



Survey



Ethics at Work: 2021 international survey of employees

An international survey of approximately 10,000 employees in 13 countries



The Institute of Business Ethics



The IBE's purpose is to champion the highest standards of ethical behaviour in business.

We believe that an investment in business ethics drives sustainable business benefits, including higher levels of staff engagement, better and more consistent decision-making, and heightened levels of trust.

The IBE:

- Advocates the importance of ethical behaviour in business
- Advises businesses and business leaders on how to achieve the highest standards of behaviour based on ethical values
- Undertakes research and thought leadership in support of the application of ethical values at all levels in organisations.

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Ethics at Work: 2021 international survey of employees

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Gold Corporate Partners				Silver Corporate Partner		
<div><div>GLENCORE</div><div><div>M</div><div>M</div><div>MOTT MACDONALD</div></div><div><div>NORTHROP GRUMMAN</div></div><div><div></div><div>TotalEnergies</div></div></div>				<div>Morgan Stanley</div>		
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Australia		France	Germany	Ireland	Italy	Netherlands
<div><div></div><div>MACQUARIE University SYDNEY-AUSTRALIA</div></div>		<div><div></div><div>IESEG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT</div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div>UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI BERGAMO</div></div>	<div><div>RSM</div><div></div></div>
New Zealand		Portugal	Spain		South Africa	United Kingdom
<div><div>Aritahi</div><div>Brian Picot Chair in Ethical Leadership</div><div><div></div><div>VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON TE HERENGA WAKA</div></div></div>		<div><div></div><div>CATOLICA CATÓLICA PORTO BUSINESS SCHOOL</div><div>PORTO</div></div>	<div><div><div>CÁTEDRA IBERDROLA DE ÉTICA ECONÓMICA Y EMPRESARIAL</div><div><div></div><div>COMILLAS ICADE</div></div><div><div></div><div>IBERDROLA</div></div></div></div>		<div><div></div><div>THE ETHICS INSTITUTE</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>Cranfield University</div></div>

About the Survey

The aims of the IBE *Ethics at Work: 2021 international survey of employees* are as follows:

- To **understand** employees' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, ethics in the workplace in 2021
- To **identify** trends and developments through comparisons with data from the IBE's previous *Ethics at Work* surveys
- To **compare** how business ethics is viewed and understood by employees in different countries.

In May 2021, the IBE surveyed about 10,000 employees from thirteen countries around the world: Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

In addition to the geographical locations, five different subgroups of employee population were analysed to see if there were any differences in their experience of ethics in the workplace. These were:

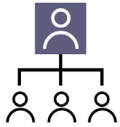
	Gender: male / female
	Age: younger employees aged 18 – 34 / mid-career employees aged 35 – 54 / older employees aged 55+
	Sector: public and third sector / private
	Size of organisation: small & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) / large organisations with more than 250 employees
	Seniority: managers / non-managers

Where the data is available, trends that have emerged over time are highlighted.

Data for this research was collected online by the research consultancy Yonder on behalf of the IBE in May 2021. The sample can be deemed representative of the adult working population in each of the countries surveyed. Please note that until 2015, data in Great Britain was collected through face-to-face interviews rather than online and some of the trend data in this report must be read with this in mind. The full research methodology and respondent profiles are presented in the Appendix. The survey questionnaire consisted of 15 questions.

This report

This report is structured in five sections:



Section 1 highlights some key data that helps to understand employees' perception of **organisational culture**, including pressures to compromise ethics and awareness of misconduct at work.



Section 2 explores employees' willingness to **speak up** about the instances of misconduct that they have been aware of and investigates the reasons behind it.



Section 3 examines whether employees are aware of the four main building blocks of an **ethics programme** being offered by their organisation.



Section 4 analyses how companies **embed ethics** in their **organisation through a supportive environment**.



Section 5 looks at **current and future issues** that can have an impact on employees' perceptions of ethics at work.

Key Findings

We surveyed around 10,000 employees in 13 countries to find out more about their attitudes to and perceptions of ethics in their organisation.

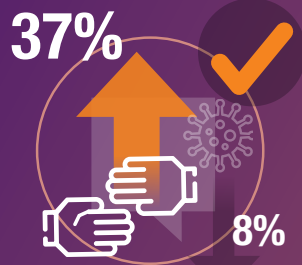
The good news

- Many organisations have responded well to the ethical challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic
- Ethical standards have improved since 2018
- Ethics programmes are having a big impact

But...

- Having an ethics programme is not enough to stamp out unethical behaviour
- Managers have rosier views than frontline staff
- Fear and futility are still barriers to speaking up

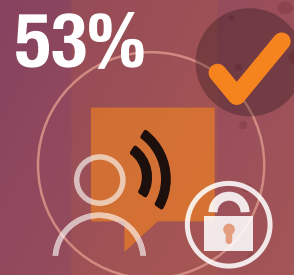
The key findings



Over a third of employees believe that ethical standards in their organisation have improved following the pandemic (37%) and **fewer than one in ten** believe standards have worsened (8%)



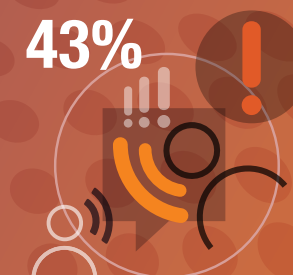
86% of employees say that honesty is practised always or frequently in their organisation



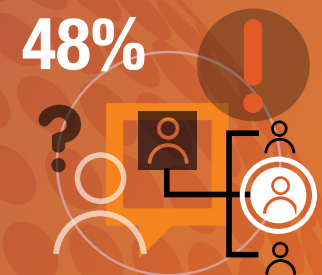
Over half of employees (53%) say their organisation has a Speak Up mechanism to report misconduct confidentially



Only slightly more than half of employees who were aware of ethical misconduct say that they raised their concerns (57%)



A shocking **two fifths** of employees who spoke up about ethical misconduct say that they experienced retaliation as a result (43%)



Almost half of employees (48%) in organisations with a comprehensive ethics programme say that their line manager rewards employees who get good results, even if they use practices that are ethically questionable



Organisational Culture

This section focuses on employees' perceptions of some indicators of corporate culture, such as:

- How acceptable they find some ethically questionable work practices
- How frequently they think honesty is practised in their organisation
- Whether they felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour
- Whether they have been aware of any instances of misconduct in the past year at work.



How acceptable are these ethically questionable practices?

Using the company's printer to print personal items is considered the least unacceptable of the listed practices, whereas making sexual advances towards a colleague is the most unacceptable.

French employees are the most lenient towards the ethically questionable practices outlined – they are more likely to find each of the eight workplace actions more acceptable than average. On the other hand, Portuguese employees are the strictest – they are more likely to find each of the eight workplace actions less acceptable than the average.

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to have lenient attitudes towards the ethically questionable actions outlined are:



Younger employees and men. Employees aged 18 – 34 are more likely to find each of the eight actions acceptable, compared to their older colleagues. Male employees are more likely to find six of the eight actions acceptable, compared to women.



Managers. They are more likely to find seven of the eight actions acceptable than those in non-managerial positions.

Q1

Below is a list of things that sometimes happen in the workplace. To what extent, if at all, do you think that each of the following actions is acceptable?

Percentage of respondents who said either *fairly acceptable* or *totally acceptable*.

ISSUE	ACCEPTABLE
Making sexual advances towards a colleague	✓ 6%
Charging personal entertainment to expenses	✓ 9%
Pretending to be sick to take the day off	✓ 11%
Claiming company fuel expenses for personal mileage	✓ 13%
Minor exaggeration of travel expenses	✓ 15%
Favouring family or friends when recruiting or awarding contracts	✓ 17%
Taking stationery from work for personal use	✓ 23%
Using the company's printer to print personal items	✓ 46%

Is honesty practised at work?

The vast majority of employees think that honesty is practised always or frequently in their place of work. Employees in Switzerland are the most likely to say so, while their colleagues in South Africa and the Netherlands are the least likely.

Employees' views about how frequently honesty is practised in their place of work has improved compared to 2018 in eight of the ten countries where historical data is available, with the exception of Ireland (-2%) and Portugal (-1%). The biggest improvements happened in Germany (+20%), France (+18%) and Switzerland (+16%). The average for those ten countries has increased from 79% in 2018 to 87% in 2021.

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to have positive views of the honesty of their organisation are:



Men and older employees. Men are slightly more likely to say that honesty is practised always or frequently in their organisation than women (87% vs 84%). Older employees aged 55+ are more likely to say so than their younger counterparts (90% vs 85% of employees aged 35 – 54 and 83% of employees aged 18 – 34).



Employees in the private sector. They are slightly but significantly more likely than those in the public sector to say that honesty is practised always or frequently in their organisation (87% vs 84%).



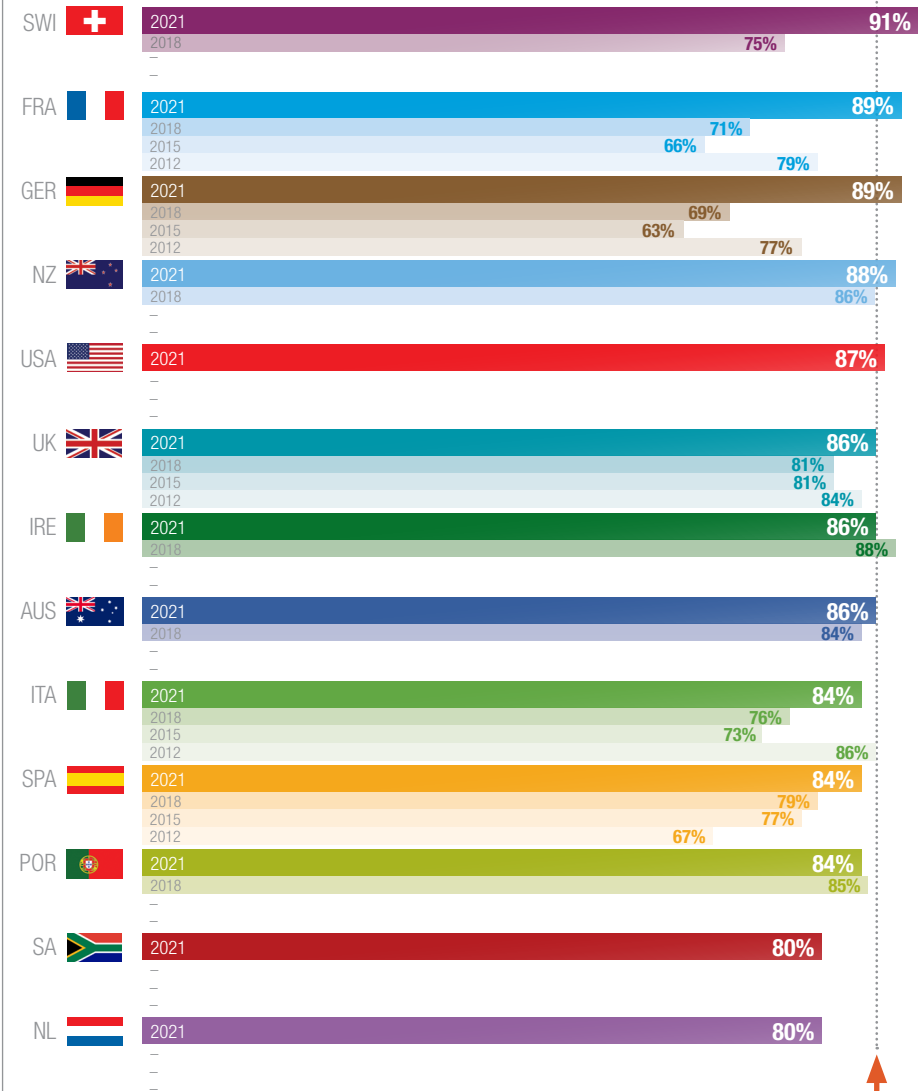
Managers are more likely to say that honesty is practised always or frequently in their organisation (90%) compared to non-managers (83%).

