Crime and Corruption Commission
QUEENSLAND

Sector insights

Public sector

1 July 2020 to 30 June 2025



Contents

Overview **3**
Complaint trends and insights **5**
Common allegation types 6
Corruption risks and enablers **7**
Vulnerable functions and activities 7
Key risks for public sector employees 8
Key risks for state government elected officials 8
Other areas of risk for the public sector 9
Enablers of corruption 9
Perceptions of corruption in the public sector **11**
Perceived corruption risks 11
Identifying and reporting corruption 13
Barriers to reporting corruption 14
Prevention strategies and resources **15**
Prevention strategies 15
CCC resources 16
Other resources 17

Overview

Queensland's public sector is responsible for the delivery of a wide range of public services and infrastructure for our state, including health, education, justice, transport and water. It also includes leadership, governance and financial management functions for the state as a whole.

The CCC currently categorises the Queensland public sector as all agencies within our jurisdiction which are not part of local government or the Queensland Police Service. This includes the entities covered by the *Public Sector Act 2022*, but also state elected officials, Ministerial and electorate staff, boards, government-owned corporations, courts and tribunals, and some universities and grammar schools.

A majority of the public sector workforce provides frontline services directly to Queenslanders, with staff in professions such as teachers and teacher aides, nurses and midwives, allied health professionals, ambulance officers, social workers, registry officers and transport inspectors.

Others work in frontline support and corporate roles, performing functions including administration, finance, procurement, communications, human resources, science, information and technology, and policy development and implementation.

Because of the broad-ranging functions and employment types within the public sector it is affected by diverse corruption risks and enablers.

The insights provided are from analysis of CCC complaints, investigations and other intelligence, along with reviews of publicly available reports, literature and data.

Notes about sector insights data

The corruption trends, risks and enablers described in this report are based on a review of complaints received by the CCC relating to the Queensland public sector between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2025, as well as investigations, intelligence and open-source information from the same period.

These insights provide general observations about the sector as a whole over that period, and individual agencies within the sector may experience their own unique corruption risks.

As these insights have been drawn from various sources, some observations may be slightly different to the data in the Corruption Complaints Dashboard (CCD) and Corruption Allegations Data Dashboard (CADD). CCD, CADD and these sector insights should be considered together to provide a range of perspectives on the risks for a given sector or agency.

Key facts about the public sector

- The Queensland public sector is the largest employer in the state, with more than 270,000 employees.
- Most of the public sector workforce is based outside Brisbane and surrounding suburbs, and predominantly works in frontline roles.
- There are 93 elected Members of the Legislative Assembly who represent 93 electoral districts.
- Health and education service providers are the biggest public sector employers in Queensland.
- The CCC categorises the following entities as part of the public sector in Queensland:
  - Members of the Legislative Assembly

- Ministerial and electorate staff
- government boards
- Queensland government departments
- statutory bodies
- government-owned corporations
- hospital and health services (including their governing boards)
- courts, registries and tribunals
- integrity agencies
- some universities and grammar schools.



Complaint trends and insights

Over the past five financial years the number of complaints received by the CCC about the public sector has increased. At the same time, the size of the public sector has grown to keep pace with an expanding population and increasing demand for public services.

Trends in the complaints received by the CCC about the public sector include:

- **Most complaints received by the CCC about the public sector relate to public service departments**, including those with some of the largest workforces that are more likely to have direct interactions with members of the public (such as Queensland Health, the Department of Education and Queensland Corrective Services).
- The CCC receives a **relatively low number of complaints about Members of Parliament**.
- Interacting with members of the public, managing confidential information and human resource management are high-risk activities for the public sector. Complaints received by the CCC about the public sector commonly relate to:
  - **Service delivery**, including conduct that occurred during the delivery of services to members of the public such as clients, customers and patients.
  - **Information control and management**, such as the handling and use of confidential information, access to systems and alleged unauthorised or inappropriate release of information.
  - **Human resource management**, which includes supervision and employee relations, payroll, recruitment and selection, and compliance with employment obligations.
  - **Custodial duties**, including conduct which occurred during custodial duties or responsibility for a detainee or prisoner in a custodial or detention facility (such as correctional and youth detention centres).
  - **Managing public assets and resources**, such as accounts processing, building management, procurement, fleet management and grants administration.
- **Corruption risks vary based on role and the level of interaction with the community**. Public sector employees who work in frontline roles or agencies with a high level of interaction with the public — such as health professionals and education employees — and those who work in high-risk settings such as correctional and youth detention centres, are more vulnerable to allegations of corruption.
- **Most complaints about the public sector were received as notifications from agencies** (in many cases, the agency the complaint involved). All public sector agencies are required to notify the CCC of suspected corrupt conduct.
- In line with the CCC's statutory corruption functions, we only investigate or monitor the most serious or systemic cases of corruption. Due to the volume of complaints we receive, and the principles of co-operation, capacity building and devolution, **most public sector complaints were referred to the agency to which the complaint related, to be dealt with**. Any matter referred to an agency to deal with may be monitored by the CCC to ensure transparency and accountability.
- In some circumstances, complaints may be referred to another integrity agency (such as the Office of the Health Ombudsman or Queensland Ombudsman) instead of the agency to which the complaint relates. Alleged criminal conduct of any state member or employee may be referred to the Queensland Police Service.

