

The logo for the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) New South Wales. It features the letters 'I·C·A·C' in a large, bold, serif font, with dots separating the letters. Below the letters is a thin horizontal line.

I·C·A·C

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION  
AGAINST CORRUPTION  
NEW SOUTH WALES



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COMMUNITY ATTITUDES  
TO CORRUPTION AND  
TO THE ICAC

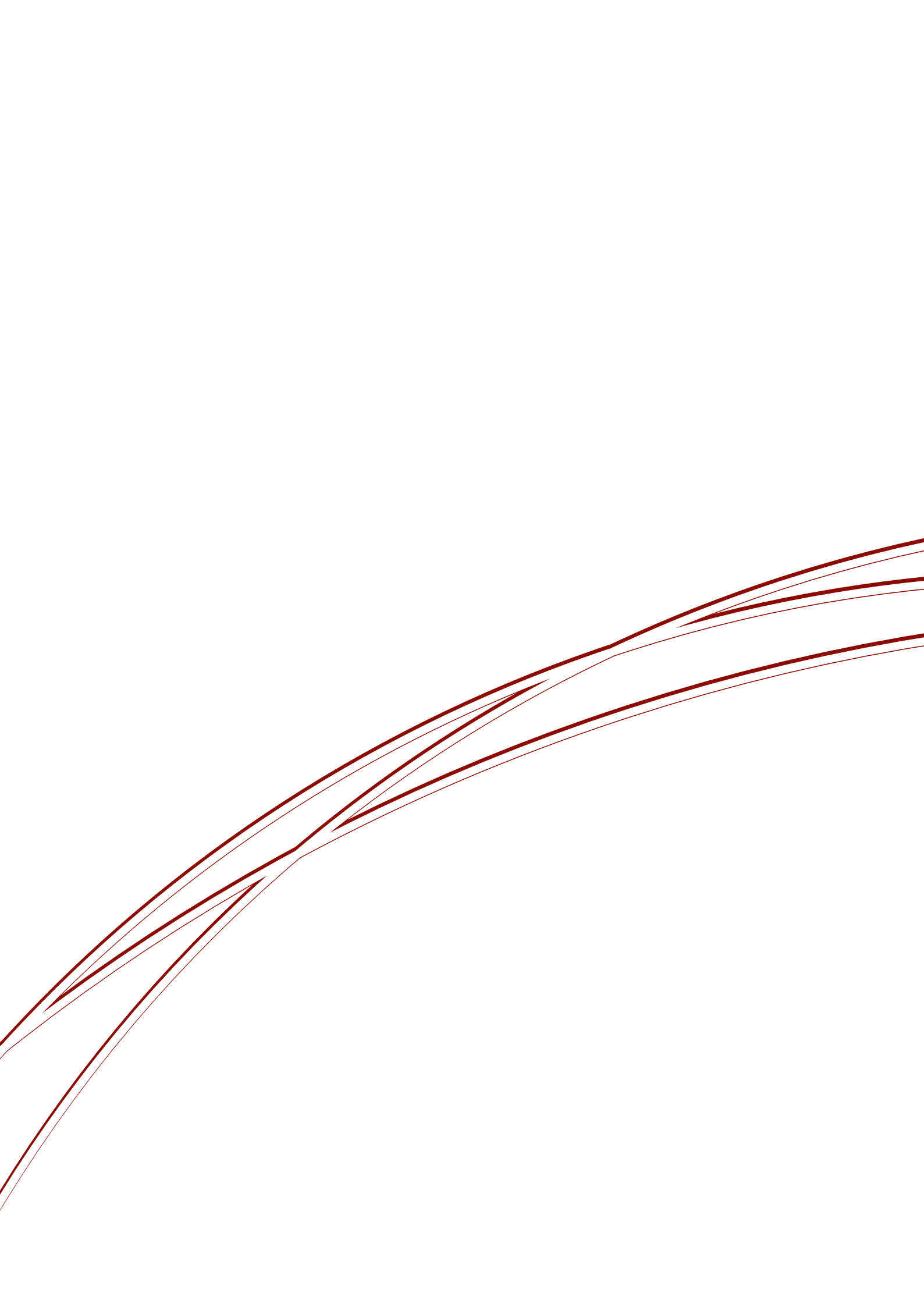
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**REPORT ON THE  
2012 SURVEY**

**JULY 2013**

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INDEPENDENT COMMISSION  
AGAINST CORRUPTION

NEW SOUTH WALES

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## COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TO CORRUPTION AND TO THE ICAC

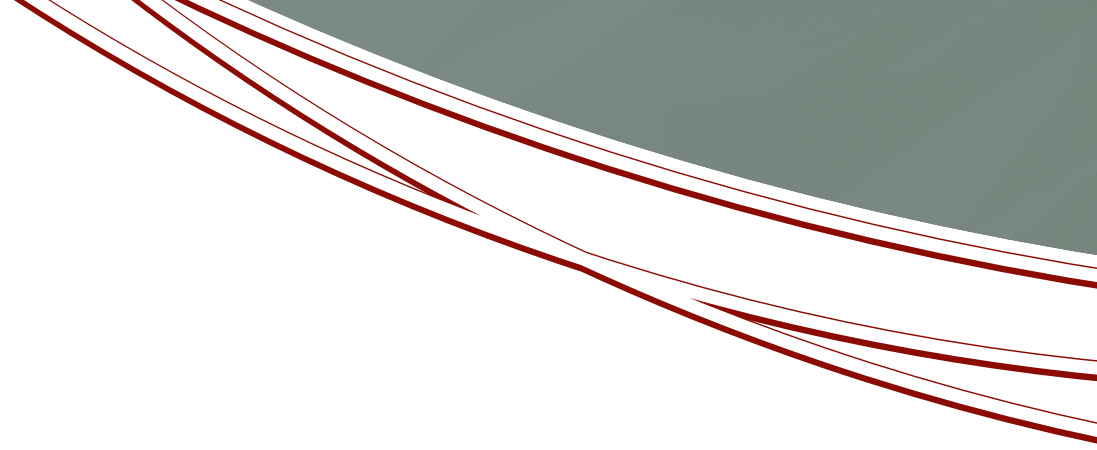
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**REPORT ON THE  
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Public sector organisations are welcome to refer to this publication in their own publications. References to and all quotations from this publication must be fully referenced.



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# Introduction

While the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was formed to investigate, expose and prevent corruption, its effectiveness depends on a wider social system. This system includes an understanding that corruption is a problem that affects everybody, and that through the ICAC corruption can be reported and action consequently can be taken. For the ICAC to be an effective body, public officials and private citizens both need to understand what corruption is, and that it is wrong, and they must be willing to report their suspicions to the ICAC.

For almost 20 years now, the ICAC has monitored this broader system within which it functions through its community attitude survey (CAS). This survey taps into the perceived severity of corruption in NSW and the way corruption affects individuals and society. Higher levels of perceived corruption can motivate individuals to report corruption; but high perceptions of corruption as a problem in NSW can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy as individuals come to believe that corruption is the basis for doing business with government.

For the NSW anti-corruption system to work, private citizens and public officials need to be aware that there is somewhere to report corruption. The ICAC need not be on the tip of everyone's tongue, but awareness that the ICAC is the place to report corruption is important to the functioning of the anti-corruption system in the state.

It is also important that the ICAC be seen to be effective. If the ICAC is seen as effective, it is reasonable to assume that individuals may be more likely to make a report of suspected corruption, and to expect consequences if engaging in corrupt behaviour. More generally, a perception that the ICAC is effective as a safeguard against corruption in the state can be expected to bolster confidence in the institutions of government.

The CAS directly assesses an individual's understanding of corruption and their willingness to report it. If corrupt behaviour is dismissed by individuals as a perk – just a bit naughty, a morality issue, a maladministration issue – or accepted as just the way it is, the conduct is unlikely to be brought to the attention of the ICAC.

Finally, it must be noted that the elements of the anti-corruption system are particularly salient when considering public officials. Public officials are in the organisations where corruption might occur. They are more likely to see suspicious behaviour and weak controls. They should be more aware of the ICAC and its role in reducing corruption. Where data are available, the current analyses examine differences between public officials and private citizens in their attitudes to corruption issues.



# Methodology

The survey format was revised for the 2012 CAS. Many questions, however, remained unchanged to facilitate cross-time comparisons. The revised survey focussed on four key areas:

- perceptions of the severity of corruption
- public awareness of the ICAC
- evaluation of the ICAC
- attitudes to reporting corruption.

