

**THE ANTI-INTIMIDATION AND
ETHICAL PRACTICES FORUM**

Ethical Practices Survey 2018:

REPORT



**ANTI-INTIMIDATION
&
ETHICAL PRACTICES FORUM**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Anti-Intimidation and Ethical Practices Forum (AEPF) is a collective forum which consists of professional bodies and other like-minded organisations, which share a common concern about the rising levels of corruption, fraud, ethics failures and lack of corporate governance in South African organisations. It was established to assist and support professionals who are experiencing forms of intimidation and who want to expose unethical behaviour in their workplaces, safely and responsibly. The purpose of the AEPF Ethical Practices Survey is (1) It is a measuring barometer and quantitative tool, used, to capture the perceptions of professionals regarding ethical practices in society, organisations and professional institutions and (2) It reports on how unethical behaviour is perceived by professionals in the governance, auditing, risk management, fraud management and ethical practices domain in organisations in South Africa.

For more information on the AEPF visit www.aepf.co.za

Summary of the demographic profile of the respondents

A total of **1900** professionals, across various industries and economic sectors in South Africa, successfully completed the survey. Some of the important factors in the demographic profile of the respondents include:

1. The gender gap narrowed somewhat with the percentage of female respondents having increased to 45% from just under 43% in 2017.
2. Although slightly lower than in 2017, the survey was dominated by White participants (48% compared to 50% in 2017), with Black (excluding Coloured and Indian participants, who represented 6% respectively) participants being the second largest group at 36%, which is the same as in 2017.
3. In terms of job level, the largest group are at executive level (28% compared to 10% in 2017), the second largest are at middle management level (21% compared to 19% in 2017), the third largest are specialists (19% which is the same as in 2017), followed by first line managers (16% which is the same as in 2017).

4. The majority of the responses were from the private sector at 62%, which is lower than the nearly 70% in 2017. The public sector respondents (excluding state owned enterprises) made up 22% of the total, which was about the same as in 2017. This may explain the race ratio in the overall demographic profile.
5. The largest number of respondents are from the banking, finance and/or insurance industry (21% compared to 25% in 2017), the second largest group are from the services (professional, media, legal) industry (17% compared to 15% in 2017) and the third largest is from the public administration sector (11% compared to 9% in 2017).

Comparative research findings

The findings that raise the most concern include:

1. Within the dimension of perceptions in society, although there is an improvement over the 2017 results (26%), only 36% of the professionals agree that doing the right thing is more important than financial success. A significant 25% disagree with the statement. In the public sector 23% of the respondents agree compared to 42% in the private sector.
2. Leaders in the public sector are still perceived as a lot less ethical than those in the private sector. Only 10% of respondents in both the public and private sectors agreed that leaders in the public sector are ethical. This has not changed much from the sentiment in 2017 (8% agreed in the public sector and ironically a higher 10% in the private sector).
3. Leaders in the private sector have taken a substantial fall from grace. Professionals in both sectors significantly downgraded their perceptions in the ethical nature of leaders in the private sector. Only 17% of respondents in the public sector agree that leaders in the private sector are ethical, a significant decline from the 60% in 2017. Only 32% of respondent in the private sector agree that leaders in their sector are ethical, a significant decline from 70% in 2017. This may be attributed to the significant corporate scandals that have dominated the news in the last year.
4. There is a significant decline in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who agree that ethics is a priority in their organisations (32% compared to 43% in

2017). This is aggravated by the significant decline in the percentage of respondents who agree that in their organisations people are encouraged to do the right thing (39% compared to 63% in 2017) as well as a decline in the percentage of respondents who agree that in their organisations people are encouraged to report unethical behaviour (44% compared to 59% in 2017).

5. There is a decline in the percentage of respondents in both sectors who believe that it is their personal duty to report unethical behaviour, i.e. 84% in the public sector compared to 91% in 2017 and 89% in the private sector compared to 92% in 2017.
6. There is a decline in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who agree that it was easy to report unethical behaviour (21% compared to 27% in 2017).
7. There is still too a high percentage of respondents in both sectors who report that they have been intimidated for doing the right thing (26% in the public sector and 17% in the private sector), that they feared losing their job for doing the right thing (26% in the public sector and 20% in the private sector), that they were threatened for speaking out about unethical behaviour (24% in the public sector and 15% in the private sector) and that they feared for their lives for reporting unethical behaviour (25% in the public sector and 20% in the private sector).

The findings that were most heartening include:

1. Despite the negative sentiment around leaders in the private sector, the perception of ethics in the private sector remains relatively high, with no significant shifts in perception. Of the respondents in the private sector 78% agree that ethics is a priority in their organisation, 80% agree that talking about ethics is encouraged, 80% agree that people are encouraged to do the right thing and 80% agree that people are encouraged to report unethical behaviour.
2. The perception of ethics in professional institutions remain very high among respondents in both the public and private sectors, with 83% in the public sector and 87% in the private sector agreeing that these bodies have ethical leadership, and 86% in the public sector and 88% in the private sector agreeing that these bodies are ethical. This is the only dimension where both sectors seem to be in relative agreement in their positive sentiment across all questions.

3. In both sectors there seems to be an increase in trust in professional institutions. In the public sector 47% agreed that they preferred to report unethical behaviour to their professional body and not to their organisation, compared to 38% in 2017. In the private sector the percentage that agree is 31% compared to 24% in 2017. It must however be noted that while this increase in trust in professional bodies is good for their reputation, it does not signal comfort in the leadership in the respondents own organisations.

2. SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1.

Gender, Ethnicity and Highest Qualification (skipped responses 212)

Descriptive Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Gender</u>		
Men	929	55%
Women	759	45%
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
Asian	18	1%
Black	606	36%
Coloured	102	6%
Indian	105	6%
White	808	48%
Other	49	3%
<u>Qualification</u>		
Matric Certificate	30	2%
Diploma or equivalent	246	15%
Bachelor's degree	612	36%
Honours degree	484	29%
Master's degree	234	14%
Doctorate/PhD	23	1%
Other	59	3%

Table 2.***Professional Affiliation, Professional Membership, and Job-Level***

Descriptive Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Professional Affiliation (skipped responses 212)</u>		
Association of Certified Fraud Examiners SA (ACFE SA)	110	7%
Institute of Chartered Secretaries Southern Africa (CSSA)	4	0%
Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA)	81	5%
Institute of Internal Auditors South Africa (IIA SA)	538	32%
Institute of Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA)	88	5%
The Ethics Institute (TEI)	15	1%
South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)	124	7%
South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA)	575	34%
Other	153	9%
<u>Professional Membership Level (skipped responses -241)</u>		
Student Member	27	2%
Associate	182	11%
Fellow	140	8%
Full Member	1256	76%
Other	54	3%
<u>Job-Level (skipped 212)</u>		
Individual Contributor (I do not manage anyone)	240	14%
Specialist (I provide a specialist skill)	321	19%
First Line Management (I manage people and report to a manager)	263	16%
Middle Management (I manage other managers and report to executive management)	360	21%
Executive Management	475	28%
Non-executive director		

Table 3.***Industry Sector, Organisation Type and Tenure in Organisation (skipped responses 212)***

Descriptive Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Industry/Sector</u>		
Banking, finance, and/or insurance	352	21%
Services (professional, media, legal)	292	17%
Public administration	191	11%
Mining, quarrying, energy, oil, and/or chemical	100	6%
Wholesale and retail	110	7%
Education and training	86	5%
Manufacturing	81	5%
Logistics	68	4%
Health/pharmaceutical	48	3%
Technology	61	4%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	54	3%
Defence/security	15	1%
Tourism and hospitality	20	1%
Other	210	12%
<u>Organisation Type</u>		
Private Sector	1041	62%
Public Sector	376	22%
State Owned Enterprise	129	8%
Non-Government Organisation	34	2%
Other	108	6%

Tenure in current organisation

Less than 1 year	148	9%
Less than 3 years	267	16%
Less than 5 years	235	14%
More than 5 years	1038	61%

3. SECTION 2: ETHICAL PRACTICES PERCEPTIONS

2.1. Research Methodology

A total of **2011** professional members of the Anti-intimidation and Ethical Practices Forum members attempted to respond to the 2018 AEPF Ethical Practices Survey, however only 1900 successfully completed the survey questionnaire. The responses were scaled from **1 (Strongly Disagree)** to **6 (Strongly Agree)**. The graphs represent the proportions of strong agreement or disagreement indicated by each respondent in the sample on the six-point scale. The multiple choice questions were designed to give respondents more options in order to give their most honest answer. The survey was anonymous and completely confidential and took the form of a self-administered quantitative web-based questionnaire.

