
Research reports

Perceptions of corruption 2023: Councillors

29/08/2023

In May 2023, all 632 Victorian local government Councillors were emailed to invite them to participate in a perceptions of corruption survey (noting that councils where Administrators were in place were excluded from the research).

Emails were sent by IBAC as well as the consultants who supported IBAC to undertake the survey. Reminder emails were sent over a three-week period to those who had not completed the survey.

In total, 131 Councillors participated in the survey, representing a response rate of 21 per cent. The maximum margin of error on the total sample of $n=131$ is $\pm 7.6\%$ at the 95% confidence level. For example, for a result of 50%, we can be 95% confident that extrapolating the survey findings to the true population result would lie within the range of 42.4% and 57.6%. However, as results get closer to the extremities (ie closer to findings reported as 0% or 100%), the margin of error decreases (eg for a result where agreement is 90%), the margin of error at the 95% confidence interval is $\pm 4.6\%$).


Where relevant, the findings from this survey have been compared against findings from the 2023 survey with Members of Parliament and the 2022 survey of local government employees, to contrast where views are similar or where these differ.


Summary of key insights

Theme	Key findings	Opportunities
Perceptions about corruption as a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Almost three-quarters think corruption is a problem in Victoria; 59% think it's a problem among elected officialsThree-quarters agree some elected officials behave inappropriately or unethically but this doesn't necessarily extend to corrupt behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There are 'shades of grey' that make it less clear when inappropriate behavior becomes corrupt. As a result, corruption can go unreported. Training and education may be warranted.

Theme	Key findings	Opportunities
<p>Behaviours most likely to be a 'high risk'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breach of professional boundaries (eg bullying and harassment) • Favouritism/nepotism • Collusion • Misuse of government resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise these behaviours for education and prevention and detection activities
<p>Ethical culture of councils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the ethical culture of councils is varied • Relatively few consider their Council is highly vulnerable to corruption (14%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of ethical health and integrity indicators • Suggested actions by respondents to reduce the risks of corruption and enhance integrity include ongoing education, capped terms and remuneration for Councillors, greater transparency, accountability and consequences
<p>Reporting corruption and misconduct</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all would report corruption if they personally observed it • Most claim to know how to report corruption • Common reporting channels are the Council CEO, Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) and IBAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the mechanisms in place to protect 'whistleblowers' for those who have concerns about reporting corruption
<p>Information sources used when seeking advice on corruption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half agree that it is difficult to find definite guidance when seeking advice on corruption • Advice from the Council's Governance team is commonly relied upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at opportunities to provide mechanisms for independent, anonymous, definite advice, without a repercussions or actions • Ensure Council Governance teams have the necessary information to support Councillors • The survey findings reinforce the importance of several recommendations made in IBAC's Operation Sandon Special Report, including the development of a Model Councillor Code of Conduct and the need for enhanced refresher training for Councillors on governance, leadership and integrity • IBAC can play a role in information dissemination and education

Prevalence of corruption	+
Reporting corruption	+
Demographics	+

 Related resources

 <u>Perceptions of corruption 2023</u> (/perceptions-corruption-2023)
 <u>2023 Perceptions of Corruption Survey Results - infographic</u> (/media/1197/download) PDF, 647.78 KB