

## Press Release

# CCAB Ethics Survey 2021

**16 December 2021**

## **ONE IN FOUR ACCOUNTANTS UNDER PRESSURE TO ACT UNETHICALLY, CCAB SURVEY FINDS**

More than a quarter of professional accountants (27%) say they have been put under pressure or felt under pressure to act in an unethical way over the past three years, a CCAB survey has found.

Many respondents said this pressure had had a detrimental impact on their mental health, triggering episodes of anxiety, depression and stress.

The CCAB, which brings together five professional accountancy organisations in the UK and Ireland, carried out a snapshot survey of accountants working across all sectors in July and August to take the ethical temperature of the profession.

Of those who said they had been put under pressure to act unethically, almost 80% spoke up against the unethical action. Two thirds (65%) did not carry out the unethical task, however 10% carried out the task fully and 25% said they did so partially.

Commenting on the findings, Iain Lowson, chair of the CCAB Ethics Group, said: "Ethics is at the heart of being a professional accountant and it's important to regularly take the ethical temperature of the profession. This informal survey provides a useful snapshot of the current context.

"It's clear ethical pressures are a real problem for a significant number of accountants and it's concerning to see so many reports of a negative impact on mental health.

"On the other hand, it is encouraging that so many accountants feel empowered to speak out against unethical pressures and practices and that so many respondents say they promote an ethics-based culture in their organisations.

"Accountants' professional membership bodies are useful sources of training, advice and support and each will have their own Code of Ethics based on the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA). We would urge any accountants who feel exposed to ethical pressures to approach their professional body for support and to refresh their knowledge of the relevant code."

A majority of respondents who reported feeling under pressure to act unethically said pressure came from internal sources such as line managers or those in senior director-level roles. Eighteen per cent cited pressure from clients and a further 10% said pressure came from their Board, Council or Cabinets.

Among the unethical activities respondents felt pressure to engage in were: preparation of overly optimistic budgets, business cases and forecasts; categorising personal expenses as business expenses; and side-stepping financial policies and regulations.

The results of the Survey can be seen here: <https://www.ccab.org.uk/ccab-ethics-survey-2021>

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## Notes to Editors

1. A total of 445 completed responses to the CCAB ethics survey were recorded and the survey received more than 300 verbatim comments.
2. There was a representative spread of responses from the following four sectors:

Audit / Accounting firm	36%
Public sector	33%
Commercial sector	21%
Charity/Not for profit	8%

3. Further findings are presented in this short CCAB report <https://www.ccab.org.uk/ccab-ethics-survey-2021>

## About CCAB

The combined membership of the five CCAB bodies - ICAEW, ACCA, ICAS, CIPFA and Chartered Accountants Ireland - amounts to over 282,000 professional accountants in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (over 408,000 worldwide).

CCAB provides a forum for the bodies to work together collectively in the public interest on matters affecting the profession and the wider economy.

CCAB's credibility stems from its insight into all areas of finance and accounting, from finance director and audit partner to management accountants, professional advisers, public sector finance leaders and entrepreneurs. CCAB's members work through the financial value chain in all sectors as key decision makers and business leaders within the UK and around the world.

Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies

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