Theme One: PERCEPTION OF ETHICS IN SOCIETY (skipped responses-302)

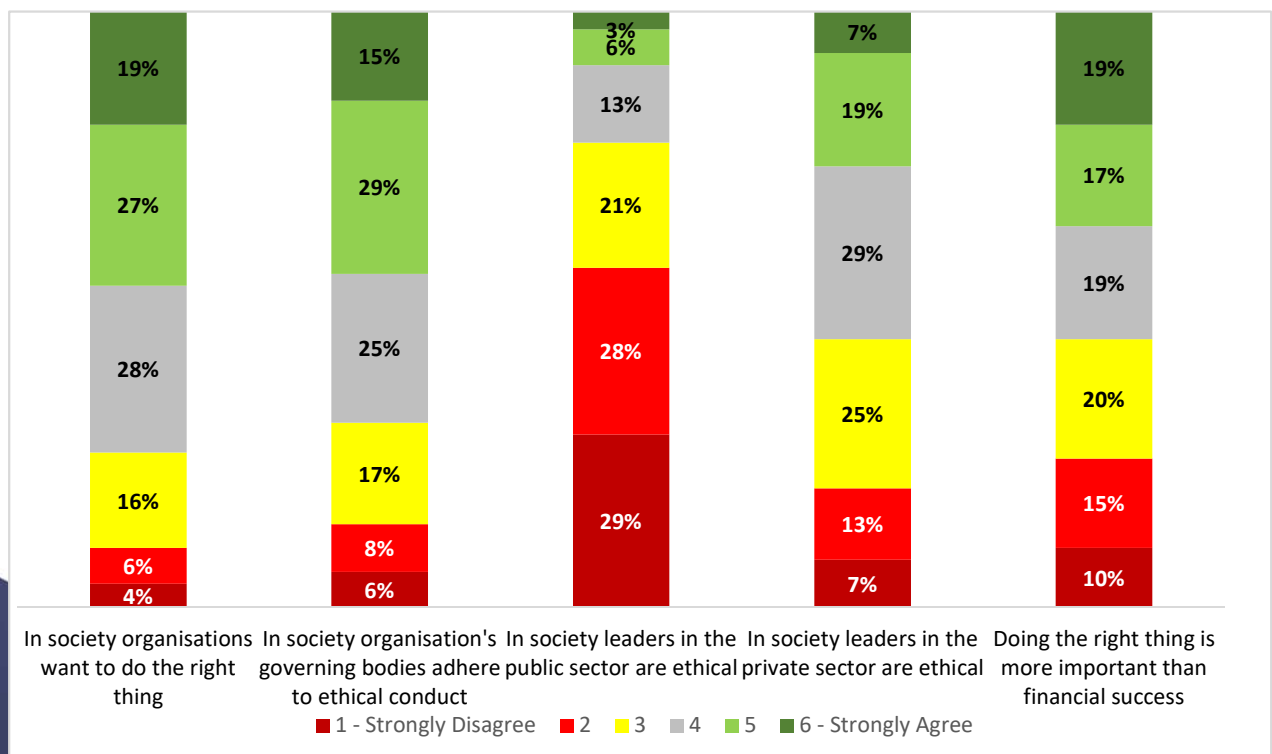


Figure 1. Ethics perceptions in society

2.2. Scale results

Less than 50% of professionals indicated that organisations in the South African society generally want to do the right thing, i.e. 46%, which is 8% less than the 54% in 2017. There is also a 2% increase in those disagreeing that organisations want to do the right thing, up from 8% in 2017 to 10% in 2018.

Ethics in the organisation starts with the tone at the top. It is therefore important that governing bodies walk the talk in adhering to ethical conduct. Although still less than 50%, the percentage of professionals that indicate that governing bodies adhere to ethical conduct has improved slightly from 42% in 2017 to 44% in 2018. There is however also a slight increase in the percentage of professionals who disagree with the statement, up from 13% in 2017 to 14% in 2018.

A positive development is the significant increase in the percentage of professionals who said that doing the right thing is more important than financial success, i.e. 36% this year compared a very disappointing 26% in 2017. Although the 36% is still too low, the 10% increase is significant. This could potentially be attributed to all the scandals in South Africa having triggered some introspection and a rethink in the face of the consequences of unethical behaviour.

Theme Two: PERCEPTION OF ETHICS IN ORGANISATIONS (skipped responses-322)

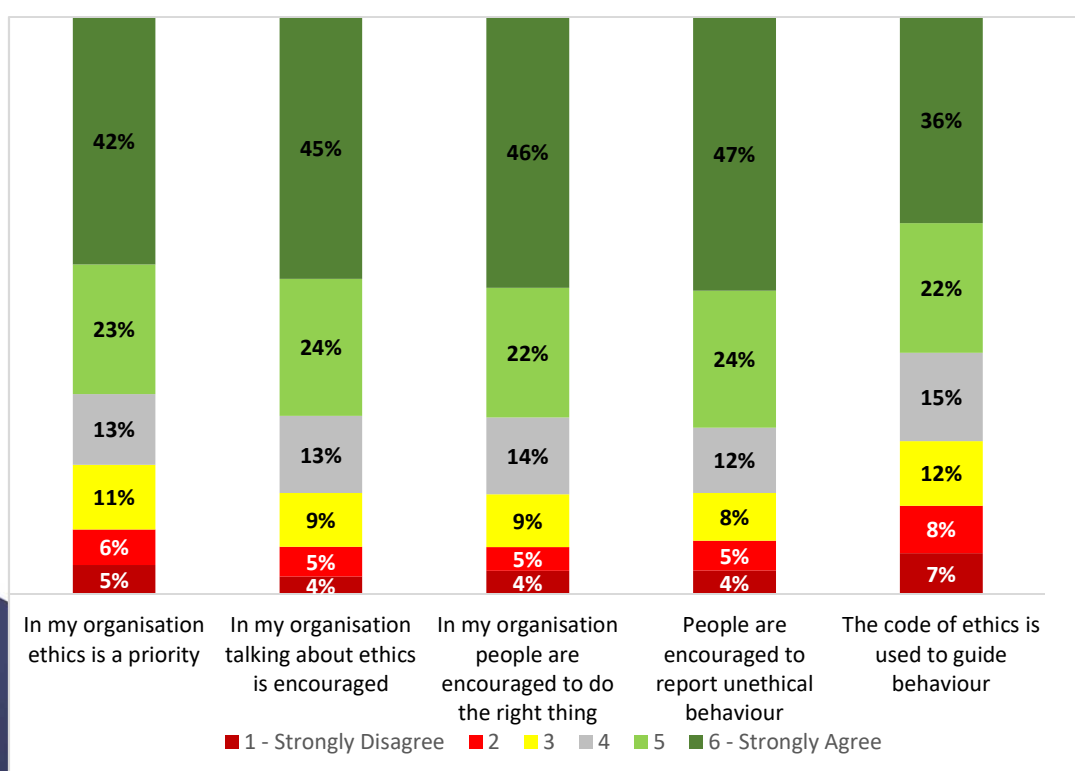


Figure 2. Perception of Ethics in Organisations

2.3 Scale results

There is a decline in agreement that ethics is a priority in organisations with 68% agreeing in 2017 and 65% in 2018. There is a significant decline in the percentage of professionals agreeing that people are encouraged to do the right thing in their organisations, i.e. from 78% in 2017 to 68% in 2018. We also see a drop in the percentage of professionals believing that they are encouraged to report on unethical behaviour from 74% agreeing in 2017 compared to 71% in 2018. This is a negative trend that should not be encouraged in organisations and can be prevented through building a strong ethical culture including open dialogue and continuous ethical awareness programmes. Organisations face reputational risk when ethical practices are not prioritised and it can be highly damaging in society. Most organisations have a code of ethics in place that guides behaviour however this area has also decreased in rating where 62% of the professionals agreed in 2017 and 58% in 2018. It is important to note that the question was phrased to focus the respondents on their own organisations in order to minimise general statements influenced by media reports and the climate in the country.

Theme Three: PERCEPTION OF ETHICS IN PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

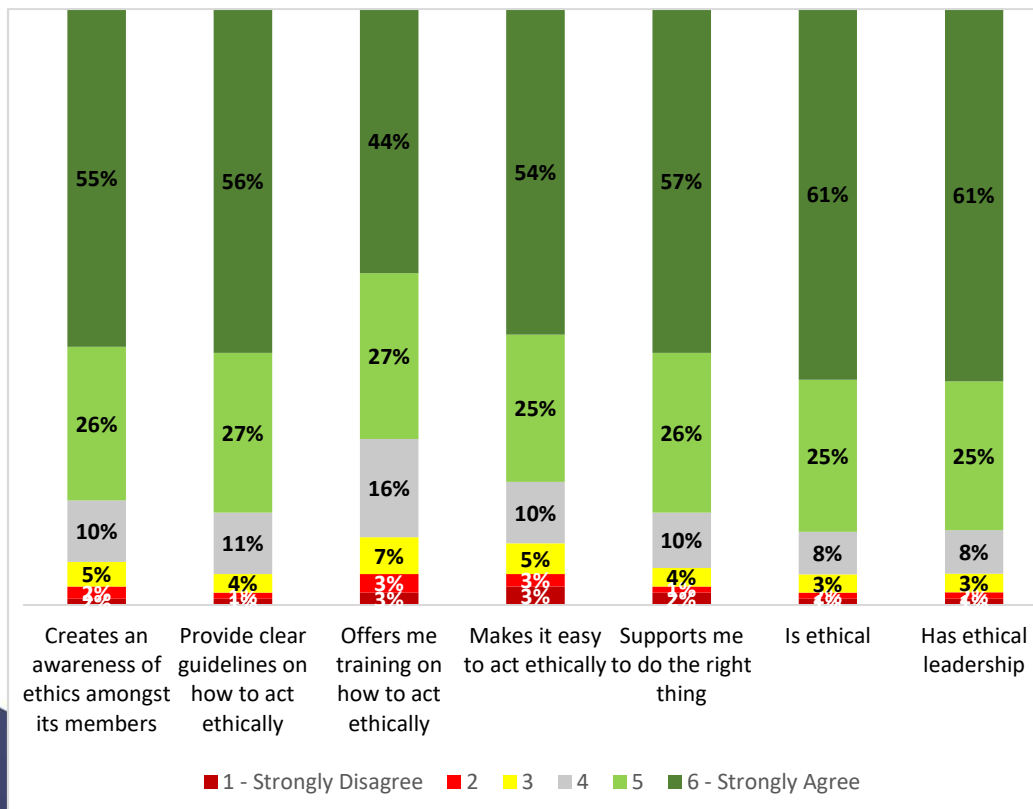


Figure 3. Perception of ethics in Professional Institutions

2.4 Scale results

There is an increase in the percentage of professionals who believe that Professional Bodies are creating awareness of ethics among their members. In 2017 79% were in agreement and in 2018 it has increased to 84%. This may be an indication that Professional Bodies are increasing their efforts given the current climate in the country. The data demonstrates that professionals are comfortable in the fact that the leadership in professional institutions practices ethical behaviour with 86% agreed in 2018 which has increased since 2017 which had a rating of 67% agreed. Most agreed that their Professional Bodies provide training on how to behave ethically, with a slight improvement in this area, i.e. 71% agreed in 2018 compared to 67% in 2017.

