



## Attitudes of the British Public to Business Ethics 2020

For 18 years the Institute of Business Ethics has asked Ipsos MORI to survey the British public (GB adults 18 – 65) about its view on how ethical British business is.

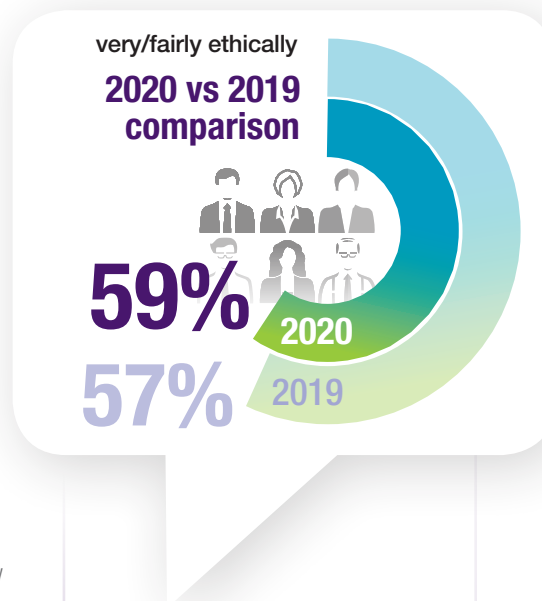
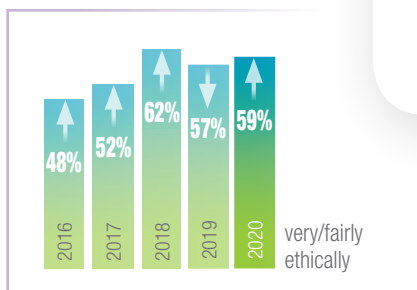
**This infographic shows how the British public's attitudes have changed since the survey began in 2003.<sup>1</sup>**



### Key Finding

**About six in ten British people believe that British businesses behave ethically.**

The figure sits just 3% short of its highest value since the survey began in 2003, when it reached 62% in 2018.



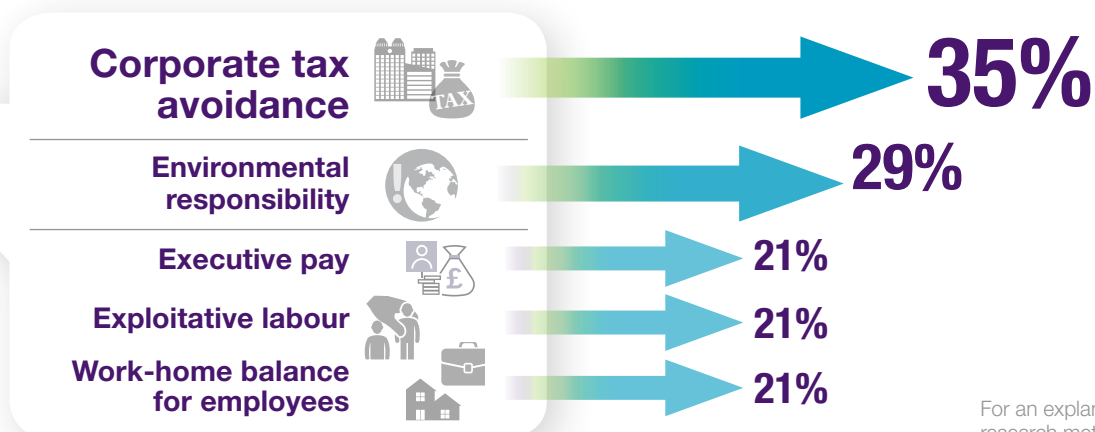
### Headline findings

**Men** are more likely than women to think that operational ethical issues, such as executive pay and corporate tax avoidance, are in need of addressing.

**Women** are more likely than men to select interpersonal issues including discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Compared to other age groups, the **youngest respondents (18-34)** are more likely to think that discrimination and human rights issues need addressing, while the **oldest group (55+)** are more likely to select corporate tax avoidance and executive pay.

