

EVERYONE'S BUSINESS TRACKER

PUBLIC ATTITUDES REPORT

JANUARY 2018



In partnership with

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The numbers behind the reputation of UK business have improved since our last survey. In the same period, the national discussion about the value of British business has reached new levels.

Since May the role business plays in society has been in sharp focus. Brexit negotiations and political debate have directed attention onto the big issues facing our economy and the implications for firms, jobs and prosperity.

It appears that this debate has focused minds on business value. Awareness about the contribution of UK business and the public's understanding of business has improved. Now, more people say they understand how a company works and fewer people feel business leaders are out of tune with their daily lives. This has resulted in an equally positive change in the public's view of business. It seems that public mindfulness about the UK's economic health influences people's attitudes towards business.

However, there is still a clear disconnect between what businesses do and what people believe. Companies are not complacent about this challenge and our research continues to show the key ways businesses can improve their reputation.

It starts with good behaviour. Treating employees well remains the number one action that people say can improve the reputation of businesses – higher than transparency on tax and action on executive pay.

Businesses must also do more to make their important contribution to the UK feel real for employees and customers. This means upping levels of employee engagement and communicating in a way that is genuine, compelling and which resonates with what the public values from business.

This report re-establishes our early findings which is reassuring, but it also reveals a new and significant link between consumer trust and cyber security. Over the course of the next six months the Everyone's Business campaign will continue to identify local and sector insights to help companies across UK regions tackle the issues which their employees and local communities really care about.

Josh Hardie



Deputy director-general, CBI



KEY FINDINGS

65%

think the reputation of UK business is good
+7 % change since July

67%

report positive relationship with their employer
+3 % change since July

50%

understand how a company works
+2 % change since July

31%

agree they know very little about what
businesses actually do
-7 % change since July

69%

agree the heads of business are far
removed from the lives of ordinary people
-8 % change since July

66%

think the biggest contribution business
makes to society is by providing jobs
-2 % change since July

72%

say customer service is most valued factor
when interacting with business
+7 % change since July

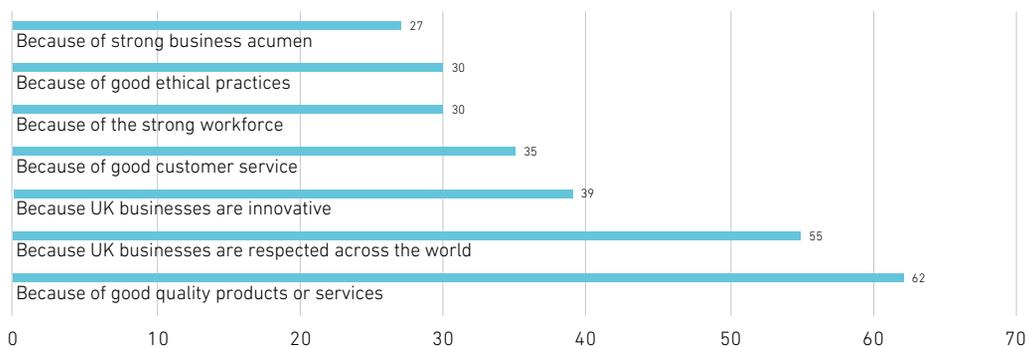
69%

believe treating employees well is best way
to improve reputation of business
+9 % change since July

The reputation of British business has strengthened, in a period of economic uncertainty

Two thirds of people agree that the reputation of UK business is good or very good with new insight from the tracker revealing that pride in British business is a key factor driving public attitudes. The global reputation and quality of goods and services produced in the UK contribute significantly to the public's favourable views of business. The public also recognises the UK as a 'service economy' with 35% of people saying the provision of essential services is the main contribution of business to society relative to just 31% for goods.

Exhibit 1: Why do you think the reputation of UK business is good?



The public's perception of business has improved across all groups within society. Ten out of the UK's twelve regions improved their reputation scores since our last survey and three-quarters of the UK's regions received better employer scores than in May. While regional variations remain obvious the overall picture is one of improvement. Over the next few months it will be interesting to explore the factors which have been contributing to these regional differences in greater detail.

