

PRESS RELEASE

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Ethical standards in the workplace are going up!

A new report published today sets out the findings of the second survey of full-time employees in Great Britain on ethical standards and attitudes in the workplace.

Many of the findings in *Employee Views of Ethics at Work: The 2008 National Survey* by Simon Webley and Andrea Werner are encouraging:

- Compared to 2005, British full-time workers are generally less tolerant of unethical practices in the workplace.
- Fewer employees feel pressured to compromise ethical standards than in 2005.
- More staff than three years ago think honesty is frequently practiced, and 81% feel their employer acts responsibly.

However, the survey does suggest that at least a fifth of managers think that petty fiddling is tolerable.

The report also identifies those likely to be 'the most ethical' and 'the least ethical' employees.

- Younger employees (16-34 year olds) are significantly over represented in the 'least ethical' group, and under represented in the 'most ethical' group.
- Female employees are significantly more likely to be found in the 'most ethical' group.

The report also looks at the impacts of an ethical working culture on employee attitudes and experiences.

- In a supportive culture employees appear to be more willing to report misconduct they are aware of, and are generally more ethical in their attitudes towards a range of workplace practices.
- In an unsupportive culture, employees experience more pressure to compromise ethical standards and are more likely to feel that honesty is rarely or never practiced.

There is evidence in this survey that the existence of formal ethics programmes as well as a positive ethical climate are linked with higher standards of ethical behaviour in the workplace.

"The findings of the survey are encouraging," says author Simon Webley, Research Director at the Institute of Business Ethics. "Importantly, they demonstrate that organisations need to support their staff for them to be able to work according to ethical standards. By training staff in what standards are expected of them, and setting the tone from the top, organisations can be rewarded with less risk of misconduct, as staff feel less pressure to act unethically. In this current economic climate this is a fact organisations cannot afford to ignore. "

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

- *Employee Views of Ethics at Work: The 2008 National Survey* by Simon Webley and Andrea Werner is published by The Institute of Business Ethics, on 30th April 2009, £25 ISBN 0 9562183 0 8 and is available from www.ibe.org.uk
- The report was sponsored by Serco, the international service company www.serco.com
- The *IBE National Survey* was carried out in September 2008 as part of Ipsos MORI's regular omnibus survey of a representative sample of the British population. This report sets out the responses of 791 employees, including 332 with managerial or supervisory roles which have been weighted to reflect the profile of the national full-time workforce.
- The responses to this survey have been compared to a survey carried out in 2005 also by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the IBE. Findings of the previous survey are available in the report *Ethics at Work: a national survey*, (2005) ISBN 0 9549288 0 6.
- The Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) was established in 1986 to encourage high standards of corporate behaviour and sharing of best practice. IBE enables companies to build relationships of trust with their customers, employees, owners, suppliers and the community.
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