Theme Four: PERCEPTION OF ETHICS AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

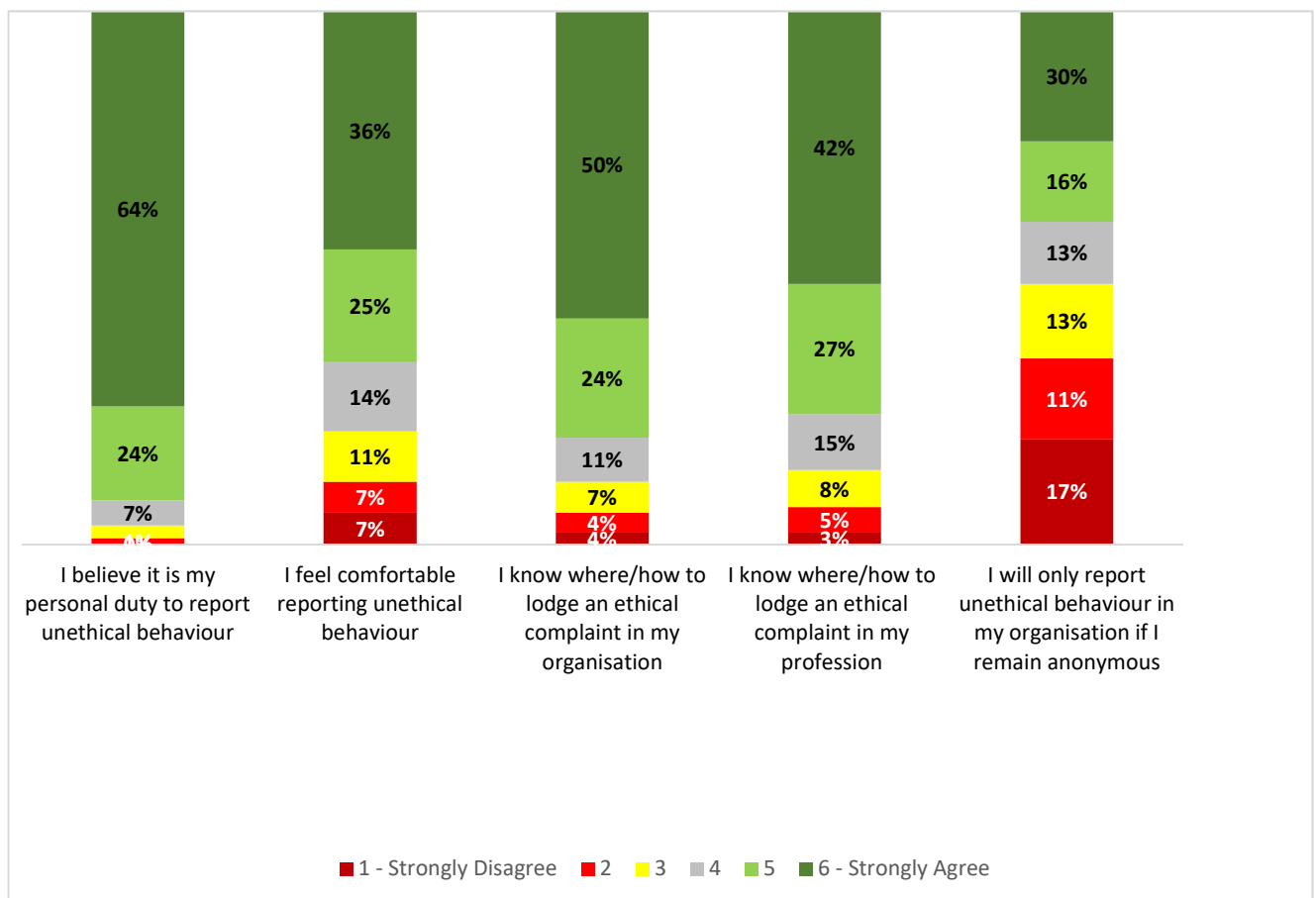


Figure 4 Personal experiences and ethical practices

Question 1: The data was collated from all industry sector respondents.

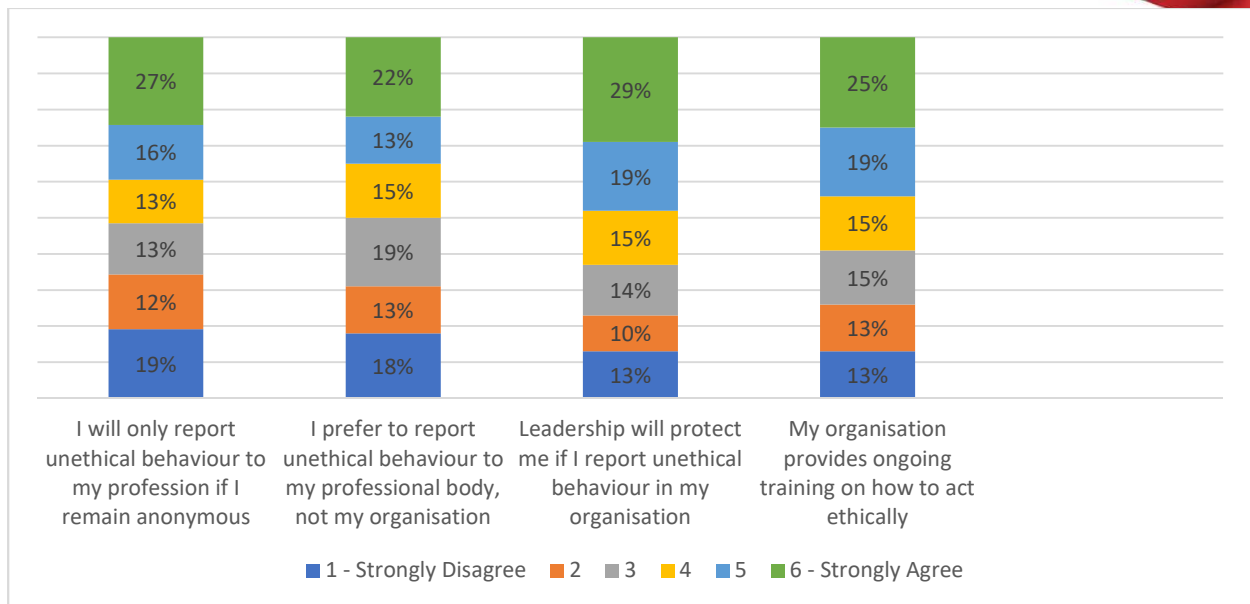


Figure 5. Personal experience and ethics reporting

2.5 Scale results

There is a significant increase in the percentage of professionals agreeing that reporting of unethical behaviour is a personal duty with 88% agreeing in 2018 compared to 78% in 2017. It is also gratifying to see that there is an increase in the percentage of professionals who feel comfortable reporting unethical behaviour (61% compared to 56% in 2017). Despite this increase in the percentage of professionals feeling comfortable reporting unethical behaviour, there has also been an increase in the percentage who will only report unethical behaviour to their profession if they remain anonymous (46% compared to 39% in 2017).

Theme 5: REPORTING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Table 4.

Reporting Unethical Behaviour (skipped 378)

Have you ever reported unethical behaviour?	Frequency	Percentage
No	846	56%

Yes

676

44%

Table 5.

Reporting Unethical Behaviour (skipped 1091)

To whom did you report unethical behaviour?	Frequency	Percentage
My Professional Institution.	123	14%
My Organisation.	572	62%
The AEPF	11	1%
The Media.	56	6%
Other	158	17%

2.6 Scale results

Of the respondents, 44% indicated they have at one time reported unethical behaviour within their organisation. This is an increase over the 39% in 2017. The majority still appear to prefer reporting within their organisations, with 62% indicating that they have reported unethical behaviour to their organisation. This could be expected given that the group who were surveyed would see confidentiality as an important element of their professional duty. This is however down from the nearly 83% in 2017 who indicated that they had reported unethical behaviour to their organisations. Leaders should take note of the fact that nearly half (46%) said that they will only report unethical behaviour in their organisations if they remain anonymous. On the one hand, it may be perceived as good news from the perspective that no reward is expected for blowing the whistle, but on the other hand, and much more importantly, it is a worrying signal that they may fear reprisal for blowing the whistle. Only 17% strongly disagreed that they need anonymity.

There is a slight increase in the percentage who indicated that they have reported unethical behaviour to their professional institution. i.e. 14% against the 11% in 2017. This correlates with the increase in the percentage of respondents who indicated that they prefer to report unethical behaviour to their professional body, and not their organisation, 35% against the 27% in 2017.