Exhibit 2: % agree reputation of UK business is good or very good

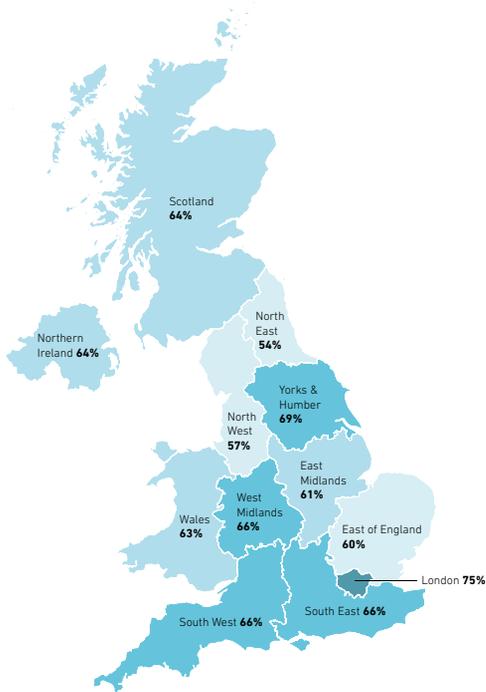
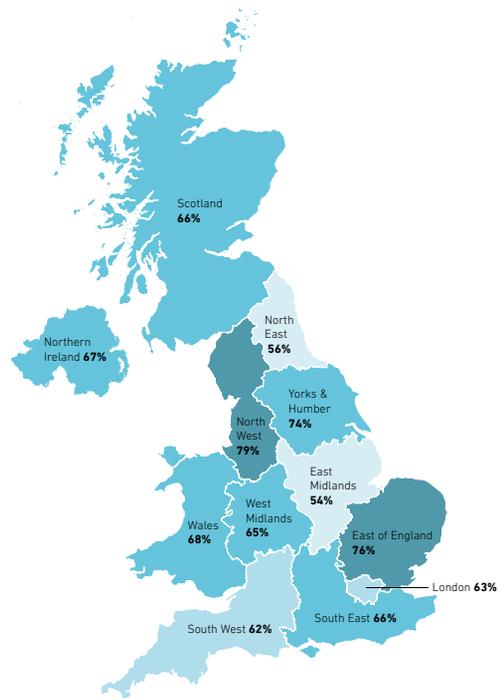
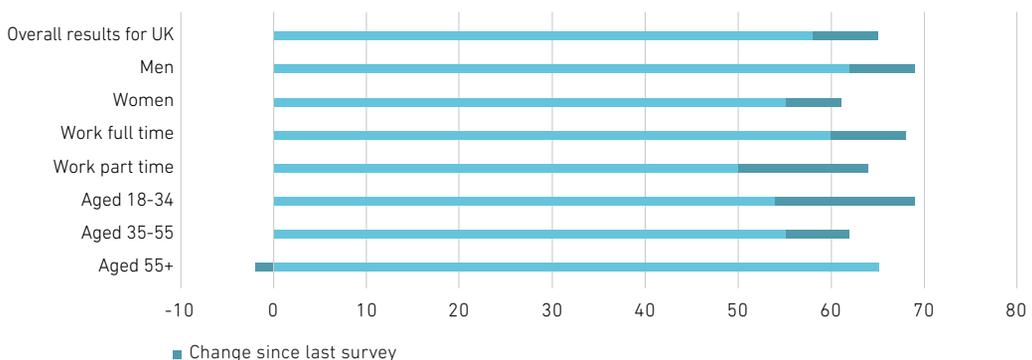


Exhibit 3: % agree they have a positive relationship with their employer



The views of people in work improved dramatically. But the biggest improvement in business reputation was reported among young people, with a significant 15% rise in positive views among 18-34 year-olds. This reinforces the view that younger people are hugely engaged in the debate on the UK's future. Yet the motivations of millennials remain distinct from other age groups. Young people are least likely to give specific reasons for their views and these views are more changeable. The Everyone's Business campaign will therefore seek to explore the dominant factors which shape the opinions of young people over the coming months.

