



The Futures Project

tomorrow's
company

A business-led programme of inquiry, debate and dialogue that will produce a positive and practical vision for companies to be a force for good.

Survey Results

As part of the Futures Project we conducted an online survey on the role of purpose in business success, the state of current business and the challenges facing business over the next 20 years. We received 333 responses from people with a mix of backgrounds covering corporates, consultants, investors, regulators and the media.

- There was strong agreement across all professions that shareholder value should be the outcome rather than the purpose of business activity, with 91% agreeing with this statement. Likewise there was strong agreement that having a clear purpose and the right culture is critical to business success, with 98% agreement.
- There was a split opinion on whether businesses operating in the UK have become more responsible over the last 20 years. Those working in financial markets and for corporates were more inclined to believe there had been progress.
- The general view was that UK business does have a damaging short-term focus, with 74% agreeing with this statement. This view was stronger amongst those working for NGOs and in academia, and weaker for those working in financial markets and corporates.
- Opinion was split on whether the press have a damaging negative focus, with those in financial markets and corporates more inclined to believe that it does.
- The most commonly cited challenges facing business over the next 20 years were accelerating technological change, competition from emerging markets and climate change.

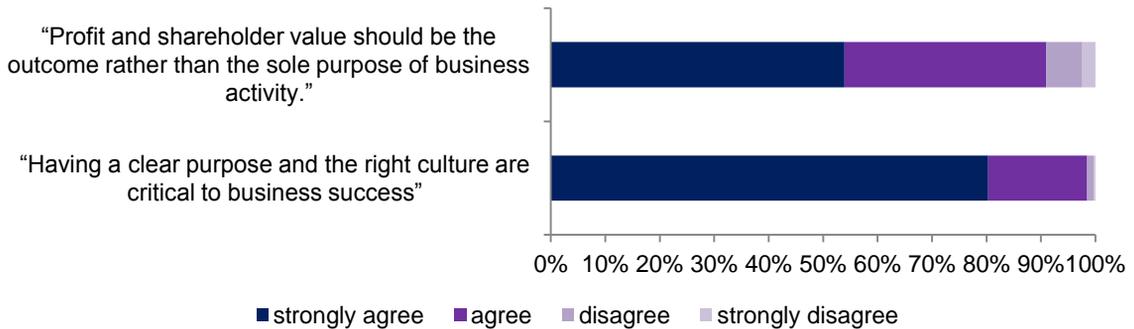
Further information

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Agreement on the role of purpose and culture in business success

There was strong agreement across all professions that shareholder value should be the outcome rather than the purpose of business activity. Likewise there was strong agreement that having a clear purpose and the right culture is critical to business success.

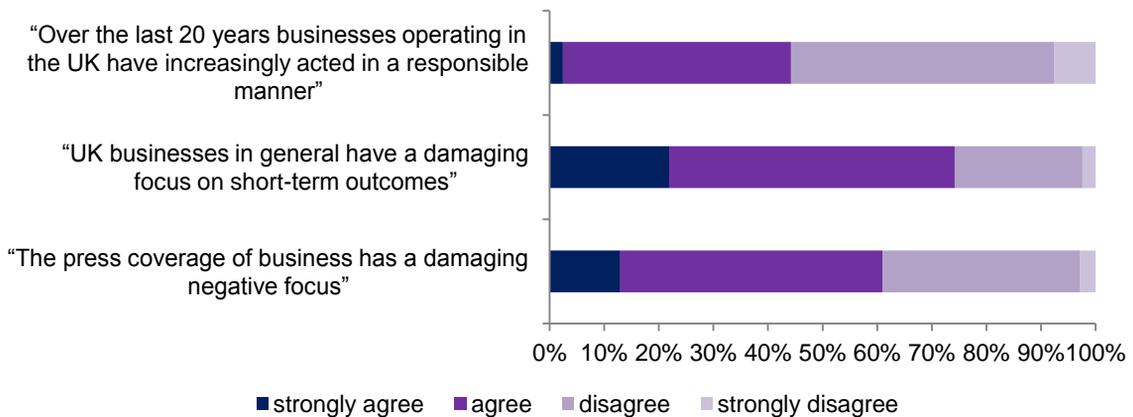


Divided opinion on the state of business

There was a split opinion on whether businesses operating in the UK have become more responsible over the last 20 years, with opinion slightly towards that it has not with 56% disagreeing.

The general view was that UK business does have a damaging short-term focus, with 74% agreeing with this statement.

Opinion was split on whether the press have a damaging negative focus.

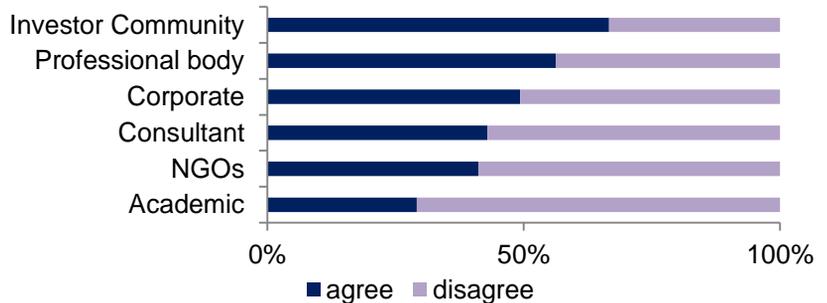


An expected division between professions

By looking at how peoples' answers differed by profession we can see an expected division in opinion between those who work in financial markets and corporates, versus those in academia and NGOs. Those in more commercial roles are more inclined to be positive on the progress of business, problem of short-termism and as a result believe the press is overly negative.