Theme 6: EXPERIENCE OF REPORTING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

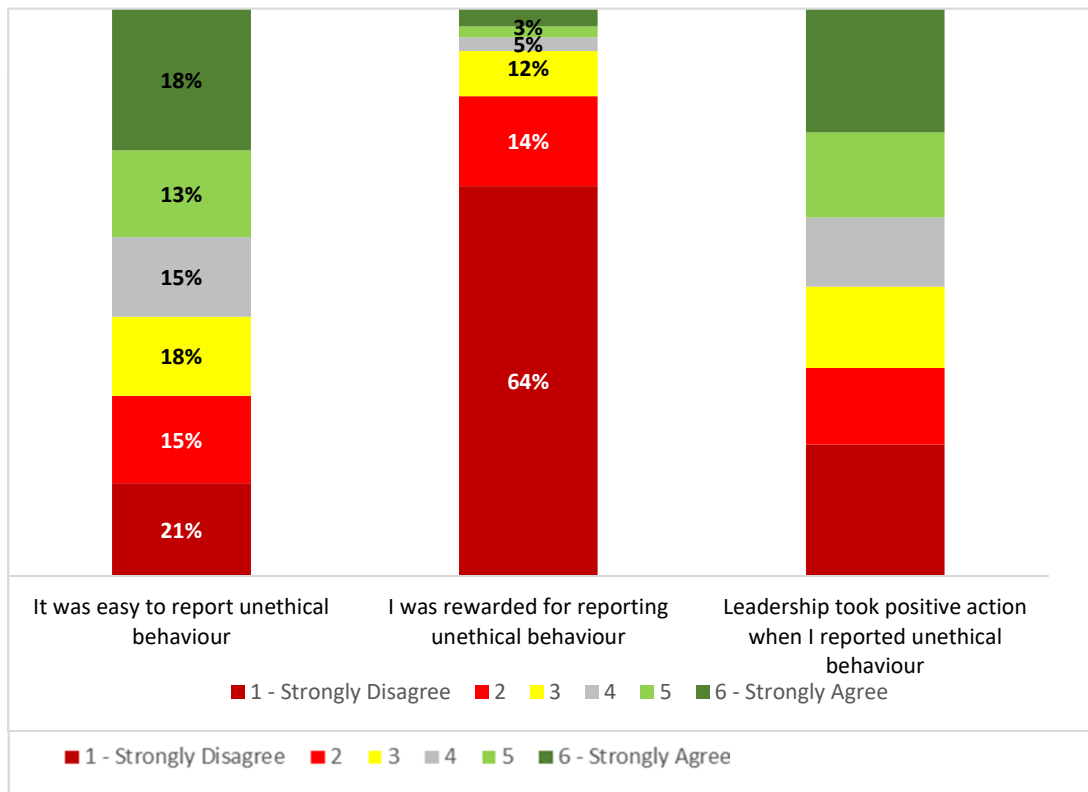


Figure 6. Experience of reporting unethical behaviour

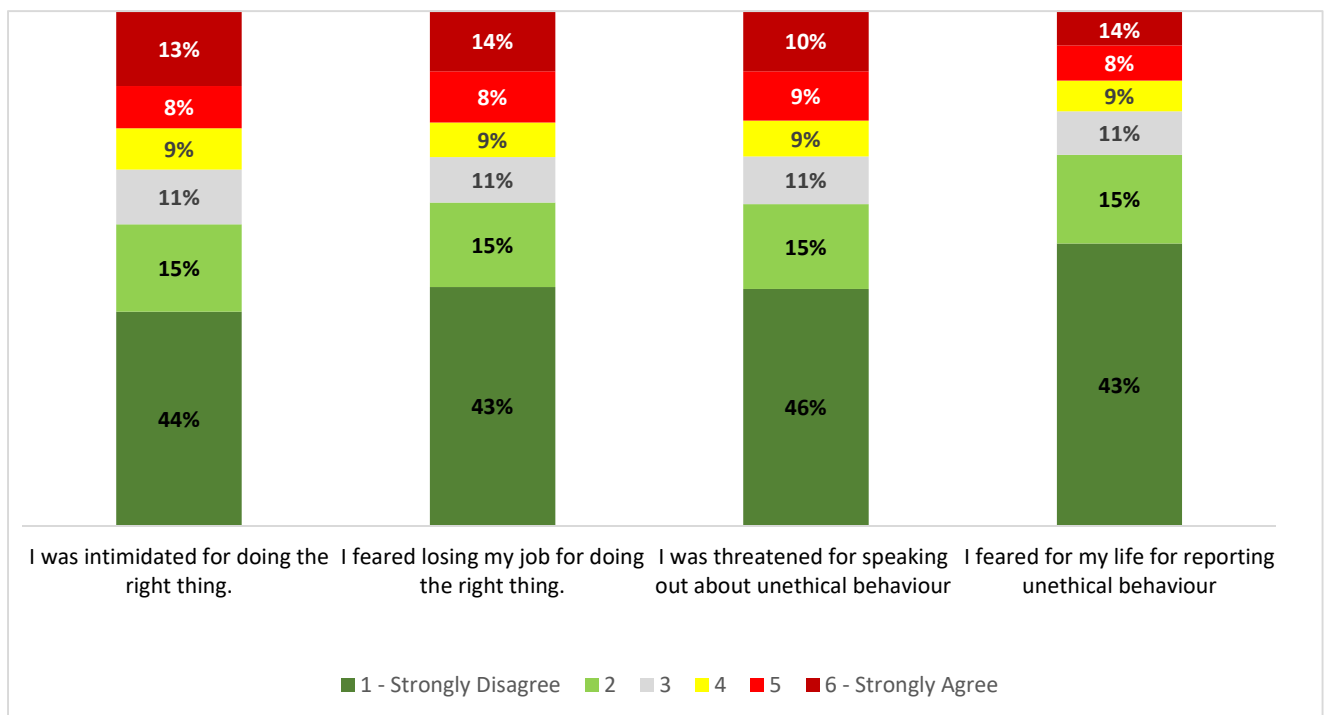


Figure 7 Experience of reporting unethical behaviour

2.7 Scale results

Even though there is an increase in the percentage of respondents who say they have reported unethical behaviour, there is a decrease in the percentage who say it was easy to report on unethical behaviour (31% compared to 40% in 2017). Although there is a slight decline in the percentage of professionals reporting that they had been intimidated for doing the right thing (21% compared to 23% in 2017) as well as in the percentage reporting that they had been threatened for speaking out about unethical behaviour (19% compared to 22% in 2017), it is concerning that there is an increase in the percentage reporting that they feared for their lives for reporting unethical behaviour (22% compared to 14% in 2017). It is also a concern that the percentage of respondents who report that they feared losing their jobs for doing the right thing remains at 22%.

Theme 7: COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

Table 6.

Reporting unethical behaviour in the public and private sectors

Did you report unethical behaviour in the past?	Frequency	Percentage
Public Sector		
Yes.	140	42%
No.	195	58%
Private Sector		
Yes.	429	45%
No.	514	55%

Table 7.

Reporting unethical behaviour in the public and private sectors-to whom

To whom did you report unethical behaviour?	Frequency	Percentage
Public Sector		
My Professional Institution	19	11%
My Organisation.	137	79%
The Media.	14	8%
The AEPF	3	2%
Private Sector		
My Professional Institution	92	19%
My Organisation.	353	73%
The Media.	32	6%
AEPF	7	1%

2.8 Scale results

Professionals from both the public and private sectors reported unethical behaviour primarily to their organisations. Although the difference is slight, there is a higher percentage in the private sector (45%, also up from the 41% in 2017) have reported unethical behaviour compared to their counterparts in the public sector (42%, up from the 39% in 2017). This may well be as a result of those in the public sector feeling less optimistic about how easy it is to report unethical behaviour in their context.

It is interesting to note that in both the public (11% compared to 10% in 2017) and private sector (19% compared to 10% in 2017) there is an increase in the percentage saying that they have reported unethical behaviour to their professional institution, with the biggest movement being in the private sector. Both groups also report an increase in reporting to the media, i.e. 8% in the

public sector, compared to 1% in 2017 and 6% in the private sector compared to nearly 2% in 2017.

