**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Major new Survation poll shows widespread public appetite for tougher regulation as Economic Crime Bill returns to Commons.**

Early results from a large-scale UK-wide opinion poll by Survation appear to show the British public supports stronger regulation of professional services firms such as lawyers, accountants and estate agents.

The news comes as the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill returns to Commons for the third round of ping-pong, with two amendments up for debate (one on a new “failure to prevent fraud” offence, the other seeking to prevent wealthy people from out-muscling law enforcement in the courts). Both now represent opportunities for parliamentarians to show voters they share concerns which seem widely held across an electorate that will choose its next government within 15 months.

The opinion poll, commissioned by the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition (UKACC), is analysing public attitudes to economic crime and political integrity. Based on a large sample size of 6,466, it’s still to return its headline results, but has today revealed that:

* Overall, 74% of the public agreed that “British professional services (accountants, lawyers, estate agents, etc ) should be better regulated to ensure they detect and prevent economic crime, and held more accountable when they fail to do so.”
* Figures were particularly stark in the 65+ age bracket – a key Conservative target demographic – in which 88.9% agreed with the statement.
* Those who voted Conservative in 2019 were also significantly more likely than average to agree with the statement, at 81.33%.
* Even in London, where many of the UK’s leading professional services firms are based, over two thirds (66.7%) of respondents supported greater regulation and accountability.

(See Appendix section for full data table and methodology.)

The news comes as the Labour Party is apparently [shifting anti-corruption much higher up its agenda](https://www.ukanticorruptioncoalition.org/our-blog/covid-commissioner).

Against this backdrop, Senior Advocacy Advisor at campaign group and UKACC member Spotlight on Corruption James Bolton-Jones said: “This polling data provides yet more evidence of just how crucial it is for government to repair public confidence in the UK’s ability to tackle economic crime.

“This should start with accepting the pragmatic amendments to the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill supported by the House of Lords, which have already been significantly watered down in an effort to find compromise with the government. It also means prioritising the implementation of new and existing legislation by ensuring key law enforcement agencies and regulators are properly resourced to take the fight to fraudsters and money launderers.”

**Amendment 151**

This amendment concerns the new “failure to prevent fraud” offence, which introduces penalties for professionals found to be enabling fraud through turning a blind eye.

But, if Government amendments are passed, the offence would not apply to 99% of all law firms, for example. (The concept of ‘failure to prevent’ already exists in bribery and tax evasion legislation.)

UK Government wants employees of “small and medium sized enterprises” (SMEs) – defined here in various ways including those generating less than £36m in turnover and/or employing fewer than 250 people – to be exempt from the legislation.

Last week, tabling Lord Garnier, a King’s Counsel barrister specialising in corporate advisory and financial services work and former Conservative Solicitor General, noted that SMEs make up the overwhelming majority of professional services companies. “If this country wants to be taken seriously,” he said, “we cannot add to the law of corporate crime by excluding 99.5% of companies and partnerships from that law.” (Full quote in appendix).

**Amendment 161**

Closely related, this amendment would impose limits to the costs in certain civil cases related to economic crime that could be racked up against UK law enforcement agencies in so-called “lawfare”.

Currently, agencies like the Serious Fraud Office and National Crime Agency can be vastly outmuscled in financial terms by wealthy individuals and companies. This can result in agencies having less appetite to investigate and prosecute the most powerful suspects in economic crimes.

Lord Faulks (Crossbench), who tabled the amendment, said last week: “(Agencies) are frequently up against expensive and unscrupulous legal teams with a plethora of loopholes at their disposal. So it seems obvious to me that, where appropriate, we should be protecting those agencies from disproportionate costs and the chilling effect which comes alongside them.” (Full quote in appendix).

**The wider polling project**

Today’s early results are part of a large-scale national opinion poll of 6,466 people by Survation, commissioned by the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition. The poll covers 29 questions analysing public attitudes to economic crime and political integrity, including 6 MRP questions where results will be extrapolated to a constituency level.

The full data will be released over two reports, the first (economic crime) expected to be published in late November-early December. The second report will cover political integrity.

More details will be released in due course, but to discuss further or to register a particular interest in advance, please contact the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition using the details in Media requests below.

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**Note to editors**

The UK Anti-Corruption Coalition brings together the UK’s leading anti-corruption organisations, and works closely with parliamentarians of all stripes. The coalition works collaboratively to fight corruption in the UK and end the UK’s role in facilitating corruption abroad. Together, its members advocate to policymakers, hold those with power to account, and work towards driving real world change.

