

I·C·A·C

INDEPENDENT
COMMISSION
AGAINST
CORRUPTION

Community attitudes to corruption and the ICAC

**DECEMBER
2003**



This publication is available in other formats for the vision impaired. Please advise of format needed, for example large print or as an ASCII file. It is also available in PDF and HTML formats on the ICAC website **www.icac.nsw.gov.au**

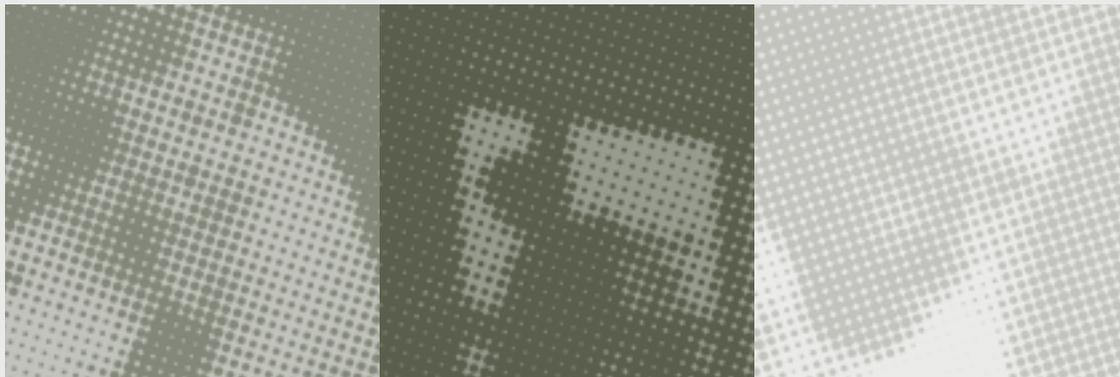
ISSN 1324-0382

© December 2003 – Copyright in this work is held by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Part III, Division 3 of the of the *Commonwealth Copyright Act 1968* recognises that limited further use of this material can occur for the purposes of 'fair dealing', for example, study, research or criticism etc. If you wish to make use of this material other than as permitted by the Copyright Act, please write to the ICAC at GPO Box 500, Sydney NSW 2001.

Contents

	Executive summary	2
Chapter 1	Introduction	4
Chapter 2	Perceptions of corruption and its effects	6
Chapter 3	Attitudes to reporting corruption	9
Chapter 4	Awareness of the ICAC	11
Chapter 5	Perceptions of the ICAC	14



Executive summary

Perceptions of corruption

In 2003, community understanding of the term “corruption” varied, the most common perceptions being that it involves personal financial gain; doing something wrong, dishonest or illegal; mismanagement or abuse of power.

In keeping with previous community surveys by the ICAC, most people surveyed in 2003 (82%) did perceive corruption to be a problem in NSW and roughly half (48%) believed that they or their families were affected by corruption in some way. Corruption was perceived to affect the whole community through poorer services and/or people having to pay more for services. While past surveys have shown increasing numbers feeling that they were affected by corruption, the 2003 survey shows a return to the 1994 level and only 19% of respondents said they or their families had directly experienced corruption in the NSW public sector. Examples of corruption that respondents were personally aware of mainly involved local government, police, other government departments or employment opportunities.

Attitudes to reporting corruption

Consistent with previous surveys, in 2003 there was substantial support for reporting of corruption, with most respondents believing it is OK to report corruption (97%) and that individuals have a responsibility to report corruption (89%).

Public cynicism about the outcomes of reporting corruption appears to be waning. The proportion of respondents who believed “there is no point in reporting corruption, because nothing will be done about it”, which was stable from 1993 to 1996 (around 32%) and rose in 1999 (39%), dropped significantly in 2003 to 29%.

There was also evidence of improving confidence that people who report corruption will not suffer negative consequences. While most 2003 respondents (60%) still believed that people who report corruption are likely to suffer as a consequence, their responses continue a downward trend since 1996 (from 76%).

Most respondents (71%) said they were likely to report corruption if they came across it, but only a third (34%) said they knew where to report corruption in the NSW public sector. Most of these (62%) would report corruption to a government body, but only a few (5%) specified the ICAC. Most (82%) said they would be willing to provide information to the ICAC.