Ethics in society

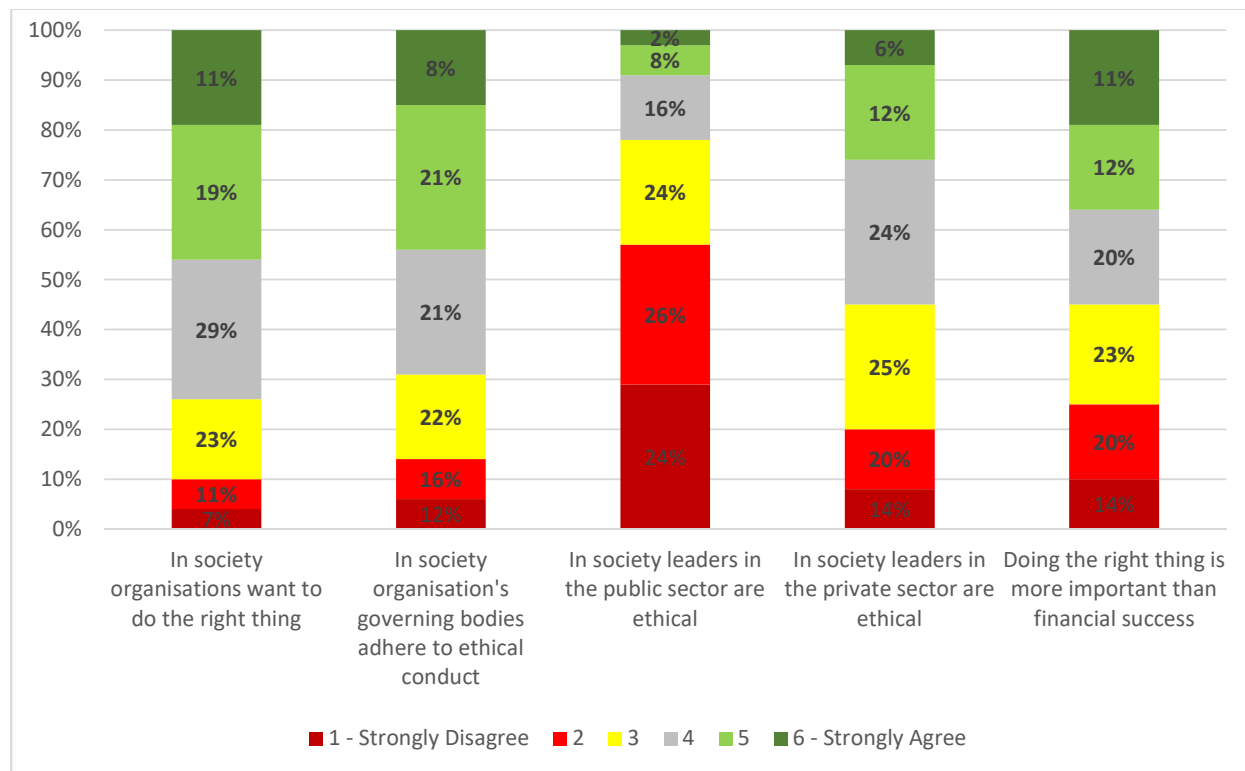


Figure 8: Perception of Ethics in Society-Public Sector

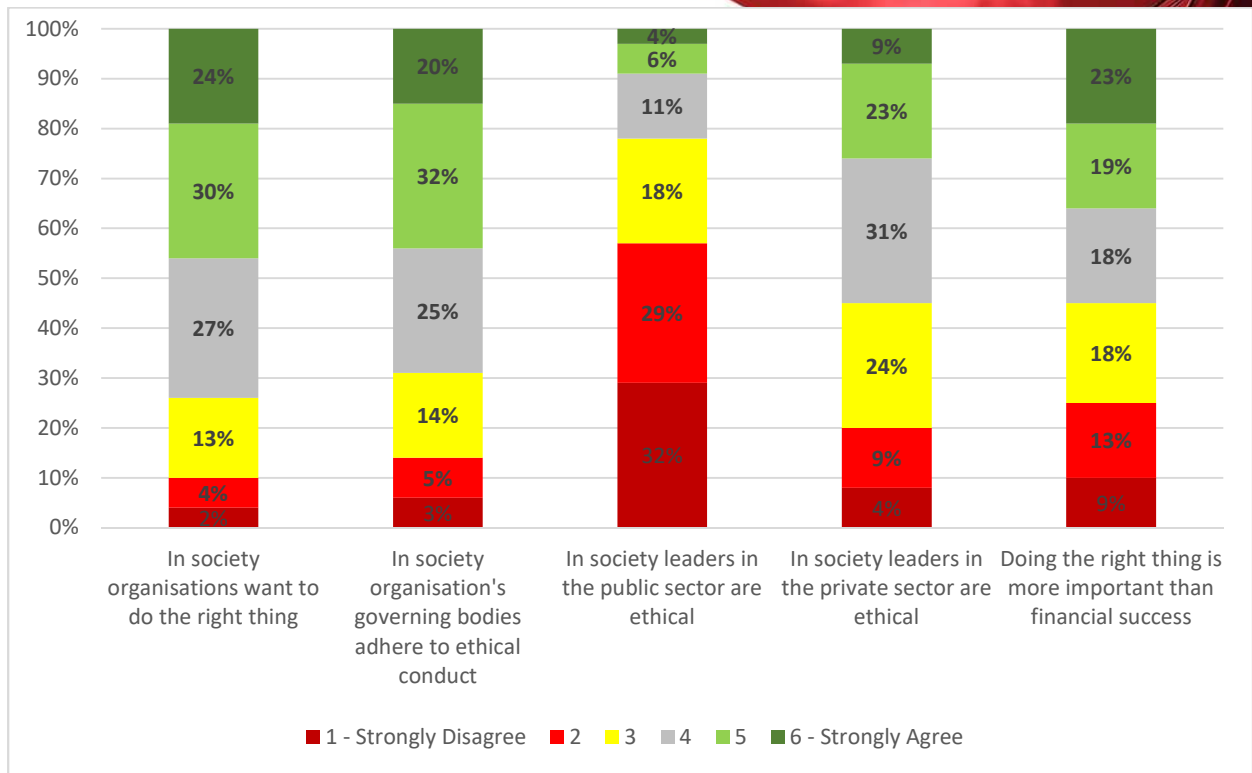


Figure 9: Perception of ethics in society –Private sector

2.9 Scale Results

Both groups of respondents report a decline in sentiment around organisations wanting to do the right thing, but the decline in the public sector is greater, i.e. 12% lower than in 2017. Respondents in the public sector have a more positive view of leaders in the public sector. Although in both groups only 10% (which is not much different from the 2017 results) agreed that leaders in the public sector are ethical, 32% in the private sector strongly disagreed that leaders in the public sector are ethical, compared to 24% of their counterparts in the public sector.

Both groups see the leadership in the private sector as more ethical, but there is a significant shift in sentiment compared to the 2017 results. Only 17% of those in the public sector agree that leaders in the private sector are ethical, compared to 60% in 2017. Only 32% of those in the private sector believe that leaders in the private sector are ethical compared to 70% in 2017. These views are probably influenced by all the scandals in the private sector that have come to light in the last year. It is however heartening to see an increase in the percentage of respondents agreeing that doing the right thing is more important than financial success,

23% in the public sector compared to 19% in 2017 and 42% in the private sector compared to 28% in 2017. This may well be a reflection of a greater realisation of the impact of corruption on society.

