



## Attitudes to corporate Australia

In early 2010, the Australia Institute undertook a poll in collaboration with Catalyst Australia to test people's feelings about the influence of big business.

The survey found high levels of public distrust in corporate behaviour, and concerns about the level of influence big business exerts over our political system.

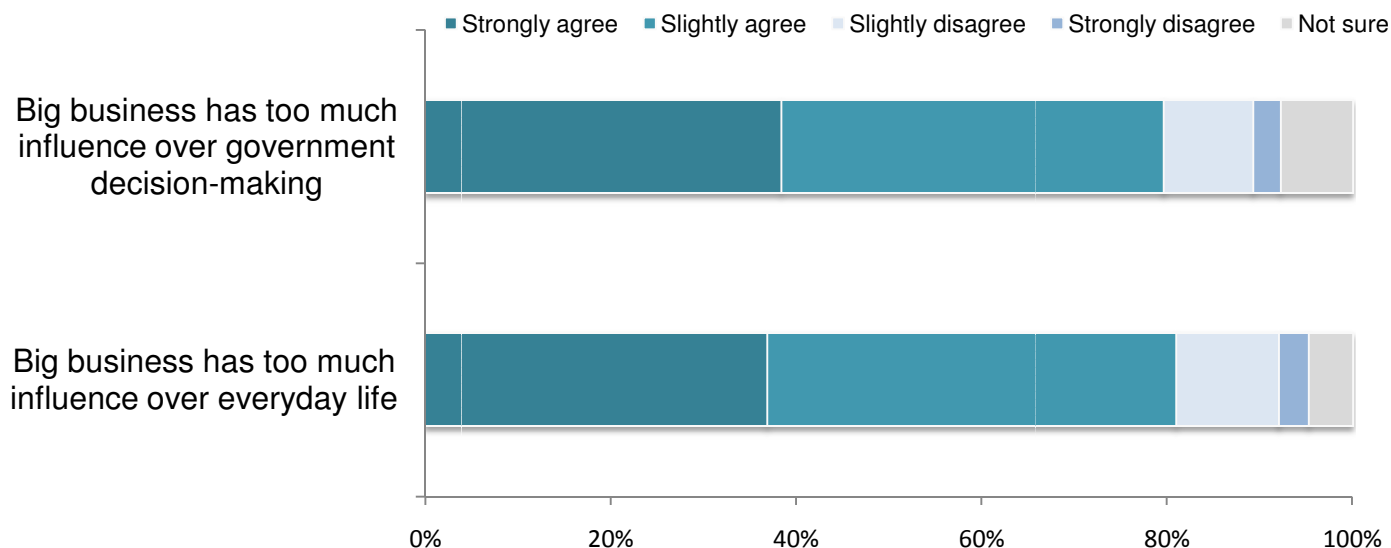
Measures canvassed and supported in this poll to restore trust and counter this influence include: greater regulation of big business, limits on profits and executive salaries, and greater protection for workers and consumers.

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## Too much influence

- Eight out of 10 people believe that big business have too much influence over government decision making.
- A similar number thought big business have too much influence over every-day life.



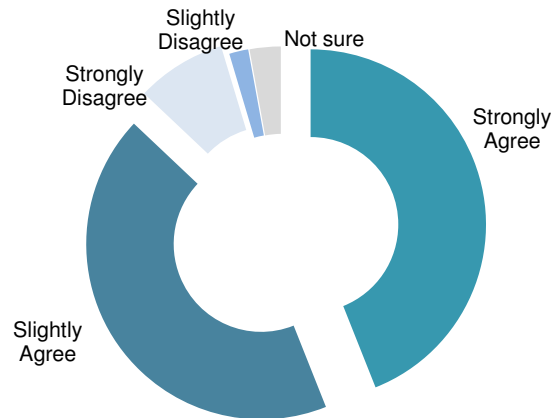
- When opinions were tested further, 87% of people thought big business had more access to politicians than other community members did.
- Nine in 10 people disagreed that big business should be able to buy access to politicians - most of this group disagreed strongly.