### Issues needing addressing<sup>2</sup>



For an explanation of the research methodology and respondent profile see page 4

<sup>1</sup> Please note, in 2016 there was a methodology change from face-to-face to online interviewing

<sup>2</sup> Full results to this question can be found at: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/key-consumer-influencers-study-autumn-2020-tables.pdf>

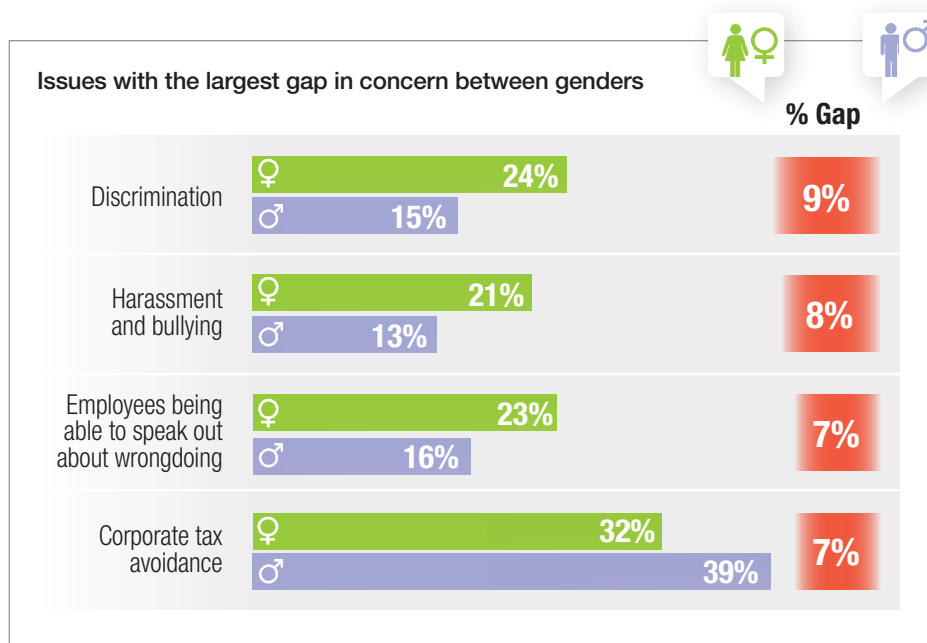
# Demographic Differences

**Q** *In your view of company behaviour, which two or three issues most need addressing?* <sup>3</sup>

## The Gender Gap

**The type of issues prioritised by men over women and vice versa appears to show a pattern.**

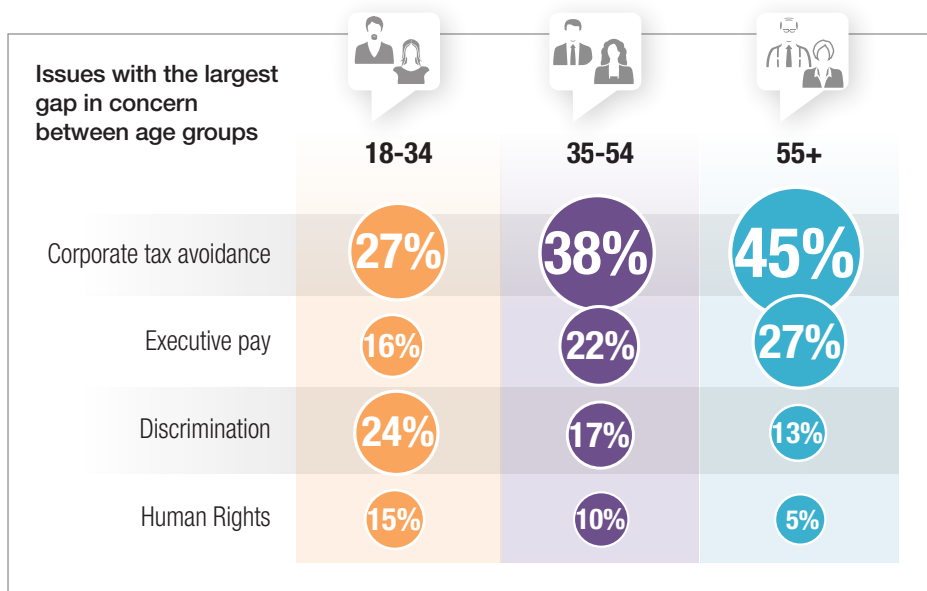
Women prioritise largely ‘interpersonal’ issues like discrimination (by 9 percentage points more than men), harassment and bullying in the workplace (by 8pp more than men) and employees’ ability to speak up about company wrongdoing (by 7pp more than men). Conversely, men tend to prioritise less interpersonal, more operational issues like bribery and corruption (by 4pp more than women), executive pay (by 4pp more than women), treatment of suppliers (by 5pp more than women), and corporate tax avoidance (by 7pp more than women).