Ethics in Organisations

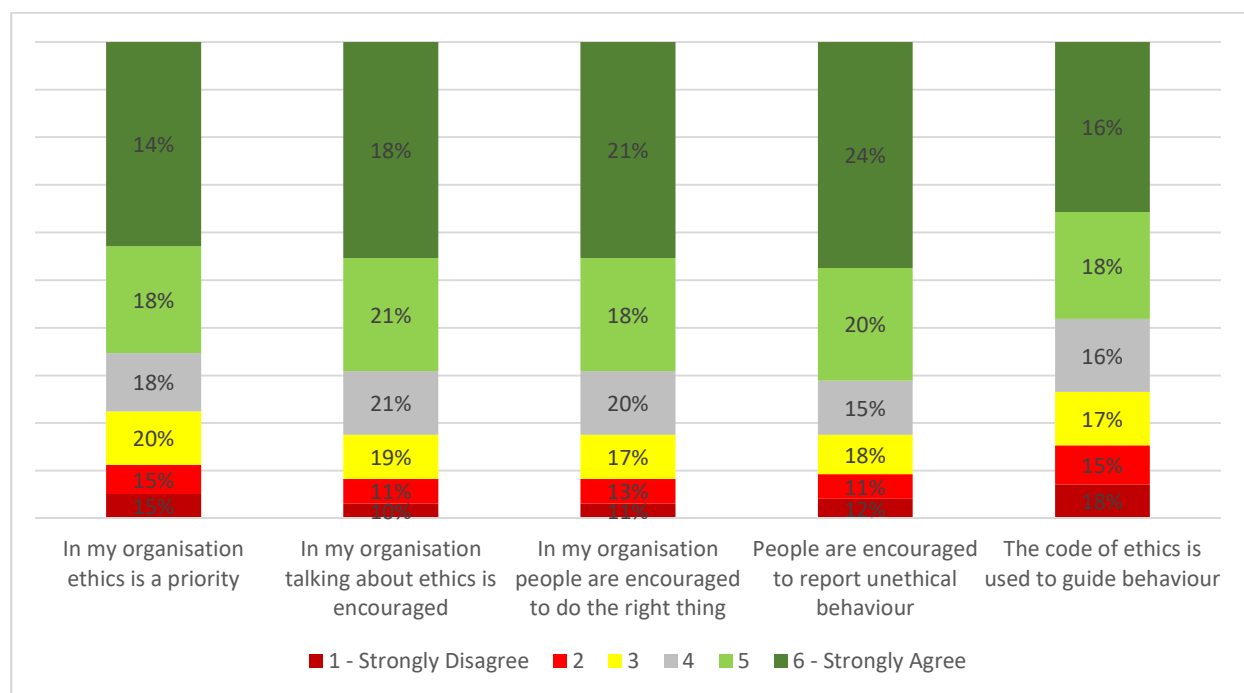


Figure 10: Perception of ethics in organisations-public sector

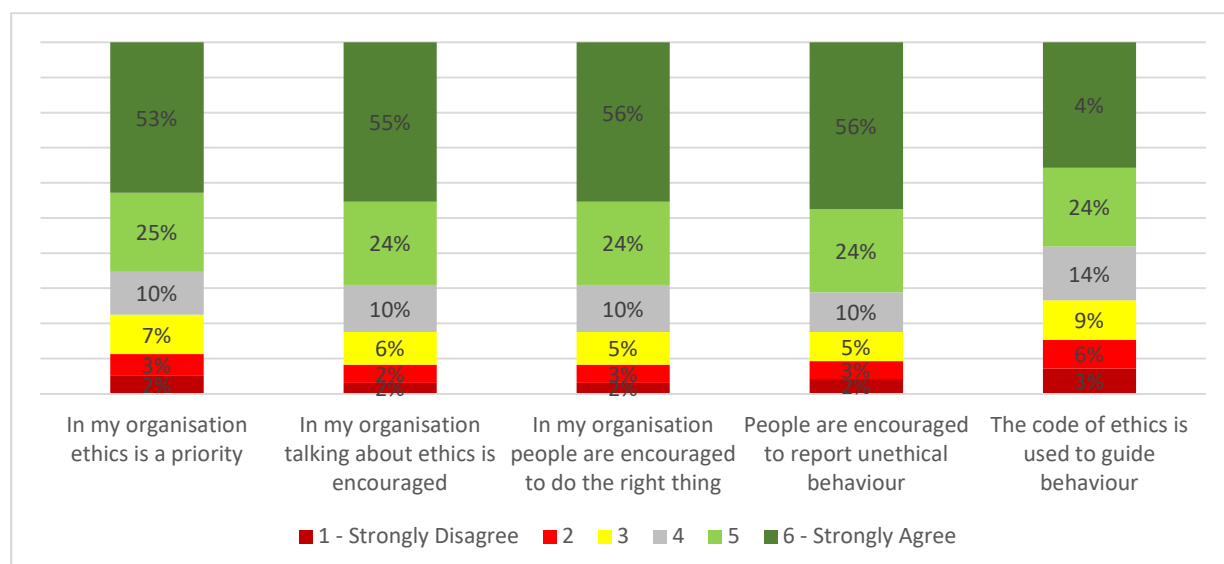


Figure 11: Perception of ethics in organisations-private sector

2.10 Scale results

The respondents in the public sector are even less optimistic about ethics being a priority in their organisations (32% against 43% in 2017) compared to their counterparts in the private sector where the results are almost the same as in 2017 (78% and 77% in 2017). There is also a significant decline in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who feel that people are encouraged to do the right thing in their organisations (39% compared to 63% in 2017). Although there is also a decline in the private sector, it was not as drastic (80% compared to 85% in 2017). There is also a significant decline in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who feel that people are encouraged to report unethical behaviour (44% compared to 59% in 2017), where the sentiment among their counterparts in the private sector has remained the same.

Ethics in Professional Bodies

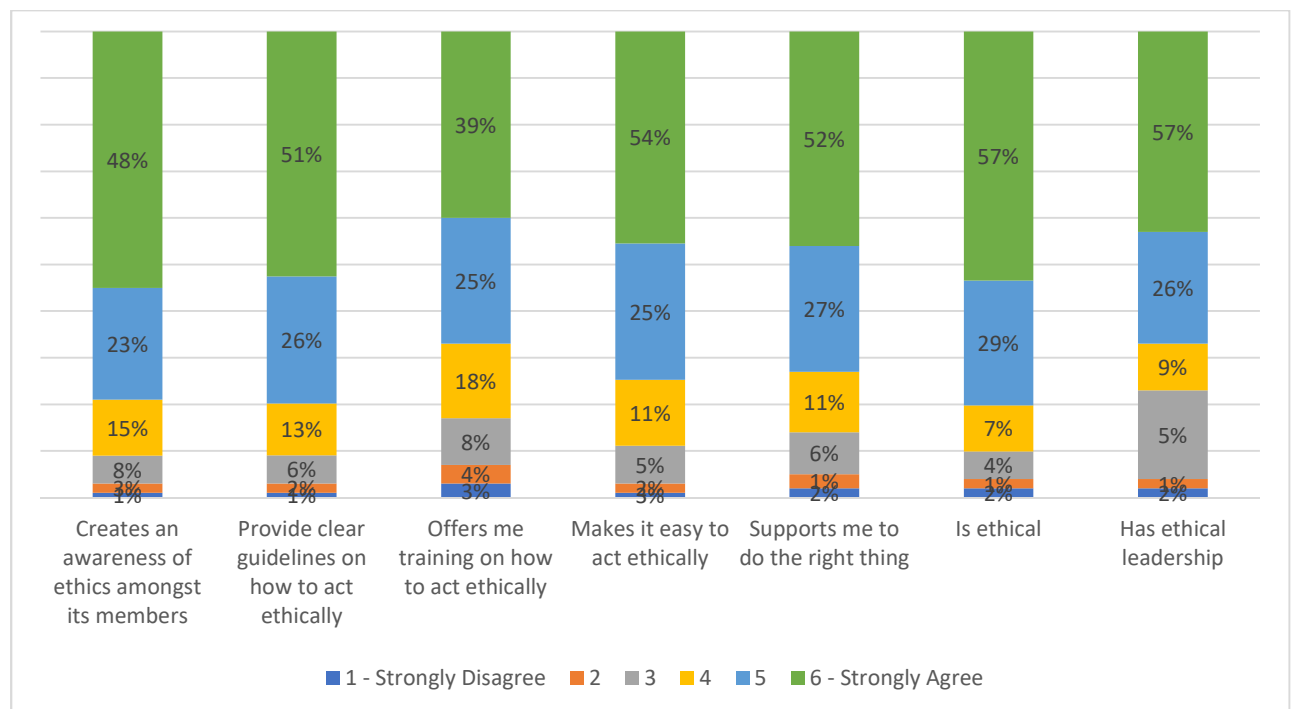


Figure 12: Perception of ethics in professional institutions-public sector

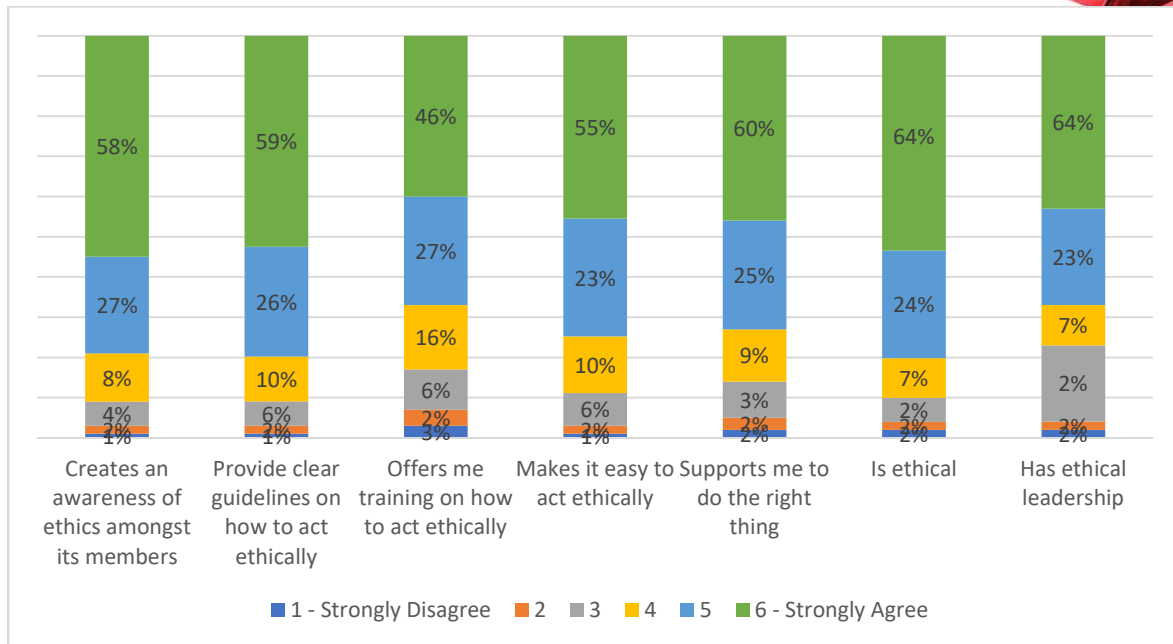


Figure 13: Perception of ethics in professional institutions-private sector

2.11 Scale results

The professional bodies can take some comfort in the fact that the sentiment in both the public and private sectors not only remain very positive with regard to how professionals perceive ethics in their professional institutions, but also that there is a general increase in positive perception. This is despite the fact that some professional bodies have come under severe pressure with regard to their response to increasing reports on fraud and corruption in the country. The biggest increase in positive sentiment has been in the public sector, where respondents rated professional institutions lower than their counterparts in the private sector did. The most significant increases are among those in the public sector who agree that their professional institutions make it easy to act ethically (79% compared to 66% in 2017), that their professional institutions support them to do the right thing (79% compared to 67% in 2017), that their professional institutions are ethical (86% compared to 74% in 2017) and those who agree that their professional institutions have ethical leadership (83% compared to 72% in 2017). The positive sentiment in the private sector remains slightly higher.