Since the ICAC conducting a survey about itself would constitute a conflict of interest, Taverner Research was contracted to pilot and distribute the revised survey. As per previous CASs, this survey was distributed via a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI). A parallel online survey was not distributed because the online sample from 2009 was found to be less representative of population demographics than the 2009 CATI survey.<sup>1</sup>

The survey was administered over a two-week period, approximately, beginning on 31 August 2012. The sample was randomly selected from NSW adults, and quotas, based on demographic information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, were applied to the gender, age and place of residence to ensure a general representativeness of the NSW population.

A total of 506 individuals responded to the survey. In total, 3,548 individuals of the required age range were approached, representing a response rate of 14%. Amongst sample respondents:

- 15% were currently employed in the NSW public sector
- 40% had completed one or more university degrees
- 29% were aged between 18 and 34 years, with 18% aged over 65 years.

<sup>1</sup> *Community attitudes to corruption and the ICAC: Report on the 2009 survey*, ICAC, Sydney, 2010

## Data analyses

There were four clear aims behind the data analytic approach taken.

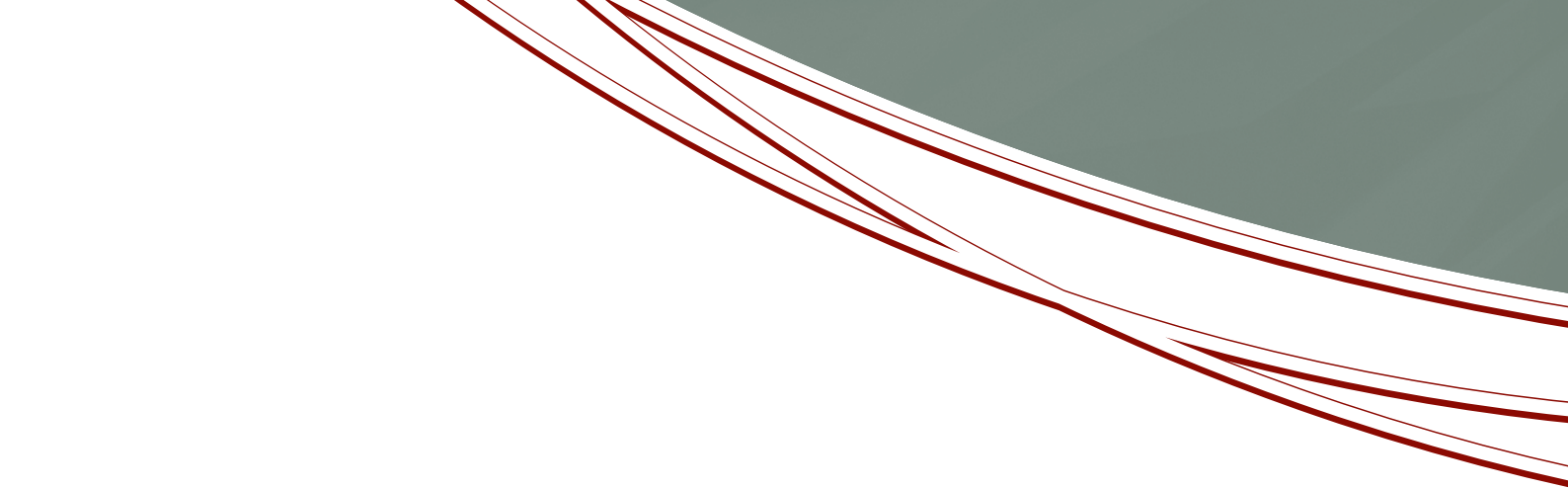
The first aim was to report the results received across the whole sample. Frequencies were utilised for this purpose.<sup>2</sup> Coding of free response items was done via a three-stage approach: (1) a draft coding frame, based on responses from previous surveys, was provided to Taverner Research, (2) Taverner Research coded the data and provided the data to the ICAC, and (3) ICAC staff reviewed the coding, merging categories if this was deemed appropriate.

The second aim was to analyse differences between groups across the sample for key items. These analyses were performed using logistic regressions. The variables entered into these analyses were determined by first analysing groups the ICAC considered *a priori* might respond differently from the rest of the sample and then by selecting only those that were found to differ in their responses. The variables removed by this pre-analysis were gender, and whether the respondent's home location was in Sydney, Newcastle/Wollongong or the rest of NSW.

The third aim was to compare key results received from this CAS with those obtained from the 2009 CAS. These comparisons were performed using Chi Square Tests of Independence. In some cases, follow-up analyses were conducted based on findings described in the 2009 CAS report – these are described in the relevant section of the report.

The fourth aim was to examine CAS results over the past two decades. Such analysis provides a long-term perspective of shifts in the NSW anti-corruption model. Logistic regressions were used to conduct this analysis,

<sup>2</sup> Two points should be noted here. For multiple-response items, percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding. Also, for free-response items, only the three most common response categories have been reported.



which compared the results from pre-2000 surveys (conducted in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1999) with those from post-2000 (conducted in 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012). The year 2000 was chosen because this represents the approximate mid-point of the ICAC's existence. Given that public officials and non-public officials represent "inside" and "outside" views, respectively, of NSW public sector corruption, whether each respondent was a NSW public official or not was also entered into these logistic regressions.

It should be noted that the results reported in this CAS and all previous surveys may be affected by the timing of survey distribution. For instance, a major public inquiry being conducted at the same time as survey distribution may temporarily skew perceptions of corruption and the ICAC. However, the stability shown by some items across surveys, and the apparent long-term trends in others, suggests that any such variability tends to "wash out" over time.





# Perceptions of the extent of corruption in NSW

Perceptions of corruption as a problem can be a positive for the functioning of an anti-corruption system that relies heavily on reports of suspected corruption from public officials and private citizens. Where individuals see it as a problem, and particularly a problem that affects them, they can be motivated to report suspicions to the ICAC.

When the perceptions of a significant corruption problem are widely held across society, however, there is a real risk that corrupt behaviour becomes accepted as the way of doing business with government. It can distort private and economic behaviour as individuals withdraw from some areas, such as bidding for state contracts.

Widespread corruption perceptions can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as individuals begin to believe that gifts or money are needed to speed up approvals or to gain a licence, or that expensive trips and dining are key to effective lobbying. Over time, widely held perceptions of corruption across the state undermine confidence in the democratic process and institutions of government.

Several survey items examined respondents' perceptions of the severity of corruption in NSW. Respondents indicated how much of a problem corruption was in the NSW public sector, government departments and local councils. They also indicated whether corruption affects them or their family and, if so, how it affected them or their family. Finally, respondents indicated whether they thought there were any types of corruption that were particularly problematic and, if so, what these types of corruption were.

## 2012 findings

As in previous surveys, all respondents indicated whether they perceived corruption in the NSW public sector to be a problem. Responses indicated that 31% of respondents viewed corruption as a major problem, with an additional 50% viewing it as a minor problem.

In separate items, all respondents were also asked to indicate whether they perceived corruption in NSW government departments and NSW local councils to be a problem. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents indicated that corruption in government departments was a major problem, with an additional 45% indicating that it was a minor problem. Thirty-six per cent of respondents indicated that corruption in local councils was a major problem, with an additional 43% indicating that it was a minor problem.

Some respondents who perceived corruption to be a major problem in local councils or government departments did not perceive corruption in NSW overall the same way. Only 68% of respondents who indicated that corruption in government departments was a major problem also indicated that it was a major problem in NSW. Likewise, only 62% of respondents who indicated that corruption in local councils was a major problem also indicated that it was a major problem in NSW. These respondents may see major corruption as "isolated" in local councils or government departments.

All respondents were given a standard definition of corruption to use<sup>3</sup> and asked to indicate if they thought corruption in the NSW public sector affected them or their family. Forty-five per cent of respondents indicated that it did.

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<sup>3</sup> The definition used was "corruption is the misuse of public office for private gain, for example: theft of public resources, misuse of confidential information, favouring a particular candidate during the hiring process, bribery, et cetera".