## The Age Gap

**The results show that different age groups tend to prioritise different issues.** The largest gap in concern between age groups is regarding corporate tax avoidance; 27% of 18-34 year-olds pick the issue, 38% of 35-54 year-olds, and 45% of the 55 and over age group. Older people are also more likely to identify executive pay as a pressing issue; 27% of the 55+ group select it, compared to just 22% of the 35-54 group and 16% of the 18-34 group.

The pattern is reversed with regard to some other issues; younger people (18-34) prioritise discrimination (25% of them selected this issue, compared to 17% of the 35-54 group and 13% of the 55+ group). 15% of the youngest group identify human rights as a key area in need of addressing, compared to 10% of 35-54 year-olds and just 5% of the oldest group of respondents.



For an explanation of the research methodology and respondent profile see page 4

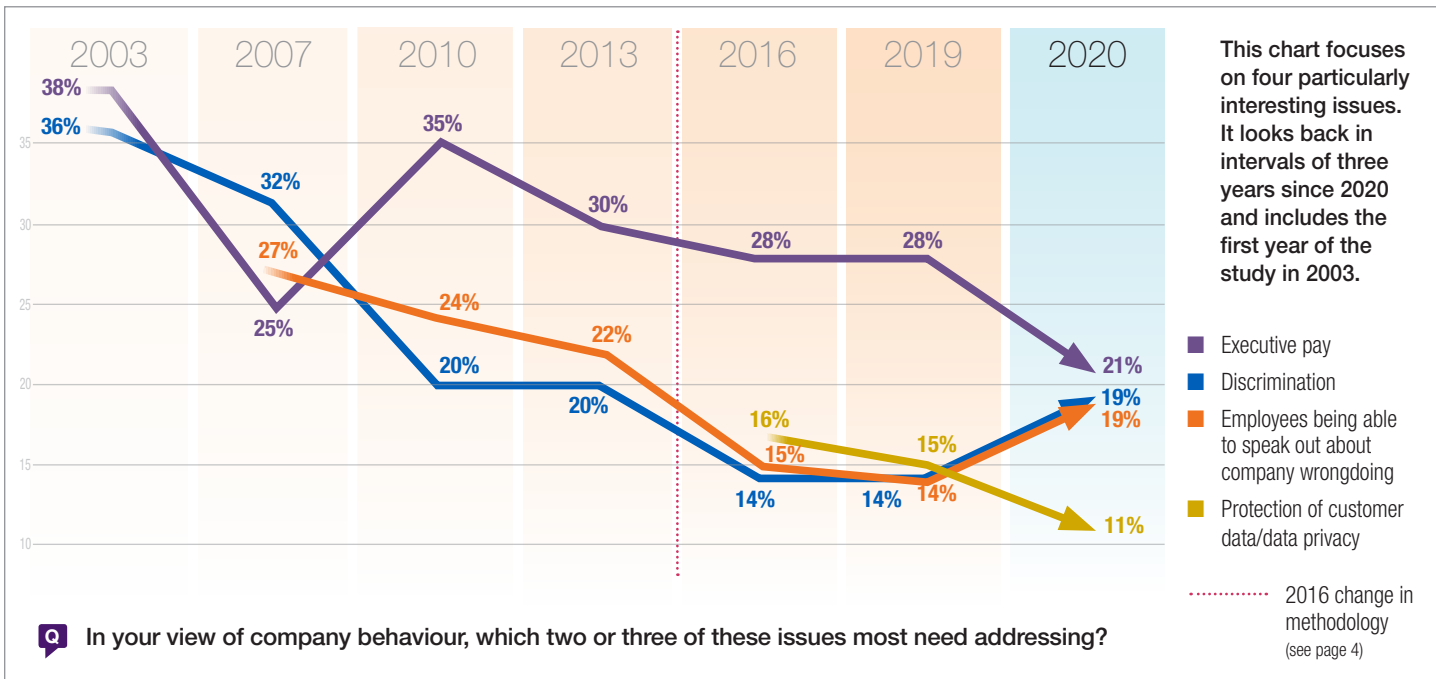
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# What has changed?

