

EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

PUBLIC ATTITUDES REPORT



In partnership with

**PORTER
NOVELLI** 

⁰⁷
Op
Opinium

FOREWORD

Business leaders know only too well that public perceptions matter.

As businesses, our reputations are our “licence to operate” and our right to be listened to by the public and in the debates that matter. Right now, this is more important than ever as the UK makes decisions about its future that will define a generation.

Business is a powerful force for good, making a massive contribution to people’s lives. Firms across the UK employ almost 27m people – that’s nearly 2 million more than they did five years ago. Last year businesses paid £205 billion in taxes in the UK – that pays for nearly one in three teachers or hospitals. As Chairman of Teach First – a fantastic social enterprise aimed at tackling educational disadvantage – I see how the support of businesses helps organisations like

Teach First to provide inspirational classroom teachers and leaders in low-income communities across England and Wales.

Despite this, in the years since the recession there has been a loud debate about the value that business brings to the UK and whether it really understands or cares about people’s concerns.

That’s why the CBI, in partnership with Porter Novelli and Opinium, have embarked on this research – to stop and listen to what people think about business today.

When we listened, people told us that they do recognise the important role that business plays – particularly in providing jobs – but there is still a reputation challenge and a clear disconnect between what businesses do and what people believe.

FOREWORD CONTINUED

To tackle this, businesses need to improve the way that they interact with employees and customers, to show that they are more than faceless machines motivated by profit. This must be a concerted effort – the best businesses know that actions speak louder than words.

I'm calling on more business leaders to get out there and talk about what matters to people, junk the jargon and think creatively about ways to improve their interactions with employees and customers.

Shifting perceptions won't be easy – but it's in the best interests of all for businesses to do so and I believe that Britain's firms are up to the job.

Paul Drechsler CBE
CBI President



WELCOME TO THE FIRST CBI & PORTER NOVELLI'S 'EVERYONE'S BUSINESS' REPORT

A shared mission to help business create a more prosperous society has brought the CBI and Porter Novelli together, with Opinium, to create the “Everyone’s Business” reputation tracker.

With the opportunities the UK currently faces – from Brexit to the huge impact of changing technology – the debate about the role of business in society matters more than ever.

In this joint study we confirmed an ongoing reputation challenge and a damaging disconnect between what the public thinks and what business delivers. The public has described two golden values that all businesses must exhibit if they are to build better relationships and bridge that disconnect.

1. FAMILIARITY

The more familiar the public are with a business, the more sympathetic their attitude. Perhaps one of the most surprising findings from the research was that the better the public know a sector, the more likely they are to think it contributes to society.

Similarly, we also found a link between the public’s knowledge of a sector and the feeling they had a good relationship with those businesses. There is a huge opportunity for more ‘distant’ businesses to become more familiar.

CONTINUED

2. A HUMAN FACE

The British public is looking for the human face of business, they don't identify with business leaders and want to see businesses represented by someone like themselves. A massive 77% of British people say, "Heads of businesses are very far removed from the world of 'ordinary' people", reflecting the desire for common ground that the public don't have with CEOs.

It draws us to the conclusion that if businesses can combine the traditional demands of competitiveness, drive and expertise with the modern demands for public empathy – to not just see and hear their customers but to relate to them too – then the public will repay them with loyalty and trust.

Businesses are the source of economic growth, jobs and opportunity in our communities. But businesses can only make a full contribution if people see the value they create. Firms up and down the country must rise to the challenge if they are to help build a more prosperous economy where the benefits are felt by all.

With Opinium tracking these themes regularly, the CBI and Porter Novelli will work with businesses to navigate and respond to these findings.

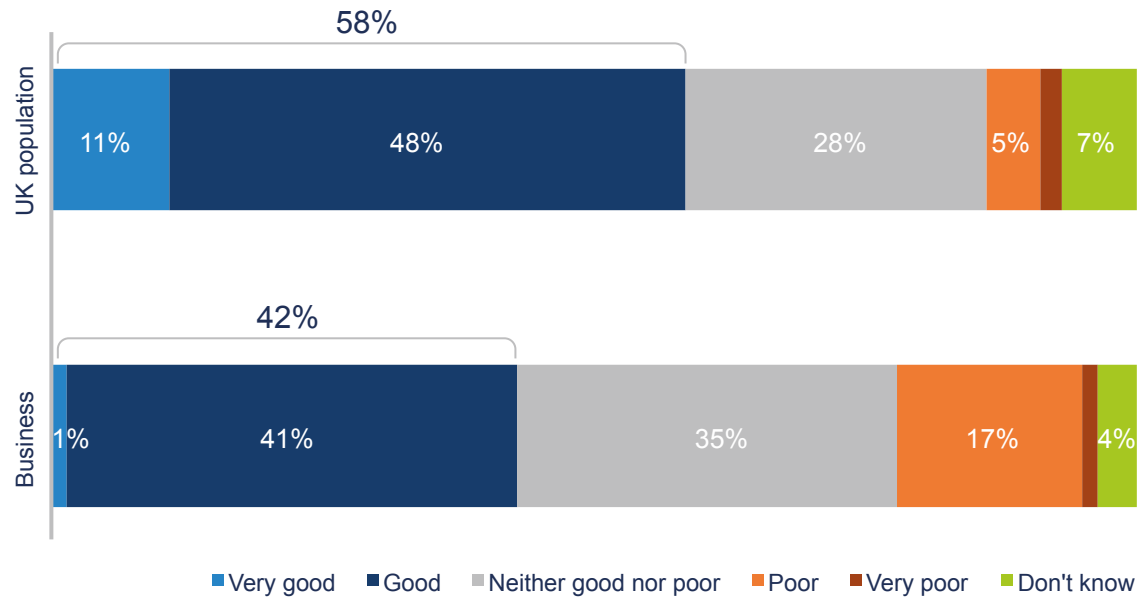
Josh Hardie, Deputy director general, CBI
Fenella Grey, MD, Porter Novelli London

INSIGHT 1

Firms are not complacent about the reputation challenge, but must focus on the public's desire to be treated as an individual

PUBLIC MORE POSITIVE ABOUT BUSINESS THAN COMPANIES THEMSELVES

How would you describe the reputation of UK business as whole?