Awareness and perceptions of ICAC

While only a minority (28%) could recall the name of the ICAC, most respondents (88%) could recognise it. Most were aware of the ICAC through television (79%), newspapers (55%) and/or radio (21%), but very few had accessed the ICAC website or publications (1%).

Consistent with previous years, attitudes to the ICAC in 2003 were generally positive, most (94%) believing that the ICAC is “a good thing” for the people of NSW and that it has been successful in exposing (74%) and reducing (55%) corruption in the NSW public sector.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since 1993, the ICAC has periodically conducted a survey of the NSW community to ascertain:

- perceptions of corruption and its effects
- attitudes to reporting corruption
- awareness of the ICAC
- perceptions of the ICAC.

This document provides a brief summary of the findings of the 2003 survey, including some comparisons with the findings of previous surveys.

The questionnaire used in this survey was designed by the ICAC Research Section, then piloted by AMR Interactive, which was also contracted to carry out the survey.

The survey was conducted by telephone within a two week period in April, 2003.

2003 Sample

The sample of 500 NSW residents was drawn from a random sampling of households listed in the Telstra White Pages telephone directory, selected to closely resemble the population of NSW aged over 18 years in terms of gender, age, geographical location and employment situation.

AGE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

18-25 years	26-44 years	45-64 years	over 64 years
10%	37%	37%	16%

GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

male	female
49%	51%

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

not in paid employment	NSW public sector	Commonwealth public sector	private sector	both public & private sectors
37%	11%	2%	47%	3%

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Sydney	Newcastle	Wollongong	rest of NSW
59%	7%	4%	30%

CHAPTER 2

Perceptions of corruption

What is corruption?

When asked to explain their understanding of the term “corruption”,

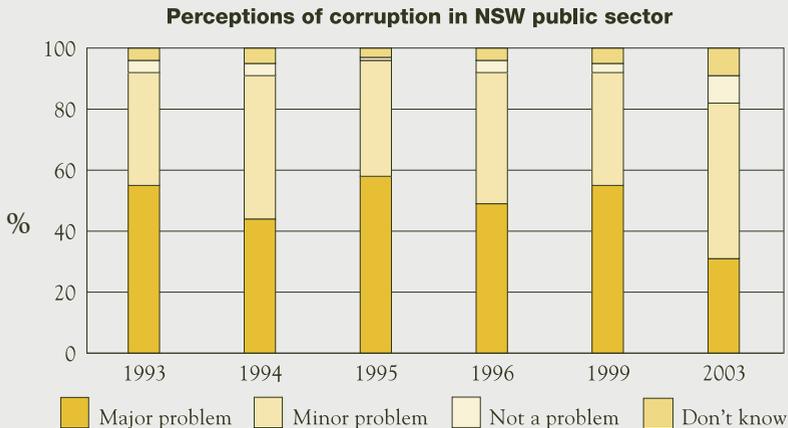
- most people (58%) thought it involved personal financial gain
- some (30%) thought it meant doing something wrong, dishonest or illegal
- some (23%) thought it meant mismanagement or abuse of power.

Perception that corruption is a problem

In keeping with previous community surveys, the large majority (83%) of those surveyed in 2003 did perceive corruption to be a problem in NSW. However, in comparison with previous years, respondents in 2003 were more inclined to see corruption as a minor problem, rather than a major problem, which may indicate that the public believes that anti-corruption measures have had some effect.

PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION AS A PROBLEM IN NSW

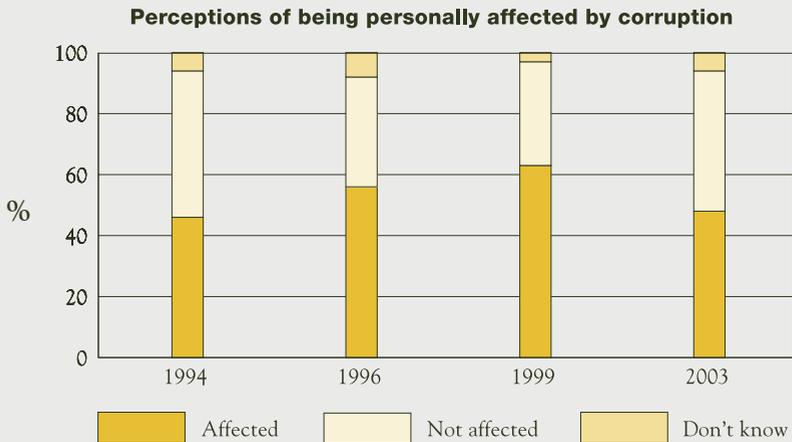
SURVEY DATE	major problem	minor problem	not a problem	don't know	N
1993	55%	37%	4%	4%	502
1994	44%	47%	4%	5%	402
1995	58%	38%	1%	3%	515
1996	49%	43%	4%	4%	511
1999	55%	37%	3%	5%	514
2003	31%	51%	9%	9%	500

**Personal impact of corruption**

Half (48%) of respondents in 2003 believed that they or their families were affected by corruption in some way. Corruption was perceived to affect the whole community through poorer services and/or people having to pay more for services. While past surveys have shown an increasing trend—that is more people feeling that they were affected by corruption—the 2003 survey shows a return to the 1994 level.

BELIEFS ABOUT BEING PERSONALLY AFFECTED BY CORRUPTION

SURVEY DATE	affected	not affected	don't know	N
1994	46%	48%	6%	402
1996	56%	36%	8%	511
1999	63%	34%	3%	514
2003	48%	46%	6%	500

**Personal experience of corruption**

However, less than one-fifth of respondents (19%) said they or their families had directly experienced corruption in the NSW public sector. Examples of corruption respondents were personally aware of mainly involved local government (23%), police (18%), other government departments (19%) or employment opportunities (16%).

CHAPTER 3

Attitudes to reporting corruption

Perceptions about reporting corruption

Consistent with previous surveys, in 2003 there was substantial support for reporting of corruption. The majority said:

- it is OK to report corruption (97%)
- individuals have a responsibility to report corruption (89%).

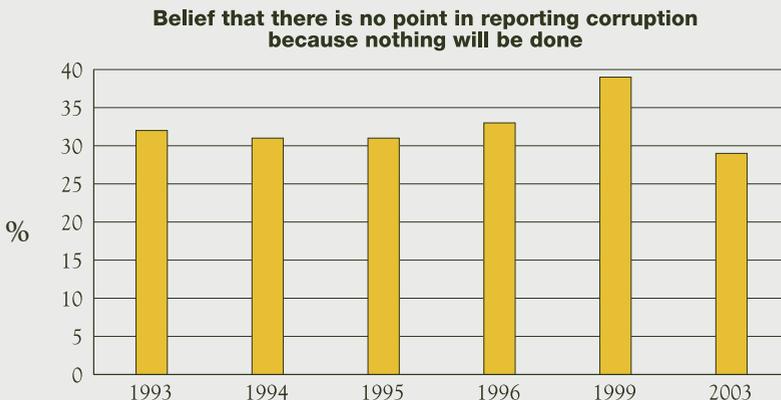
Cynicism about the outcomes of reporting corruption

Responses to the 2003 survey suggest that public cynicism about the outcomes of reporting corruption is waning.

The proportion of respondents who believed “there is no point in reporting corruption, because nothing will be done about it” was stable from 1993 to 1996 (31%-33%), rose in 1999 (39%), but dropped significantly in 2003 (29%) ($\chi^2 = 11.09$, $p < .01$).

