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Jan. 20, 2015

More than nine out of ten Americans don't condone cheating on their income tax returns (at least that's what they say). But that doesn't mean the public approves of the way the IRS is treating taxpayers.

Those are some of the results that were gleaned from the IRS Oversight Board 2014 Taxpayer Attitude survey. The nine-member Oversight Board, which was created by the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1988, is charged with supervising the IRS in various administrative, management and conduct matters. It surveyed 1,000 taxpayers late in 2014 and published its findings on December 8.

According the Oversight Board, here are several noteworthy points derived from the survey:

- The vast majority of taxpayers — 94 percent, to be exact — believe that **it is every American's civic duty** to pay their fair share of income taxes. This is the same percentage that frowned upon tax cheating in the previous year's survey.
- **Only 61 percent of the taxpayers trust the IRS to fairly enforce the tax laws.** The trust in enforcement is noticeably higher among younger age groups than those age 65 or over. It was 73% for taxpayers ages 18 to 24 compared to 56 percent for senior citizens.
- **Taxpayer satisfaction with personal interactions with the IRS dropped in 2014 to 74 percent.** This is the lowest level of satisfaction with the IRS ever recorded by this survey. In the Board's opinion, the drop-off likely reflects the impact of

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cheating. More than nine out ten taxpayers cite personal integrity as the greatest influence on whether they honestly report and pay their taxes. This goes to the heart of our federal tax system, which is based on voluntary compliance.”

“Second, although the IRS still has a way to go to regain the public’s trust, the survey suggests that most taxpayers, especially younger ones, trust the IRS to enforce the tax laws.”

“This brings me to my third and last point,” the Chairman said. “Taxpayer satisfaction with IRS customer service has fallen to its lowest level in more than a decade. The Board believes this can be directly tied to deep cuts in IRS funding which have served only to punish honest America’s taxpayers who must endure long wait times over the IRS toll-free telephone lines and at walk-in centers. Taxpayers understand what’s going on – a solid majority supports extra funding for IRS customer service. However, Congress is turning back the clock on the significant gains made in customer service since the passage of the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998. It is time to reinvest in the IRS to help honest taxpayers comply with a complex tax code and to protect the integrity of our tax system.”

If you want to read the complete *IRS Oversight Board 2014 Taxpayer Attitude Survey*, go to www.irsoversightboard.treas.gov.

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