Reporting on Ethics

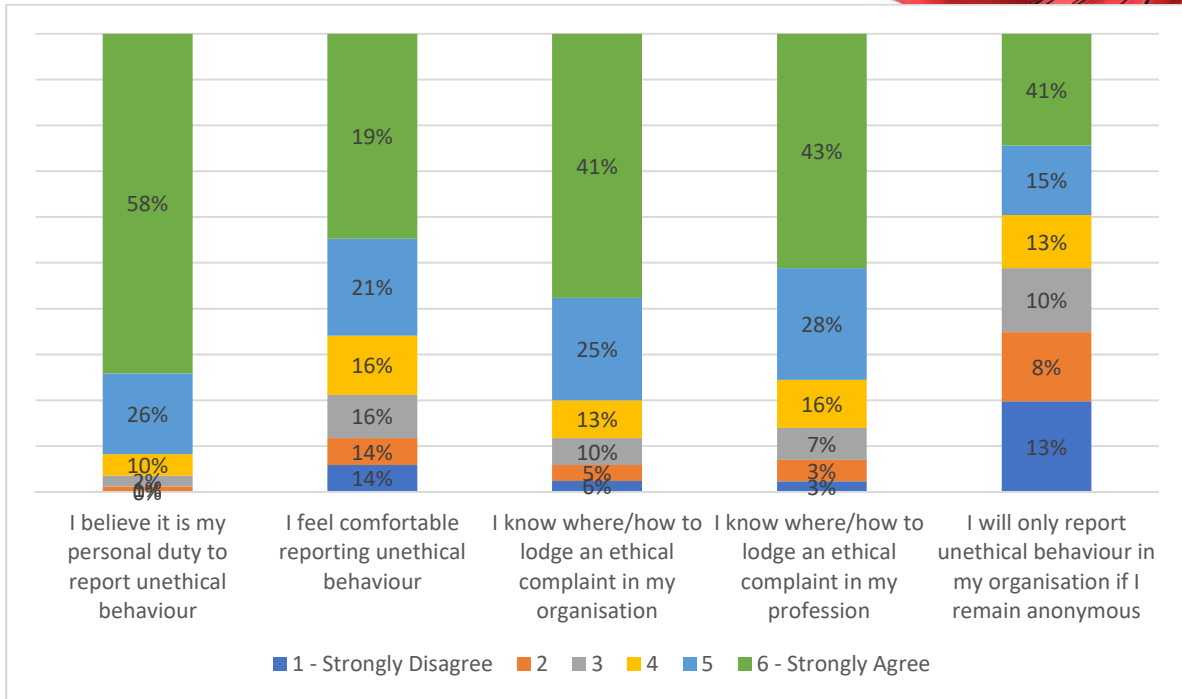
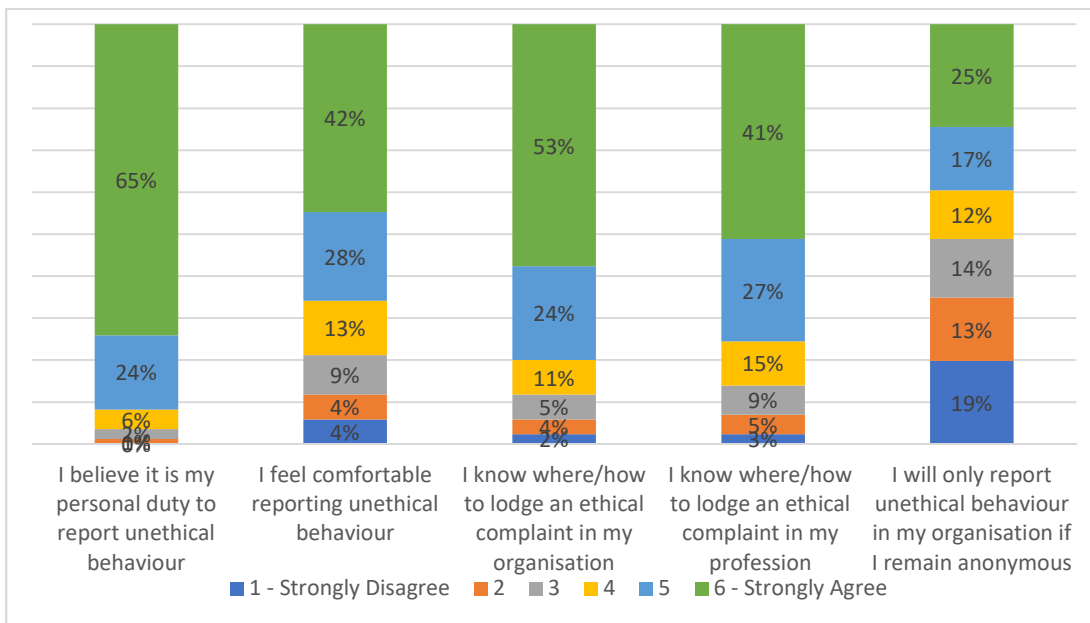


Figure 14: Reporting on ethics-public sector



Question 1: The data was collated from only public and private sector respondents.

Figure 15: Reporting on Ethics-private sector

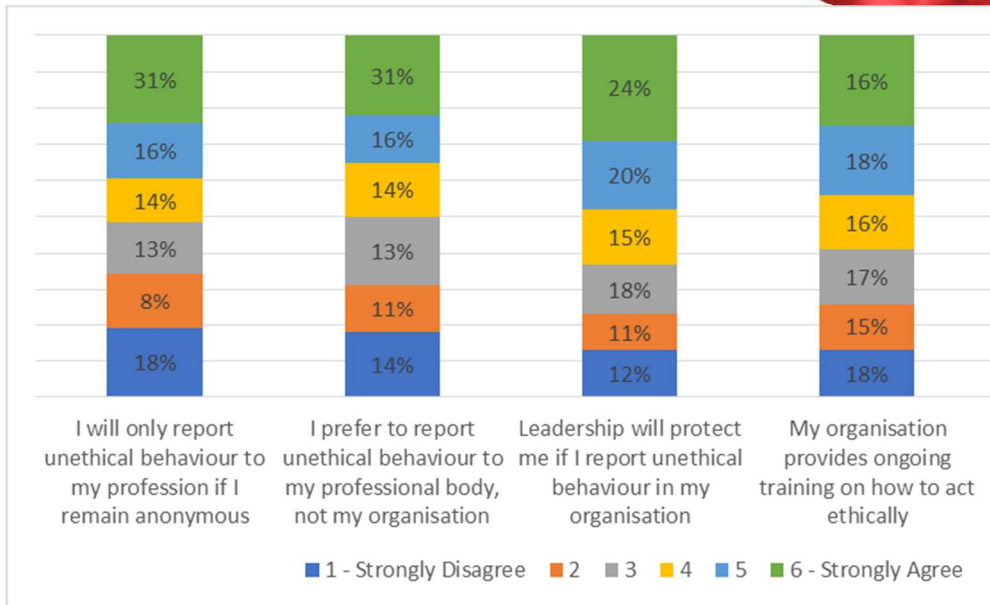


Figure 16: Reporting on ethics-public sector

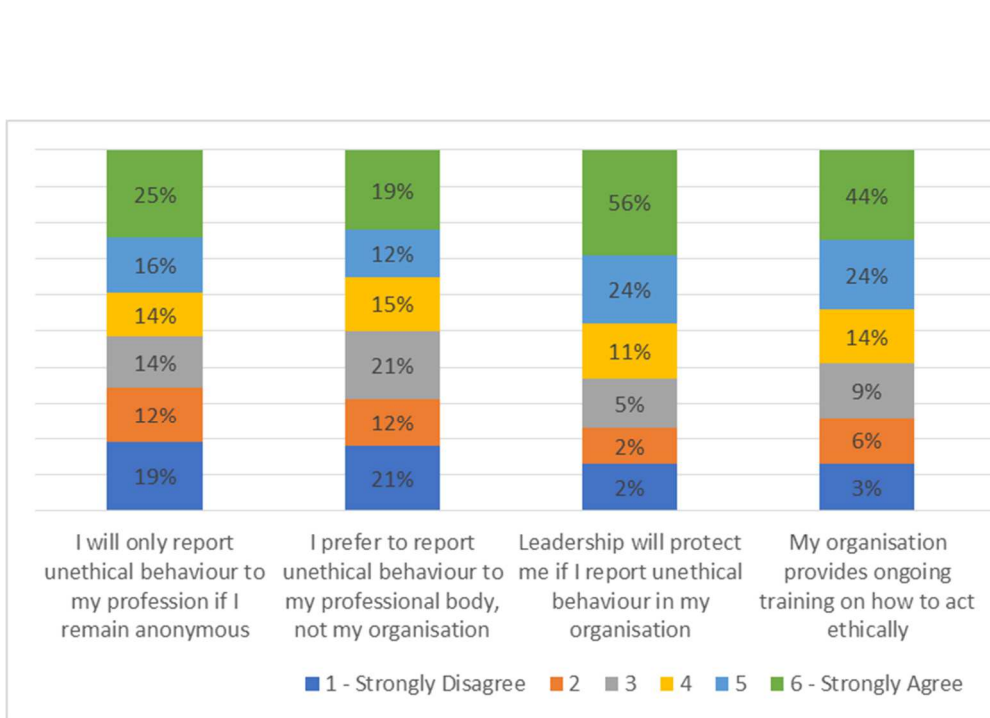


Figure 17: Reporting on ethics-private sector

2.12 Scale results

There is a decline in the percentage of respondents who believe that it is their personal duty to report unethical behaviour (84% in the public sector compared to 91% in 2017, and 89% in the private sector compared to 92% in 2017). There is also a slight decline in both groups in the percentage who agree that they feel comfortable reporting unethical behaviour (40% in the public sector compared to 45% in 2017, and 70% in the private sector compared to 73% in 2017). The results also show a slight decline in the percentage of respondents, among both groups who say that they know where or how to lodge an ethical complaint in their organisation (66% in the public sector compared to 69% in 2017, and 77% in the private sector compared to 83% in 2017).

Anonymity remains an issue for both groups, with no significant change in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who say that they will only report unethical behaviour to their profession if they remain anonymous, although it went up in the private sector from 37% to 41%.

Although it is clear that much work still needs to be done, the increase in respondents, in both sectors, who agree that their organisations provide ongoing training on how to act ethically. Is a step in the right direction (34% in the public sector compared to 26% in 2017 and 68% in the private sector compared to 50% in 2017).