PERCEPTION THAT THERE IS NO POINT IN REPORTING CORRUPTION

1993	1994	1995	1996	1999	2003
32%	31%	31%	33%	39%	29%

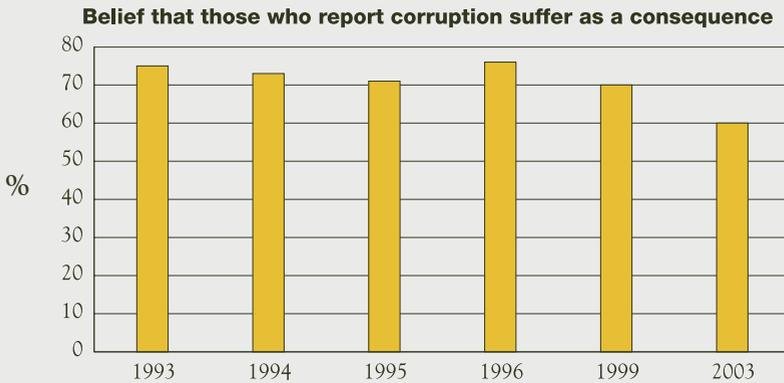


Perceived personal consequences of reporting corruption

There was also evidence of improving confidence that people who report corruption will not suffer negative consequences. While most 2003 respondents (60%) still believed that people who report corruption are likely to suffer as a consequence, this figure continues a downward trend since 1996 ($\chi^2 = 30.48, p < .001$).

BELIEF THAT THOSE WHO REPORT CORRUPTION SUFFER AS A CONSEQUENCE

1993	1994	1995	1996	1999	2003
75%	73%	71%	76%	70%	60%



Willingness to report corruption

Despite this concern, a majority of respondents (71%) said they were likely to report corruption if they came across it.

However, only one third (34%) said they knew where to report corruption in the NSW public sector. Most of these (62%) said they would report corruption in the public sector to a government body, but only a few (5%) specified the ICAC.

After being reminded of its existence, most respondents (82%) said they would be willing to provide information to the ICAC.

CHAPTER 4

Awareness of the ICAC

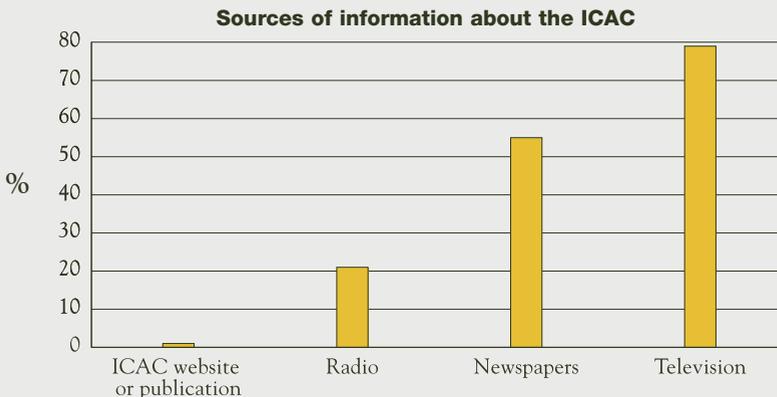
Sources of awareness

While only a minority of respondents (28%) could recall the name of the ICAC, most (88%) were able to recognise the name when they heard it. Most had seen or heard something about the ICAC through television (79%), newspapers (55%) and/or radio (21%). Very few had received information through the ICAC website or an ICAC publication (1%).

The most common source of information about the ICAC was commercial television (67%), mainly news (58%) or current affairs (25%) programs. A smaller proportion (38%) had heard about the ICAC through ABC television, again mainly news (31%) and current affairs (16%) programs. The most common newspaper sources were the *Daily Telegraph* (28%) and *Sydney Morning Herald* (25%), followed by the *Sunday Telegraph* (7%), *Sun-Herald* (7%) and local newspapers (6%), *The Australian* (4%) and *The Financial Review* (2%). The most common radio sources were commercial news programs (9%) and ABC radio news (5%).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE ICAC

ICAC website or publication	Radio	Newspapers	Television
1%	21%	55%	79%



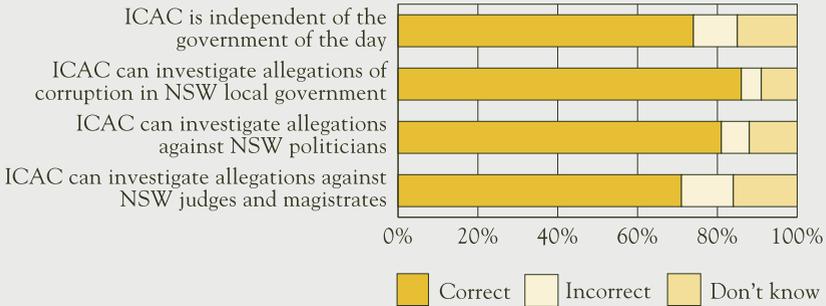
While most people (84%) thought the ICAC had some prominence in the media, only half (49%) could actually recall any recent media story involving the ICAC and many of these were in fact stories about issues outside ICAC jurisdiction, such as police corruption issues addressed by the Police Integrity Commission, petrol prices, HIH Insurance and One-Tel. Genuine ICAC stories most commonly recalled concerned Rockdale City Council (3%) and Liverpool City Council and the Oasis/Bulldogs story (2%).