Q2

In your organisation's daily operations, would you say that honesty is practised?

Percentage of respondents who say *always* or *frequently*.

2021 Average **86%**



Do employees feel pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour?

The percentage of employees who felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour differs substantially between countries. On average, one in ten employees reports feeling pressured.

Compared to 2018, the percentage of employees that say so has decreased in all ten countries for which historical data is available, with the exception of Spain (+3%) and Ireland (+2%). Switzerland (-13%), Germany and France (-11%) recorded the most substantial drop. The average for those ten countries has dropped from 15% in 2018 to 11% in 2021. Employees in Portugal are more likely to say so than their colleagues in other countries.

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to say that they have felt pressured to compromise their organisation's ethical standards are:



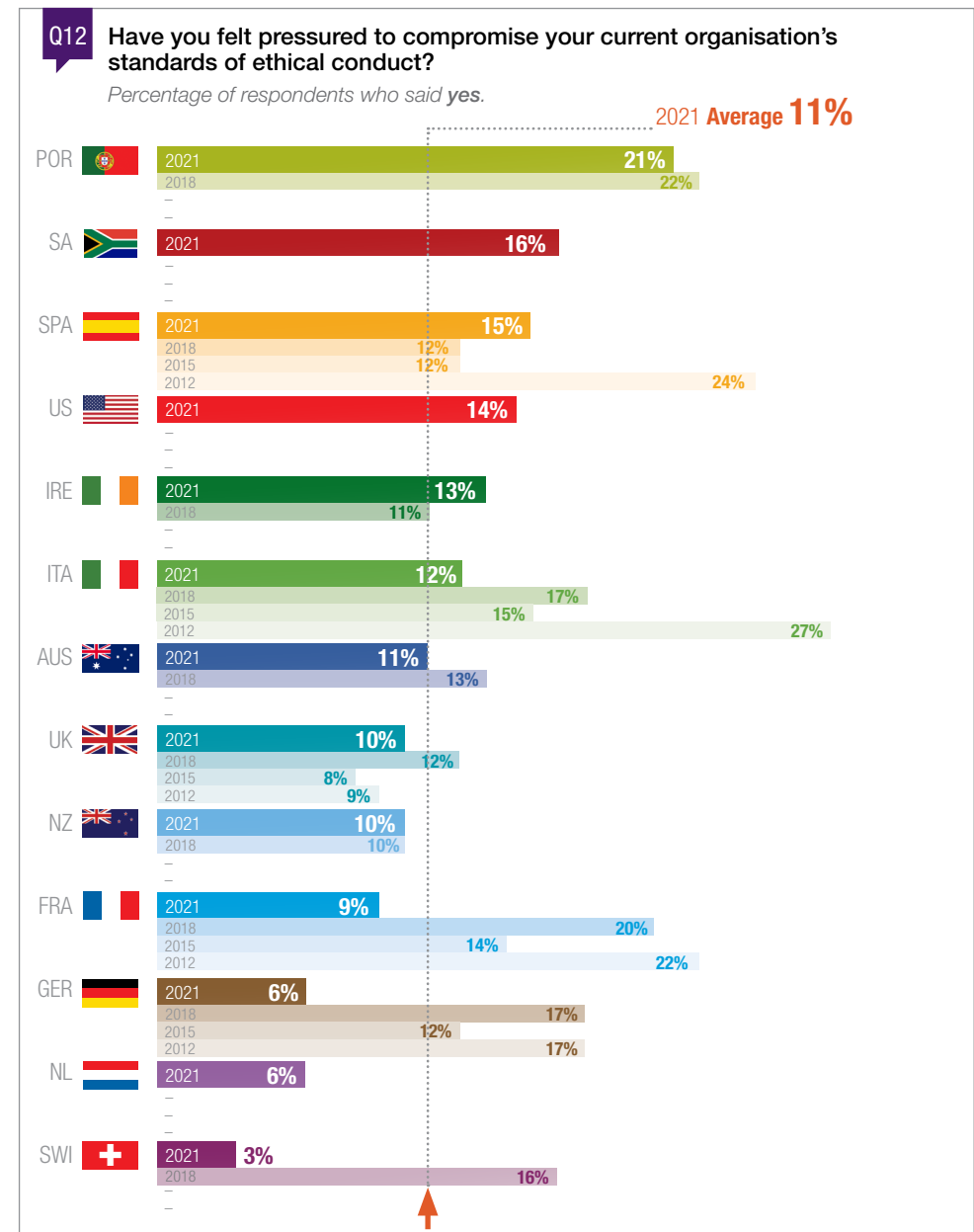
Younger employees (aged 18 – 34) (16%), compared to employees aged 35 – 54 (10%) and 55+ (6%).



Employees in the public sector (13%), compared to employees in the private sector (11%).



Managers (14%), compared to non-managers (10%).

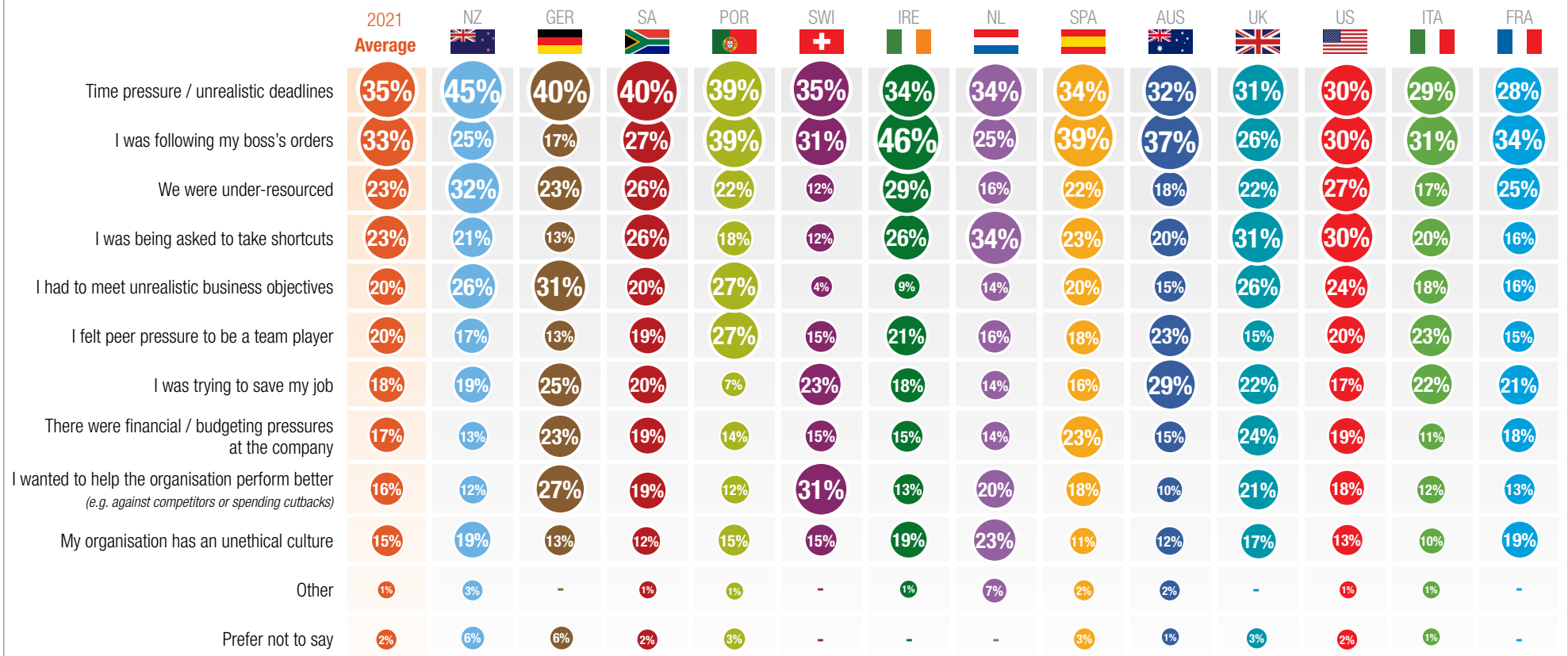


What are the main types of pressure to compromise ethics?

Overall, the main sources of pressure for employees to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour are time pressures / unrealistic deadlines (35%) and the need to follow the boss's orders (33%).

Q13 Which of the following, if any, were the main pressures on you to act unethically?

Asked to all respondents who said that they felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour.



How does the presence of pressures to compromise the organisation's standards of behaviour correlate with other aspects of ethics at work?

Employees who have felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour are less likely than those who have not felt pressured to say that:

- **Honesty** is practised in their organisation always or frequently (73% vs 88%).
- Their **line manager** sets a good example of ethical business behaviour (52% vs 74%), that s/he explains the importance of honesty and ethics in the work they do (54% vs 67%), and that s/he supports them in following their organisation's standards of ethical behaviour (54% vs 71%). However, they are more likely to say that their line manager rewards employees who get good results, even if they use practices that are ethically questionable (48% vs 30%).
- Their organisation **disciplines employees** who violate their organisation's ethical standards (53% vs 66%), that issues of right and wrong are discussed in **staff meetings** (54% vs 59%), and that **decisions** about people are made **fairly** in their organisation (45% vs 68%).
- Their organisation acts **responsibly** in all its business dealings (59% vs 79%), and that their organisation lives up to its stated policy of **social responsibility** (54% vs 75%).
- **Senior management** takes ethics seriously in their organisation (54% vs 73%).

Employees who have felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour are also more likely than those who have not felt pressured to say that:

- They have been aware of **misconduct** at work (58% vs 12%).
- They have **raised their concerns** about misconduct (68% vs 51%).
- They have experienced **retaliation** after raising their concerns about misconduct (64% vs 25%).
- Minor **breaches of the rules** are inevitable in a modern organisation (51% vs 39%), that if they cracked down on every minor breach of the rules, they would soon find they had no staff (51% vs 34%) or suppliers (45% vs 29%), and that as long as they come in on time and within budget, they are not going to worry about some minor breaches of the rules (40% vs 25%).
- It is acceptable to artificially increase profits in the books as long as no money is stolen (31% vs 11%).
- They are concerned about each of the statements about the **future of the workplace** listed in [Q15](#). For example, 61% of employees who have felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of behaviour are concerned about the inability of their organisation to live up to their stated ethical standards, compared to 33% of those who haven't felt pressured.

How common is misconduct at work?

On average, almost a fifth of respondents have been aware of misconduct during the past year at work.

Employees are less likely to say that they have been aware of misconduct at work compared to the past in all ten countries where historical data is available. The average for those countries has dropped from 29% in 2018 to 17% in 2021. The most notable drops have been recorded in France (-18%) and Spain (-17%).

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to have been aware of misconduct at work are:



Younger employees (aged 18 – 34) (24%), compared to employees aged 35 – 54 (18%) and 55+ (10%).



Employees in the public sector (20%) compared to those in the private sector (17%).



Employees in large organisations (21%) compared to employees in SMEs (15%).