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
Big business has too much influence over government decision-making	521 38.3%	561 41.3%	131 9.6%	40 2.9%	106 7.8%	1360 100%
Big business has too much influence over everyday life	501 36.8%	601 44.2%	150 11%	44 3.2%	65 4.8%	1360 100%
Big business has more access to politicians than other community members	698 51.4%	486 35.8%	67 4.9%	28 2.0%	81 5.9%	1360 100%
Big business should be able to buy access to politicians	24 1.7%	73 5.4%	164 12.0%	1053 77.5%	46 3.4%	1360 100%

## Attitudes to Regulation

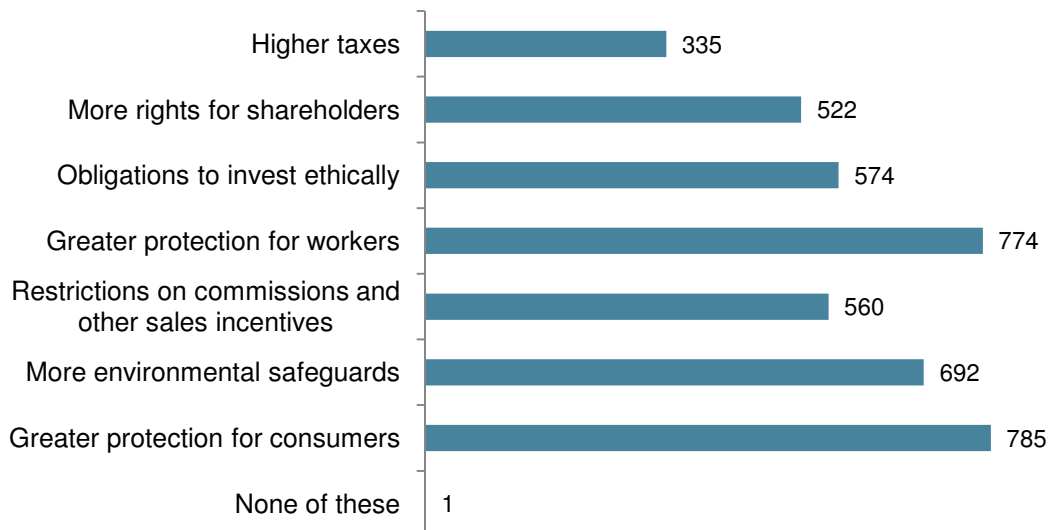
In all, 94% of people agreed regulation is necessary to make sure big business behaves responsibly.

Only 4% of people disagreed that regulation was necessary.



This was explored further and people were asked how much and what type of regulation of big business they supported. 70% of people supported **more** regulation and in terms of type, most people thought regulation should address greater protection for workers and consumers. This was followed by more environmental safeguards.

**You said there should be more regulation of big business. What kinds of regulation of big business do you think there should be?\***