Understanding of the powers and jurisdiction of the ICAC

Most survey participants were aware that the ICAC:

- is independent of the government of the day (74%)
- can investigate allegations of corruption in NSW local government (86%)
- can investigate allegations of corruption against NSW politicians (81%)
- can investigate allegations of corruption against NSW judges and magistrates (71%).

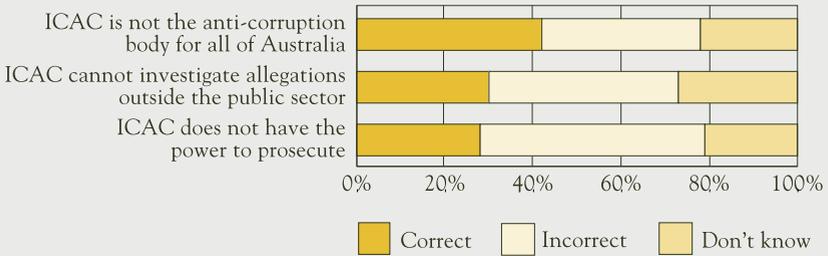
Widely understood aspects of ICAC powers and jurisdiction



Aspects of the powers and jurisdiction of the ICAC that were understood by less than half of those surveyed included:

- the ICAC is not the anti-corruption body for the whole of Australia (36%)
- the ICAC cannot investigate allegations of corruption in the private sector that do not involve the public sector (43%)
- the ICAC does not have the power to prosecute people (51%).

Less widely understood aspects of ICAC powers and jurisdiction



CHAPTER 5

Perceptions of the ICAC

Perception that the ICAC is “a good thing”

In keeping with the findings of previous community surveys, attitudes to the ICAC in 2003 were generally positive.

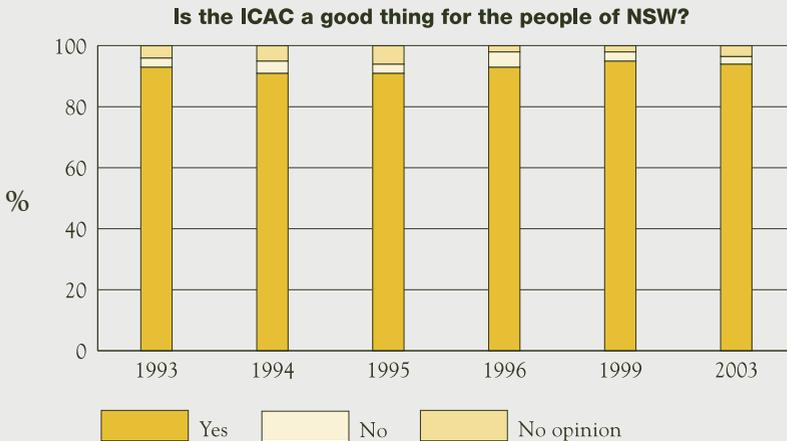
The large majority (94%) believed that the ICAC is a “good thing” for the people of NSW.

Explanations of why the ICAC was perceived to be a good thing mainly concerned:

- the ICAC’s purpose (investigating, controlling, reducing corruption) (48%)
- the independent nature of the ICAC (25%)
- perceived benefits to the community (8%).