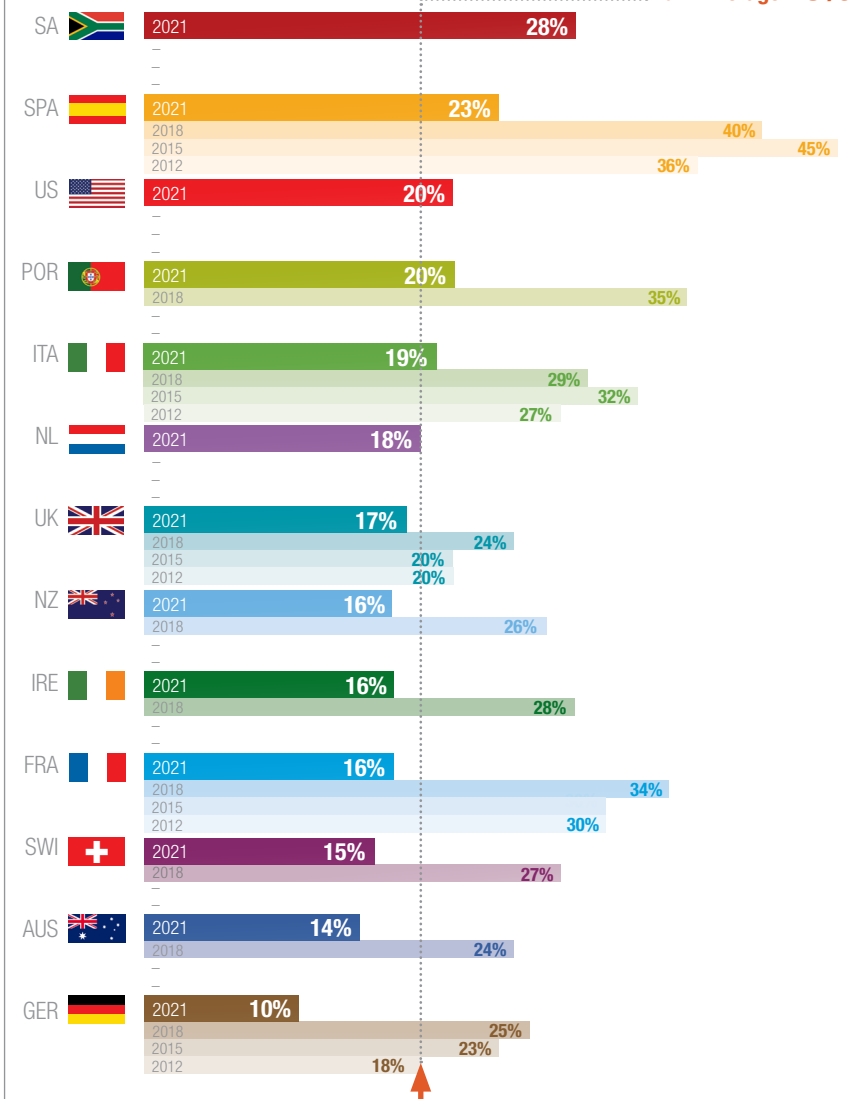
Managers compared to non-managers (21% vs 16%)

Q4

During the past year at work, have you been aware of any conduct by your employer or colleagues that you thought violated either the law or your organisation's ethical standards?

Percentage of respondents who said yes.

2021 Average 18%



How does the awareness of misconduct correlate to other aspects of ethics at work?

Employees who have been aware of misconduct at work are also less likely than those who have not been aware of misconduct to say that:

- **Honesty** is practised in their organisation. Only 74% of employees who have been aware of misconduct say that honesty is practised always or frequently in their organisation, compared to 89% of those who have not been aware of misconduct.
- Their **line manager** sets a good example of ethical business behaviour (56% vs 75%), that s/he explains the importance of honesty and ethics in the work they do (55% vs 68%), and that their manager supports them in following their organisation's standards of ethical behaviour (56% vs 73%). However, they are more likely to say that their line manager rewards employees who get good results, even if they use practices that are ethically questionable (42% vs 30%).
- Their organisation **disciplines employees** who violate their organisation's ethical standards (53% vs 67%), that issues of right and wrong are discussed in **staff meetings** (53% vs 60%), and that decisions about people are made **fairly** in their organisation (45% vs 71%),
- Their organisation acts responsibly in all its business dealings (60% vs 81%), and that their organisation lives up to its stated policy of social responsibility (55% vs 76%).
- **Senior management** takes ethics seriously in their organisation (53% vs 75%).

Employees who have been aware of misconduct at work, are also more likely than those who have not been aware of misconduct to say that:

- They have **felt pressured** to compromise their organisation's standards of ethical conduct (37% vs 5%).
- Minor **breaches of the rules** are inevitable in a modern organisation (50% vs 38%), that if they cracked down on every minor breach of the rules, they would soon find they had no staff (47% vs 33%) or suppliers (41% vs 29%), and that as long as they come in on time and within budget, they are not going to worry about some minor breaches of the rules (37% vs 24%).
- It is acceptable to artificially increase profits in the books as long as no money is stolen (25% vs 11%).
- They are concerned about each of the statements about the **future of the workplace** listed in [Q15](#). For example, 54% of employees who have been aware of misconduct are concerned about the inability of their organisation to live up to their stated ethical standards, compared to 33% of those who haven't been aware of misconduct.

Speaking Up

This section explores:

- Employees' willingness to speak up about the instances of misconduct that they have been aware of
- Why people decide not to raise their concerns about misconduct
- Whether those who did speak up were happy with the outcome and whether they experienced any retaliation for doing so.

2



How willing are employees to speak up when they are aware of misconduct?

On average, over half of employees who are aware of misconduct decide to report it. Employees in the US are more likely to raise concerns than their colleagues in other countries. On the other hand, less than half of respondents who have been aware of misconduct in Spain, Portugal and Switzerland speak up about it.

The percentage of employees willing to speak up about the misconduct they were aware of has decreased compared to 2018 in six of the ten countries for which historical data is available. The average for those countries has decreased from 57% to 53%. It has decreased the most in Switzerland (-17%) and in the UK (-12%), while it has increased the most in Italy (+4%).

Subgroups

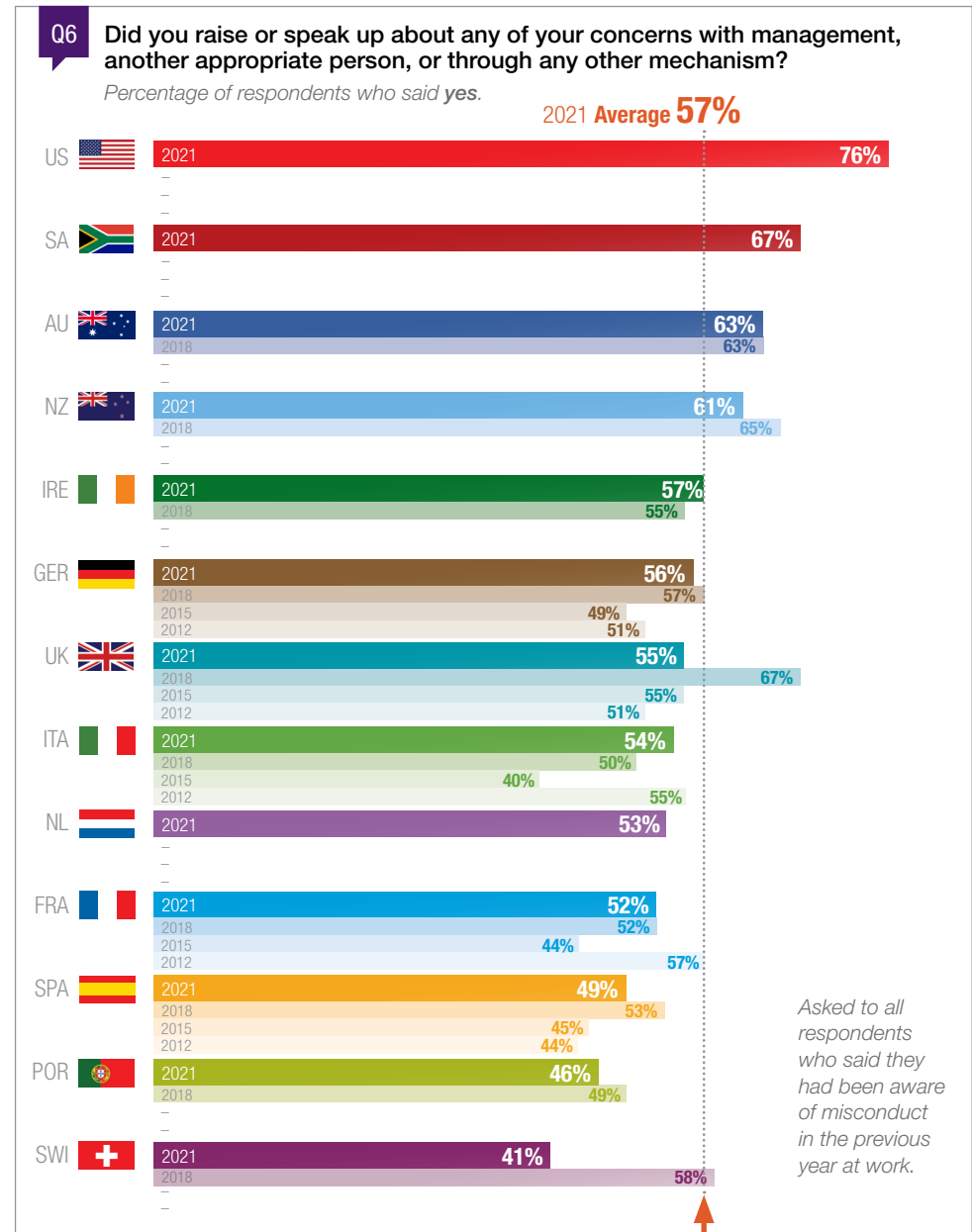
The subgroups that are more likely to have raised their concerns internally about misconduct at work they have been aware of are:



Younger employees (aged 18 – 34). 61% of them say so compared to 53% of employees aged 35 – 54 and 52% of employees aged 55+.



Managers. 71% of managers say so compared to 45% of non-managers.



How satisfied with the outcome are people who speak up?

On average, about three in five employees who raise concerns about misconduct they have been aware of are satisfied with the outcome. However, in Portugal and Italy, less than half of those who speak up are satisfied with the outcome. At the other end of the spectrum, about three quarters of employees who raised their concerns about misconduct in the US and in Spain report being satisfied.

Compared to 2018, employees in seven of the ten countries for which historical data is available are more likely to say that they are satisfied. The average for those countries has increased from 52% in 2018 to 58% in 2021. The biggest improvement was recorded in France and Switzerland (+16%), while the biggest drop happened in Portugal (-9%).

