remains the top issue the British public thinks business needs to address.

10th December: Corporate tax avoidance remains the top public concern about business behaviour for 2015, according to the latest survey of public opinion about business behaviour conducted for the Institute of Business Ethics.

The survey, published today, shows that the public's general opinion about ethical business behaviour has failed to improve, with nearly 40% still saying they consider British business behaves unethically.

Since the survey began in 2003, the British public's opinion consistently leans more towards judging business as behaving 'ethically' than 'not ethically'. However, while there has been a 12% points rise in those that think business is behaving ethically since the survey began twelve years ago, over the past three years opinion has reached a sticking point.

Philippa Foster Back CBE, IBE's Director, said: *"Public trust in business is flat-lining. Business needs to do more to effect a step change in public opinion. While there are some companies doing great work in this field, there are still those who are not engaging in ethical business practice. A sizeable minority have not done enough. These companies are dragging the business sector down."*

Tax avoidance has been one of the top two issues since it was first introduced as a category in the survey in 2012, with 34% considering this an issue which needs to be addressed.

Philippa Foster Back CBE said: *"The fact that tax still remains the top public concern is an example where business is not doing enough to address these issues. Tax planning is difficult and complex. Internal engagement is needed around the decisions and circumstances behind tax positions, then communicated externally. Reputations can still be damaged by legal tax avoidance, which is why it is good practice for companies to have a clear and transparent statement showing their position on payment of tax."*

Executive pay, while still remaining the second highest issue of concern to the public, has seen the biggest fall. Philippa Foster Back CBE, said: *"Here we are beginning to see the results of companies beginning to engage with an issue. For too long, businesses were oblivious to public opinion but now they are beginning to engage and communicate what they are doing to rectify situations like rewards for failure and inflated bonus packages."*

Two issues to watch are **Environmental responsibility**– which continues to fluctuate as an issue of concern, but has seen a significant rise between 2014-15; and **Exploitative labour*** –which has seen a gradual increase in prominence over the last three years.

#IBESurvey

ENDS/

To obtain jpegs of the infographic, or to organise interviews or articles, please contact Katherine Bradshaw, Head of Communications, 07771 517700 k.bradshaw@ibe.org.uk

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Attitudes of the British Public to Business Ethics – 2015 Survey Free report with infographics to download from www.ibe.org.uk

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Simon Webley and Daniel Johnson will discuss the findings of the latest survey in a webinar on 10 December at 10am – http://www.ibe.org.uk/forthcoming-events/56/48

About the Survey

Since 2003, the Institute of Business Ethics has commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out an annual face to face survey asking British adults (16+) their opinion of the ethical behaviour of British business and the issues that most need addressing. This survey report considers the findings over these ten years.

The three questions asked are:

Q1: How ethically do you think British business generally behaves?

Q2: How do you think British business is behaving now compared with 10 years ago? (asked since 2006)

Q3: In your view of company behaviour, which two or three of these issues most need addressing? [prompted]

*In 2014 'Sweatshop labour' was changed to 'Exploitative labour'.

The research is conducted on behalf of the IBE by Ipsos MORI. A total of 1,130 face-to-face, in-home, interviews were conducted between 31st July and 9th August 2015 and data has been weighted to reflect the adult population (16+) in the UK in terms of age, gender, region, social grade, ethnicity, housing tenure and working status.

About the Institute of Business Ethics

The Institute of Business Ethics promotes high standards of business practice based on ethical values.

We help organisations to strengthen their ethics culture through the sharing of knowledge and good practice.

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