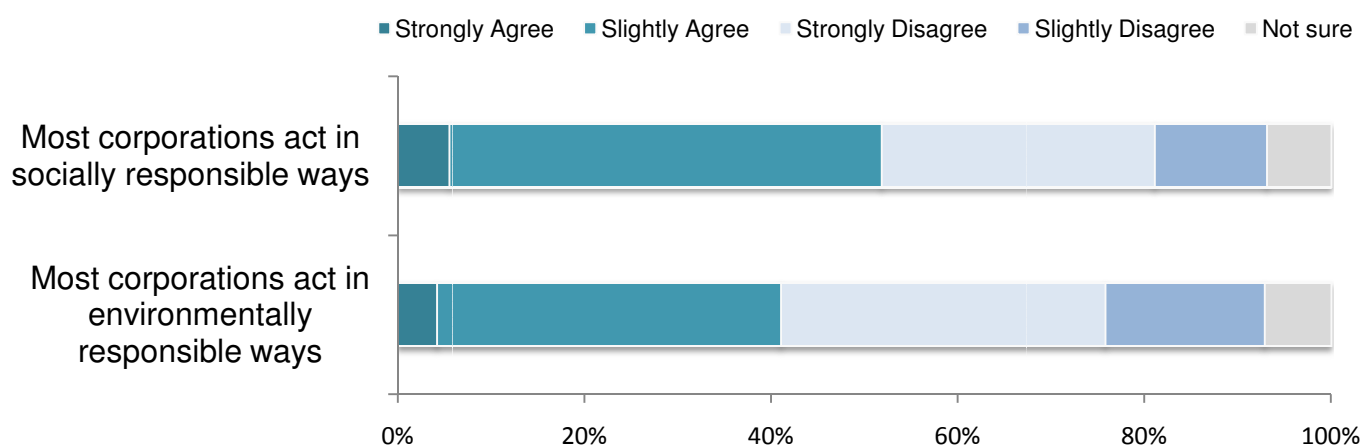


\* Note respondents could select more than one option

	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
Regulation is necessary to ensure big business behaves responsibly	881 64.8%	394 28.9%	51 3.8%	13 1%	22 1.6%	1360 100%

## Social and environmental credentials

- Public opinion is divided about whether the actions of corporations are socially responsible. A majority of people agreed that corporations act in socially responsible ways, but very few had strong feelings about this.
- Most people disagreed with this statement.

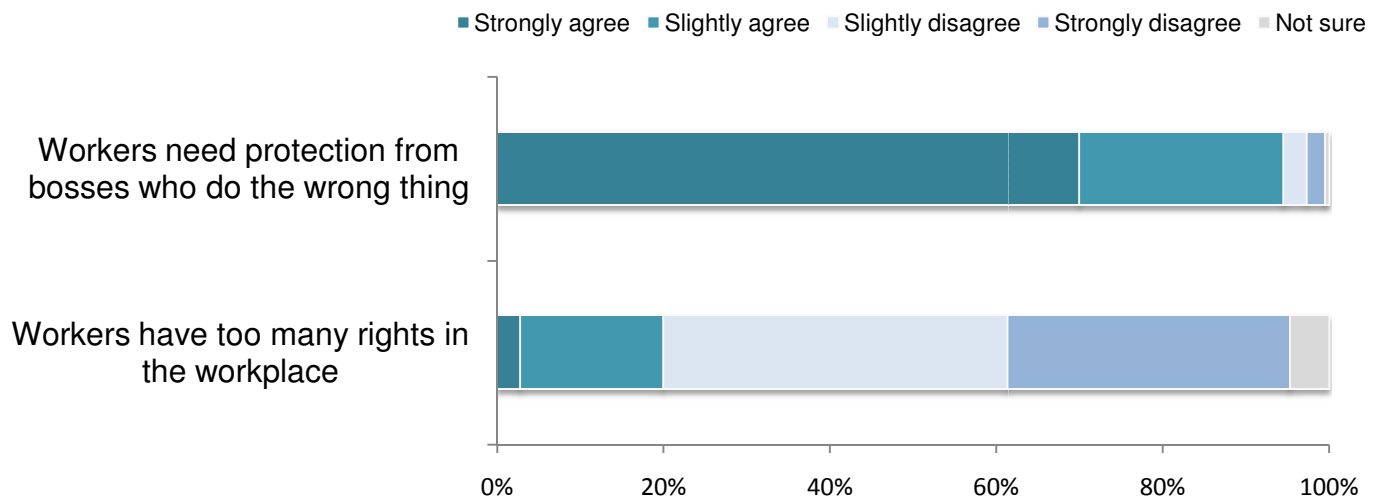


- When responses were tested further on this issue, nearly 9 in 10 people thought business only acted responsibly when it was in their interests to do so.
- Three quarters of people did not agree that business passed profits on to the community in the form of higher wages for workers and/or cheaper goods or services for consumers.