Exhibit 4: Percentage of people who describe the reputation of UK business as 'good' or 'very good'

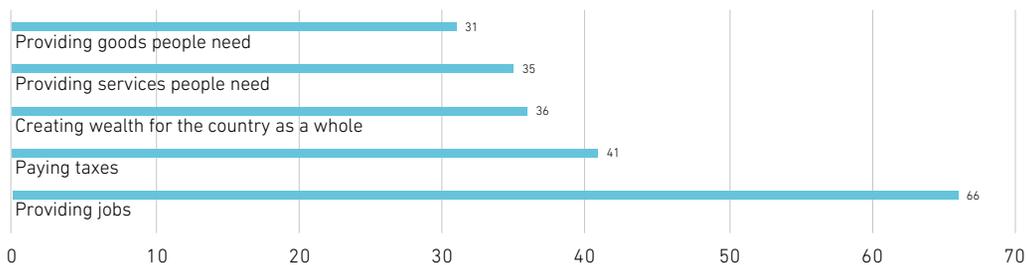


Job creation is still the most important contribution businesses make to society

The public understands – and values – the direct link between business, employment, and the health of the economy.

There continues to be strong agreement that the biggest contribution of businesses large and small is providing jobs. Similarly, the public is clear in its expectations that job creation should be the biggest contribution business makes to local communities. These results give local businesses a real opportunity to improve public attitudes by communicating and focusing on the jobs they create.

Exhibit 5: What is the most important contribution business should make to UK society?



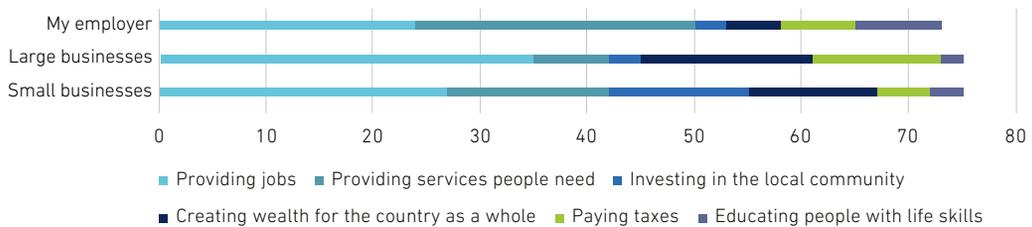
“If more people are working the better the country is”

“Providing jobs benefits the local community”

“High employment enables more disposable income goods and services, keeping the economy afloat”

Employees also make a clear link between their work and their company's value in the community. Employees think their employer's biggest contribution to society is by providing the goods and services which people need. This makes sense because the public's opinions about business are primarily shaped by their own daily experiences in work or as customers. Employees take pride in their work delivering the key goods and services their companies provide. Employers who can harness this insight and talk about how their company is delivering social outcomes via the products they create are likely to gain from improvements in reputation among their employees, but also the wider public.

Exhibit 6: What do you think is the biggest contribution business makes to UK society?



Sharing information about the value your company creates locally - by creating jobs and delivering products people need – is a powerful way to shape the public's view of your company as a responsible business.

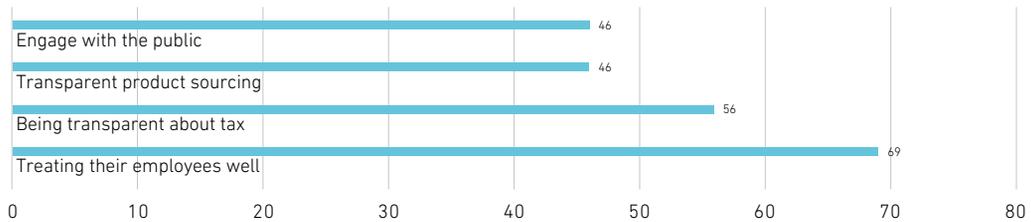
DID YOU KNOW: UK businesses employ almost 27 million people in the UK. On average 72% of business income is spent on employing staff through wages, pension payments and National Insurance Contributions.

Treating employees well remains the best way to improve business reputation

Every sector of the economy benefited from an improvement in public sentiment towards business. The most positive relationships reported by the public remains the interaction between employees and their employers.

