

About the ...

World Online Whistleblowing Survey

From May 2012, a research team led by Griffith University and The University of Melbourne is conducting the **World Online Whistleblowing Survey**.

This is the first international survey testing public views about whistleblowing to be run online in multiple languages.

Whistleblowing is when a person reveals inside information about serious wrongdoing within or by an organisation, to people or authorities who may be able to take action.

The survey is collecting data to help answer questions about:

- Attitudes to the value of whistleblowing
- The impact of new technologies and social media on the role and nature of whistleblowing
- Differences in attitudes to whistleblowing in different social or cultural contexts
- Citizens' propensity to 'blow the whistle' on wrongdoing, particularly to the media
- Citizen preferences regarding *how* to blow the whistle on wrongdoing, including issues of anonymity, communication and trust when dealing with the media.

Who can answer the survey?

Anyone can answer the survey, anywhere in the world, provided they do so only once.

The research team encourages as many people as possible to complete the survey – whether they think whistleblowing is good or bad. The survey is for everyone, not just whistleblowers.

The survey is being offered in a number of languages. Depending on the response to this first-ever survey, further languages may also be added in future editions.

The survey takes between 15 and 20 minutes. It is available for download and submission at:

<https://whistleblowingsurvey.org>

As well as a large cross-section of citizens who elect to answer the survey, key sections of the survey are being administered to a random representative sample of the Australian population. They may also be administered to similar samples in other countries.

Who is conducting the survey?

The survey is part of a three year research project funded by the Australian Research Council, titled: *Blowing Boldly: The Changing Roles, Avenues and Impacts of Public Interest Whistleblowing in the Era of Secure Online Technologies*.

The research team consists of Professor A J Brown (Griffith University, Australia), Dr Suelette Dreyfus, Dr Simon Milton, Dr Rachelle Bosua and Dr Reeva Lederman (University of Melbourne, Australia) (all project elements) and Professor Marcia Miceli (Georgetown University, USA) (secondary analysis).

How can your organisation help promote the survey?

Media and other organisations who are interested in the outcomes of this study, are encouraged to promote public participation in the survey by placing a survey download link on their own websites, or informing readers or members about the survey, or both.

Organisations who enter an agreement with the research team to assist in promoting the survey will receive advance, direct notice of the study findings for reporting purposes.

Survey download links will include a short (2-3 sentence) description of the survey. More detail is available at <https://whistleblowingsurvey.org>. Media and other organisations who wish to assist in promoting the survey are asked to email the research team at media@whistleblowingsurvey.org.

The research team is seeking the views of the widest possible range of people. This is irrespective of whether respondents think whistleblowing is good or bad, and whether or not they have ever ‘blown the whistle’ themselves, or think they would ever do so.

Why is the research significant?

‘Whistleblowing’ is increasingly recognized around the world as one of the most important ways that serious wrongdoing within organisations can be brought to light.

For example, many countries have now passed ‘whistleblower protection’ legislation. Measures to encourage whistleblowing are recommended by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) and in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

In some countries, surveys have been conducted within organisations to establish how many people have witnessed suspected wrongdoing, and how many have reported or revealed that wrongdoing.

However, few large-scale studies have been undertaken into:

- the attitudes of the general population towards whistleblowing, including how feasible it is for citizens in different countries, and different situations, to blow the whistle
- when people think it is or isn’t legitimate, or feasible, to blow the whistle by revealing inside information to the news or current affairs media
- *how* people might prefer to blow the whistle, if they had need to do so, particularly using new technologies

The role of the media as outlets for whistleblowing has changed rapidly as a result of new technologies and social media. This is the first known large-scale study in the world to collect empirical evidence of social attitudes relevant to understanding these changes.

How will the research be used?

The findings will help inform improvements to:

- government policies about the role of whistleblowing
- laws and regulations aimed at encouraging and protecting public interest whistleblowing, especially involving the media
- the systems and procedures used by organisations, especially media organisations, to receive public interest information from, and communicate with, whistleblowers.

The findings will be made available to the media, with priority given to media and other organisations who have helped promote public participation in the survey.

The research findings will also be submitted for publication in leading research journals, and be made publicly available through the following websites:

<https://whistleblowingsurvey.org>

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/whistleblowing>

<http://people.eng.unimelb.edu.au/smilton/whistleblowing>

How has the survey been prepared?

The survey has been prepared on the basis of preliminary research, including previous surveys across expert fields including management, public policy, corporate governance, organisational behaviour, journalism and new media, computing, sociology and law.

The survey has also been designed using:

- insights from a first stage of qualitative research, involving interviews with journalists, publishers and whistleblowers, and
- expert feedback from members of the International Whistleblowing Research Network, convened by Middlesex University, London.

The study has been approved by The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee consistently with Australian national guidelines.

How anonymous is the survey?

Respondents are asked not to provide any information which could be used to identify them.

Respondents are offered a choice of ways to submit the survey to provide the best available method of ensuring that the source of the survey or location of respondent cannot be identified. Data gathered will be stored securely in line with research ethics requirements.

Raw data will only be available to approved university researchers for purposes of analysis in line with research project publication protocols. Only aggregate findings, from which no person can be identified, will be made publicly available.

Research team contacts

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