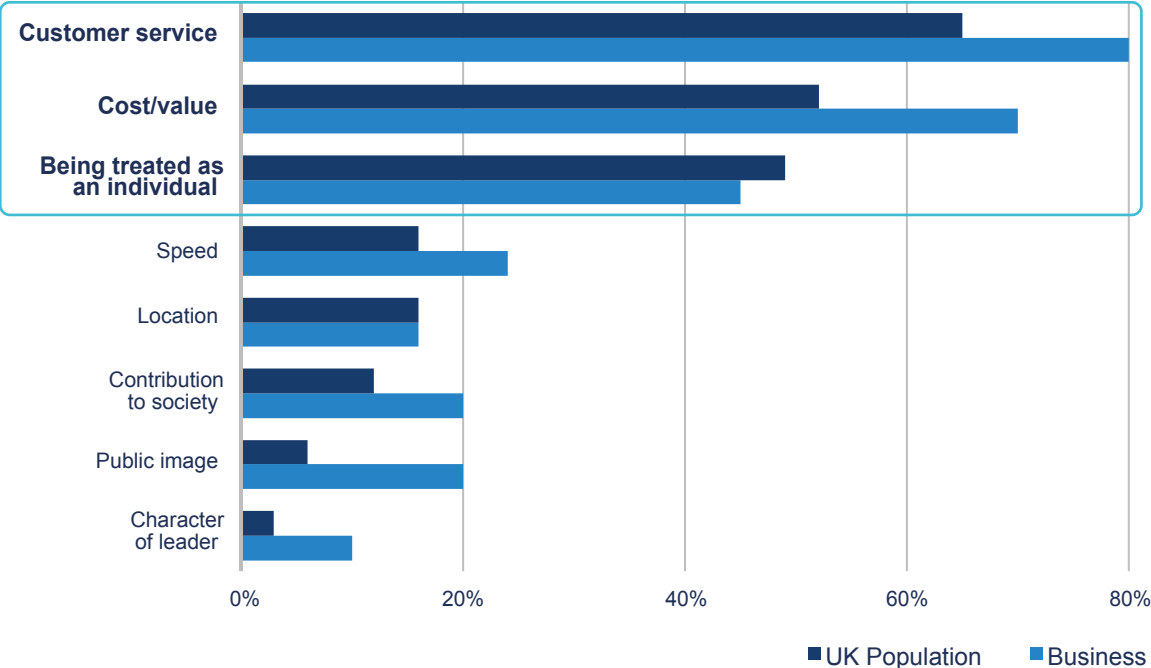


Business is alive to the challenge it faces. The fact that the public is more sympathetic than business would expect shows that business hasn't underestimated the challenge.

“There are plenty of negative aspects as well...but I’m not sure how we could operate now without businesses in the UK.”
– Online community participant

BUSINESS 'GETS' WHAT MATTERS MOST BUT MUST RESPOND TO PEOPLE'S DEMANDS FOR INDIVIDUALITY

What matters most in your interactions with business? / What do you think the public value most in their interactions with your business?



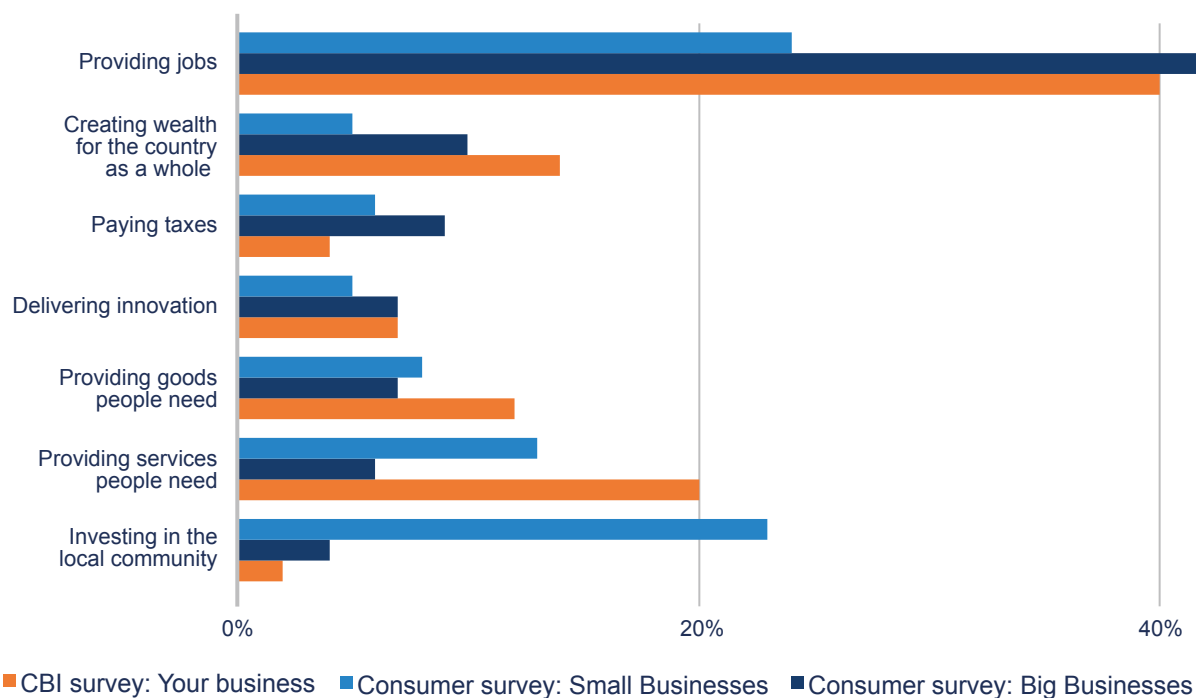
Businesses understand what matters to the public.