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome after raising their concerns about misconduct are:



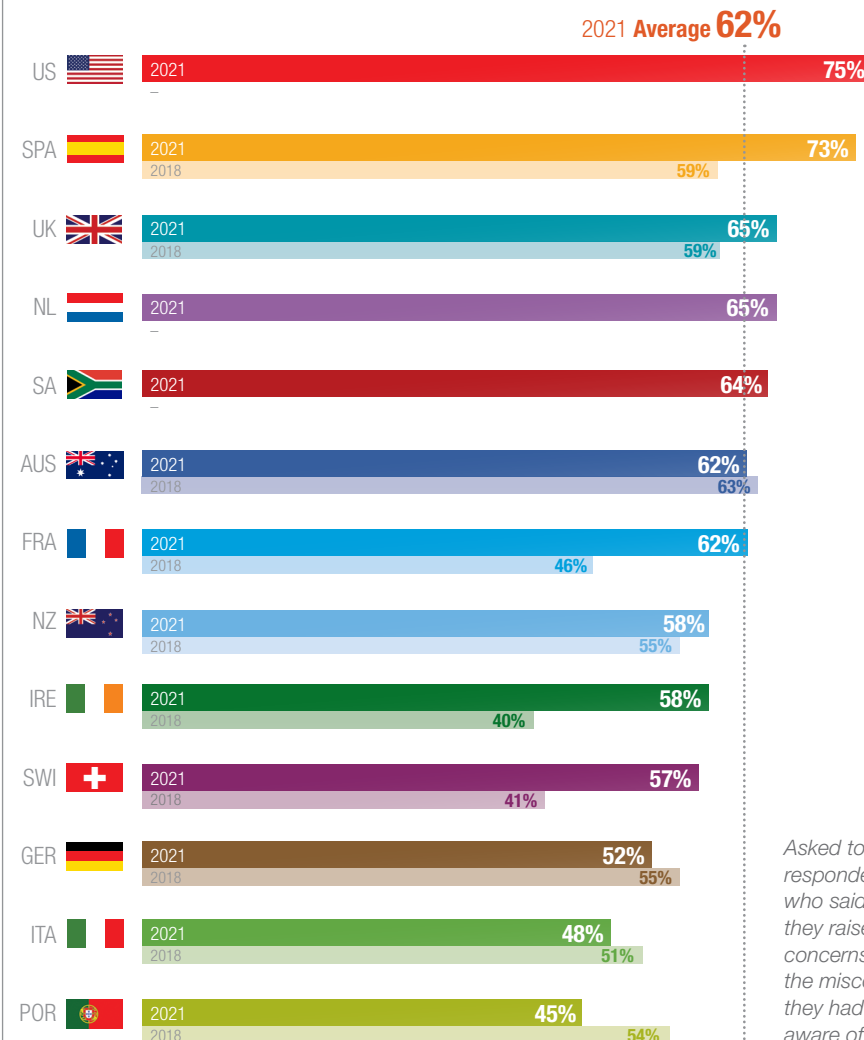
Men and younger employees (aged 18 – 34). 66% of men are satisfied with the outcome after raising their concerns about misconduct, compared to 57% of women. 71% of younger employees (aged 18 – 34) say so compared to 57% of employees aged 35 – 54 and 39% of employees aged 55+.



Managers. 74% of managers say so, compared to 45% of non-managers.

Q7 After raising or speaking up about your concerns, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the outcome?

Percentage of respondents who said either *very satisfied* or *fairly satisfied*.



Asked to all respondents who said that they raised concerns about the misconduct they had been aware of.

How common is retaliation against those who speak up?

The percentage of employees who speak up about misconduct and experience retaliation as a result averages a shocking 43% and ranges from 28% in Switzerland to 60% in France.

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to experience retaliation after raising their concerns about misconduct are:



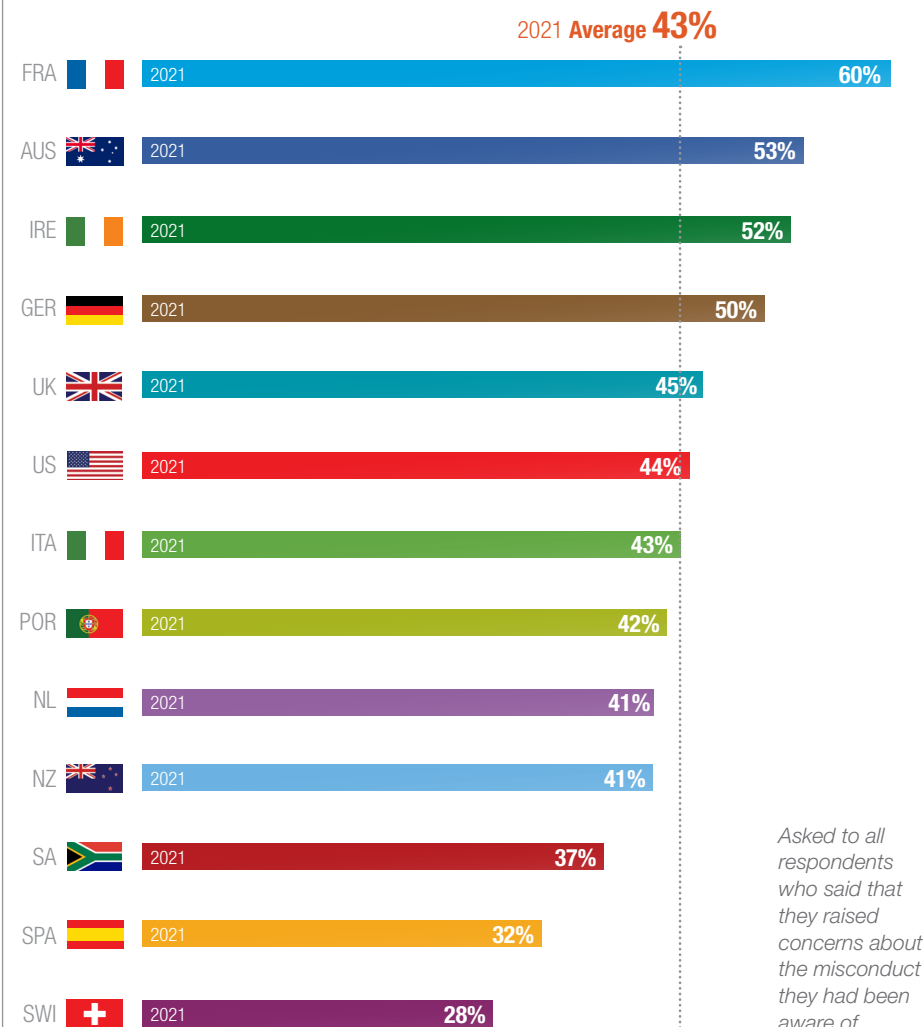
Younger employees (aged 18 – 34). 48% of them say so compared to 38% of employees aged 35 – 54 and 37% of employees aged 55+.



Managers. 47% of them say so compared to 37% of non-managers.

Q8 After raising or speaking up about your concerns, did you experience any personal disadvantage or any form of retaliation for doing so?

Percentage of respondents who said *yes*.



Asked to all respondents who said that they raised concerns about the misconduct they had been aware of.

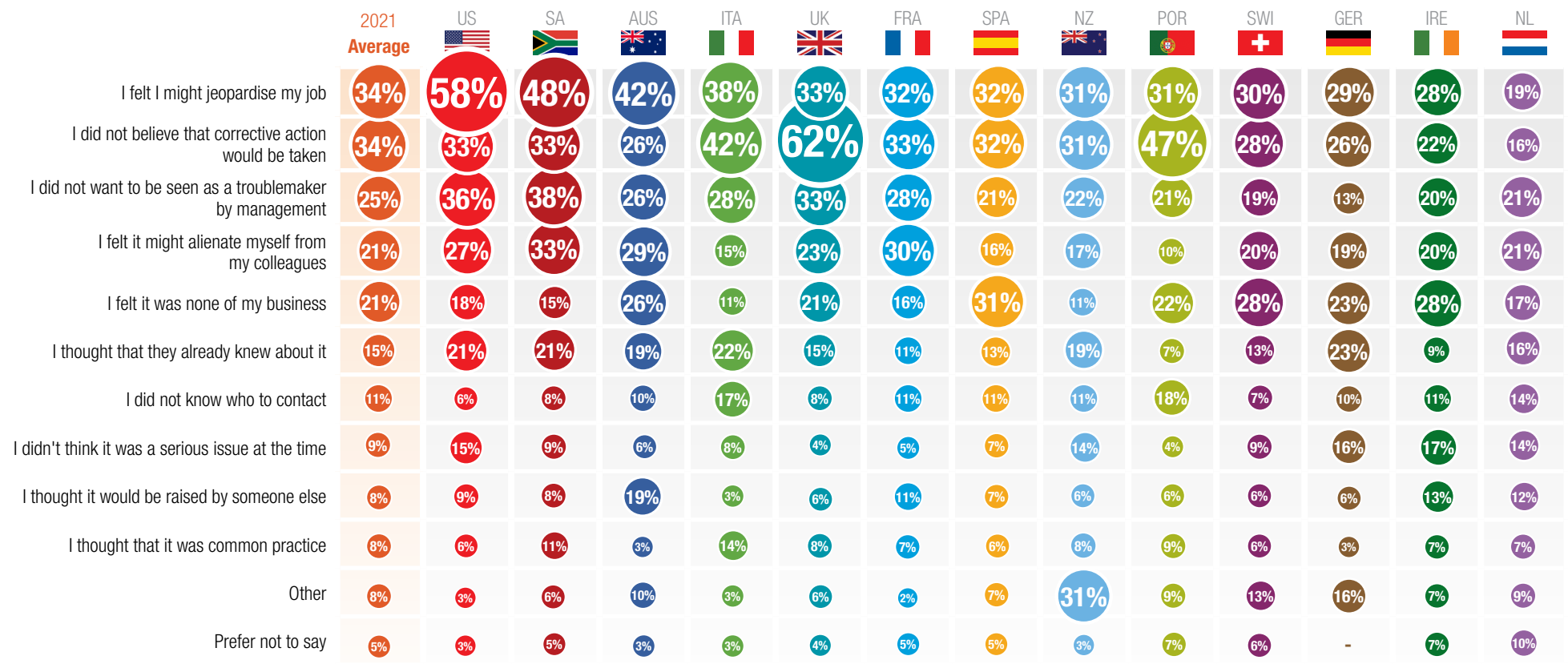
Please note that, due to the low sample base for this question, the figures presented in this table must be interpreted as indicative.

What prevents employees from speaking up about the misconduct they are aware of?

Fear of jeopardising their job (34%) and concerns about the lack of corrective action from the organisation (34%) are the main reasons that prevent employees from speaking up about misconduct.

Q9 Which of the following, if any, influenced your decision not to raise or speak up about your concerns?

Asked to all respondents who said that they did not raise concerns about the misconduct they had been aware of.



The Ethics Programme

This section examines whether employees are aware of the four main building blocks of an ethics programme being offered by their organisation:

- Written standards of ethical business conduct
- A means of reporting misconduct confidentially
- Training on standards of ethical conduct
- Advice or a helpline to receive advice on how to act ethically.

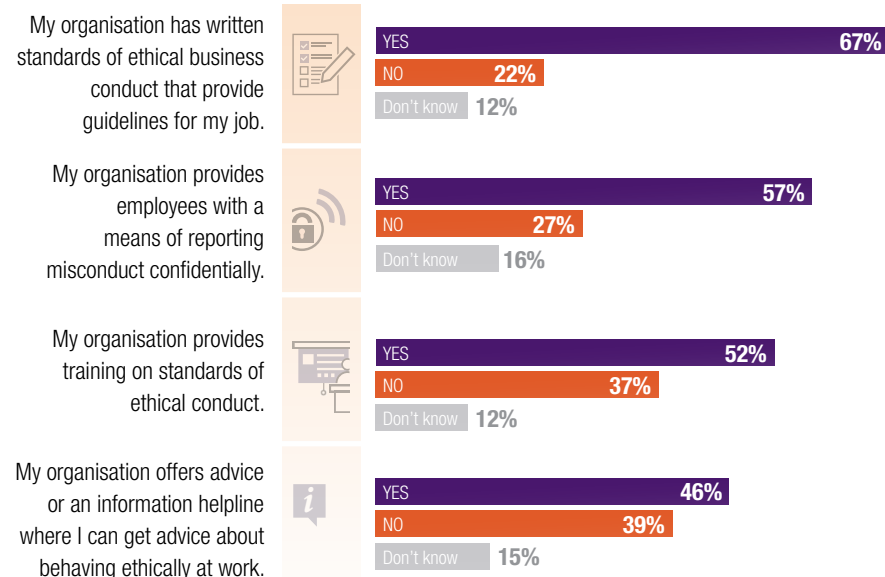
3



Do organisations provide comprehensive ethics programmes?