Respondents who indicated that corruption affected them or their family were asked how it affected them. The most frequent responses are presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Perceptions of how corruption affects respondents or their family**

How corruption affects respondent or their family	Number of respondents	Example
Poor execution of government functions	68 (30%)	<i>I think moneys are diverted which should be spent on vital projects.</i>
Increased costs or taxes	42 (18%)	<i>It leads to higher taxes and higher rates because money and services are siphoned off by some person enriching themselves.</i>
Misallocation of funds	42 (18%)	<i>Misappropriation of money has a flow-on effect for everyone.</i>

Respondents were also asked whether they felt any particular types of corruption were particularly problematic for the community; 58% of respondents indicated that there were types of corruption that were particularly problematic. These respondents were asked to indicate what the particular problematic types of corruption were, and the most frequently provided responses are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Perceptions of which types of corruption are particularly problematic**

Types of corruption	Number of respondents	Example
Corruption surrounding planning and development	99 (20%)	<i>Some of the scandals due to property development and planning concern me.</i>
Favouritism or nepotism	38 (8%)	<i>The way nepotism can operate in that families and friends of officials can benefit from government operations.</i>
Taking bribes	36 (7%)	<i>Paying people and accepting bribes.</i>

## Subgroup differences

The proportion of respondents who thought that corruption in NSW was a major problem was compared across the sample subgroups. The following significant differences were observed:

- individuals aged 35–64 were significantly more likely to view corruption in NSW as a major problem compared with individuals aged 18–34 years<sup>4</sup>
- respondents without a university degree were significantly more likely than those with a degree to view corruption in NSW as a major problem.<sup>5</sup>

The proportion of respondents who thought corruption affects them or their family was also compared across the subgroups. The only significant differences observed were that respondents aged 35–64 years were more likely to indicate corruption affects them or their family than respondents younger than 35 years or older than 64 years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>  $B=-.67$ ,  $Wald=7.87$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.96$ ,  $p=.005$

<sup>5</sup>  $B=-.47$ ,  $Wald=4.87$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.60$ ,  $p=.03$

<sup>6</sup>  $B=-.86$ ,  $Wald=15.50$ ,  $Exp(B)=2.36$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $B=1.07$ ,  $Wald=15.71$ ,  $Exp(B)=2.91$ ,  $p<.001$  respectively

## Recent changes

The percentage of respondents who indicated that they perceived corruption in the NSW public sector to be a major problem was significantly lower than in 2009.<sup>7</sup> The percentage of respondents who perceived corruption in state departments to be a major problem did not differ between 2009 and 2012.<sup>8</sup> This was also the case for the corresponding percentage for local councils.<sup>9</sup>

Results from the 2009 CAS also suggested that corruption might be more frequently seen as being problematic in state government departments than in local councils. For the 2012 results, respondents' perceptions of state departments and local councils were compared. A related-samples sign test indicated that corruption in government departments was not perceived significantly differently from local councils.<sup>10</sup>

Questions that separately assess how problematic corruption in NSW government departments and local councils is perceived to be were first introduced in 2006. Historic data regarding these items are presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Perceptions of the level of corruption in NSW government departments and local councils over time**

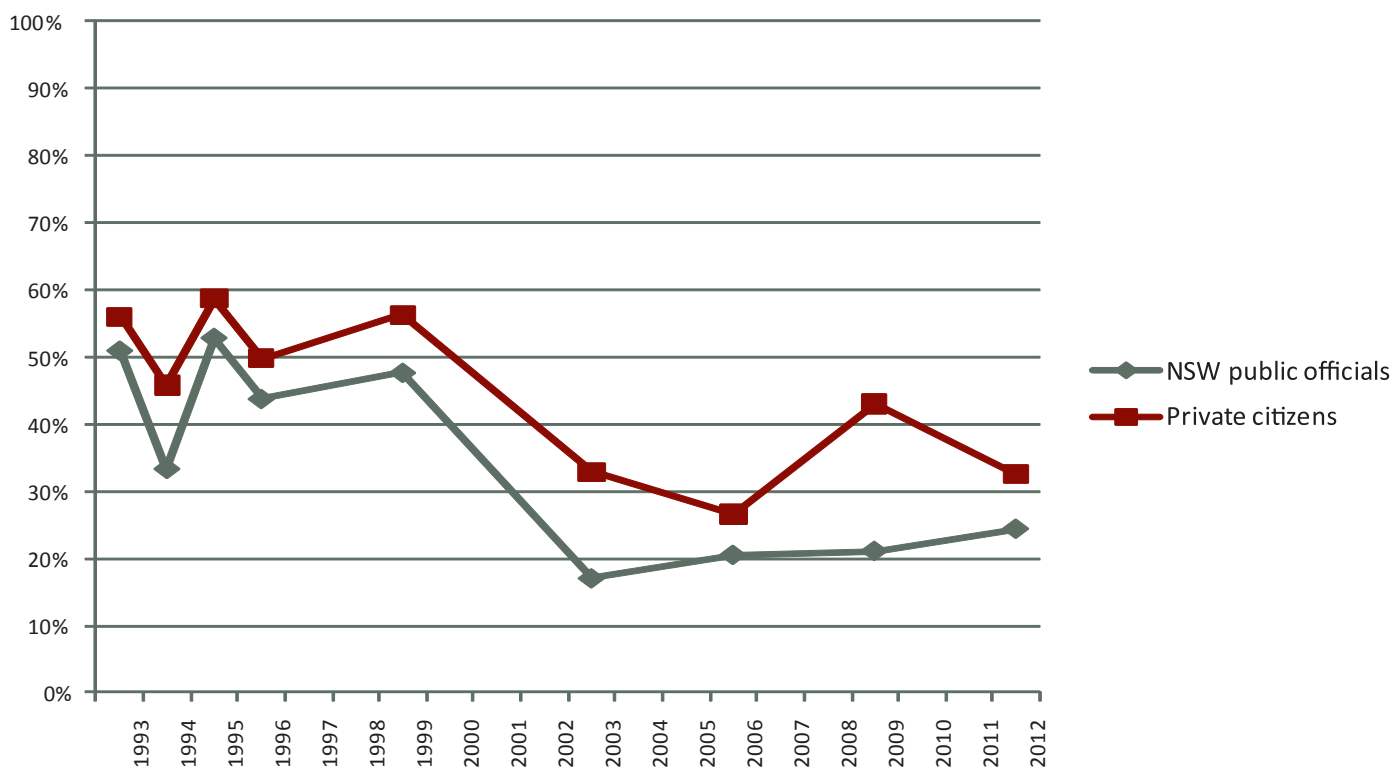
Corruption perceived as a major problem in:	2006	2009	2012
Government departments	27%	41%	37%
Local councils	35%	35%	36%

The proportion of respondents who indicated that corruption affects them or their family was significantly lower than that observed in 2009.<sup>11</sup> Given the 2009 proportion was a significant increase on that observed in 2006 and the 2006 and 2012 figures did not differ significantly,<sup>12</sup> the 2009 result may reflect events at the time of the survey or may simply reflect a sampling variation.

## Twenty year trends

Figure 1 compares long-term data regarding the percentages of NSW public officials and other respondents who view corruption in NSW as a major problem.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 1: Perceptions of corruption as a major problem over time**



7  $\chi^2=8.31, df=1, n=1007, p=.003$

8  $\chi^2=1.35, df=1, n=1007, p=.25$

9  $\chi^2=.12, df=1, n=1007, p=.73$

10  $z=-1.92, p=.06$ ; "don't know" responses were excluded for this analysis consistent with the analyses performed in 2009.