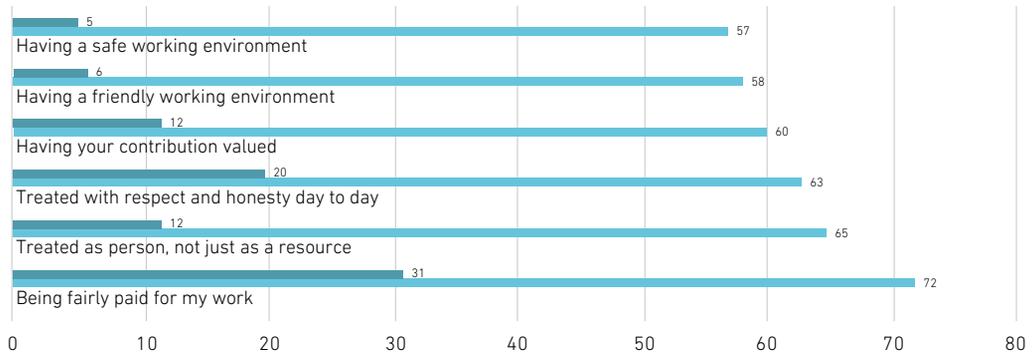
Nationally 67% reported a good relationship with their employer. Furthermore, the public are clear that how people are treated at work remains the critical factor for business trust and reputation, followed by transparency around key business practices.

Exhibit 7: Which action would most improve the reputation of UK business



Being paid fairly is a key criterion for the public, but pay isn't the only factor. Having a good working environment and being treated with respect are two elements where cost is no obstacle to progress.

The strong bond between employers and their employees provides a great opportunity for companies looking to improve their reputations. Companies which excel at employee care are likely to be perceived more favourably by the public.

Exhibit 8: What does it mean to you to be treated well by your employer?

Being clear about the way your company treats its employees is an effective way to shape people's attitudes towards your business.

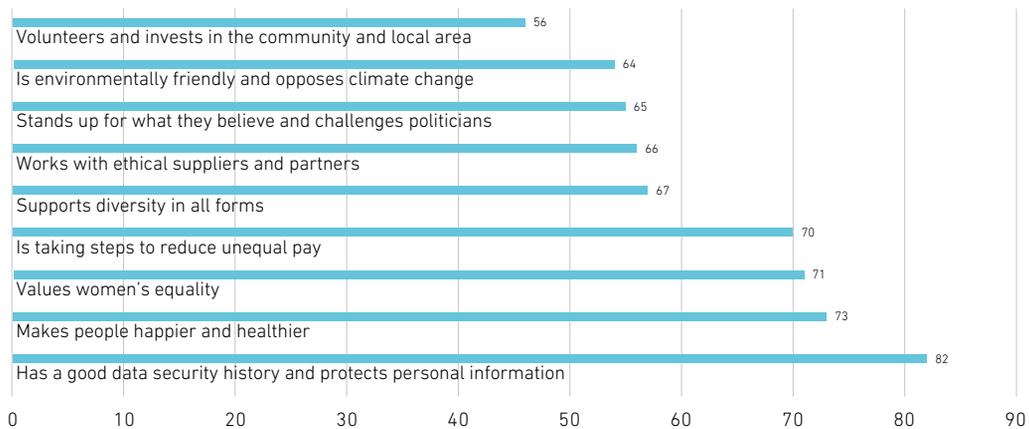
DID YOU KNOW: Improving employee engagement has been a top employer priority for many years – 73% of companies make a link between employee engagement and productivity.

In a digital economy companies must offer people a secure yet personal experience

Consumer instinct plays a large part in shaping views about business. People are looking for a personal connection with the companies they use but they want to know that their own information is protected.

A firm's record on data security is an important factor for many people when assessing which British brands they want to buy from and work with. As more and more transactions take place online it is important that companies adapt to people's changing habits to maintain consumer trust.

Exhibit 9: How important are the following characteristics when choosing the businesses you buy from or work with? (% net important)



Taking action to prioritise data security within your business will improve customer and employee confidence and trust in your company.

DID YOU KNOW: The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force on 25 May 2018 and businesses are gearing up to meet this new requirement. These new rules set out how businesses should manage and protect employee and customer information.

For further information on this report,
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The tables contained in this publication
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October 2017. Opinium conducted an online
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has been weighted to reflect a nationally
representative audience. If the base is not
otherwise specified, then the results in
that table reflect the full sample.

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