They grasp the fundamental building blocks for good relationships and realise that speed, public image and charismatic leadership are no substitute for doing the basics well.

Businesses recognise the long-standing demands for good customer service and value, but they still need to respond to the new desire by customers to be treated as individuals.

CONSENSUS THAT PROVIDING JOBS IS BUSINESS' BIGGEST CONTRIBUTION

What do you think is the biggest contribution big / small businesses / your business makes to UK society?



There's strong agreement that the biggest contribution of business is the jobs it provides.

The public focus more on how this contribution most directly affects them – the wider value business creates through taxes and innovation doesn't resonate as much with their day to day experiences.

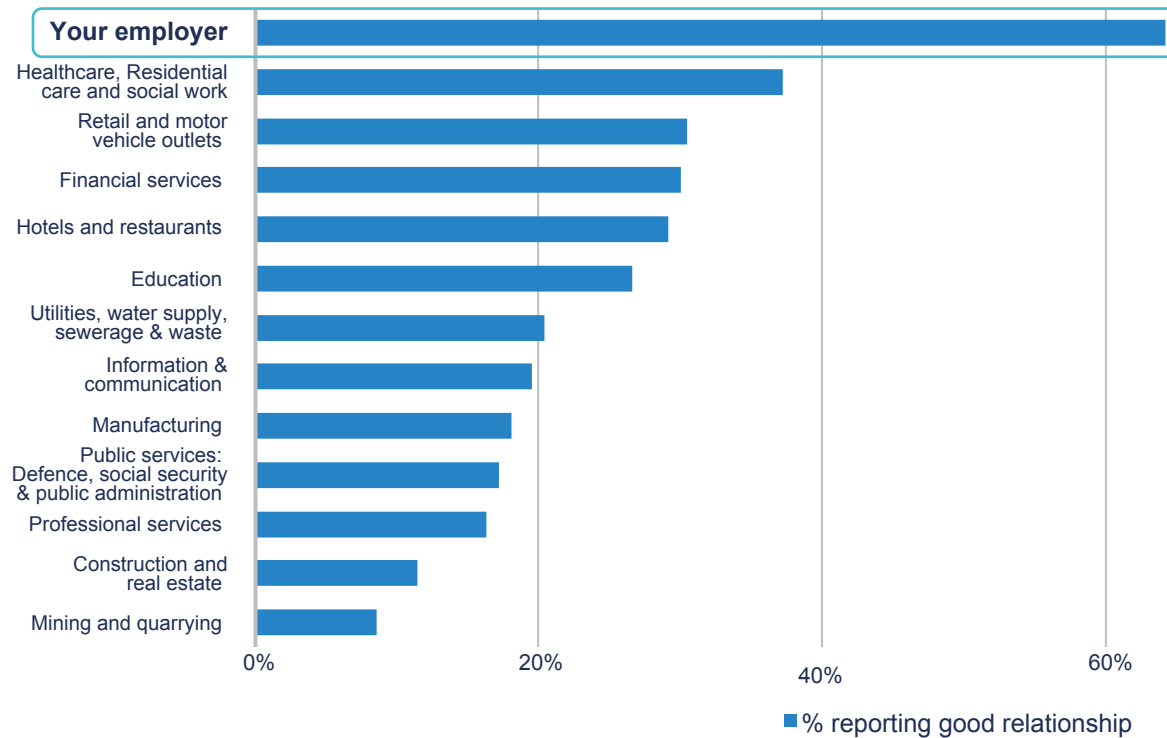
“Society cannot manage without businesses. They provide jobs for people. They provide services required by people. They enable the economy to grow for the benefit of everyone.”
- Online community participant

INSIGHT 2

Familiarity leads to likeability

FAMILIARITY BREEDS TRUST

How would you describe your relationship with the following businesses?



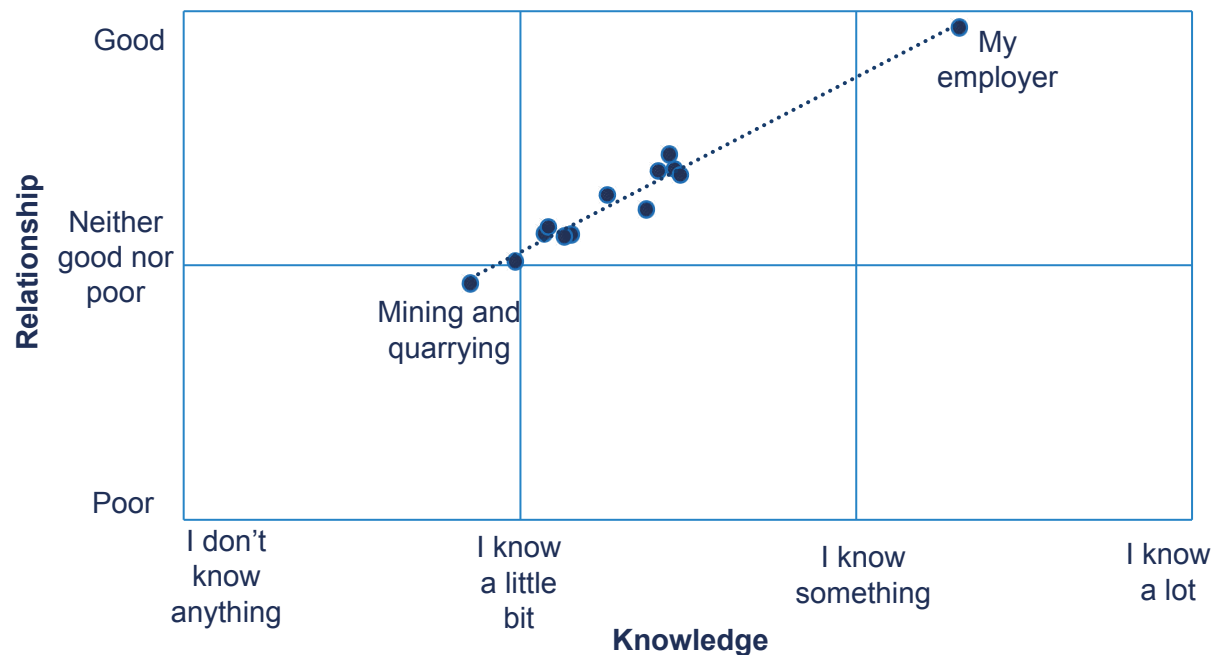
Familiarity drives positive relationships with business. The more the public interact with business, the more likely they are to be sympathetic.