11  $\chi^2=6.83, df=1, n=1007, p=.009$

12  $\chi^2=.71, df=1, n=1008, p=.40$

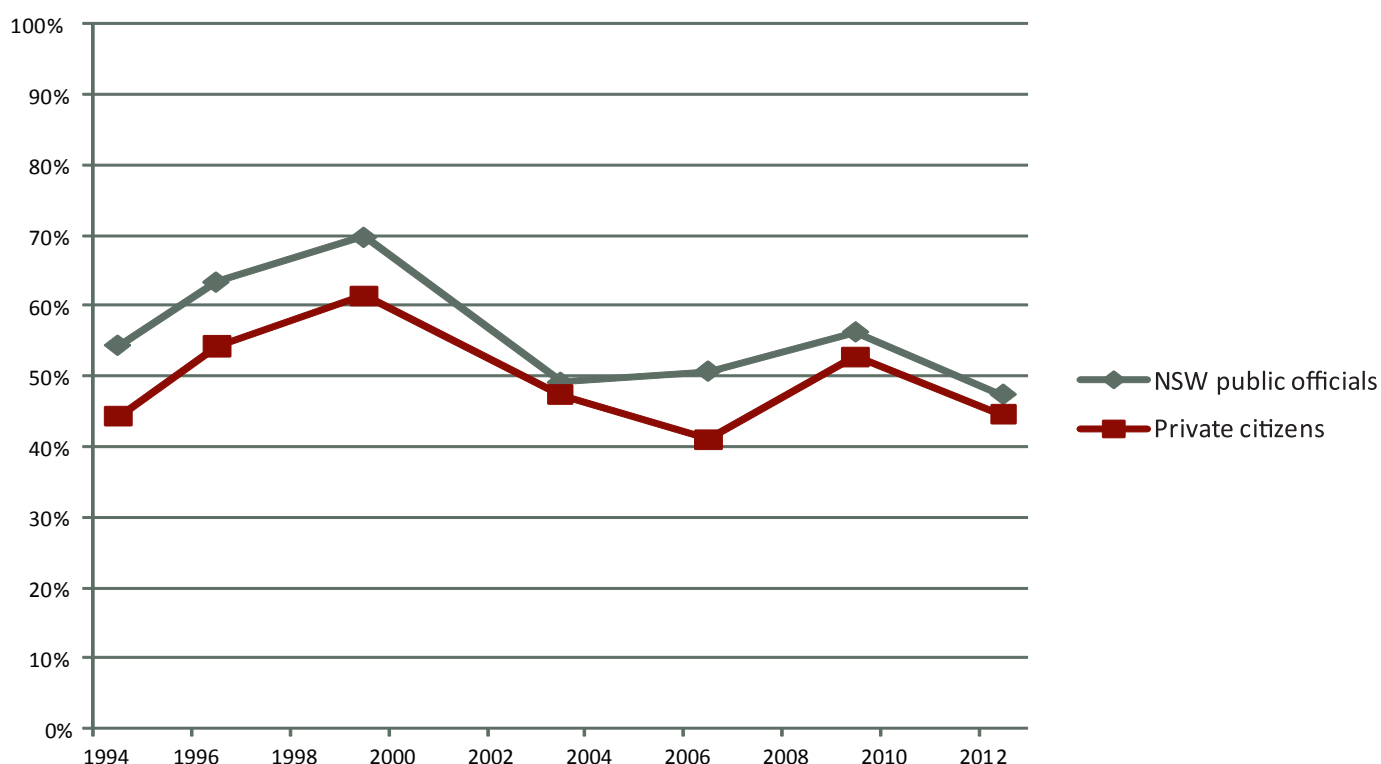
13 For the 1993 survey, this was described as a "serious problem", rather than a "major problem".

Analyses were conducted that compared the results of the surveys conducted before 2000 with those conducted after 2000, as this represented the approximate mid-point of the ICAC's existence to date. Those who responded to the survey over the past 12 years were significantly less likely to perceive corruption as a major problem than those surveyed before 2000.<sup>14</sup> Across all surveys, public officials were significantly less likely to indicate that corruption was a major problem than other respondents.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 2 presents long-term data regarding the proportions of public officials and other respondents who indicated that corruption affects them or their family.

Compared with pre-2000 respondents, post-2000 respondents were significantly less likely to indicate that corruption affected them or their family.<sup>16</sup> Across all surveys, public officials were significantly more likely to indicate that corruption affected them or their family.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 2: Belief that corruption personally affects respondent or their family over time**



Note: this question was not asked in 1993 and 1995 surveys.

<sup>14</sup>  $B=-.51$ ,  $Wald=67.01$ ,  $EXP(B)=.60$ ,  $p<.001$

<sup>15</sup>  $B=-.31$ ,  $Wald=11.03$ ,  $EXP(B)=.74$ ,  $p=.001$

<sup>16</sup>  $B=-.33$ ,  $Wald=22.54$ ,  $EXP(B)=.72$ ,  $p<.001$

<sup>17</sup>  $B=-.25$ ,  $Wald=6.12$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.28$ ,  $p=.013$

## Conclusions

Overall, there appears to have been a long-term decline in the proportion of respondents who view corruption in NSW as a major problem. In the years immediately after the establishment of the ICAC, some 55% of those surveyed viewed corruption in NSW as a major problem. This number has declined significantly since the establishment of the ICAC but remains at over 30%.

For the past 20 years of surveys, public officials have been less likely to perceive corruption as a major problem in the NSW government than private citizens. While less likely to perceive corruption as a major problem, public officials are more likely to view corruption as having a personal negative effect on them. While the surveys can't explain why these long term effects occurred, it may be that public officials understand how government works and are less likely than the public to see corruption where there may be maladministration, poor communication, lack of transparency or simply a situation where a person did not get their way. It is also likely that public officials are better placed to see how damaging corruption is when it does occur.

## Awareness of the role of the ICAC

The ICAC forms an important part of the state's anti-corruption system. Its functions include both investigating serious and systemic corruption, and providing assistance to public authorities to improve their control of corruption. Given the secretive nature of corruption, the effectiveness of the ICAC is heavily dependent on public officials and private citizens reporting suspicions to the ICAC. For such reporting to occur, there needs to be a widespread recognition of the ICAC and its role in NSW anti-corruption. Not everyone needs to have the name of the ICAC on the tip of their tongue, but some level of awareness that there is such an anti-corruption body is an important precursor to reporting.

Public awareness of the ICAC was examined via three items. The first item asked respondents to name the body set up to deal with corruption in the NSW public sector. Respondents who could *not* name the ICAC unprompted were asked whether they had heard of the ICAC. Respondents who could either name the ICAC unprompted or indicated that they had heard of the ICAC were considered to be aware of it. Respondents who were aware of the ICAC were asked to describe its functions.

### 2012 findings

Twenty-five per cent of respondents could name the ICAC as the NSW public sector anti-corruption body unprompted. An additional 57% were aware of the ICAC when prompted by being asked whether they had "...heard of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the I.C.A.C. or I-cac". Thus, there were 82% of respondents who were aware of the ICAC.<sup>18</sup>

The 82% of respondents who were aware of the ICAC were asked to indicate how they had heard of it. The most frequent response, by far, was through news and media outlets, which was nominated by 68% of those who were aware of the ICAC.

Respondents who were aware of the ICAC were asked to indicate what it did. The most frequent responses are presented in table 4.

**Table 4: Respondent perceptions of what the ICAC does**

What the ICAC does	Number of respondents	Example
Investigates corruption	283 (68%)	<i>Investigates complaints of corruption.</i>
Prevents corruption	40 (10%)	<i>Supposed to keep all the corruption from happening.</i>
Monitors/oversees the public service	23 (6%)	<i>Monitors the various arms of government to make sure they are all following the regular conduct and regulations.</i>

<sup>18</sup> Questions concerning perceptions of the ICAC were not asked of the 19% of respondents who were not aware of it.

## Subgroup differences

Comparisons across sample subgroups were performed separately for awareness of the ICAC. The following significant differences were observed.

- 35–64 year olds were significantly more likely to be aware of the ICAC than 18–34 year olds<sup>19</sup>
- current and previous public sector employees were significantly more likely be aware of the ICAC than those who had never been employed in the NSW public service.<sup>20</sup>

