



2024 Perceptions of corruption survey – local government

October 2024

Suggested yammer/internal social media posts

- 91 per cent of local government employees agree that they know what behaviour constitutes corruption. Do you?
- Do you think a report of corruption would definitely be taken seriously in our organisation? 46 per cent of local government employees think it would be taken seriously in their organisation, according to an IBAC survey.
- Favouritism or nepotism (27 per cent) and inaction, such as inefficient administration and failure to report wrongdoing (24 per cent) are behaviours considered to be a high corruption risk in the local government sector.
- The majority (67 per cent) of local government employees agree that 'corruption is a problem in Victoria', which is similar to 2022 (66 per cent).
- How would you rate the ethical culture of our organisation? Most local government employees rate the ethical culture of their organisation as strong (47 per cent) or moderate (39 per cent).
- Would you accept a gift or benefit worth over \$50 if it was offered from a current or potential supplier? Just over half of local government employees (53 per cent) believe there is a medium or high risk of local government employees accepting gifts or benefits worth over \$50 from suppliers, a significant decrease compared to 2022 (58 per cent).

Suggested key messages for internal news story

Key findings released from IBAC Victorian local government perceptions of corruption survey

About the survey

Over 2,200 Victorian local government employees completed an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) survey between April and May 2024 to share their perceptions of corruption in the Victorian local government sector. The survey was open to employees working in a Victorian local council.

The findings from the surveys are now available on IBAC's website:

<https://www.ibac.vic.gov.au/perceptions2024>

IBAC is Victoria's agency responsible for preventing and exposing public sector corruption and police misconduct.

Key corruption risk areas

Perceptions that corruption is a problem in Victoria, as well as in the workplaces of survey participants, haven't changed significantly since 2022.

- In 2024, two-thirds of local government employees (67 per cent) agree that corruption is a problem in Victoria, less agree (22 per cent) that it is a problem in their workplace.

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- 'A problem in Victoria': 67 per cent in 2024 vs 66 per cent in 2022
- 'A problem in their workplace': 22 per cent in 2024 vs 21 per cent in 2022.
- Staff working in depot operations (29 per cent) continue to view corruption as a problem in the workplace compared to those working in other parts of council.

Compared to 2022, a significantly lower proportion of local government employees identify various corruption and misconduct behaviours as being 'high' or 'medium' risk.

- The top three risks remain as favouritism or nepotism (68 per cent 'high' or 'medium' risk), inaction (67 per cent) or a breach of professional boundaries (67 per cent), with misuse of resources (61 per cent) and collusion (54 per cent) rated slightly lower.
- Just over half of local government employees (53 per cent) believe there is a medium or high risk of local government employees accepting gifts or benefits worth over \$50 from suppliers, a significant decrease compared to 2022 (58 per cent).

Ethical culture and reporting

In 2024, most local government employees (86 per cent) describe the ethical culture of the organisation as 'strong' (47 per cent) or 'moderate' (39 per cent). The remaining 14 per cent rate the ethical culture as 'weak'.

- Since 2019, there has been a significant rise in the proportion of people who perceive local government to have a 'strong' ethical culture (47 per cent in 2024 vs 42 per cent in 2019).
- Since 2019, the perception that local government is not vulnerable to corruption or misconduct has strengthened (32 per cent in 2022 and 2024 vs 18 per cent in 2019).

Perceptions that corruption and misconduct would be taken seriously within local government have weakened compared to previous surveys.

- Compared to 2019, the belief that reported corruption and misconduct would 'definitely' be taken seriously has significantly declined (46 per cent in 2024 vs 50 per cent in 2019), while the belief that it will not be taken seriously has increased (7 per cent in 2024 vs 3 per cent in 2019).
- However, most local government employees said they would report observed corruption or misconduct (87 per cent) and/or that their supervisor would support them (83 per cent).
- Seven in 10 (70 per cent) employees are most likely to report corruption or misconduct to their immediate manager.

Call to action

The findings on reporting suspected corruption and misconduct identify a number of opportunities or calls to action for those working in the local government sector:

- Explore the different perceptions among employees working in different areas within council (eg community services, regulatory functions, depot operations) and tailor prevention education and detection information and activities to these employees
- Ensure people managers understand the process of reporting so complaints made to them are handled correctly.
- Focus on increased transparency, accountability and ensuring meaningful action is taken when reports are made.
- Focus on prevention activities that address the behaviours identified as being at a higher risk of occurring: breaches of professional boundaries (eg bully and harassment), inaction, favouritism/nepotism and conflicts of interest.
- Regular monitoring of ethical health and integrity indicators

Summary of key insights for the Victorian local government sector

Theme	Key findings	Opportunities
Perceptions about corruption as a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions about corruption being a problem in Victoria and in the workplace haven't changed much since 2022 • Staff working in depot operations continue to be more likely to view corruption as a problem in the workplace compared to employees working in other parts of council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise depot operations work area for prevention and detection activities
Behaviours most likely to be a 'high risk'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top three corruption or misconduct risks: favouritism/nepotism, inaction and breach of professional boundaries (eg bullying or harassment), however there are sector differences in the behaviours considered higher risk • Behaviours associated with corruption and misconduct are considered less likely to occur than in previous years, which may link to perceptions of a stronger ethical culture within local government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise these behaviours for education and prevention and detection activities • Explore the different perceptions of higher risk behaviours in the workplace (eg those working within community services vs regulatory functions)
Organisational ethical culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2019, there has been a gradual improvement in perceptions that local government organisations have a 'strong' ethical culture • There is also a stronger belief that local government is not vulnerable to corruption and misconduct - with one in three employees now holding this view. • Perceptions regarding ethical culture and organisational vulnerability differ across sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of ethical health and integrity indicators to identify strengths and opportunities • Address the different perceptions about ethical culture and organisational vulnerabilities across sectors (eg regulatory functions, depot operations)
Reporting corruption and misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong intention for employees to report corruption or misconduct, though most would only do so anonymously and with evidence, with a fear of personal repercussion still evident • Perceptions that corruption and misconduct would be taken seriously within local government have weakened compared to previous surveys • Employees would look to utilise internal channels in the first instance when reporting corruption or misconduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the factors behind declining perceptions about reports of corruption being taken serious by agencies • Raise awareness about systems and protections available to support employees making a complaint • Ensure people managers understand their role and the complaint handling processes to follow
Awareness and understanding of IBAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is strong awareness of IBAC among local government employees, though knowledge of IBAC's function is relatively limited • Awareness of IBAC is mainly from exposure to media reporting, though this has declined since 2022 • Local government employees have strong levels of trust in IBAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of other ways to find out about IBAC (eg website, prevention tools, events/forums)