PROPORTION WHO BELIEVE THAT THE ICAC IS A GOOD THING FOR THE PEOPLE OF NSW

1993	1994	1995	1996	1999	2003
93%	91%	91%	93%	95%	94%



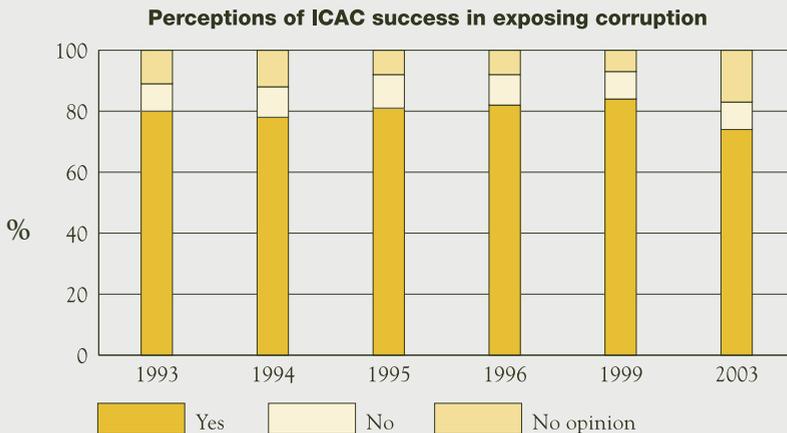
Perceptions of ICAC success in exposing corruption

In keeping with previous surveys, most people believed the ICAC has succeeded in exposing corruption.

While the proportion responding 'yes' was slightly lower in 2003, the proportion responding 'no' did not increase. There were simply more people offering no opinion in 2003.

HAS THE ICAC SUCCEEDED IN EXPOSING CORRUPTION IN NSW?

SURVEY DATE	yes	no	no opinion
1993	80%	9%	11%
1994	78%	10%	12%
1995	81%	11%	8%
1996	82%	10%	8%
1999	84%	9%	7%
2003	74%	9%	17%

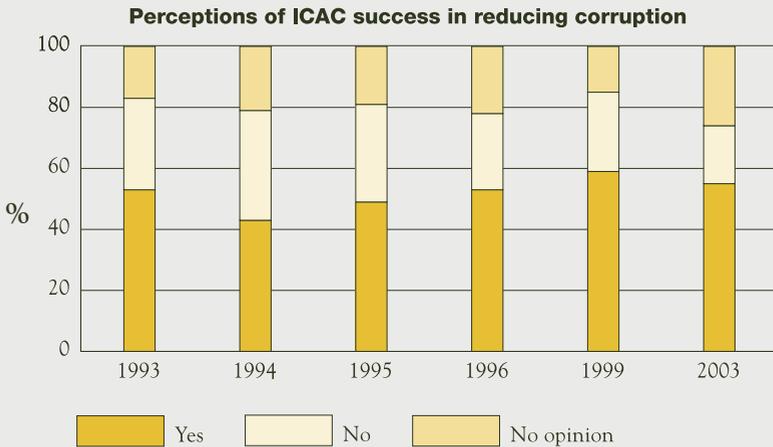


Perceptions of ICAC success in reducing corruption

In keeping with previous surveys, roughly half of the 2003 sample believed that the ICAC was succeeding in reducing corruption. While the proportion responding ‘yes’ was slightly lower than the 1999 result, the proportion responding ‘no’ also decreased. Again, there were simply more people offering no opinion on this matter in 2003.

HAS THE ICAC SUCCEEDED IN REDUCING CORRUPTION IN NSW?

SURVEY DATE	yes	no	no opinion
1993	53%	30%	17%
1994	43%	36%	21%
1995	49%	32%	19%
1996	53%	25%	22%
1999	59%	26%	15%
2003	55%	19%	26%



Perceptions that the ICAC has been successful in exposing and/or reducing corruption in the NSW public sector were most commonly based upon:

- media reports (19%)
- the existence of the ICAC being seen as a deterrent (11%)
- perceived reduction of corruption in the public sector (8%).

Perceptions that the ICAC has not been successful in exposing or reducing corruption were most commonly based upon:

- perceptions that corruption in the public sector persists (10%)
- lack of evidence or knowledge on which to make a judgment (21%).



INDEPENDENT
COMMISSION
AGAINST
CORRUPTION

Where to get more information

For more information, including copies of all ICAC publications, information in community languages, reports on ICAC investigations, transcripts of ICAC public hearings and links to other relevant sites, visit the ICAC website:

www.icac.nsw.gov.au

or contact the ICAC by:

MAIL GPO Box 500
Sydney NSW 2001

PHONE (02) 8281 5999 or
Toll Free 1800 463 909

FAX (02) 9264 5364

EMAIL icac@icac.nsw.gov.au