Reporting Experience

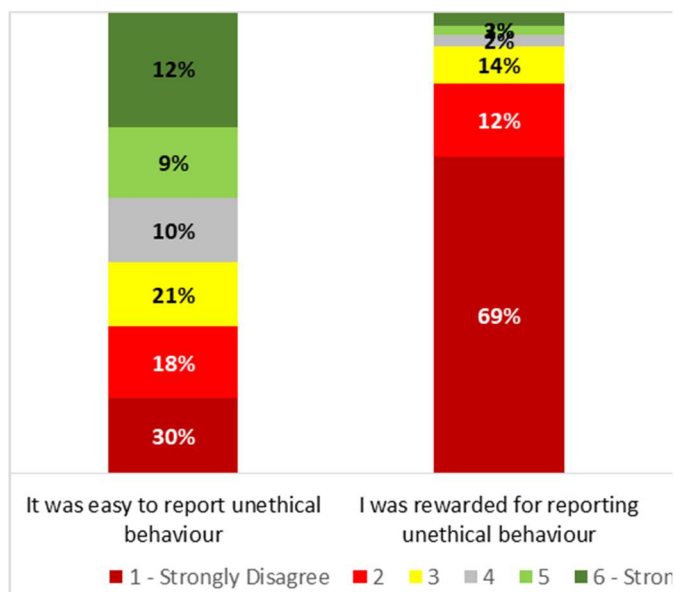


Figure 18: Experience of reporting unethical behaviour-public sector

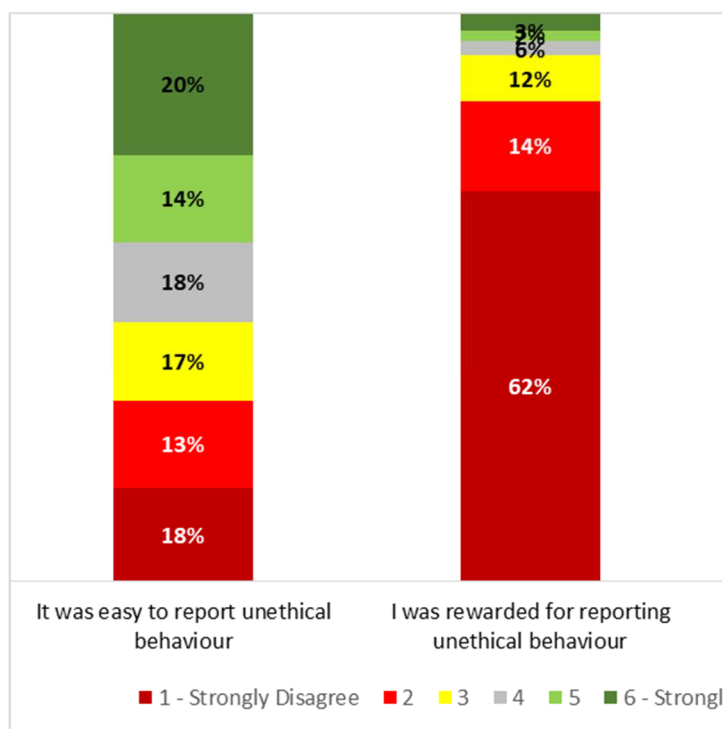


Figure 19: Experience of reporting unethical behaviour-private sector

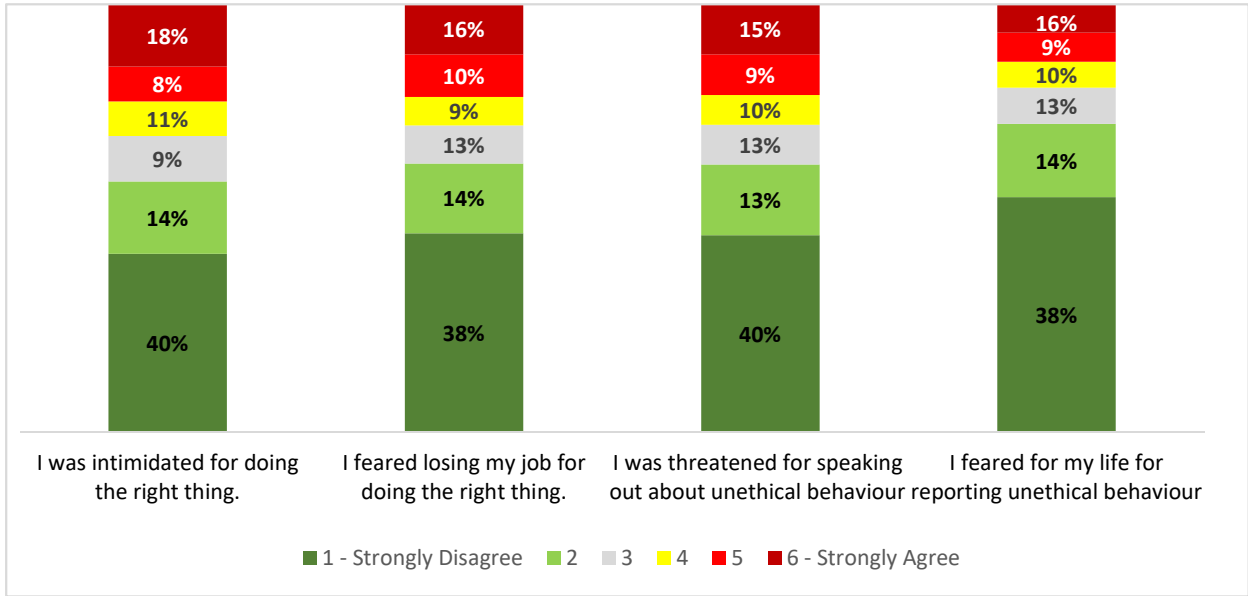


Figure 20: Experience of reporting unethical behaviour-public sector

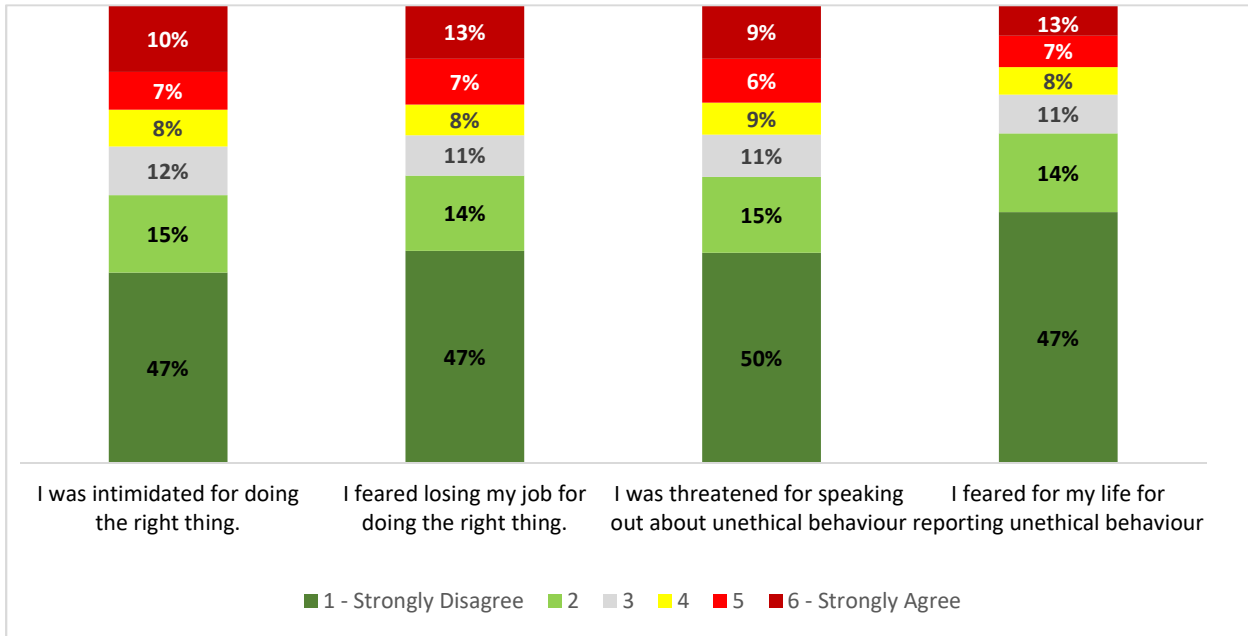


Figure 21: Experience of reporting unethical behaviour-private sector

2.13 Scale results

Although the results were about the same for the private sector, there has been a decline in the percentage of respondents who agreed that it was easy to report unethical behaviour in the public sector (21% compared to 27% in 2017).

A positive sign is the decline in the percentage of respondents, in both sectors, who agreed that they had been intimidated for doing the right thing (26% in the public sector compared to 34% in 2017, and 17% in the private sector compared to 20% in 2017). Although there is a slight increase in the percentage of respondents in the private sector (20% compared to 19% in 2017), there is a decrease in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who agreed that they feared losing their job for doing the right thing (26% compared to 30% in 2017). There is also a decrease in both sectors in the percentage of respondents who agree that they were threatened for speaking out about unethical behaviour (24% in the public sector compared to 28% in 2017, and 15% in the private sector compared to 19% in 2017).

While there has been no overall significant change in the percentage of respondents in the public sector who agreed that they feared for their lives for reporting unethical behaviour, the percentage who strongly agreed increased from 12% in 2017 to 16%. It is however concerning that the percentage of respondents in the private sector who agreed that they feared for their lives for reporting unethical behaviour increased from 10% in 2017 to 20%, with 13% strongly agreeing with the statement (5% strongly agreed in 2017). This is a significant result.

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5. REFERENCES

AEPF 2017 Ethical Practices Survey report www.aepf.co.za