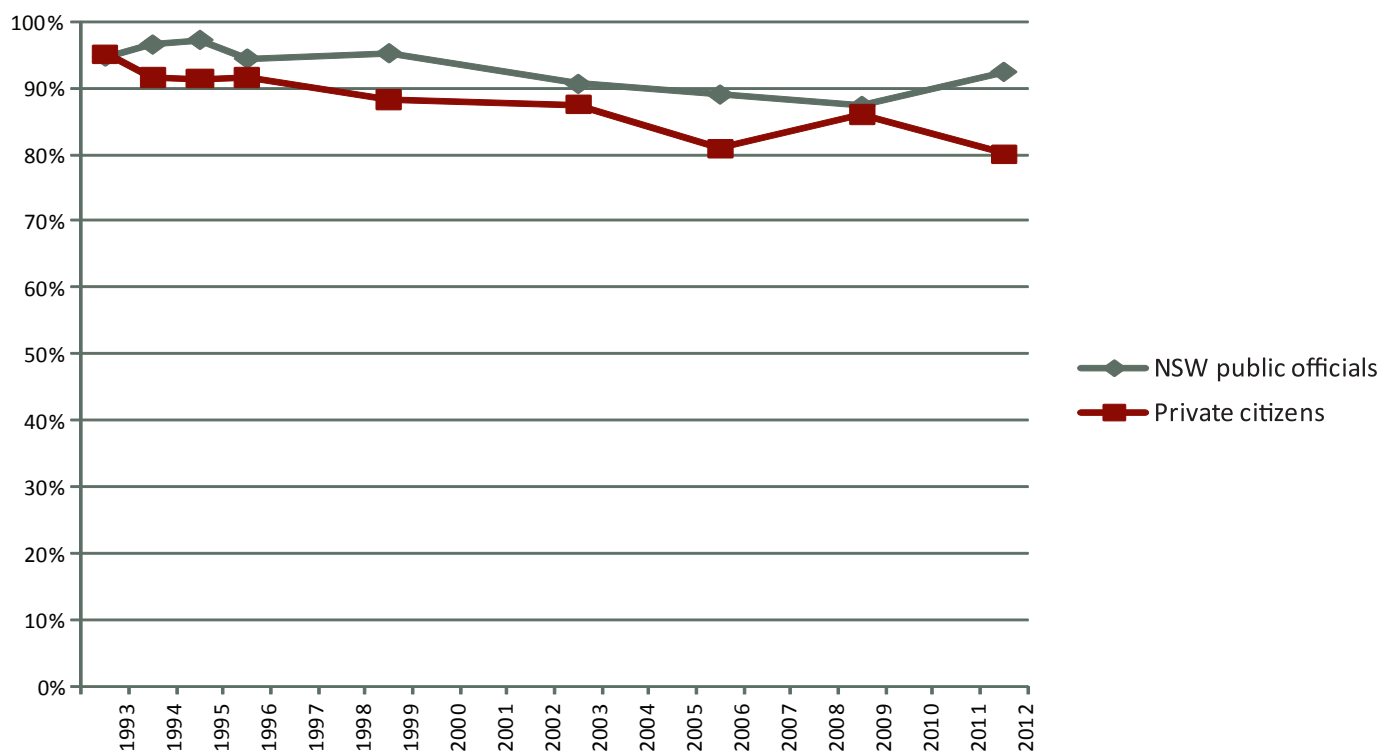
## Recent changes

The percentage of respondents who were aware of the ICAC in 2012 did not differ significantly from 2009.<sup>21</sup>

## Twenty year trends

Figure 3 displays longer term data regarding awareness of the ICAC by both public officials and non-public officials.

Figure 3: Awareness of the ICAC over time

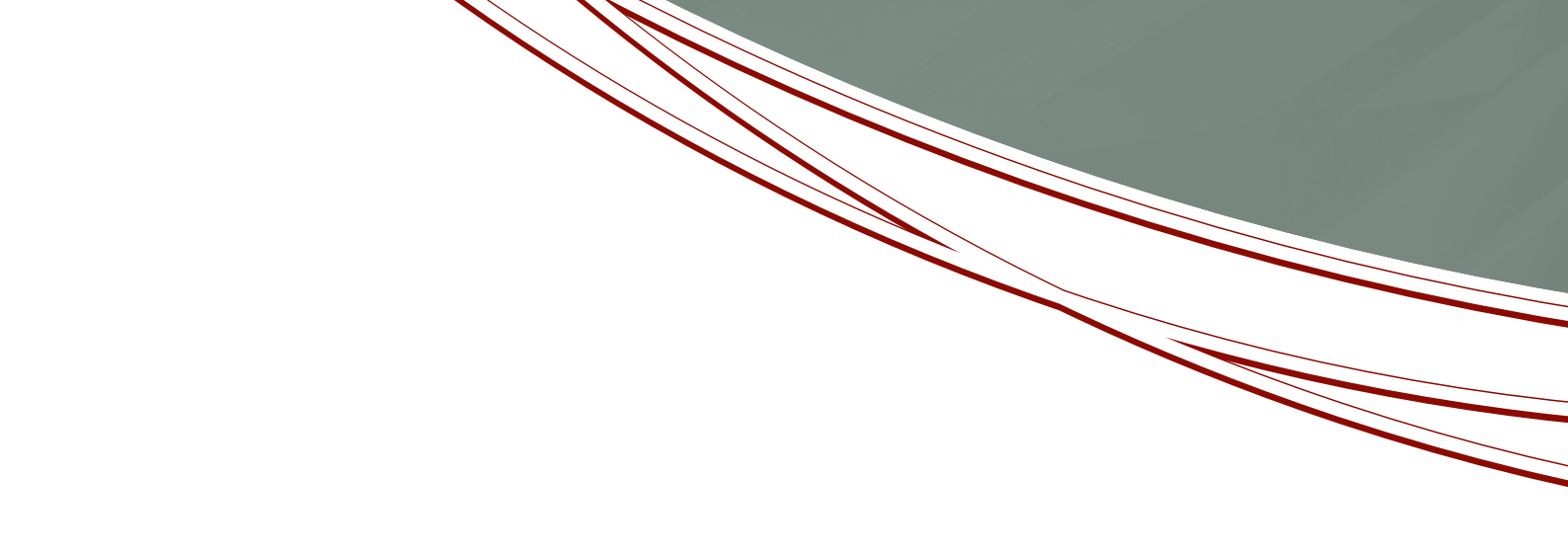


19  $B=-2.03$ ,  $Wald=49.47$ ,  $EXP(B)=.13$ ,  $p<.001$

20  $B=1.18$ ,  $Wald=6.03$ ,  $EXP(B)=3.24$ ,  $p=.01$  and  $B=1.34$ ,  $Wald=6.93$ ,  $EXP(B)=3.80$ ,  $p=.008$

21  $\chi^2=3.34$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $n=1007$ ,  $p=.07$





Compared with pre-2000 CAS respondents, a significantly smaller proportion of post-2000 survey respondents displayed some awareness of the ICAC.<sup>22</sup> Across all surveys, public officials were significantly more likely to be aware of the ICAC than non-public officials.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusions

Overall, it appears that the vast majority of the NSW public are aware of the ICAC, and have been since a time period briefly after its establishment. Awareness has been fairly consistent in recent years, although it is slightly lower than in the ICAC's early years. With over 80% of the public aware of the ICAC, it is unlikely that execution of the ICAC's functions has been affected by a lack of public awareness.

Importantly, NSW public officials display greater awareness of the ICAC. This is essential given their important role in controlling potential corrupt conduct in NSW government. It is not particularly surprising that younger respondents appear to have less awareness of the ICAC. Younger respondents are likely to have had fewer opportunities to be exposed to the work of the ICAC.

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<sup>22</sup>  $B=-.76$ ,  $Wald=61.74$ ,  $EXP(B)=.47$ ,  $p<.001$

<sup>23</sup>  $B=.60$ ,  $Wald=12.68$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.82$ ,  $p<.001$

## Perceptions of ICAC effectiveness

For the ICAC to be effective, it needs to be seen to be effective. If individuals do not perceive the ICAC to be successful at exposing corruption then they may be less likely to report corruption. Similarly, if the ICAC is not perceived as effectively reducing corruption, it is less likely that public officials charged with controlling corruption will seek its assistance or accept its recommendations.

Three items were used to gauge ICAC effectiveness. The first two items asked how successful the ICAC had been in achieving its goals of exposing and reducing corruption. The third item asked whether having the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW. After each of these items, respondents were asked to provide reasons for their judgments.

### 2012 findings

The 81% of respondents who were aware of the ICAC were asked whether the ICAC had been successful in exposing some of the corruption in NSW and in reducing the level of corruption in NSW. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents indicated that the ICAC has been successful at exposing corruption in NSW, with 54% indicating that it had been successful at reducing corruption in NSW.<sup>24</sup>

Respondents were asked to indicate why they evaluated the ICAC as being successful at exposing and reducing corruption. The most frequently provided reasons are presented in table 5 and table 6 respectively.

**Table 5: Respondent reasons for their evaluation of whether the ICAC has been successful at exposing corruption**

Reason	Number of responses	Example
<i>Respondents who thought the ICAC had been successful at exposing some of the corruption in NSW</i>		
Media reports and publicity	132 (46%)	<i>We read about it in the newspapers. If they weren't successful we wouldn't read about it.</i>
Success of ICAC investigations	87 (30%)	<i>Their investigations get results.</i>
General awareness of corruption being exposed	45 (16%)	<i>I have heard of them exposing some corruption.</i>
<i>Respondents who did not think the ICAC had been successful at exposing some of the corruption in NSW</i>		
ICAC inquiries and successes were not adequately publicised	43 (34%)	<i>I haven't heard a lot of results from the issues they've been looking into.</i>
Unsure of reasons	25 (20%)	<i>Don't know enough about it.</i>
Have not followed or taken an interest	12 (9%)	<i>Haven't looked into it.</i>

<sup>24</sup> It should also be noted that "don't know" was selected more than twice as often as "unsuccessful" for each of these items.