This means any abstract concept of 'business', will never be viewed as positively by the public as the direct relationships they experience.

“The gentleman who runs it knows me, knows my family. He always asks how my parents are... it makes you feel more valued as a customer.”
– Online community participant

TIME TO DEMYSTIFY BUSINESS

Public's knowledge of business sectors vs their relationship



The public are more sympathetic to businesses that they know.

The more remote a business is from people's daily lives, the less they know about it, and in turn the less they value it.

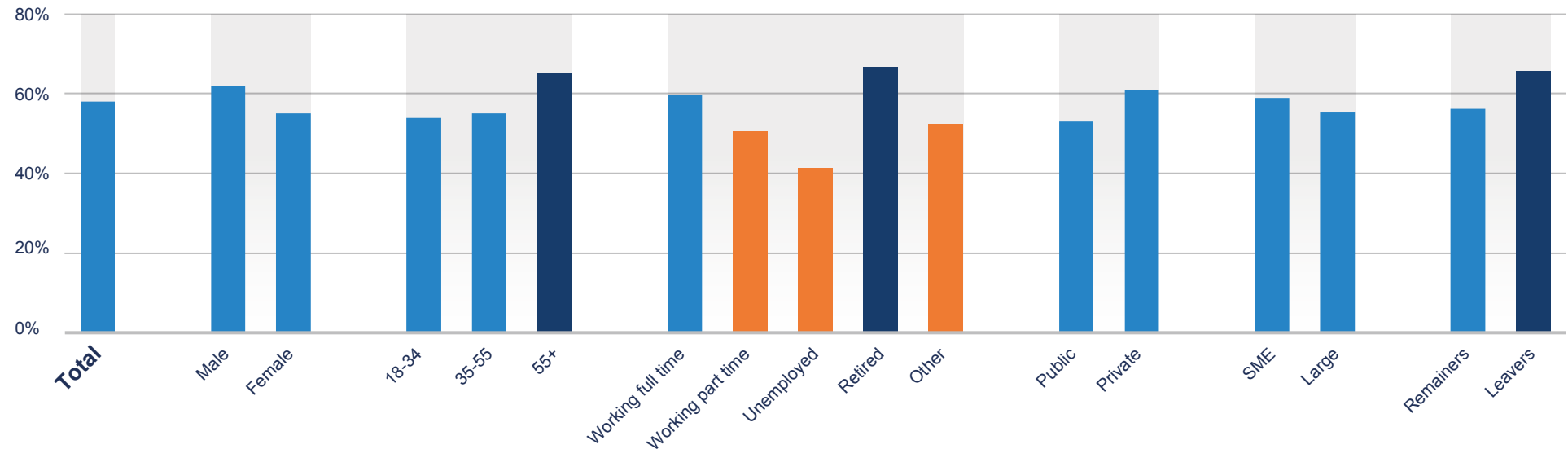
Demystifying what business does, so that more people 'understand' business will have a positive impact on its reputation.

"I know [Company X] has had a lot of backlash recently with their CEO, but my dad has worked there for years and has never had anything bad to say about them."

– Online community participant

ATTITUDES SPLIT OVER BUSINESS REPUTATION

Percentage of people who rate reputation of UK business as 'good' or 'very good'



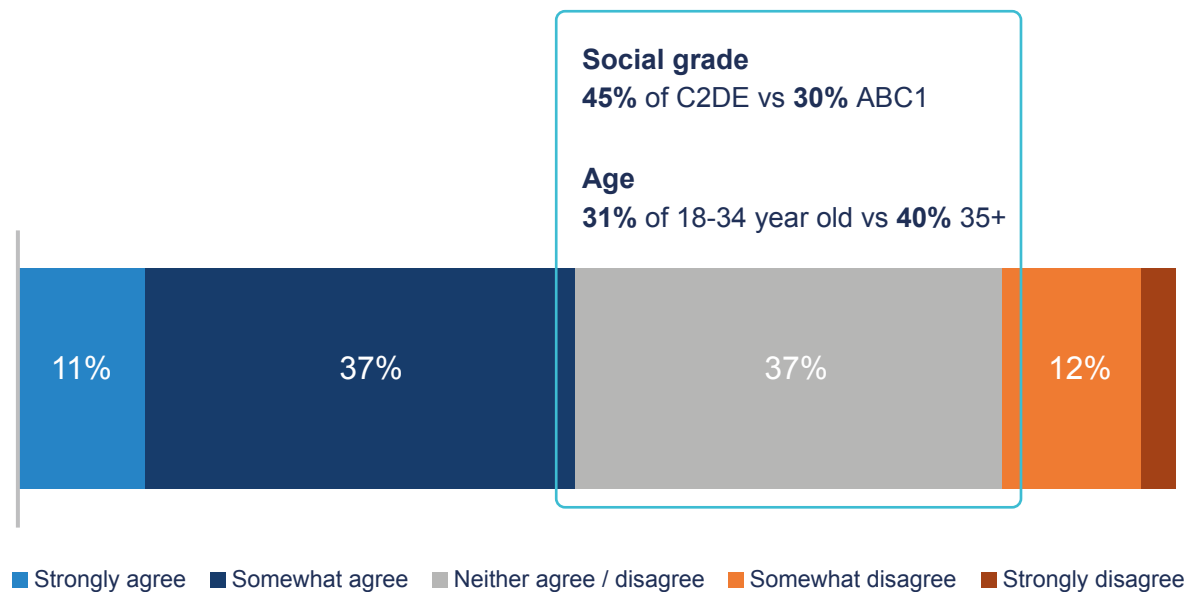
Attitudes towards business are split along referendum voting lines. Also, if you are of working age, being closer to the world of work and spending more time at work positively affects your views. So supporting more people into work will have a positive impact on the reputation of UK business.

