Survey

Attitudes of the British Public to Business Ethics 2015

For each of the last 12 years, the Institute of Business Ethics has asked the British public its view on business ethics. This infographic shows the attitudes of the British public to business ethics in 2015.

Current business behaviour

Almost 40% of the British public still believe that British business is behaving unethically.

Current business behaviour compared to 10 years ago

Compared to 2014, the British public is now more likely to believe that companies are behaving more ethically than a decade ago (an increase of 6%).

34% 2015

Issues of most concern

Corporate tax avoidance 34%
Executive pay 25%
Exploitative labour 20%
Employees being able to speak out about company wrongdoing 19%
Discrimination 18%
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Current business behaviour

How ethically do you think British business generally behaves?

Perceptions of the British public regarding general ethical business behaviour appear to have reached a sticking point. In 2015, while 59% continue to believe business is behaving ethically, almost 40% still believe that British business is behaving unethically.

Age difference compared to general population, 2015

Those aged 16-34 are more positive in their perceptions of ethical business behaviour, two-thirds of whom think current business behaviour is ethical (% saying ‘ethically’ 2015: 66%)

Those aged 55+ are less positive, with less than half saying they think that business behaviour is ethical (% saying ‘ethically’ 2015: 49%)

Those aged 35-54 show a more positive attitude towards ethical business behaviour than they did in 2014 (% saying ‘ethically’ 2014: 55%; % saying ‘ethically’ 2015: 63%)

Research Methodology 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. [2014 base = 997]
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Current business behaviour compared to 10 years ago

How do you think British business is behaving now compared with 10 years ago?

Comparing current business behaviour to 10 years ago divides opinion, but versus 2014, attitudes of the British public appear to be more positive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More ethically</th>
<th>Less ethically</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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</tbody>
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Issues of most concern

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

Corporate tax avoidance remains the number one concern for the British public

Top 5 issues:

1. Corporate tax avoidance 34%
2. Executive pay 25%
3. Exploitative labour 20%
4. Employees being able to speak out about company wrongdoing 19%
5. Discrimination 18%

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Notable changes in attitudes since 2012

**Rising issues**

- **Exploitative labour*** is the only issue which has seen a gradual increase in prominence over the last three years. This can be related to its general increase as an issue of public concern, which culminated in the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015.

- **Work-home balance for employees** has seen the biggest increase in prominence between 2014-15. For many, the lines between work and home are becoming increasingly blurred, and this finding suggests that a higher number of the British public expect organisations to address this. This is consistent with the findings of the 2015 IBE Ethics at Work Survey.

- **Environmental responsibility** continues to fluctuate as an issue of concern, but has seen a significant rise between 2014-15.

**Falling issues**

- Since spiking after the introduction of the UK Bribery Act in 2011, bribery and corruption has seen a steady decrease in prominence since 2012. This can potentially be related to the increasing maturity of anti-bribery and corruption policies and initiatives in organisations.

- **Advertising and marketing practices** have also steadily decreased as an issue of concern since 2013.

- **Executive pay** has seen the biggest fall as an issue of concern between 2014-15.