**Table 6: Respondent reasons for their evaluation of whether the ICAC has been successful at reducing corruption**

Reason	Number of responses	Example
<i>Respondents who thought the ICAC had been successful at reducing corruption in NSW</i>		
The success of ICAC investigations	48 (21%)	<i>[It] has acted on information received; people have been taken to court.</i>
Media reports	44 (20%)	<i>You hear of what it is doing in the media, that is, cases that it is fighting.</i>
Presence of the ICAC acts as a deterrent	37 (16%)	<i>It is a deterrent. People know that there is someone watching over them.</i>
<i>Respondents who did not think the ICAC had been successful at reducing corruption in NSW</i>		
Unsure of a reason for their response	47 (25%)	<i>I wouldn't know. Don't know how big corruption is.</i>
Corruption still exists in NSW	34 (18%)	<i>There is still a lot of corruption. They are making a difference but need to do a lot more.</i>
Not enough evidence of success	26 (14%)	<i>I don't hear of successes.</i>

Among those respondents who were aware of the ICAC, 95% agreed that having the ICAC was a good thing for the people of NSW. The most frequently provided reasons for this response are presented in table 7.

**Table 7: Respondent reasons why the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW**

Why the ICAC is a good thing	Number of respondents	Example
Need for an oversight body to ensure accountability in the public sector	100 (25%)	It keeps people in power accountable.
Importance of a body independent from government	55 (14%)	Independence is very important because there is no vested interest.
Need for an anti-corruption body	49 (12%)	Agencies like that are needed to stop corruption.

## Subgroup differences

Subgroup comparisons were performed on the items examining whether the ICAC had been successful at exposing and reducing corruption. The following significant differences were obtained:

- respondents aged between 35 and 64 were significantly more likely to indicate that the ICAC had been successful at exposing corruption in NSW than those aged between 18 and 34<sup>25</sup>
- respondents aged between 35 and 64 were significantly more likely to indicate that the ICAC has been successful at reducing corruption than those aged 65 and over.<sup>26</sup>

## Recent changes

Neither the percentage of respondents who indicated that the ICAC had been successful in exposing corruption, nor the percentage of respondents who indicated that the ICAC had been successful at reducing corruption, significantly differed between the 2009 and 2012 samples.<sup>27</sup> The percentage of respondents who thought that the ICAC was a good thing for the people of NSW also did not differ between the 2009 and 2012 samples.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup>  $B=.79$ ,  $Wald=8.35$ ,  $EXP(B)=2.20$ ,  $p=.004$

<sup>26</sup>  $B=.99$ ,  $Walds=13.10$ ,  $EXP(B)=2.70$ ,  $p<.001$

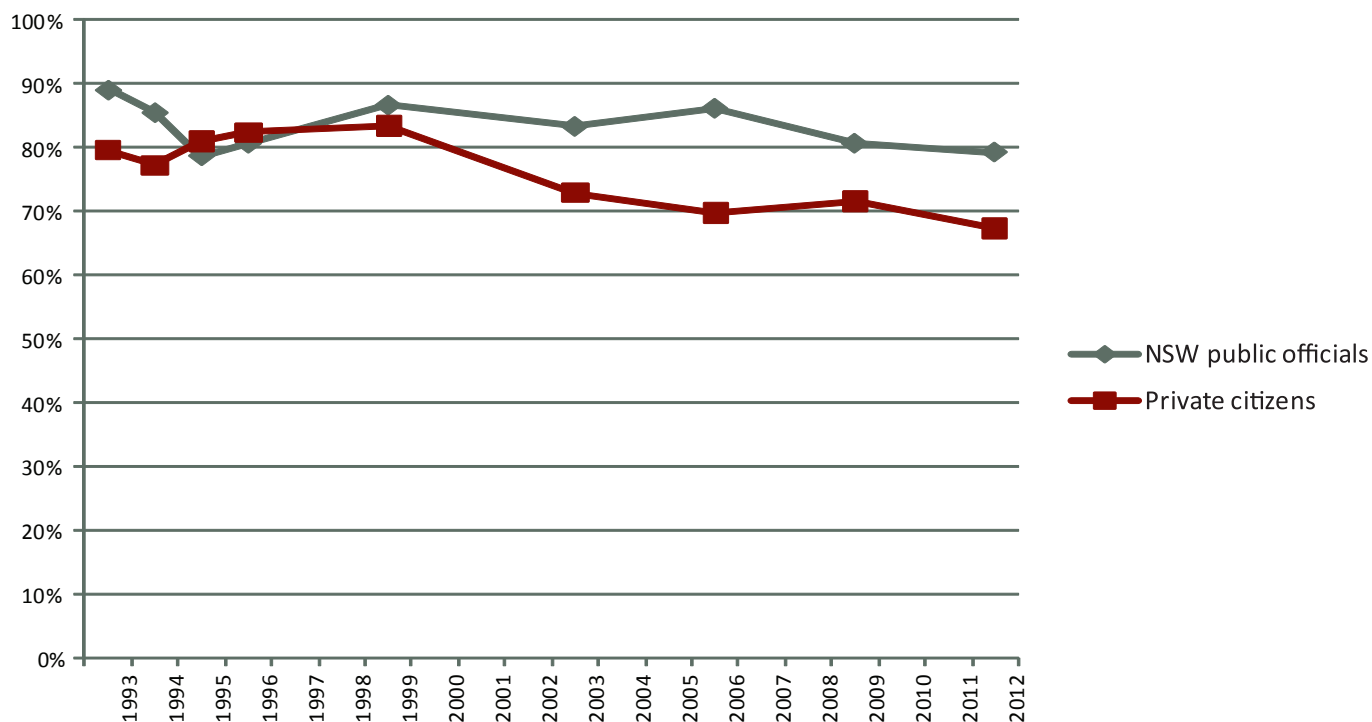
<sup>27</sup>  $\chi^2=1.28$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $ns=847$ ,  $p=.26$  and  $\chi^2=1.05$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $n=847$ ,  $p=.30$  respectively

<sup>28</sup>  $\chi^2=.11$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $n=847$ ,  $p=.74$

## Twenty year trends

Figure 4 presents long term data regarding perceptions of whether the ICAC has been successful at exposing corruption for both public officials and other respondents.

**Figure 4: Perceptions of whether the ICAC has been successful at exposing corruption over time**



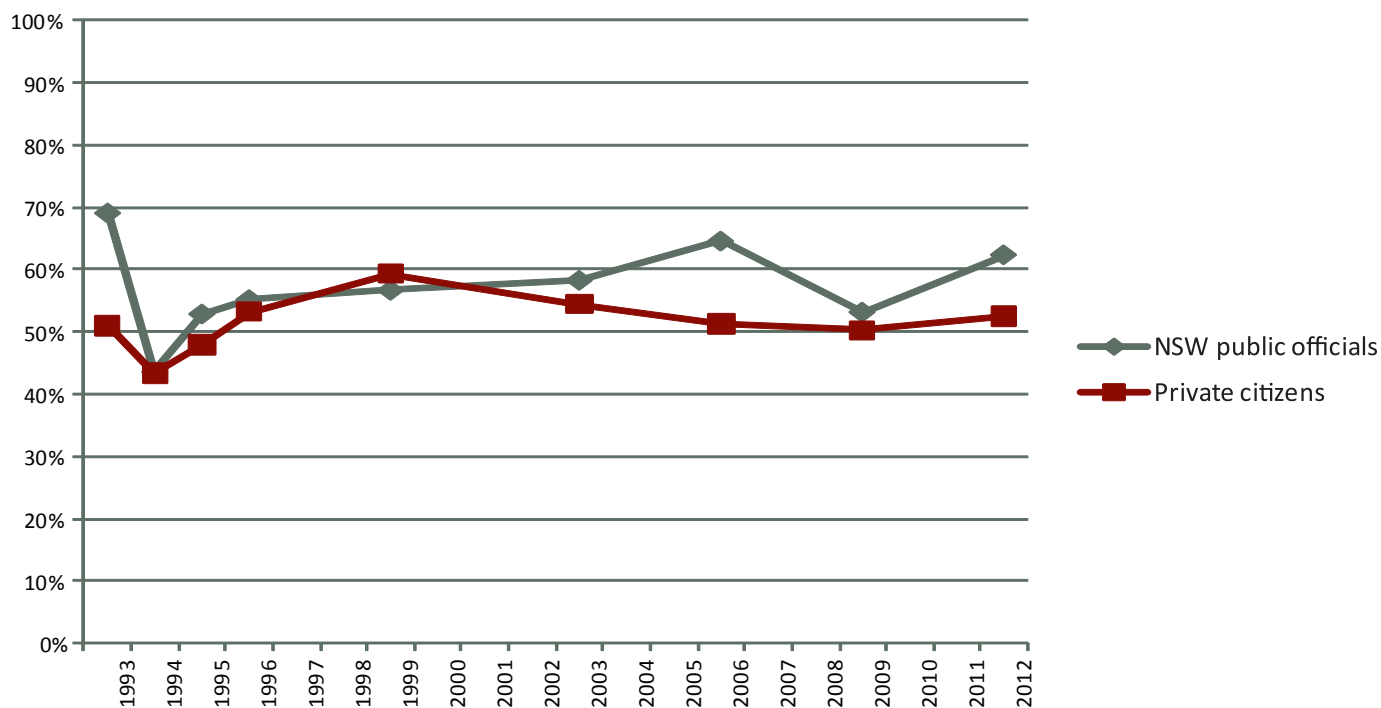
Compared with pre-2000 CAS respondents, a significantly smaller proportion of post-2000 survey respondents indicated that the ICAC had been successful at exposing corruption.<sup>29</sup> Public officials were significantly more likely to indicate that the ICAC had been successful at exposing corruption.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>  $B = -.52$ ,  $Wald = 45.63$ ,  $EXP(B) = .60$ ,  $p < .001$