INSIGHT 3

Businesses need to 'open up' to close the disconnect with the public

HUGE SWATHES OF 'UNDECIDED VOTERS' UP FOR GRABS

I understand how a company works



Too many people don't understand how a company works and told us they know little about what business in the UK does.

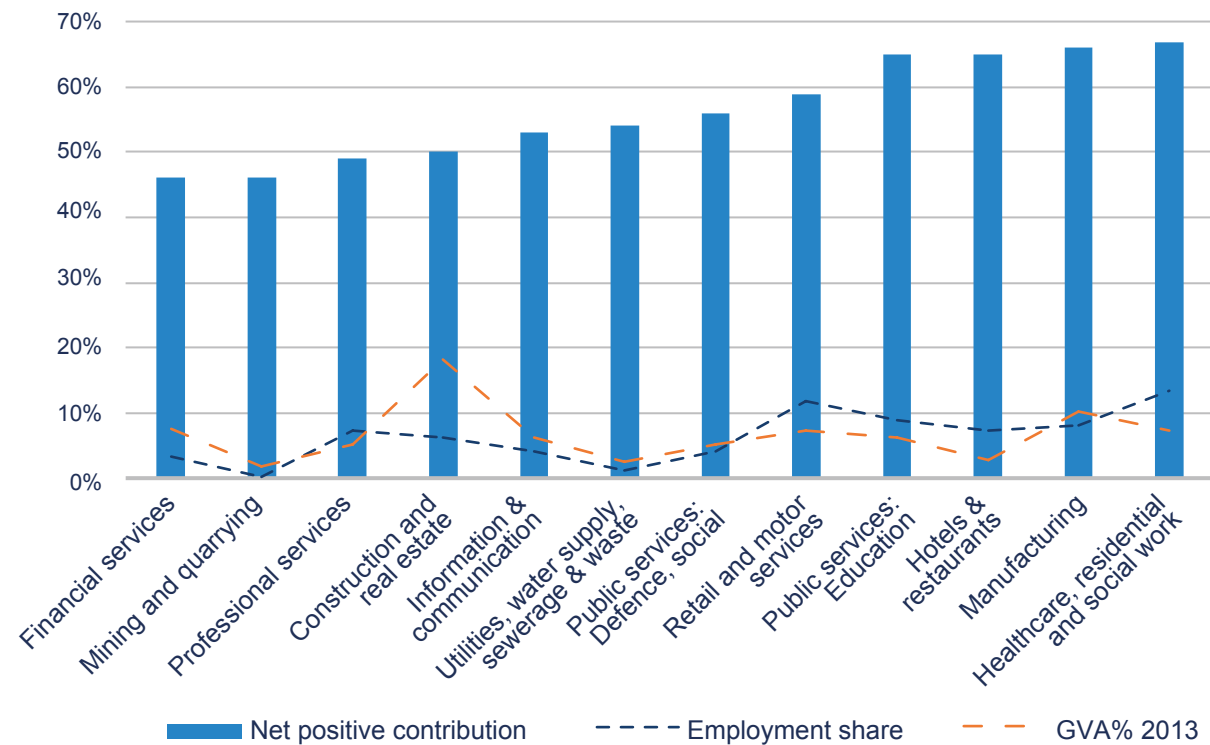
There is a large public audience that haven't made up their mind about business – in political terms the 'undecided voters'. There is real scope to improve the reputation of UK business by helping more people to understand how business works.

“When I try and understand business practices I am OK as long as the understanding is basic and down to earth. If it gets too ‘in depth’ then I feel I am out of mine.”

– Online community participant

A SKEWED VIEW OF SECTOR VALUE

Comparison: The public's view of contributions to society vs contributions to employment and the economy