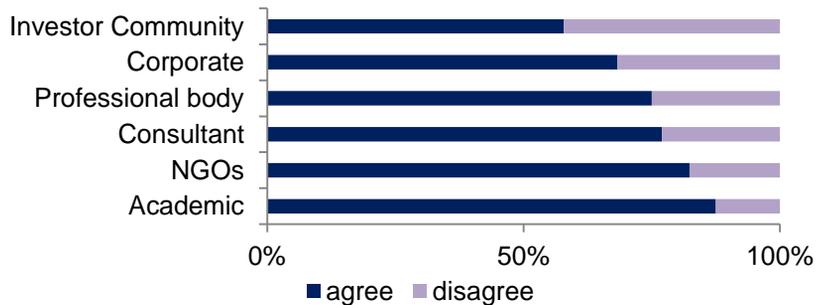
The investor community was the most positive on the progress towards more responsible business, with academics being the most pessimistic.

“Over the last 20 years businesses operating in the UK have increasingly acted in a responsible manner”



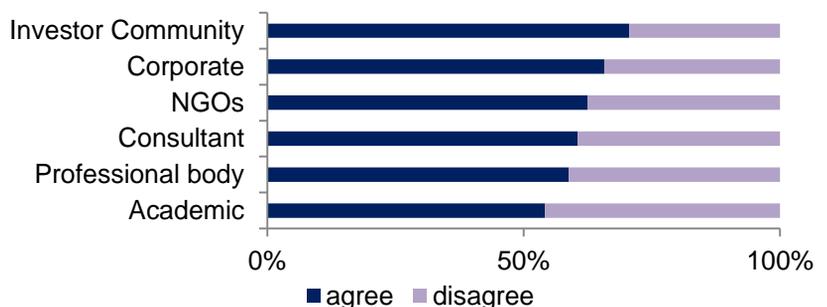
This is mirrored in the agreement on whether short-termism is a problem. While all professions in general agreed that is was, this was weakest in the investor community and corporate employees and strongest in NGOs and academics.

“UK businesses in general have a damaging focus on short-term outcomes”

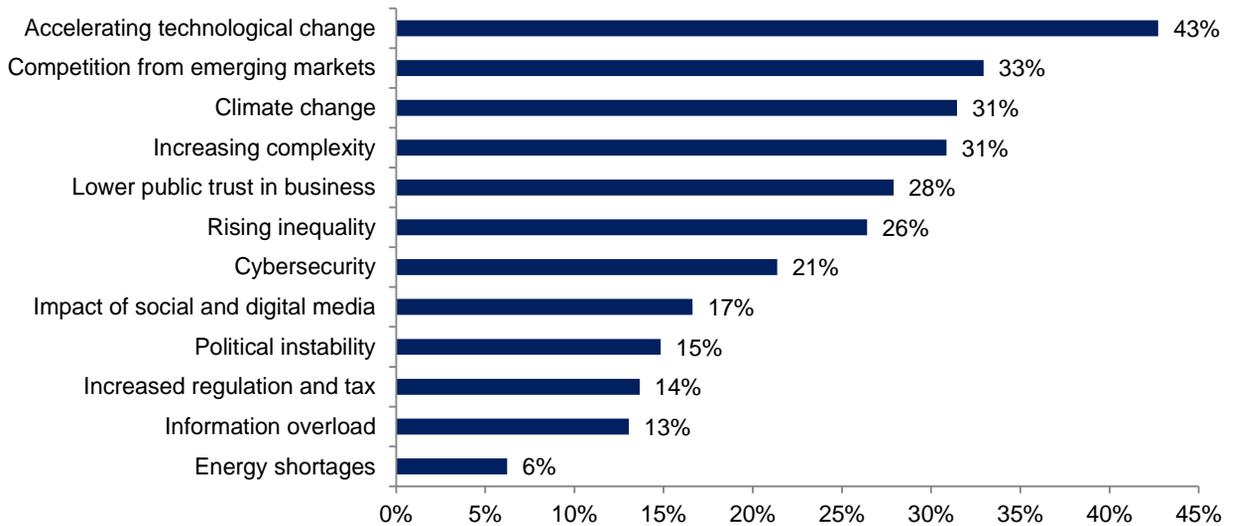


A similar split is seen in regard to whether press coverage of business has a damaging negative focus, with the investor community and corporate employees more inclined to agree that the press is overly negative.

“The press coverage of business has a damaging negative focus”



What are the top 3 challenges facing business over the next 20 years?



Other challenges mentioned

“Meeting investor expectations”

“Skills shortage”

“Concentration of financial capital in too few hands”

“Unsustainable western debt”

“The growing power of big business subverts democracy.”

“A mismatch of culture between younger and older workforce”

“Resource scarcity”

“Systemic collapse of ecosystems and related issues including resource shortages and biodiversity loss.”

“Incompetent leaders”

“Conflation between business and financial markets”

If you feel business can and must be a force for good, please contribute to our campaign to create a fresh vision, setting a new agenda for business.

Do you or your organisation want to contribute?

[Contact Alex Maitland](#) for more information

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