<sup>30</sup>  $B = .43$ ,  $Wald = 12.40$ ,  $EXP(B) = 1.53$ ,  $p < .001$

Figure 5 presents perceptions of whether the ICAC has been successful at reducing corruption over all surveys for both public officials and other respondents.

**Figure 5: Perceptions of whether the ICAC has been successful at reducing corruption over time**



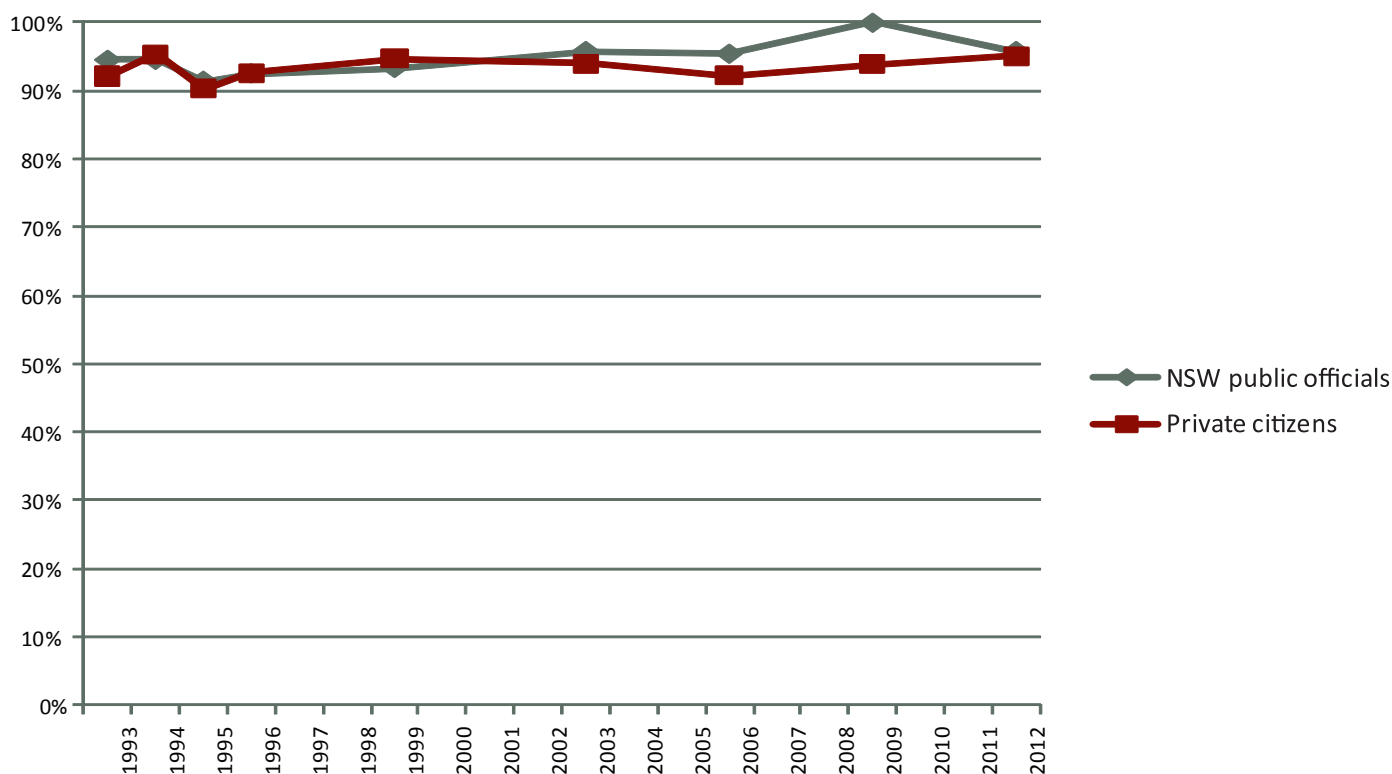
The proportion of post-2000 survey respondents who indicated that the ICAC had been successful at reducing corruption did not significantly differ to the proportion from pre-2000 respondents.<sup>31</sup> Public officials were significantly more likely to indicate that the ICAC had been successful at reducing corruption.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup>  $B=.06$ ,  $Wald=.77$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.06$ ,  $p=0.38$

<sup>32</sup>  $B=.23$ ,  $Wald=6.22$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.26$ ,  $p=0.13$

Figure 6 presents perceptions of whether the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW over all surveys for both public officials and other respondents.

**Figure 6: Perceptions of whether the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW over time**



The proportion of post-2000 survey respondents who indicated that the ICAC was a good thing for the people of NSW was significantly greater than the proportion from pre-2000 respondents.<sup>33</sup> Public officials were significantly more likely to indicate that the ICAC was a good thing for the people of NSW.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusions

The NSW public has a positive perception of the ICAC. Almost all respondents who were aware of the ICAC indicated that it was a good thing for the people of NSW, and this has increased significantly over 20 years.

More than two-thirds indicated that the ICAC had been successful at exposing corruption and more than half indicated that the ICAC had been successful at reducing corruption. While the percentage of respondents who indicated that the ICAC had been successful at exposing corruption has decreased since post-2000, the percentage who thought that the ICAC had been successful does

not appear to have markedly changed and the percentage who thought that the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW appears to have increased from an already high starting point.

Survey results from the past 20 years indicate that public officials have held a significantly more positive view of the ICAC's effectiveness than private citizens. They are also more likely to indicate that having the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW.

Respondents' reasons for their ratings of ICAC effectiveness tended to fall into three sets of categories. Respondents who indicated that the ICAC had been successful at exposing or reducing corruption most frequently focused on successful investigations and media coverage of them. In contrast, reasons why the ICAC was a good thing for the people of NSW tended to focus on the need to have an organisation that was an independent oversight body that tackled corruption. Respondents who felt the ICAC had not been successful tended to focus on a perceived lack of evidence of ICAC success, or a lack of knowledge or interest about the ICAC.

33  $B=.55$ ,  $Wald=18.9$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.73$ ,  $p<.001$

34  $B=.39$ ,  $Wald=4.18$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.48$ ,  $p=.04$

# Understanding of, and willingness to report, corruption

Although most respondents are willing to express an opinion about the severity of the corruption problem in NSW and almost all believe that the ICAC is a good thing for the people of NSW, it does not automatically follow that the general public has an adequate understanding of what corruption is, or is willing to report it. This last section analyses the accuracy of peoples' understanding of what corruption is and their willingness to report suspicions of corruption.

There are two key elements to whether an individual will report corrupt conduct. First, the individual needs to be able to recognise corrupt conduct when they see it. Secondly, individuals need to be willing to report corrupt conduct, despite any potential negative consequences that may arise from them making a report.

Survey questions about reporting focused on these two elements. Respondents were asked to indicate what they understood corruption to be. They were also asked whether they would be likely to report serious corruption and whether something useful would be done if they did report it.