	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
Most corporations act in socially responsible ways	74 5.4%	630 46.3%	399 29.3%	163 12.0%	94 6.9%	1360 100%
Most corporations act in environmentally responsible ways	56 4.1%	502 36.9%	474 34.8%	232 17.0%	97 7.1%	1360 100%
Big business only acts responsibly when it is in their interests to do so	598 43.9%	586 43.1%	113 8.3%	24 1.7%	39 2.9%	1360 100%
Big business usually passes profits onto the community in the form of higher wages and/or cheaper goods and services	40 2.9%	189 13.9%	469 34.5%	594 43.6%	69 5.1%	1360 100%

## Workers need greater protection

- One area where public attitudes were especially strong was in the need for workers to have protection against bosses who do the wrong thing.
- Similarly, very few people felt that workers had **too many** rights – in all two thirds of people disagreed with this statement.

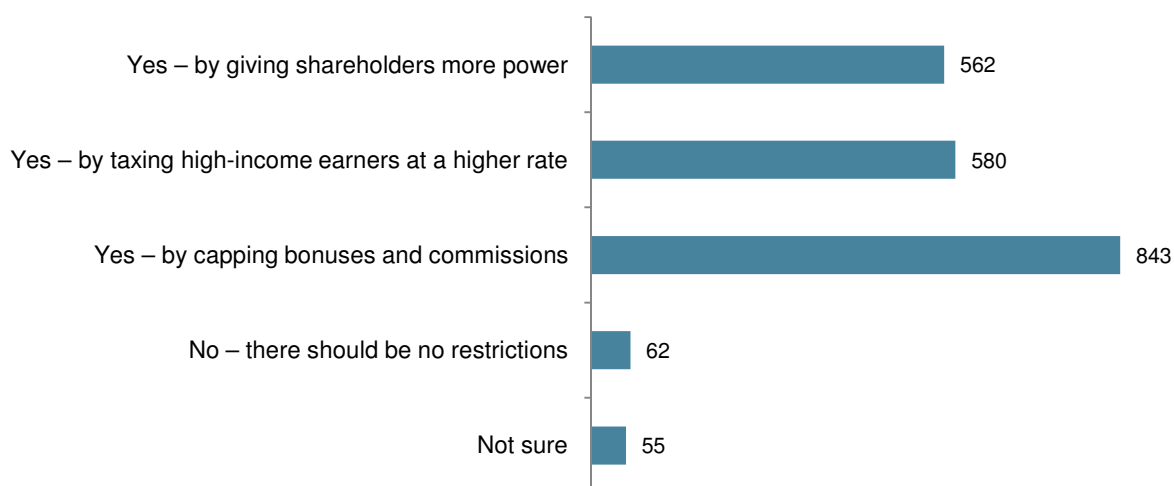


	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
Workers need protection from bosses who do the wrong thing	952 70%	334 24.6%	38 2.8%	30 2.2%	7 0.5%	1360 100%
Workers have too many rights in the workplace	38 2.8%	233 17.1%	562 41.3%	463 34.1%	64 4.7%	1360 100

## Profits and Salaries

- Over a third of people (35.7%) agreed with the statement that corporations should be free to make as much profit as they can.
- A larger number of respondents (42.5%) felt the statement 'corporate profits should be restricted' better reflected their views. A further 21.8% were unsure.
- People supported restrictions on the amount corporate executives could be paid. Capping bonuses and commissions gained the strongest support - by 62% of respondents\*

### In your view, should there be restrictions on how much corporate executives can be paid?\*



\* Note respondents could select more than one option.

## **Methodology**

An online survey of 1360 adult Australians was conducted by the Australia Institute in March 2010.

Respondents were sourced from an independent research-only panel provider, and respondents were provided with a small incentive (\$1.50 each) to encourage participation.

Quotas were applied and survey responses were post-weighted to ensure that the survey sample reflected the adult Australian population by age and gender.