

# Majority of British adults say tax avoidance is 'morall...

Published: January 13, 2026, 3:05 am

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[New research from Christian Aid](#) has revealed that 56% of British adults believe that tax avoidance by multinational companies (MNCs), while a technically legal way of reducing what they owe the taxman, is morally wrong, and half of people think it should be made illegal.

Only four per cent of those polled thought tax avoidance by MNCs was 'morally justifiable' and only four per cent described such practices as 'fair'.

The survey of attitudes to tax avoidance commissioned by Christian Aid shows public support for Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne's view that such practices are 'morally repugnant'. However many of the 2,026 people questioned in the survey by ComRes don't think these strong words are being matched with Government action.

Three quarters (74%) felt that David Cameron should be demanding international action to tackle tax evasion and avoidance, yet just two in five respondents to the survey (38%) believe the Government is genuine in their desire to combat tax avoidance.

There was also a clear view that companies should be more transparent as 81 per cent of those polled believed MNCs accounts should be more transparent and publicly available. Some 79 per cent of people polled said it was too easy for MNCs in the UK to avoid paying tax.

The results show that the majority see this as a development, as well as domestic, issue for the Government. More than half those asked (55%) believe that the British government should make helping developing countries combat tax avoidance a greater priority than it is at present.

Of those opposed to tax avoidance, (those who think it is either immoral, should be illegal or is unfair) 67 per cent said one of their main concerns was that tax avoidance meant there was less money for governments to spend on public services, 33 per cent said that it meant governments had less money to tackle poverty, 28 per cent said that

it damaged the reputation of all multinationals, and 25 per cent were concerned that it made developing countries more reliant on aid.

Some 75 per cent of people polled said MNCs enjoyed more lenient treatment from the tax man than individuals received, and two thirds (65%) believed closing legal tax loopholes should be a greater international development priority for the British Government than funding infrastructure in developing countries.

The ComRes poll marks the launch of a Tax Justice bus tour of the UK and Ireland on 24 August, organised by both Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty, to highlight the damage that tax abuse causes in countries rich and poor alike.

Christian Aid research estimates tax dodging by some unscrupulous multinational companies costs developing countries at least \$160 billion a year, far more than the total global aid budget — money which could go on health and education. Church Action on Poverty says tax dodging in the UK deprives the government of funds to support vital services.

The Tax Justice Bus will be making over 100 stops from Falmouth to Inverness and Dover to Belfast from 24 August through to 15 October. Politicians, church leaders and thousands of campaigners and members of the public will be invited to step aboard and show their support for an end to tax dodging.

The charities want people to 'Tick for tax Justice' by signing a petition that calls on the Prime Minister to push for measures that would require:

- \* Companies to report on the profits they make and taxes they pay in every country in which they operate.
- \* Tax havens to share automatically information about the money flowing through them with other countries.

Niall Cooper, Church Action on Poverty, co-sponsor of this work with Christian Aid said:

*The results are overwhelming. If the Government is to listen to the people, they must do more to combat tax avoidance and evasion.*

*In this time of austerity, rich tax-dodging companies are robbing people in poverty of the vital services they depend upon. If we put a stop to tax dodging, the Government could have an extra £35 billion a year to invest in local public services such as hospitals, schools and emergency services, and to better tackle UK poverty.*