**Q** In your view of company behaviour, which two or three issues most need addressing?

## Trends since 2003



## This year's main movers

### • Discrimination



The prominence of discrimination as an issue in need of addressing according to respondents has fallen gradually since this survey began in 2003. This year, however, it jumped up 5 percentage points, with just under a fifth of respondents picking it. Protests and dialogue around issues of racism have gained a lot of media attention in 2020, leading many to reconsider their stances and putting issues of diversity and discrimination in the forefront of public discourse. We think this might have had an impact on these results.

### • Employees' ability to speak out about wrongdoing



This issue saw a jump of 5pp on last year, up to 19%. We think it's possible that this jump may be attributable to some large, public business ethics scandals that took place this year, but there are a few of those every year; perhaps more likely is that the pandemic's impact has massively undermined many people's job security, creating a dynamic of fear that inhibits the raising of concerns. It could also be argued that people furloughed or working from home might find it harder to raise a concern.

### • Executive Pay



Executive pay has historically been one of the most frequently selected issues in this survey. This year it retains a spot in the top three, but drops from 2nd to joint 3rd after a decrease of 8 percentage points; the largest change we recorded this year. At the IBE, we speculated that with the pandemic leading to the rollout of the furlough scheme and firms laying off employees in large numbers, that this would be an even more controversial issue, but that does not appear to be the case.

### • Protection of customer data/data privacy



This issue saw a decrease of 4pp this year. We suggest it could be that people feel more at ease with how their data is used and stored, or it may just be that people felt other issues were more pressing this year.