As discussed in the 2009 CAS report, individuals often indicate that they will report serious corrupt conduct to bodies other than the ICAC. Consequently, asking a respondent whether they would be likely to report corruption is not the same as asking whether they would be willing to assist the ICAC. Respondents who were aware of the ICAC were consequently also asked whether they would be willing to provide the ICAC with information about serious corrupt conduct.

## 2012 findings

All respondents were asked to provide their own definition of corruption. These were classified into a number of different themes, where one definition could have multiple themes. The most frequently used themes are presented in table 8.

**Table 8: How respondents define corruption**

Theme from definition of corruption	Number of respondents	Example
Self-interest at the expense of government, one's employer or the public	165 (33%)	<i>Someone acting for their own personal gain rather than for the government.</i>
Acting illegally, immorally or unethically	157 (31%)	<i>An illegal act that takes advantage of the public trust.</i>
Bribery or other improper payment	116 (23%)	<i>People using bribes to undermine the process.</i>

All respondents were provided with a standard definition of corrupt conduct<sup>35</sup> and asked how likely they were to report serious corruption.<sup>36</sup> Fifty-two per cent of respondents indicated that they were very likely to report corrupt conduct, with a further 30% indicating that they were likely to report it.

<sup>35</sup> This was provided in the "Perceptions of the severity of corruption" section.

<sup>36</sup> Serious corruption was defined as "...would be considered a criminal offence...".



All respondents were asked whether something useful would be done if they reported NSW public sector corruption. Fifty-five per cent agreed or strongly agreed that something useful would be done.

Respondents who were aware of the ICAC were additionally asked how willing they would be to provide information about serious corrupt conduct to the ICAC. Thirty-eight per cent indicated that they would be very willing to provide the ICAC with such information with a further 48% indicating that they would be fairly willing.

## Subgroup differences

The proportions of respondents who indicated they would be likely to report serious corruption, believed that something useful would be done if they reported corruption or were willing to provide the ICAC with information about serious corrupt conduct were compared across subgroups. The following significant differences were obtained:

- respondents who had never been employed in the NSW public sector were significantly more likely to report serious corrupt corruption compared with current public sector employees<sup>37</sup>
- no subgroup was significantly more or less likely to agree that something useful would be done if they reported NSW public sector corruption<sup>38</sup>
- no subgroup was significantly more or less willing to provide information about serious corruption to the ICAC<sup>39</sup>.

37  $B=.65$ ,  $Wald=4.18$ ,  $EXP(B)=1.91$ ,  $p=.04$

38  $|B| \leq .30$ ,  $Walds \leq 1.96$ ,  $.74 \leq EXP(B) \leq 1.25$ ,  $ps > .16$

39  $|B| \leq .58$ ,  $Walds \leq 2.50$ ,  $.71 \leq EXP(B) \leq 1.79$ ,  $ps > .11$

## Recent changes

Neither the percentage of all respondents who were likely or very likely to report serious corruption, nor the percentage who agreed or strongly agreed that something useful would be done if they reported corruption significantly differed between the 2009 and 2012 CAS samples.<sup>40</sup>

Respondents were first asked in the 2006 CAS whether they would be likely to report serious corrupt conduct. Historical data for this item is presented in table 9.

**Table 9: Likelihood of reporting corruption over time**

Likelihood	2006	2009	2012
Very likely	43%	53%	52%
Likely or very likely	83%	86%	82%

Respondents were first asked in 2006 whether something useful would be done if they were to report corrupt conduct.<sup>41</sup> Historical data for this item is presented in table 10.

40  $\chi^2=2.68$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $n=1007$ ,  $p=.102$  and  $\chi^2=1.50$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $n=1007$ ,  $p=.22$  respectively

41 Earlier CASs had asked whether "there is no point reporting corruption because nothing useful will be done" but this is not a comparable item.

**Table 10: Belief that something useful will be done if serious corruption is reported over time**

Likelihood	2006	2009	2012
Very likely	7%	6%	10%
Likely or very likely	49%	51%	54%

Of the respondents who were aware of the ICAC, the percentage who would be fairly or very willing to provide information also did not significantly differ from the percentage observed in the 2009 CAS.<sup>42</sup> As reported in the 2009 CAS, the 2009 percentage did not significantly differ from the 2006 percentage, indicating the willingness to report has remained stable for some six years.

Respondents were first asked in the 2006 CAS whether they were willing to provide the ICAC with information about serious corruption.<sup>43</sup> Historical data for this item is presented in table 11.

**Table 11: Willingness to provide the ICAC with information about serious corrupt conduct over time**

Willingness	2006	2009	2012
Very willing	42%	38%	41%
Fairly willing or very willing	86%	86%	87%

42  $\chi^2=.14$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $n=847$ ,  $p=.71$

43 A 2003 item asked about providing information about "potential corruption" but this is not a comparable item.

## Conclusions

Respondents' understanding of corruption overlaps but is not aligned with the ICAC definition of corrupt conduct. Both bribery and self-interest at the expense of government/the public certainly may constitute corrupt conduct but these do not span the scope of all possible corrupt conduct. By contrast, there are illegal, immoral or unethical acts that do not constitute corrupt conduct. That said, the concept of corruption is difficult to define, and the working definitions held by respondents are not so far wide off the mark as to raise questions about whether the issue of corruption is understood.

Most respondents appear willing to report serious corruption. More than 80% of respondents indicated that they were likely to report serious corruption, and over 85% of respondents who were aware of the ICAC indicated that they were willing to provide information about serious corrupt conduct to the ICAC. It is of some concern that fewer public sector employees are likely to report serious corruption. The survey does not allow this issue to be further explored but it may be due to a fear of retribution. It should be noted, however, that public sector employees are *not* less willing to provide information to the ICAC.

A slim majority of respondents believes that reports of corruption will result in appropriate action. Slightly more than half of respondents indicated that something useful would be done if they reported serious corruption. Given that more than 80% indicated a likeliness to report corruption, it may be that corruption is sometimes reported for reasons other than expecting to see a specific resolution of that particular matter.



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## Concluding remarks

The effectiveness of the ICAC in investigating, exposing and preventing corruption is inextricably linked to the attitudes and knowledge of the broader community. Without public awareness of the problem of corruption, confidence in the anti-corruption mechanisms of the state, knowledge of where to report, and a willingness to report, the ICAC would be severely constrained. Without public reports of corruption, public agencies acting to prevent corruption, and perceived consequences of corruption acting as a deterrent, the NSW anti-corruption system would falter.

The attitudes of the community have been assessed by the ICAC periodically, with the current survey coming some 20 years after the first. The analysis, therefore, focused on the current results and short-term changes since the 2009 survey, but was also able to assess changes in community attitudes from soon after the ICAC was established through to the present.

Overall, community attitudes continue to support an effective anti-corruption environment in NSW. The proportion of individuals who see corruption as a major problem has fallen over the past 20 years and particularly from the period soon after the ICAC was established.

Awareness of the ICAC as the anti-corruption body in NSW remains at a high level, although it has fallen in recent years. The ICAC is seen as a good thing for the people of NSW by virtually all respondents and this has not changed over 20 years. The perceived effectiveness of the ICAC in reducing corruption has been stable, at a little over 50% over these two decades. Perceived effectiveness in exposing corruption has declined slightly over the same period, from about 80% to about 70% of respondents.

Overall, the results give confidence that the public is aware of the ICAC and believe that having the ICAC is a good thing for NSW. Awareness of the ICAC and confidence in the ICAC may be important precursors

to reporting corruption and in positioning the ICAC as a deterrent to corrupt behaviour. Most respondents appear to have a working understanding of corruption, and would be likely to report serious corruption.

In 2012, nearly 90% of respondents were willing to provide information to the ICAC. The report also examined the willingness of public officials to report generally and to provide information specifically to the ICAC. With public officials more intimately involved in public sector activities, their awareness of corruption as a problem, awareness of the ICAC, and their willingness to report suspicions of corruption are of high importance. Over the past 20 years, public officials were less likely to see corruption as a major problem but more likely than the general public to indicate that it affects them or their family.

When asked about a general willingness to report corruption, which could include internally to their agency or to the police, public officials are less likely to proactively report serious corrupt conduct than the general public. When asked whether they are willing to provide information specifically to the ICAC, however, they do not differ from the general public. The reason for this difference may lie in the fact that public officials – notwithstanding protections for public interest disclosures – are more concerned about retribution than the general public; nevertheless they do trust the ICAC.







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