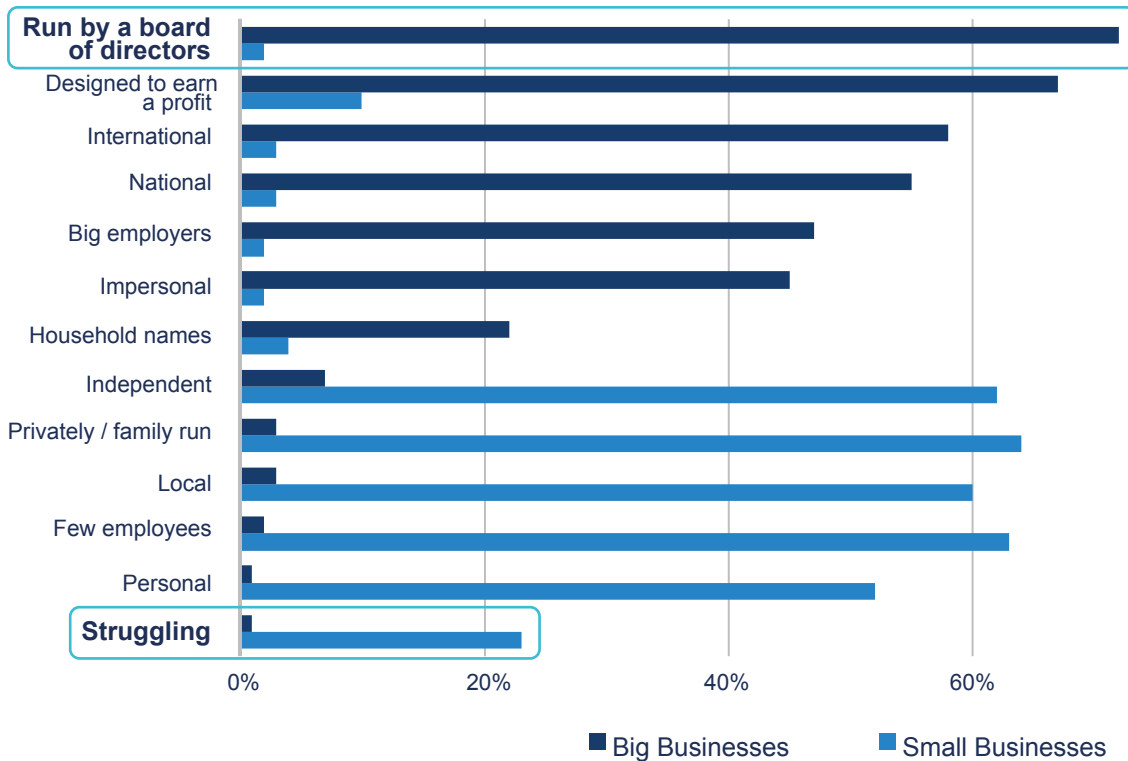
A disconnect influences the public's view of how businesses make a difference to the UK.

The public base their view of value on their knowledge of and relationships with those industries – not how these industries are traditionally measured as contributing to jobs or the economy. The public underestimate certain industries because they are more remote from their daily lives.

This gives those industries that are underestimated an opportunity to tell a positive story by focusing on the 'surprising' value they create.

BIG VS SMALL BUSINESS SPLIT PERSISTS

Which of the following do you most associate with big / small businesses?



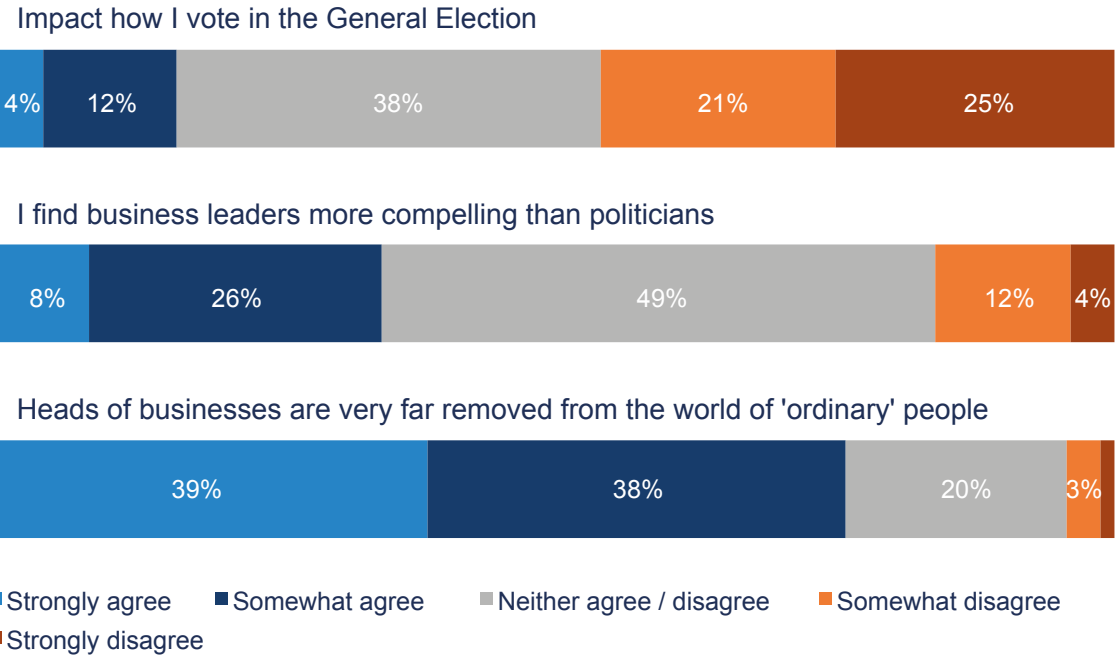
The disconnect also creates a clear difference in people’s minds between big and small businesses.

Big businesses and small businesses share an ecosystem and many characteristics, but these are lost on the public who see small and large businesses as fundamentally different.

Emphasising why profit is important to businesses of all sizes is one way to close the disconnect and will go some way to addressing the lack of understanding of how business operates.

CEO INSIGHT: BUSINESS LEADERS SEEN AS 'FAR REMOVED'

Perspectives on business leaders



“I don't think these people speak for the benefits of communities and the country, as we have seen with Philip Green, they are mainly interested in profit.”
– Online community participant

Business leaders are seen to be removed from the world of ordinary people.