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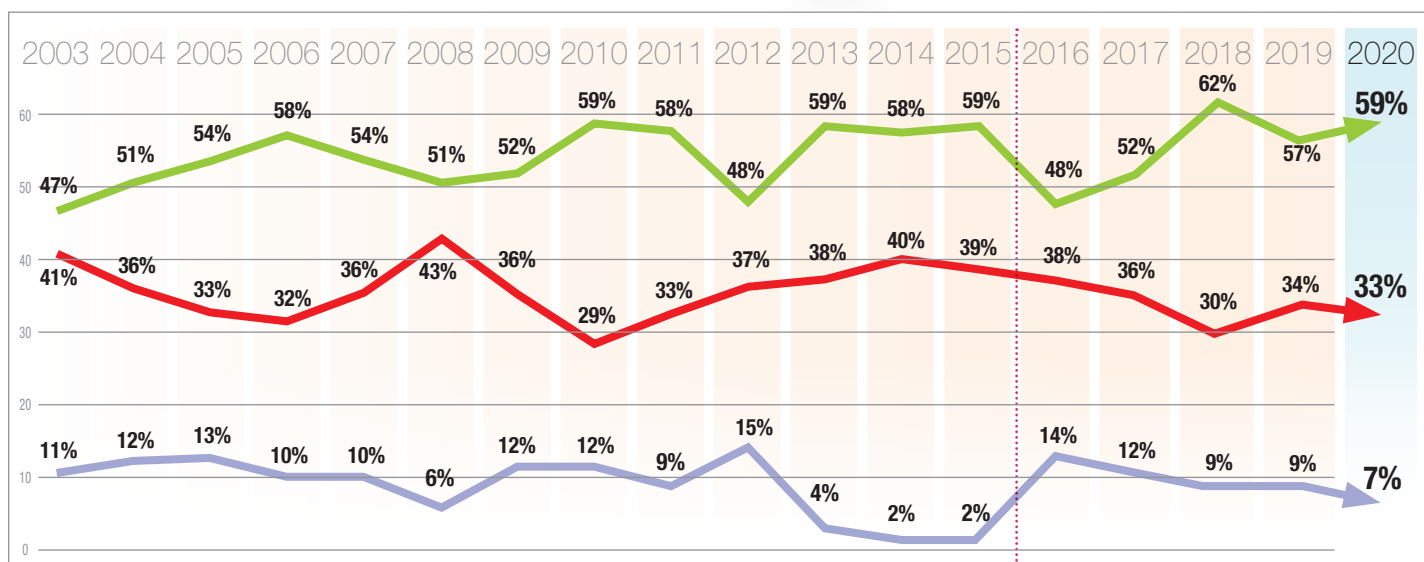
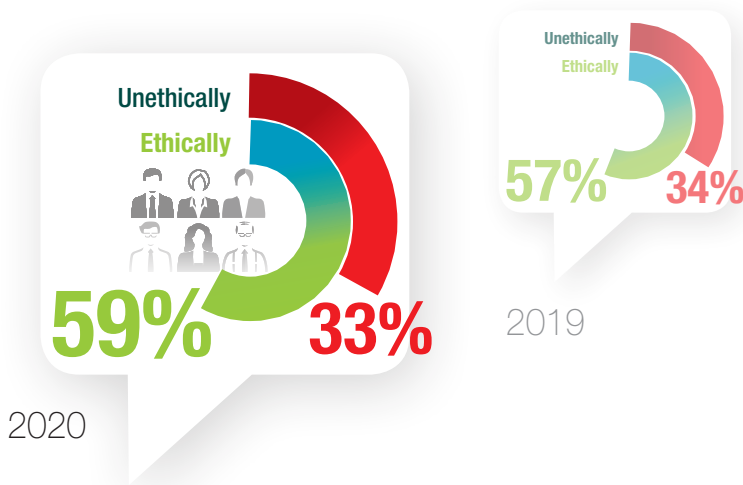


# Current business behaviour

**Q** How ethically do you think British business generally behaves?

The British public's view of how business behaves is now back to the second-highest level since our survey began

Only in 2018 was it higher, at 62%. The figure has reached 59% three times before: in 2010, 2013, and 2015.



**Q** There is a lot of discussion these days about how ethically business is behaving - that is, how far its behaviour and decisions follow good principles. How ethically do you think British business generally behaves?

■ Ethically    
 ■ Unethically    
 ■ No opinion    
 ..... change in methodology (see below)

## Research Methodology

The research is conducted on behalf of the IBE by Ipsos MORI. This year, 2001 GB adults aged 18+ completed an online survey between 23 September and 5 October 2020. Data have been weighted to reflect the adult population (18-65) in the UK in terms of age, gender, region, class, ethnicity, housing tenure and occupational status.

In 2016 the study moved from face-to-face interviewing to online surveying. It is widely acknowledged that online surveys elicit more 'don't know' responses compared to face-to-face surveys, as respondents are considered to be more comfortable in saying that they are unsure about something when not responding face-to-face.

Respondent Profile	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Working	Graduate
	2,001	46%	54%	31%	47%	22%	60%	40%	73%	51%