[www.ukanticorruptioncoalition.org](http://www.ukanticorruptioncoalition.org)

**Media requests**

For more information, or to get in contact with the civil society experts and parliamentarians we work closely with, please get in touch:

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**Appendix**

**Full data table**



**Full quotes**

Lord Garnier on amendment 151: “If this country wants to be taken seriously,” he said, “we cannot add to the law of corporate crime by excluding 99.5% of companies and partnerships from that law. We need a uniform offence and a uniform and accessible defence. And surely, no properly run company of any size needs to fear the law nor would it anyway want to promote or permit fraudulent activities by anyone it deals with.

“Honest business is good business, and good business breeds repeat business. In a spirit of compromise we are prepared to exempt micro-businesses. As long as an opportunity presents itself coherently to modernise our approach to corporate crime, those of us who wish to see the Government and Parliament do the right thing must keep arguing the case.”

Lord Faulks on amendment 161: “Our enforcement agencies are too often outgunned and outmanoeuvred by deep-pocketed crooks and kleptocrats. They are frequently up against expensive and unscrupulous legal teams with a plethora of loopholes at their disposal. So it seems obvious to me that, where appropriate, we should be protecting those agencies from disproportionate costs and the chilling effect which comes alongside them.”

**Polling methodology**

1. Fieldwork Dates

26th September - 9th October 2023

1. Data Collection Method

The survey was conducted via online panel. Invitations to complete surveys were sent out to members of the panel. Differential response rates from different demographic groups were taken into account.

1. Population Sampled

All residents aged 18+ living in Great Britain.

1. Sample Size

6,466

1. Data Weighting

Data were weighted to the profile of all adults in the UK aged 18+. Data were weighted by age, sex, region, highest level of qualification, annual equivalised household income, 2019 General Election Vote, and 2016 EU Referendum Vote.

Targets for the weighted data were derived from Office for National Statistics Data and the results of the 2019 UK General Election and the 2016 EU Referendum.

1. Margin of Error

Because only a sample of the full population was interviewed, all results are subject to margin of error, meaning that not all differences are statistically significant.

For example, in a question where 50% (the worst case scenario as far as margin of error is concerned) gave a particular answer, given the sample of 6,466 it is 95% certain that the ‘true’ value will fall within the range of 1.21% from the sample result.

Subsamples from the cross-breaks will be subject to higher margin of error, conclusions drawn from crossbreaks with very small sub-samples should be treated with caution.

1. Voting Intention

In order to assess voting intention, we first asked respondents, on a scale of 0-10, how likely they would be to vote in the next general election.

This likelihood to vote was then used to weight voters' responses, such that respondents replying “10” were weighted by a factor of 1.0, whilst those responding “9” were weighted by a factor of 0.9, and so on down to responses of “0” being excluded altogether.

Respondents were then asked who they would be most likely to vote for if that election were tomorrow. The responses “Conservative”, “Labour”, “Liberal Democrats”, “Scottish National Party (SNP)” (in Scotland), and "Plaid Cymru" (in Wales) were asked in a randomising order, and if respondents selected “Another Party” they were then asked to specify. Northern Irish parties were prompted in a random order for respondents living in Northern Ireland.

As an additional step, respondents who replied “undecided” and “refused” were then removed from the sample.

All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error. On the basis of the historical record of the polls at recent general elections, there is a 9 in 10 chance that the true value of a party’s support lies within 4 points of the estimates provided by this poll, and a 2 in 3 chance that they lie within 2 points.

1. Question presentation

All data tables are shown in full, in the order and wording put to respondents, including but not limited to all tables relating to published data and all relevant tables preceding them.

Tables for demographic questions might not be included but these should be clear from the cross-breaks on published tables.

In all questions where the responses are a list of parties, names or statements, these will typically have been displayed to respondents in a randomising order.

The only questions which would not have had randomising responses would be those in which there was a natural order to maintain – e.g. a list of numbers from 0 to 10 or questions which had factual rather than opinion-related answers such as demographic information. “Other”, “Don't know” and “Refused” responses are not randomised.

Not all questions will have necessarily been asked to all respondents – this is because they may be follow-on questions from previous questions or only appropriate to certain demographic groups.

Lower response counts should make clear where this has occurred.

1. Britain Talks Climate Segmentation

Respondents were asked a series of 16 'Golden' questions used by Climate Outreach/Britain Talks Climate to create a classification of respondents based on their beliefs on a range of topics.

The data was segmented using a model provided by Wang, S., Corner, A., and Nicholls, J. (2020). Britain Talks Climate: A toolkit for engaging the British public on climate change. Oxford: Climate Outreach.

Further information on the methodology used to create the original model used in this study can be accessed here: https://climateoutreach.org/download/21974/?tmstv=1692246384

***Data were analysed and weighted by Survation.***