On average, only a relatively low percentage of employees are aware of each of the four building blocks of an ethics programme being offered by their organisation, as illustrated in the chart below. Advice or an information helpline where employees can get advice about behaving ethically is the least common element, while a code of ethics (or equivalent) is the most common.

Q10 Please indicate whether each of the following statements apply to your organisation or not.



Subgroups

The following subgroups that are more likely to be aware of each of the building blocks of an ethics programme. As an example, the different percentages of employees aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially are shown below, but a similar pattern is found for all four building blocks considered.



Men. 59% of men are aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially in their organisation, compared to 54% of women.



Younger employees (aged 18 – 34). 64% of younger employees are aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially in their organisation, compared to 55% of employees aged 35 – 54 and 50% of those aged 55+.



Employees in the public sector. 61% of those in the public sector are aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially in their organisation, compared to 54% in the private sector.



Employees in large organisations. 66% of those in large organisations are aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially in their organisation, compared to 49% in SMEs.

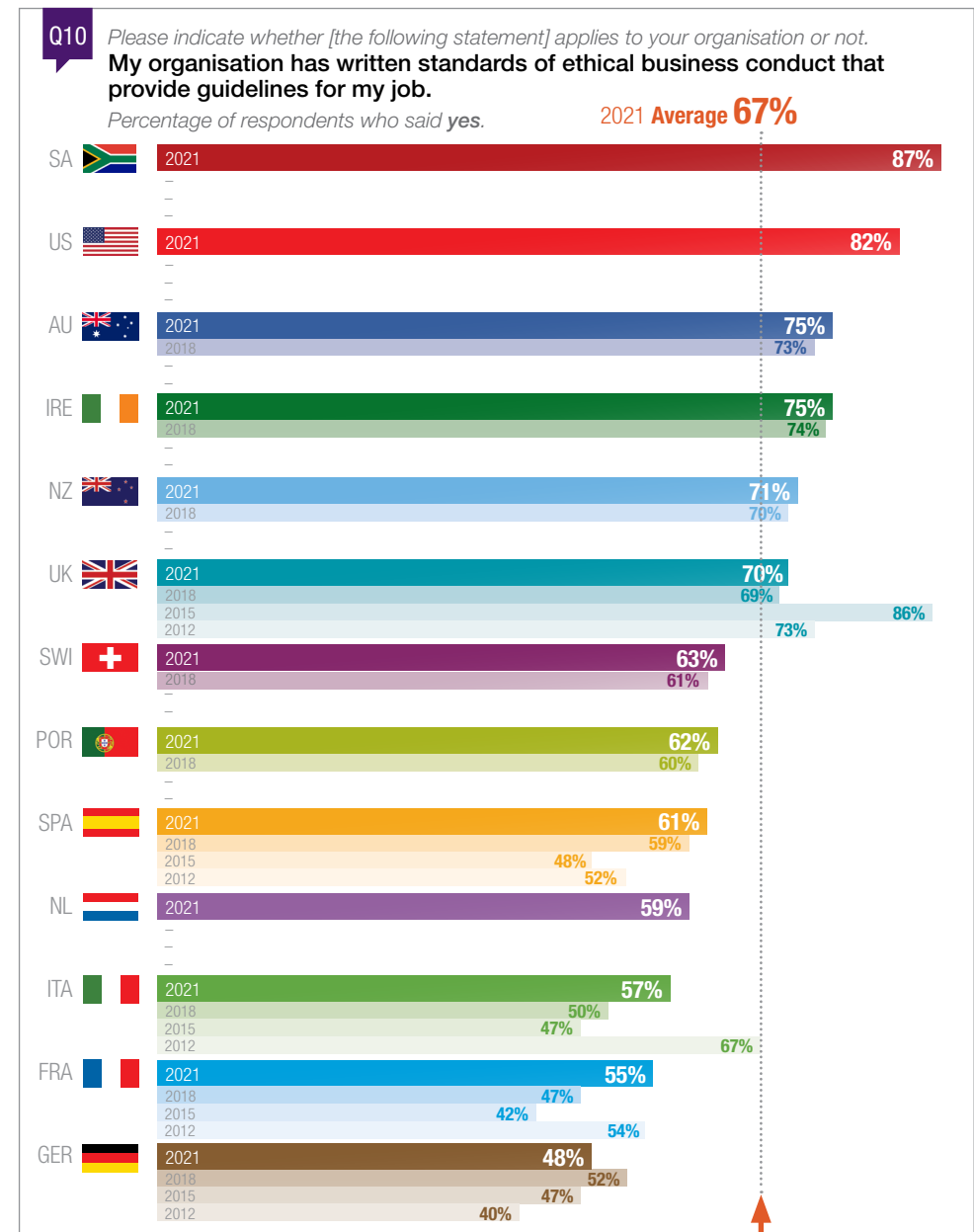


Managers. 64% of managers are aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially in their organisation, compared to 52% of non-managers.

How common are codes of ethics?

On average, over two thirds of respondents are aware of a written standards of ethical business conduct (such as a code of ethics or equivalent) being offered by their organisation. This is particularly common in South Africa (87%) and in the US (82%). At the other end of the spectrum, only 48% of respondents in Germany say that they are aware of it.

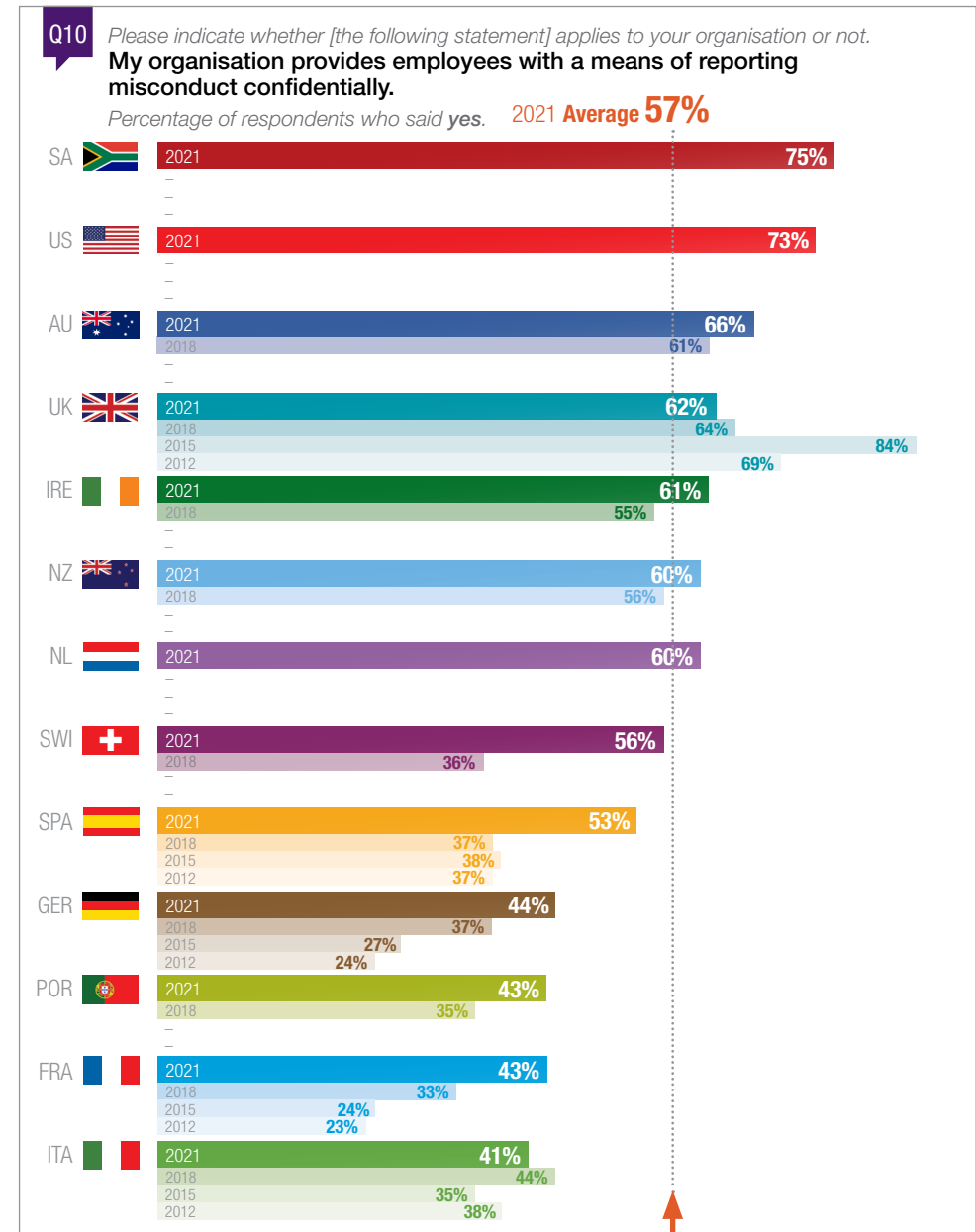
Employees are more likely than in 2018 to be aware of a code of ethics (or equivalent document) provided by their organisations in nine out of ten countries for which historical data are available, although in many cases the increase is very small. The only exception is Germany (-4%). The average for those countries has increased from 62% in 2018 to 64% in 2021.



How common are Speak Up mechanisms?

On average, the percentage of employees who are aware of a means of reporting misconduct confidentially offered by their employers is still relatively low (57%). It is most common in South Africa (75%) and in the US (73%). In Italy (41%), France and Portugal (43%) and Germany (44%), less than half of respondents are aware of a Speak Up mechanism to report misconduct confidentially in their organisation.