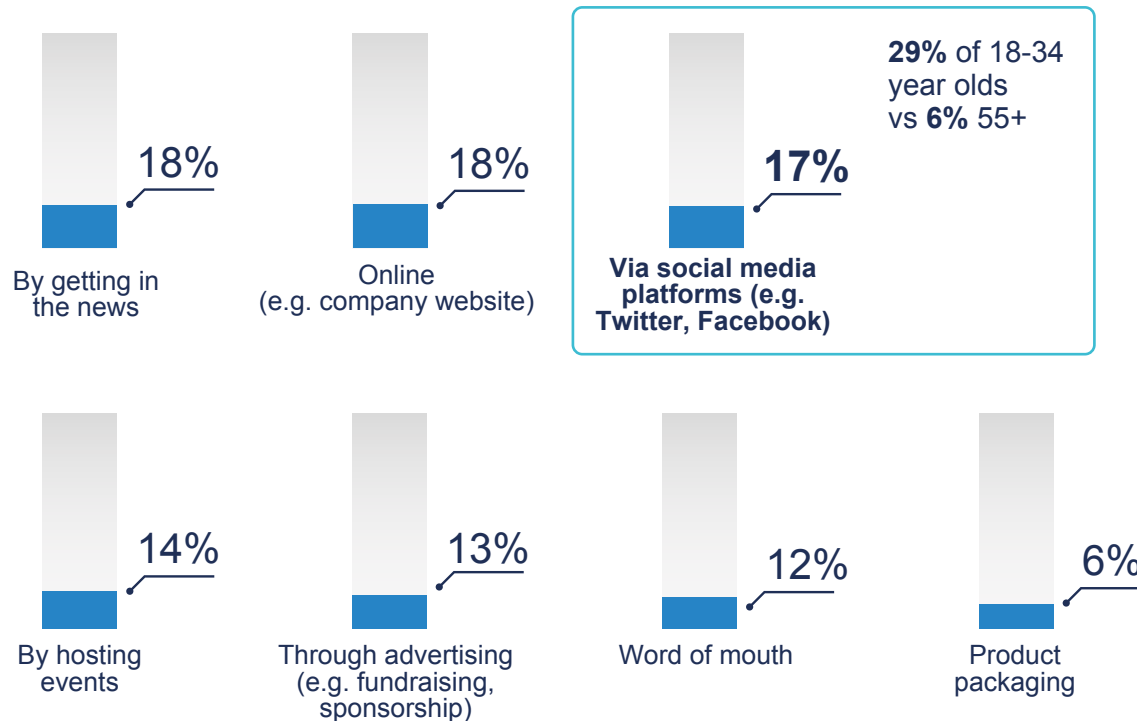
CEOs should consider ways to ensure their messages resonate, from using more human language to deploying alternative spokespeople from their organisation who the public are more likely to view as relatable.

INSIGHT 4

A focus on treating employees well can unlock reputation gains

A STRONG PUBLIC DESIRE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT BUSINESS THROUGH NEW MEDIA

Consumer survey: Best ways for businesses to communicate their contribution to society



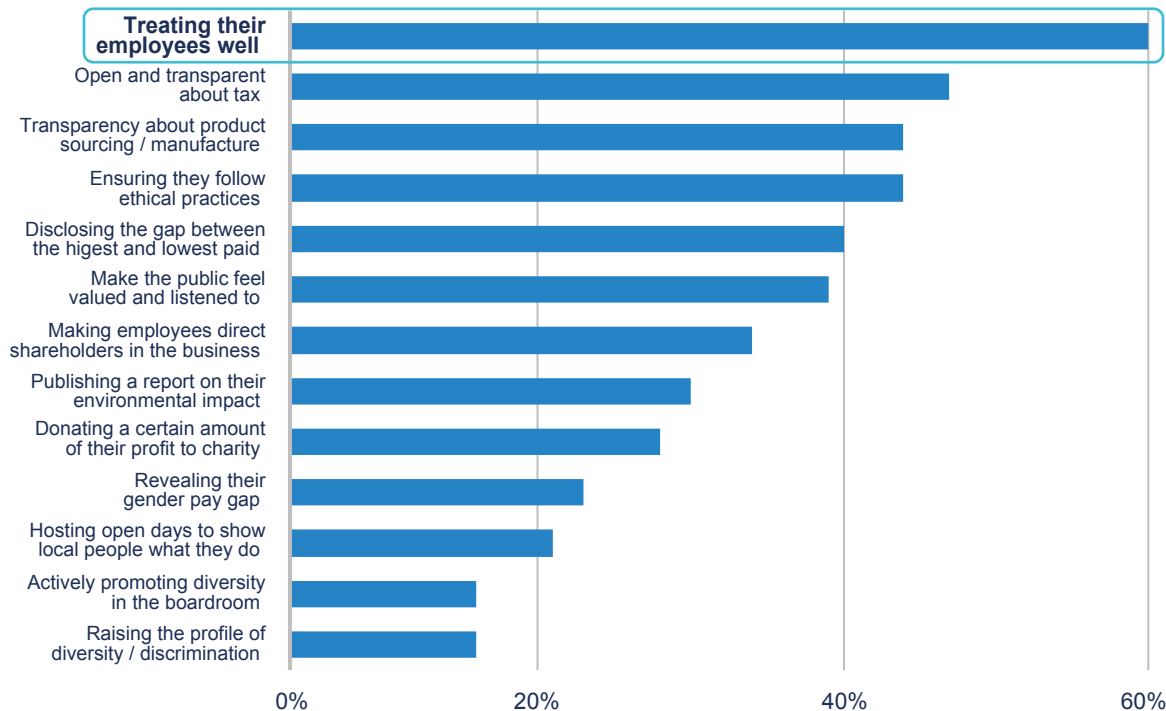
Most people (62%) would welcome businesses telling them more about how they contribute to society – valuing news, online, and social media as the most effective channels.

It would be easy to conclude that the solution lies in the media. But whilst media platforms can be an effective tool, particularly for targeting some audiences, word of mouth remains the most accessible way to make the most of strong employee relationships.

Businesses don't underestimate this importance – firms told us they focus on day to day interactions (82%) and good customer service (80%) to communicate their value.

HOW BUSINESSES CAN IMPROVE THEIR REPUTATION

Which, if any, of the following do you think would improve the reputation of UK businesses?



People identify with business through their own experiences and for most people this is by treating employees well. The public told us this means being fairly paid, being treated with respect and as a person, not just as a resource.

This value placed on personal interactions is why the public are sceptical about specific programmes or initiatives, and why making a real impact requires businesses to change their behaviour and attitudes.

