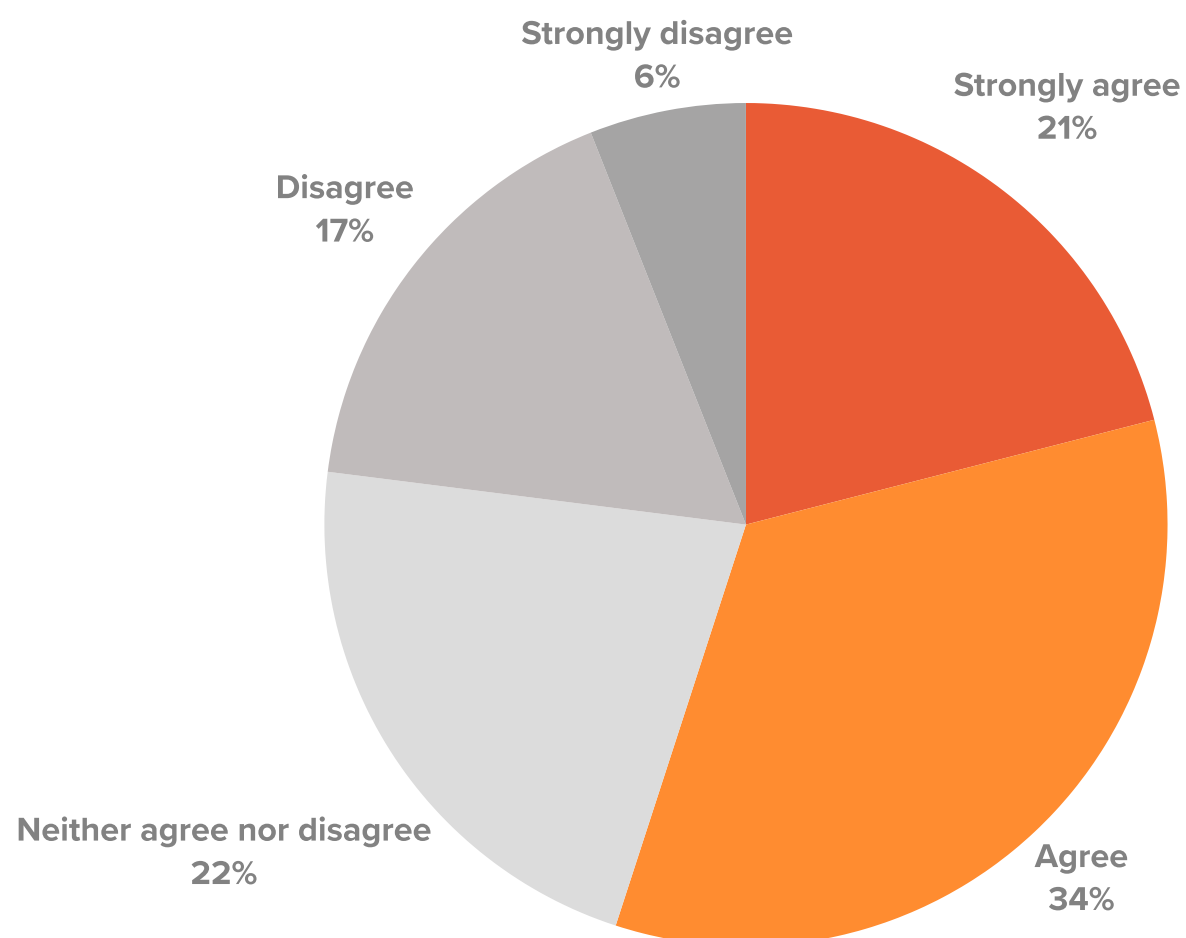# Setting the Tone for Ethical Behavior at the Top

Ethics & compliance practitioners understand the important impact of setting the tone at the top for an organization's culture. **Yet ECI's Global Business Ethics Survey found that more than half of employees surveyed indicated that leadership does not make the discussion of ethical behavior a regular part of the workplace schedule.**

This finding indicates a major missed opportunity for organizations. Strong ethical cultures are not built in reverse, and the best leadership is proactive, not reactive.

Top management has a clear responsibility to set the tone for ethical behavior in an organization, and part of that is providing the tools, resources and consistent reminders that employees need in order to respond and reflect appropriately when faced with ethical dilemmas.

Top management only talks about ethics when something goes wrong in the organization.

Pie chart:
- Strongly disagree 6%
- Strongly agree 21%
- Disagree 17%
- Agree 34%
- Neither agree nor disagree 22%

If leaders only address the role of ethics when there has been an ethical failure, employees are left without the proper tools that will actually prevent unethical behavior. Educate your employees on company values, expectations and standards through regular discussion. This will prepare your workforce to take initiative in presenting ethical concerns and guard against misconduct they may observe throughout the workplace.

ECI members have access to the perfect resource for bringing ethics to the forefront of company culture: Talking the Walk Case Studies. This resource offers leader and participant guides designed for practitioners to use in regularly centering ethical behavior as a core expectation for employees.

◆**More than 1/2**
of employees globally agreed that top management only talks about ethics when something goes wrong.

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Note: Data are based on the global median of 42 countries from the 2023 Global Business Ethics Survey® (GBES®).