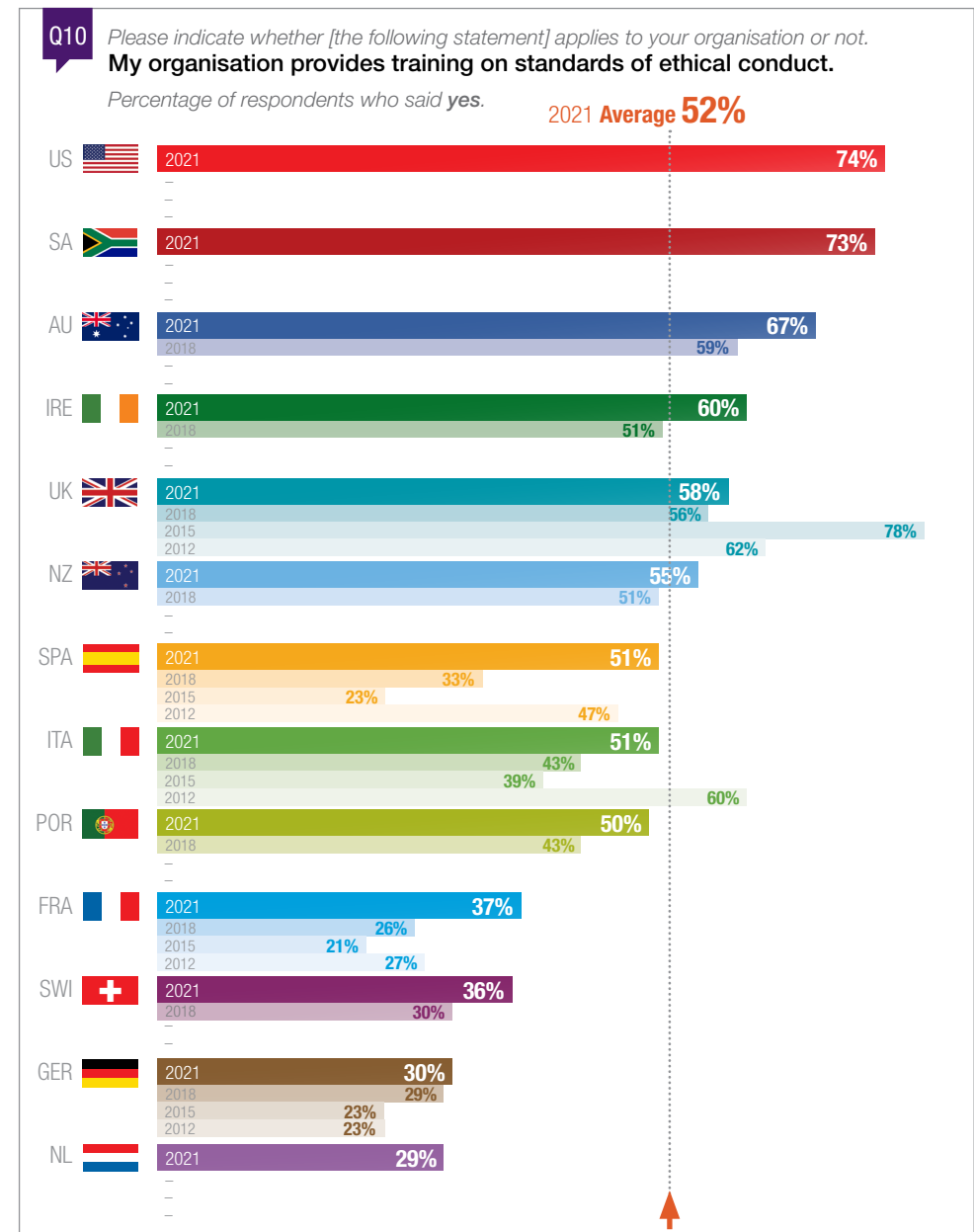
Compared to 2018, the percentage of employees who are aware of a Speak Up mechanism to report misconduct confidentially in their organisation has increased in all the countries for which historical data is available, with the exception of Italy (-3%) and the UK (-2%). The average for those ten countries has increased from 46% in 2018 to 53% in 2021. The biggest improvements have been recorded in Switzerland (+20%) and Spain (+16%).



How common is training on ethical standards?

Whereas ethics training seems to be relatively common in some countries, such as the US (74%) and South Africa (73%), in other countries it is less common. In the Netherlands (29%) and in Germany (30%), less than a third of employees are aware of it being offered by their organisation.

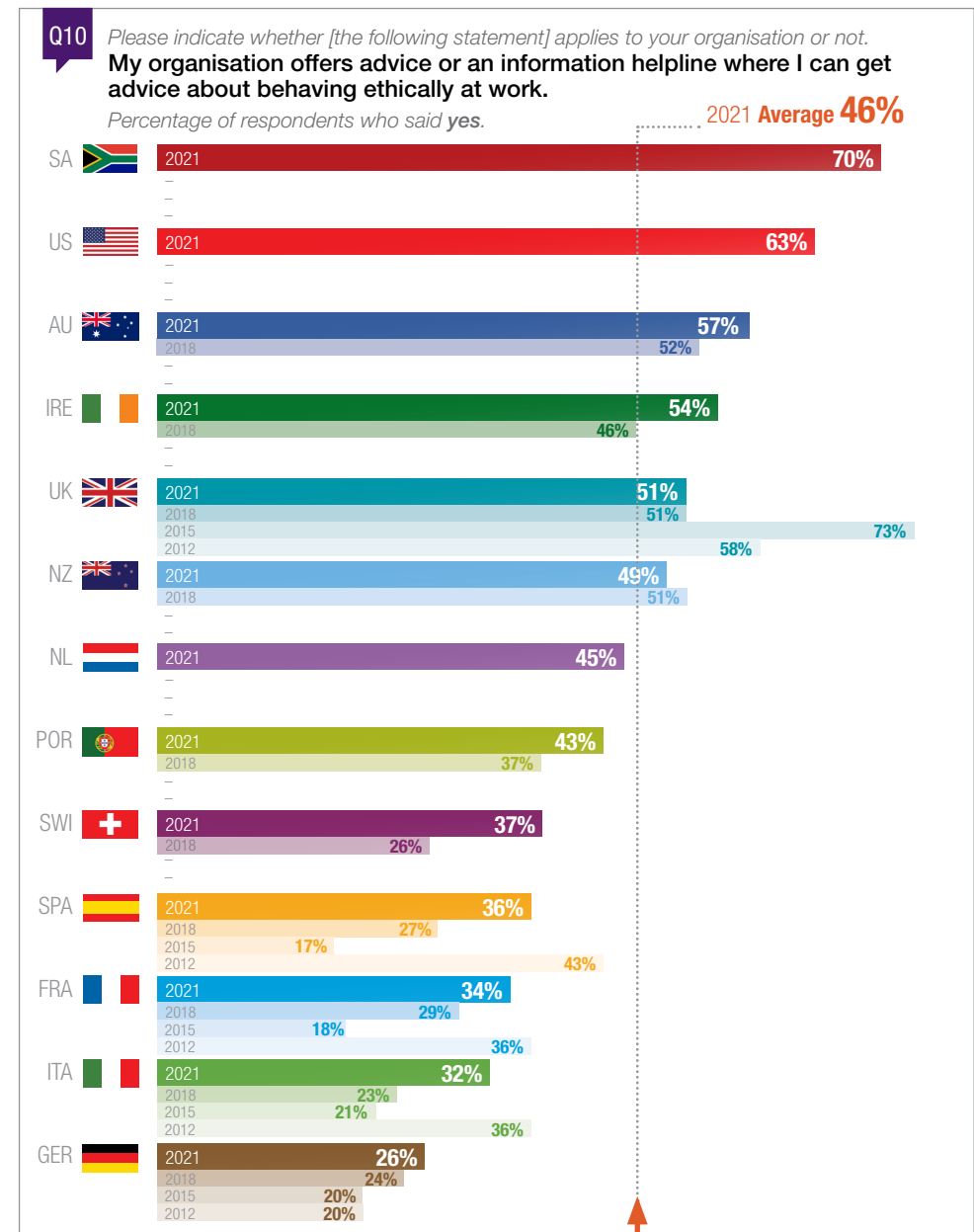
However, employees are more likely to be aware of ethics training offered by their organisations than in 2018 in all ten countries for which historical data is available. The average for those countries has increased from 42% in 2018 to 50% in 2021. The biggest improvement has taken place in Spain (+18%).



How common is having an information helpline to receive advice about behaving ethically?

On average, advice or an information helpline where employees can get advice about behaving ethically at work is the tool that employees are least likely to be aware of, out of the four building blocks of an ethics programme proposed (46%). It is most common in South Africa (70%) and the US (63%), while it is least common in Germany (26%).

However, compared to 2018, this type of tool is more common. New Zealand is the only country where the percentage of employees who are aware of this element of an ethics programme has decreased (-2%). The average for the countries where historical data is available has increased from 37% in 2018 to 42% in 2021. The biggest improvements have been recorded in Switzerland (+11%), Italy (+9%) and Ireland (+8%).



How does the presence of a comprehensive ethics programme correlate with other aspects of ethics at work?

Employees in organisations with a comprehensive ethics programme (where employees are aware of their organisation offering all four building blocks) are more likely than those in organisations without an ethics programme to say that:

- **Honesty** is practised in their organisation. 91% of employees in organisations with an ethics programme say that honesty is practised always or frequently, compared to 79% in organisations without an ethics programme.
- Their opinion of **how ethically their organisations behaves** has improved following the Covid-19 pandemic (57% vs 14%).
- They **raised their concerns** about misconduct they had been aware of (72% vs 36%).
- They were **satisfied with the outcome** after raising concerns of misconduct (80% vs 26%).
- Their **line manager** sets a good example of ethical business behaviour (87% vs 46%), that s/he explains the importance of honesty and ethics in the work they do (86% vs 35%), and that s/he supports them in following their organisation's standards of ethical behaviour (88% vs 40%). However, they are also more likely to say that their line manager rewards employees who get good results, even if they use practices that are ethically questionable (48% vs 18%).
- Their organisation **disciplines employees** who violate their organisation's ethical standards (85% vs 32%), that issues of right and wrong are discussed in **staff meetings** (80% vs 29%), and that **decisions** about people are made **fairly** in their organisation (81% vs 45%).

- Their organisation acts responsibly in all its business dealings (90% vs 57%), and that their organisation lives up to its stated policy of **social responsibility** (89% vs 44%).
- **Senior management** takes ethics seriously in their organisation (89% vs 43%).

However, employees in organisations with a comprehensive ethics programme are also more likely than those in organisation without an ethics programme to say that:

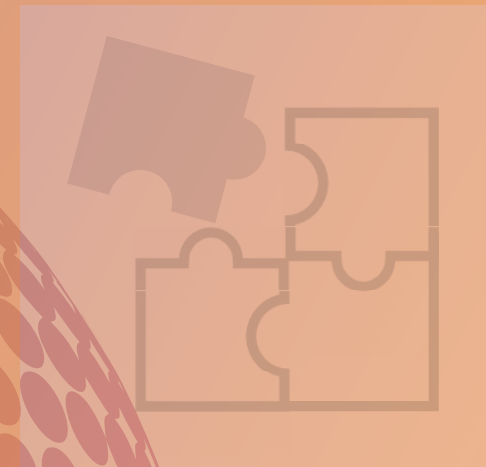
- They have **felt pressured** to compromise their organisation's standards of ethical conduct (11% vs 9%).
- Minor **breaches of the rules** are inevitable in a modern organisation (44% vs 33%), that if they cracked down on every minor breach of the rules, they would soon find they had no staff (39% vs 29%) or suppliers (35% vs 23%), and that as long as they come in on time and within budget, they are not going to worry about some minor breaches of the rules (27% vs 24%).
- It is acceptable to artificially increase profits in the books as long as no money is stolen (19% vs 8%).
- They are concerned about each of the statements about the **future of the workplace** listed in [Q15](#). For example, 45% of employees in organisations with an ethics programme are concerned about the inability of their organisation to live up to their stated ethical standards, compared to 27% of those in organisations without an ethics programme.

Embedding Ethics Through a Supportive Environment

This section analyses how companies embed ethics in their organisation through a supportive environment. In particular, it looks at:

- The role of management
- How organisations engage with external stakeholders and employees on ethics
- Whether organisations discipline employees who breach their ethical standards
- Employees' attitudes towards minor breaches of the rules.