“I would consider a business worthwhile supporting which treats its suppliers, employees and customers fairly and does not pay the boss over the odds.” - Online community participant

'ENGAGE AND EXPLAIN' ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

Actions business leaders can take to become less remote



The public want to see business leaders engaging more directly with their own employees – demonstrating yet again the value the public places on personal interaction.

Although there is a communications challenge for business leaders, it's not about appearing more often but improving the way they communicate – stopping jargon and explaining what it is that businesses do in accessible, human language.

WHAT THE CBI WILL DO NEXT (1)

This research shows the scale of the challenge. Improving the relationship between business and society will take sustained commitment from the business community. Firms are already alive to this and the CBI is dedicated to supporting businesses to demonstrate leadership.

CBI's aims

CBI's work will target the disconnect between people and firms, finding new ways to improve understanding of what business does.

CBI's audience

Four out of five people work in the private sector. They are not just employees; businesses should think of them as customers, colleagues and family members too. They should be our primary audience and help spread the word in communities.

The secondary audiences are government and the media. Where the public has limited direct experience, the government and the media play a key role in shaping attitudes. The CBI will involve them with this work so that they can champion business more effectively.

CBI's metrics for success

The reputational challenge facing businesses is significant and CBI needs to be ambitious but clear about what outcomes it is seeking to achieve.

In five years' time, the CBI wants to see the number of people who say they have a good relationship with their employer to rise from 64% to 80%. With focus and determined action, this target is achievable and will make a difference.

Working with Porter Novelli and Opinionium, CBI will publish a regular tracker of sentiment allowing us to measure progress over time.

WHAT THE CBI WILL DO NEXT (2)

This research and a CBI Task Force of business leaders have led us to a series of actions for the CBI and its members. CBI would like your input to shape these further.

Step 1: Kill business speak

The public are open to hearing more about how business contributes to society, so firms need to make this real for people. This means focusing on how businesses make a difference for individuals and doing it with human language.

Firms need to think carefully about who talks on their behalf, and how they talk. Business leaders will foster more personal relationships by avoiding 'business speak' and by strengthening their engagement with employees. Using other voices – aside from the CEO – from across the business can also be a more effective way for a firm to tell their story.

Supporting the business community to address these issues, the CBI will lead the Everyone's Business campaign to promote plain speaking. As part of this campaign, the CBI will provide practical business tools to support the business community to successfully demonstrate the value it creates.

Step 2: Think local, act local

Too often businesses talk in big numbers, national or even global terms. Business should start with addressing what matters to people in their communities.

Working with partners Porter Novelli, the CBI will support businesses to understand the specific actions they can take to address public concerns. This is not more local CSR: but it is a focus on what drives attitudes in places up and down the country.

Step 3: External relationships

A stronger relationship between business and society will drive prosperity. The CBI is clear that the government, and media, have a responsibility in this debate. There is a role for calling out bad practice but equally, so is there for praising good practice, valuing the role of business and supporting firms to improve. This balance is not always there.

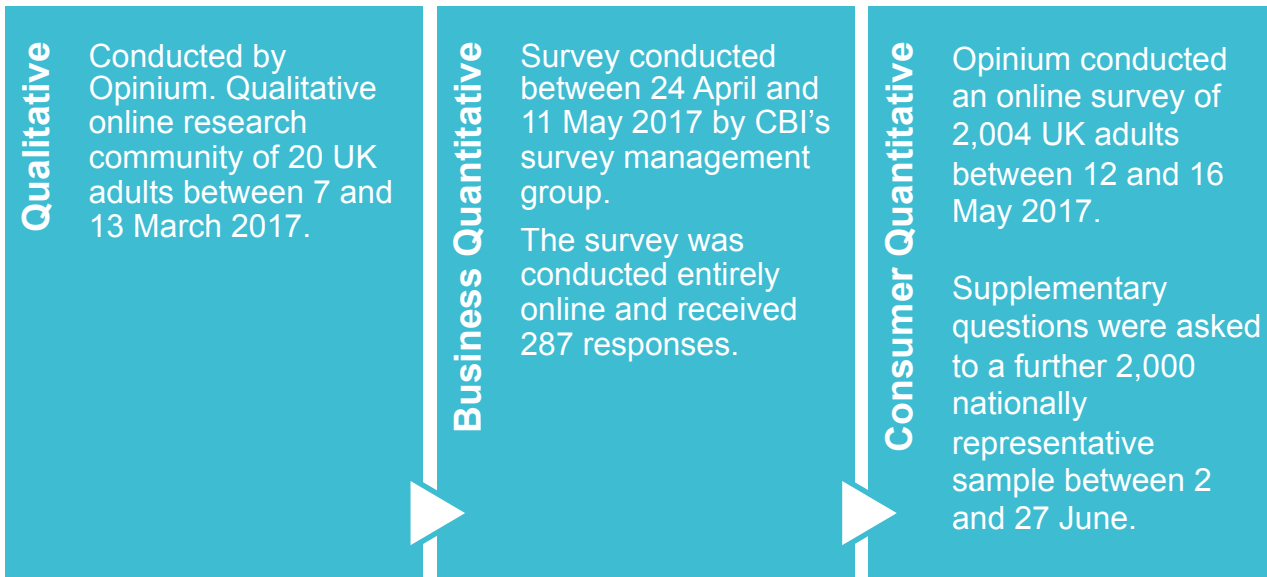
The CBI will engage government and media in the campaign and help them to get involved and hold them to account.

BUSINESS NEEDS YOU

CBI is calling on all firms to rise to the challenge and tackle perceptions head on. We're asking businesses to sign up and support CBI's Everyone's Business campaign to ditch the jargon, show a human face and deliver the best possible impact on people's lives.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in three phases between March and June 2017:



For further information on this document,
please contact:

Holly Harkins
Principal Policy Adviser
T: +44 (0)20 7395 8261
E: Holly.harkins@cbi.org.uk



In partnership with

**PORTER
NOVELLI** 

⁰⁷
Op
Opinium