

Majority of workers feel they work for an honest organisation

However, half of employees who were aware of misconduct fail to report it

Two surveys published today by the Institute of Business Ethics set out the views of employees in Great Britain and continental Europe (France, Germany, Italy and Spain) on ethical standards and behaviour in their workplace.

The majority of British (84%) and continental European (77%) employees say that honesty is practiced “Always/Frequently” in their organisation’s daily practices. In addition, the majority of British and continental European employees perceive their organisation as having an ‘ethical culture’ in place - according to seven indicators measuring the ethical behaviour of line management and ethical standards in organisations (at least 60% of respondents agreed with each of seven positive statements*).

However, of the fifth of British employees (20%) and the quarter (28%) of continental European employees aware of misconduct in their organisation in the last year only half in each case (51%) say they reported it.

“Attitudes of indifference (‘It’s none of my business’) and the belief that no corrective action would be taken, deter employees who are aware of misconduct from raising their concerns,” says Simon Webley, IBE’s Research Director. “Businesses need to work harder at communicating the importance of speaking up, and supporting staff who do.”

Compared to 2008, components of a formal ethics programme seem more prevalent in Britain, with significant increases in the proportions of British workers saying their organisation provides each of four aspects (written standards on ethical business behaviour, up from 66% in 2008 to 73% in 2012; an anonymous mechanism for reporting misconduct, up from 54% to 69%; training on ethical standards, up from 55% to 62%; and an information helpline on ethical issues, up from 49% to 58%).

The case in continental Europe is less positive. Just half (53%) of employees say their organisation has written standards of ethical business behaviour in place, and less than half of employees say their organisation has an anonymous speak up mechanism (31%) or an advice or information helpline (34%) or provides training (39%) on ethical issues.

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For further information, contact Philippa Foster Back, IBE Director or Simon Webley (co-author):

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To obtain an advanced press copy of the surveys, or to organise interviews, please contact

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Employee Views of Ethics at Work: 2012 British Survey

ISBN 978 1 908534 04 0

By Sabrina Basran & Simon Webley

Executive Summary available here http://www.ibe.org.uk/userfiles/execsumm_gbethics_work%20survey2012.pdf

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Free downloads from www.ibe.org.uk. Hard copies £10

Launched Thursday 6th December 2012 at the Institute of Business Ethics, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1BE

3pm – 5pm

Simon Webley, IBE's Research Director and one of the authors of the report will present the survey findings. He will be joined by Patrick Lewis, Director of Partnership Services at John Lewis. Using examples from John Lewis, Patrick will respond to the surveys' findings, demonstrating that a strong ethical culture does have a positive effect on employee attitudes and perceptions of behaviour. Please email events@ibe.org.uk if you would like to attend.

The Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) is a non-profit professional organisation, which encourages high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values. They raise public awareness of the importance of doing business ethically, and collaborate with other UK and international organisations with interests and expertise in business ethics. www.ibe.org.uk

About the Surveys

Comparisons of the findings of these two studies are indicative only due to differences in methodology, sample composition, and fieldwork dates.

GB Survey During January and February 2012, the IBE carried out its third Ethics at Work Survey of British full-time employees. The data was collected by Ipsos MORI as part of its omnibus face-to-face survey of a quota sample of the British adult population. This report sets out the responses of 665 full-time British workers (a subset of a nationally representative sample of the British population), including 305 with managerial/supervisory roles. The results are compared with those of previous IBE British Ethics at Work Survey conducted in 2008 (791 respondents) and 2005 (759 respondents). The base size for those who have felt pressured to compromise their organisation's ethical standards is 56 in 2012 and 86 in 2008.

Continental Europe Survey In 2012 the IBE extended its British Ethics at Work Survey to four countries in continental Europe, with data collected by ComRes. This Paper sets out the online responses of nationally representative samples of full and part-time employees in private and public sector organisations in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, totaling 3,001 employees.

** The seven statements were: A. Overall, my line manager sets a good example of ethical business behaviour; B. My line manager explains the importance of honesty and ethics in the work we do; D. My line manager supports me in following my organisation's standards of ethical behaviour; E. My organisation disciplines employees who violate my organisation's ethics standards; F. My organisation acts responsibly in all its business dealings (with customers, clients, suppliers, etc.); G. My organisation lives up to its stated policy of social responsibility; H. Issues of right and wrong are discussed in staff meetings. Employees were asked whether they agree or disagree with each statement.*

The authors

Sabrina Basran is a Research Officer at the City of London Corporation. Prior to joining the City of London Corporation she worked as Researcher for the Institute of Business Ethics, where she researched and wrote on best practice on a range of business ethics topics, advised companies on embedding ethical values in their organisations, and engaged in public speaking to raise awareness of the subject. She has published a number of research reports on business ethics topics including *Corporate Ethics Policies & Programmes: UK and Continental Europe Survey 2010* (co-author, 2011).

Simon Webley is Research Director at the Institute of Business Ethics. He has published a number of studies on business ethics, the most recent being: *Religious Practices in the Workplace* (2011), *Corporate Ethics Policies & Programmes: UK and Continental Europe Survey 2010* (co-author, 2011), *Employee Views of Ethics at Work: The 2008 National Survey* (2009), and *Use of Codes of Ethics in Business* (2008).

Sponsors

The views expressed in these reports are those of the authors under the editorial control of the IBE. The IBE thanks Japan Tobacco International (JTI) and Finmeccanica UK for their financial support of the continental Europe survey.