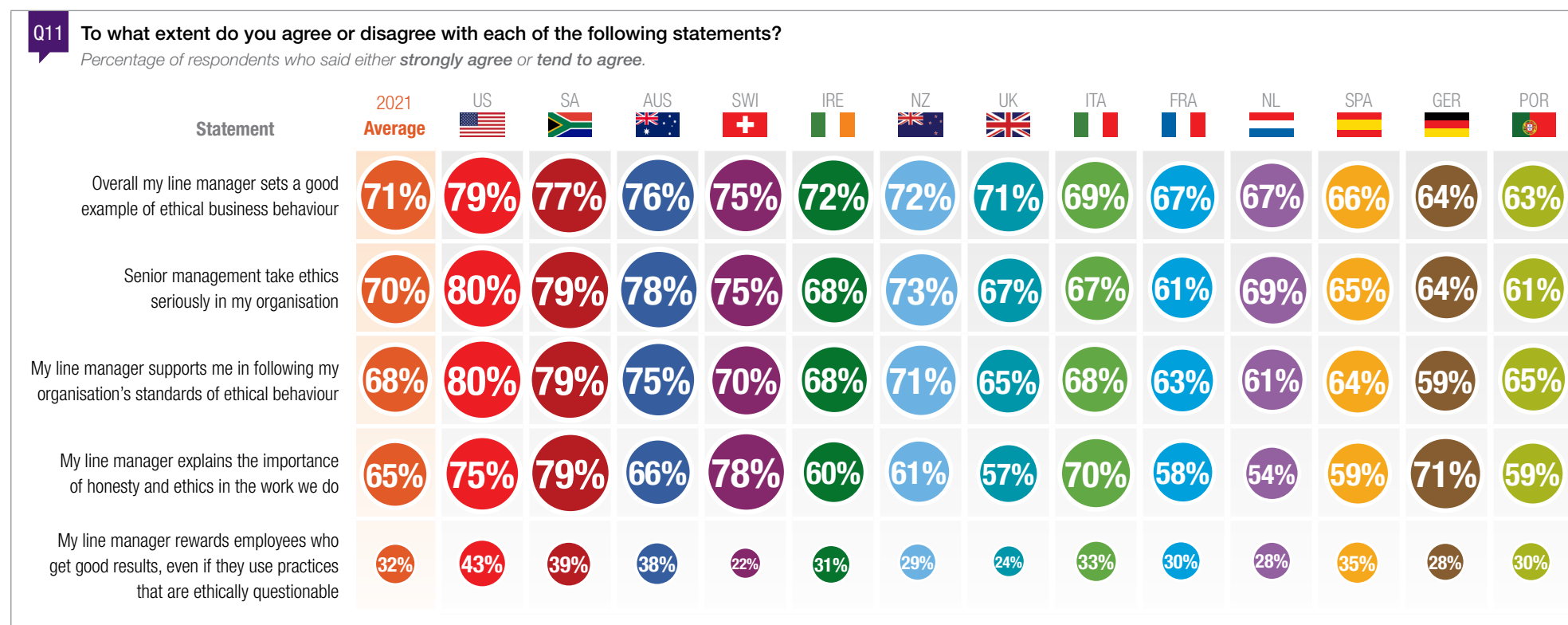
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What are employees' views of how ethically management behaves?

Although the majority of respondents in all countries expressed positive views on the ability of their line manager to set a good example of ethical behaviour, explain the importance of honesty and ethics, and support them to follow their organisation's standards of behaviour, the notable percentage of employees who say that their line manager rewards good results, even when they are achieved through ethically questionable practices remains a concern.

Employees in the US are the most likely to agree with three of the four positive statements about their line manager. However, they are also the most likely to agree that their line manager rewards employees who get good results, even if they use practices that are ethically questionable (43%). Employees in the UK and Switzerland are the least likely to agree with this statement (24% and 22% respectively).



Subgroups



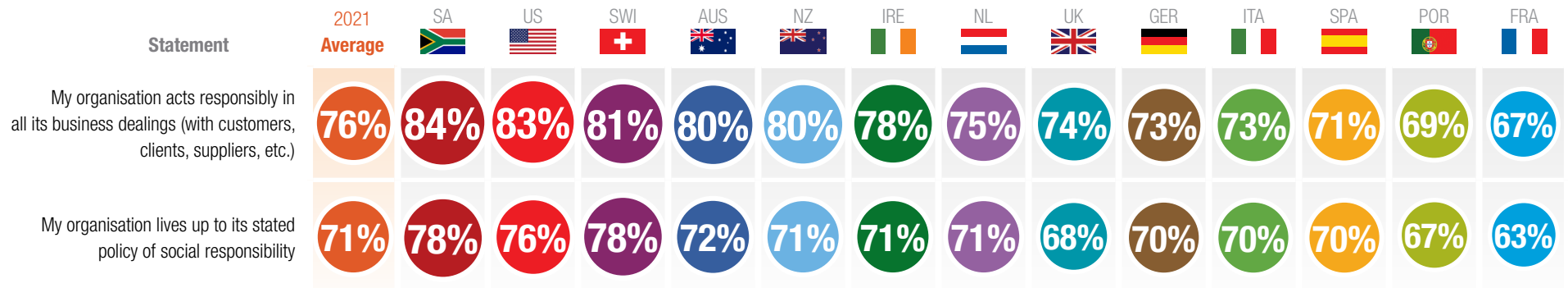
Managers are more likely to agree with each of the positive statements above than non-managers. However, they are also more likely than non-managers to say that their line manager rewards employees that get good results, even if they use ethically questionable practices.

How do organisations engage with external stakeholders on ethics?

Employees have overall positive views of their organisation's ability to act responsibly in all its business dealings with external stakeholders and to live up to its stated policy of social responsibility. However, employees in each of the countries surveyed are slightly less likely to say that their organisation lives up to its stated policy of social responsibility.

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Percentage of respondents who said either *strongly agree* or *tend to agree*.



Subgroups



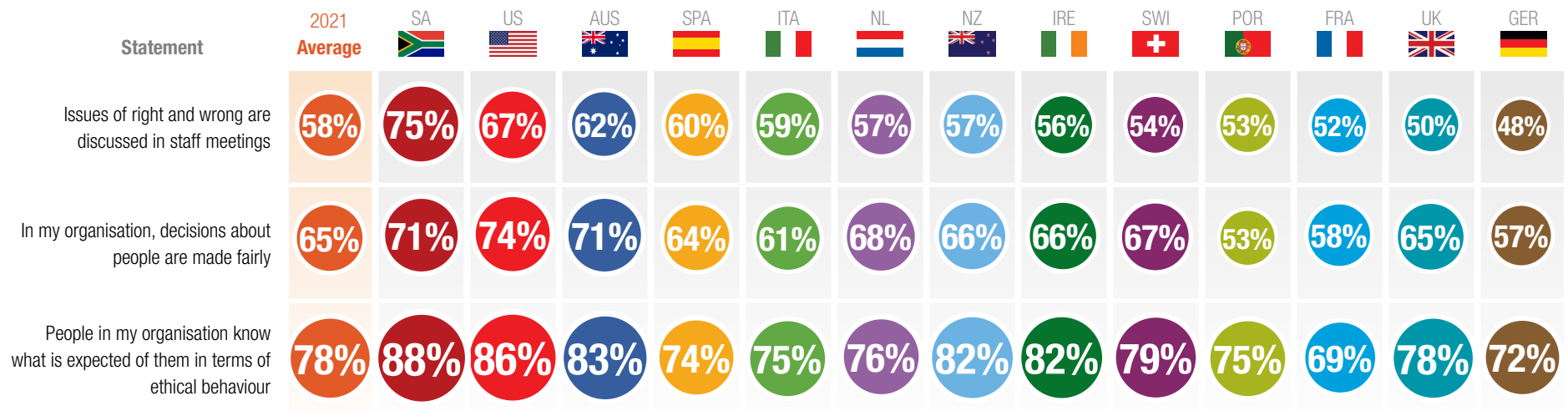
Managers are more likely than non-managers to agree that their organisation acts responsibly in all its business dealings with external stakeholders and that it lives up to its stated policy of social responsibility.

How do organisations engage with their employees on ethics?

Overall, about four in five respondents think that people in their organisation know what is expected of them in terms of ethical behaviour. However, discussing this in team meetings doesn't seem to be as common; on average, only 58% of respondents say so. Furthermore, only 65% of respondents say that in their organisation decisions about people are made fairly.

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Percentage of respondents who said either *strongly agree* or *tend to agree*.



Subgroups

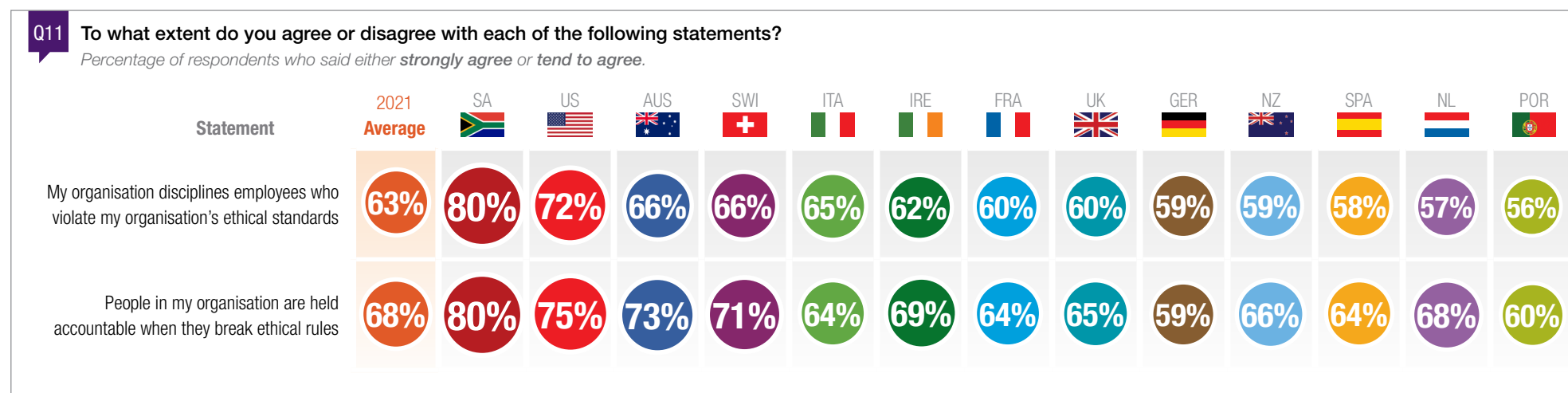


Managers are more likely than non-managers to agree with each of the three statements above.

How are ethical standards enforced?

On average, more than three in five (63%) of respondents think that people in their organisation are disciplined when they violate their organisation's ethical standards.

Employees in South Africa are the most likely to agree with each of the two statements (both at 80%).



Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to have positive views of their organisation's ability to enforce its ethical standards are:



Men, who are more likely than women to agree with each statement.



Younger employees (aged 18 – 34), who are more likely than their older colleagues to agree with each statement.



Employees in large organisations, who are more likely than employees in SMEs to agree with each statement.



Managers, who are more likely than non-managers to agree with each statement.

How does the presence of an environment that is supportive of ethics correlate with other aspects of ethics at work?

Employees' responses to eight of the statements included in Q11 were used to identify and compare two groups of respondents: those in a working environment that is supportive of ethics (who agreed with at least seven of those statements) and those in a working environment that is unsupportive of ethics (who agreed with three or less of those statements). Employees in organisations where there is an environment that is supportive of ethics are more likely than those in organisations with an unsupportive environment to say that:

- **Honesty** is practised in their organisation always or frequently (95% vs 68%).
- Their opinion of **how ethically their organisation behaves** has improved following the Covid-19 pandemic (50% vs 17%).
- They **raised their concerns** about misconduct they had been aware of (71% vs 45%).
- They are **satisfied with the outcome** after raising their concerns about misconduct (87% vs 26%).

However, employees in organisations where there is an environment that is supportive of ethics are also more likely than those in organisation with an unsupportive environment to say that:

- Minor **breaches of the rules** are inevitable in a modern organisation (41% vs 34%), that if they cracked down on every minor breach of the rules, they would soon find they had no staff (36% vs 33%) or suppliers (33% vs 25%), and that as long as they come in on time and within budget, they are not going to worry about some minor breaches of the rules (27% vs 23%).

- It is acceptable to artificially increase profits in the books as long as no money is stolen (16% vs 8%).
- They are concerned about each of the statements about the **future of the workplace** listed in [Q15](#). For example, 40% of employees in supportive organisations are concerned about the inability of their organisation to live up to their stated ethical standards, compared to 33% of those in unsupportive organisations.

Employees in organisations where there is an environment that is supportive of ethics are also less likely than those in organisations with an unsupportive environment to ethics to say that:

- They have been aware of **misconduct** at work (13% vs 28%).
- They have experienced **retaliation** for raising their concerns about misconduct (39% vs 53%).
- They have **felt pressured** to compromise their organisation's standards of ethical conduct (8% vs 18%).

What are employees' attitudes towards minor breaches of the rules?

On average, two in five respondents think that minor breaches of the rules are inevitable in a modern organisation. Employees in the UK are the most likely to say so (57%), while in Italy they are the least likely (27%).

Q14 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Percentage of respondents who said either **strongly agree** or **tend to agree**.

Statement	2021 Average	UK	IRE	NZ	AUS	SA	US	NL	FRA	POR	SPA	SWI	GER	ITA
Minor breaches of the rules are inevitable in a modern organisation	40%	57%	48%	46%	45%	45%	45%	42%	37%	34%	34%	33%	30%	27%
If we cracked down on every minor breach of the rules, we would soon find we had no staff	36%	45%	41%	37%	33%	44%	39%	30%	33%	28%	34%	31%	32%	39%
If we cracked down on every minor breach of the rules, we would soon find we had no suppliers	31%	35%	33%	25%	29%	41%	35%	24%	30%	27%	32%	25%	28%	35%
As long as I come in on time and within budget, I am not going to worry about some minor breaches of the rules	26%	31%	27%	24%	25%	24%	28%	27%	32%	16%	25%	27%	33%	23%
It is acceptable to artificially increase profits in the books as long as no money is stolen	13%	11%	10%	9%	13%	15%	18%	11%	22%	14%	22%	11%	8%	11%

Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to have lenient attitudes towards minor breaches of the rules are:



Men, who are more likely to agree with each statement than women.



Younger employees (aged 18 – 34), who are more likely to agree with each statement than their older colleagues.



Managers, who are more likely to agree with each statement than non-managers.

Current and Future Issues

This section looks at current and future issues that can have an impact on employees' perceptions of ethics at work. In particular, it focuses on:

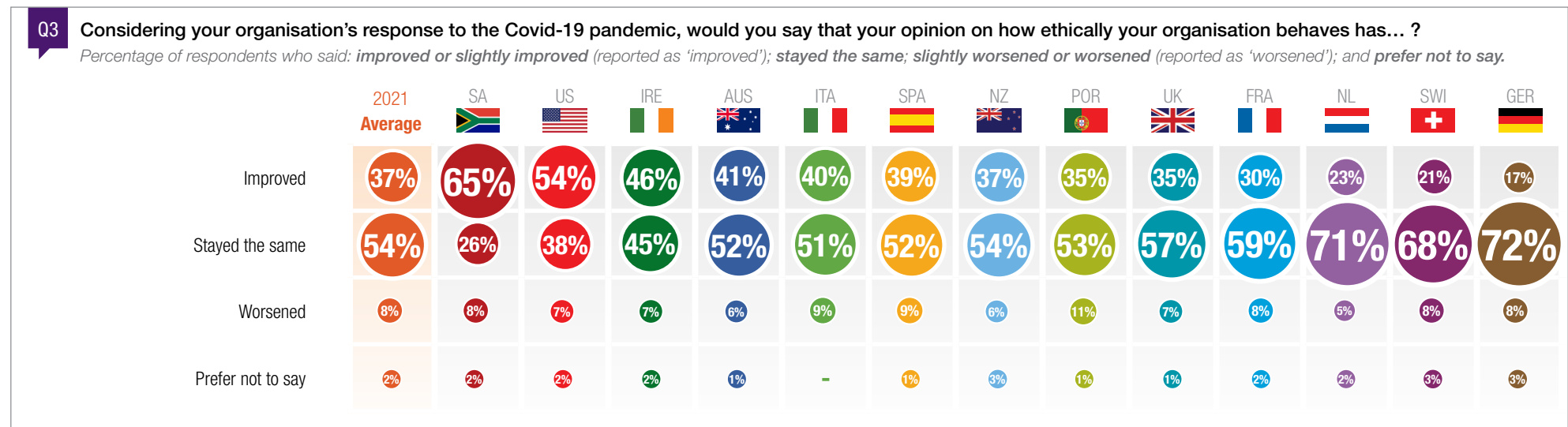
- The impact of the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic
- The main concerns that employees have about the future of the workplace.

5



What is the impact of the pandemic on employees' perception of ethics?

Overall, in all countries employees are more likely to say that their opinion on how ethically their organisation behaves has improved rather than worsened following the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is particularly the case in South Africa and the US, with 65% and 54% of respondents respectively saying that their opinion has improved.



Subgroups

The subgroups that are more likely to say that their opinion of how ethically their organisation behaves has improved after the Covid-19 pandemic are:



Men (38%), compared to women (36%)



Younger employees (aged 18 – 34) (45%), compared to 36% of employees aged 35 – 54 and 28% of employees aged 55+.



Employees in large organisations, (40%) compared to those in SMEs (34%).



Managers (45%), compared to non-managers (32%).

What are the main concerns that employees have about the future of the workplace?

On average, the issue of most concern for employees with regards to the future of the workplace is the loss of interpersonal interactions due to the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown (44%), closely followed by misuse of Artificial Intelligence for unethical behaviour, discrimination or bias in the workplace (41%) and automated machines or Artificial Intelligence replacing human in the workplace (41%).

Employees in Portugal and South Africa are the most likely to be concerned about each of the issues proposed, while employees in Germany and in the Netherlands are least likely.



Statements from Gold Corporate Partners of the Survey

GLENCORE

Glencore

We have been transforming the global commodities industry for nearly half a century, evolving from a marketer of oil, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, into one of the world's leading miners and marketers. Reflecting our Purpose to responsibly source the commodities that advance everyday life, our commitment is to deliver financial performance and operational excellence while making a positive contribution to society.

Our focus on operating with integrity – having the courage to do what's right, even when it's hard – is at the heart of what we do. From maintaining relationships with our customers to collaborating with employees across the Group, integrity is a key pillar for our success. We always aim to create lasting benefits for stakeholders in a manner that is responsible, transparent and respectful to the rights of all. Finding out more about our employees' satisfaction with their roles as well as vitally important concepts such as safety and ethical behaviour are key elements that underpin our strategy and reputation as a responsible and ethical operator.

We are proud to partner with the IBE on this project. We started supporting the IBE as they are a leading provider of guidance on ethics and compliance topics. We worked with them in the development of our Code of Conduct and in designing our People survey and benchmarking our results. Having access to strong research allows companies to benchmark their progress and continually improve in their efforts to embed ethical values into their culture.

Glencore is one of the world's largest global diversified natural resource companies and a major producer and marketer of more than 60 responsibly-sourced commodities that advance everyday life. The Group's operations comprise around 150 mining and metallurgical sites and oil production assets. With a strong footprint in over 35 countries, Glencore's industrial activities are supported by a global network of more than 30 marketing offices. Glencore's customers are industrial consumers. We employ around 135,000 people, including contractors. Our ambition is to be a net zero total emissions company by 2050.

Statements from Gold Corporate Partners of the Survey



Mott MacDonald

Our commitment to ethics is underpinned by our PRIDE values (progress, respect, integrity, drive, excellence). For over 20 years they have helped define what we stand for and guide our behaviour, shape our culture and inform our relationships with clients, partners and colleagues. We have further incorporated our PRIDE values by adopting the tagline 'Delivering with PRIDE' into the development and launch of Our Code – Delivering with PRIDE which launched in September 2021.

Our Code consolidates our commitment to doing what's right by setting out our standards and expectations on the issues that matter to us. Together Our Code and PRIDE values support a framework for how we achieve and sustain success as a responsible business as we build stronger, more trusting relationships with stakeholders. Fundamentally, for us, ethics is about helping all our colleagues to do the right thing in the right way – even when no one is looking.

As we continue to build out our own ethics & compliance programme, we wanted to partner with IBE on this survey, not only to demonstrate our own commitment, but also to support this vital work that informs and guides all of us in the development of ethics within our organisations.

Mott MacDonald's purpose is to improve society by considering social outcomes in everything we do; relentlessly focusing on excellence and digital innovation, transforming our clients' businesses, our communities and employee opportunities.

To this end we're involved in:

- solving some of the world's most urgent social, environmental and economic challenges
- helping governments and businesses plan, deliver and sustain their strategic goals
- responding to humanitarian and natural emergencies
- improving people's lives

For every project, we create the blend of talent needed to create the right result – appropriate; cost, carbon and resource-efficient; safe and swift to deliver and operate; reliable and resilient.

Statements from Gold Corporate Partners of the Survey



Northrop Grumman

At Northrop Grumman, we are proud of our reputation, which is built on a foundation of ethics and integrity and reflects our [Values](#). Our Values support our ability to deliver on our shared purpose; they reflect who we are and how we treat others; they define who we are as a people and a culture, and how we act and operate. Our Values reaffirm what is important to us and explicitly state what we should expect from our company and from one another. This is what makes our company special.

- **We Do the Right Thing** – we earn trust, act with ethics, integrity, and transparency, treat everyone with respect, value diversity, and foster safe and inclusive environments.
- **We Do What We Promise** – we own the delivery of results focused on quality outcomes.
- **We Commit to Shared Success** – we work together to focus on the mission and take accountability for the sustainable success of our people, customers, shareholders, suppliers, and communities.
- **We Pioneer** – with fierce curiosity, dedication, and innovation; we seek to solve the world's most challenging problems.

Northrop Grumman solves the toughest problems in space, aeronautics, defense and cyberspace to meet the ever evolving needs of our customers worldwide. Our 90,000 employees define possible every day using science, technology and engineering to create and deliver advanced systems, products and services.

Methodology

This report presents the findings of public research undertaken by Yonder on behalf of the IBE. Yonder is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Where the data are available, the 2021 results are compared with survey results from 2018, 2015 and 2012.

The survey was completed by a total of 9,834 respondents across 13 countries. It comprised a sample of about 750 working adults (aged 18+) in each country. The survey was undertaken in May 2021. Loose nationally representative quotas were set in each market during fieldwork, based on age, gender, and region. With these loose quotas in place, the working adult population was allowed to fall out naturally so as to not under- or over-represent any subset of the working population in any given market. Thus, the sample was deemed to be representative of the working adult population in each of the countries surveyed.

The survey was conducted online, in the native language of the country being surveyed, and questions were 'randomised' to avoid any undue bias there may have been when answering potentially sensitive questions. In some cases, percentages do not add up exactly to 100%. This is due to a number of reasons including rounding, participants being able to select more than one response to the question or additional options (e.g. don't know or prefer not to say).

The data have not been tested for statistical significance with previous editions of the survey. Therefore, any trends over time must be read with this in mind.

The methodology for data collection in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) changed in 2018. From 2005 to 2015, data was collected only in Great Britain through face-to-face interviews with full time workers and the data was weighted to be representative of the full-time working population aged 16+. The alteration in methodology is aimed at improving comparability of data between the different countries surveyed. However, this change has an impact on the ability to track changes over time in the UK and has to be kept in mind when comparing data for this country.

Ethics at Work: 2021 international survey of employees

We hope you found this report interesting and useful.

For further information about the research that underpins the report, please email us at info@ibe.org.uk.

If you would like to discuss how we can help you develop your own staff ethics survey or benchmark your data against our results, please contact engagement@ibe.org.uk.

For further information about the IBE, its services or becoming a Supporter, please visit www.ibe.org.uk or email us at info@ibe.org.uk.

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