Visit our website to view our Corruption Complaints Dashboard.

Common allegation types

Over the past five financial years, the most frequent types of allegations contained in complaints received by the CCC about public sector employees related to the following behaviours:

Allegation	Conduct involves…
Misuse of information	Accessing or disclosing official information without a legitimate reason, unintentionally disclosing official information, falsifying information or a record, acquiring or retaining information or records illegally, or inadequately safeguarding information.
Misuse of authority	A public sector employee or member of parliament abusing their position to benefit themselves or others, including favouring a family member, friend, associate or benefactor, or furthering their own interests.
Failure of duty	Not complying with a legal, policy or reporting obligation or executing duties of their position to an appropriate standard, including failures resulting from a lack of knowledge, competence or appropriate care and diligence.
Assault/use excessive force	Assault or using excessive force either with or without a weapon, or threats to assault or use force.
Misappropriation or unauthorised use of resources	The unauthorised use, fraudulent diversion, or theft of public funds or property such as dishonestly claiming employee entitlements, fabricating information to support a grant application, or theft of publicly owned property or funds (including government resources such as work time, equipment or facilities).

Read more about the allegation and activity categories used by the CCC.

Corruption risks and enablers

Risk factors for corruption are influenced by an employee's role, their responsibilities, and their level of interaction with members of the public and detainees.

Vulnerable functions and activities

Below are some of the main activities or functions vulnerable to corruption (or perceptions of it) within the public sector, based on trends and themes in complaints received by the CCC.

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of all activities or work functions which may be vulnerable to fraud and corruption.

Function or activity	Vulnerabilities
Service delivery	Delivery of services to members of the public, such as clients, customers and patients.
Information control and management	Non-compliance with policies and procedures and misuse of confidential information.
Custodial duties	Conduct which occurred during custodial duties or responsibility for a detainee or prisoner in a custodial or detention facility, such as assault or excessive use or force or inappropriately exercising discretion or powers.
Recruitment, selection and promotion processes	Not following processes, and inadequate employee screening to verify candidate suitability. This includes not declaring relationships or associations during recruitment and selection processes.
Payroll	Payroll processes, employees claiming allowances and entitlements they're not entitled to or misusing work time.
Supervision and employee relations	Conduct occurring during supervision or management, such as a staff member raising an allegation about their manager, or conduct relating to relations between employees.
Compliance with employment obligations	Not complying with employment obligations, such as not declaring or managing a conflict of interest, not declaring secondary employment, or not declaring a gift received.
Management of public assets and resources	Accounts processing, building management, procurement, sourcing and tendering, contract management, fleet management and grants administration.

Key risks for public sector employees

- **Direct client / customer contact:** Including being rude or aggressive towards members of the public or offenders in custodial settings (including youth detention), mistreatment of vulnerable people, such as in hospitals or care facilities, or providing false or misleading information while providing a service.
- **Information control and management:** Including accessing or disclosing official information without a legitimate reason; unintentionally disclosing official information; falsifying information or records; acquiring or retaining information or records illegally; or inadequately safeguarding information.
- **Human resource management:** This includes poorly managed conflicts of interest or interference in employment decisions (such as the recruitment, promotion or termination of employees); misuse of allowances or entitlements; and matters relating to conduct or discipline, including interfering with or undermining investigations by providing false information, statements or complaints.
- **Management of public assets and resources:** Including all aspects of procurement, such as sourcing and tenders and contract management; asset and financial management, such as overseeing financial transactions and assets, acquiring goods or services; and capital works and the construction of public infrastructure.
- **Custodial duties:** Including conduct which occurred during custodial duties or responsibility for a detainee or prisoner in a custodial or detention facility (such as correctional and youth detention centres).
- **Compliance with employment obligations:** This can include not accurately representing leave taken; not returning from leave on time; not reporting conflicts of interest; or not adhering to health and safety obligations.
- **Supervision and employee relations:** Such as leadership roles treating staff unfairly through excessive or unreported performance management; not adhering to approved employment policies; or making inappropriate comments to staff.
- **Unprofessional personal conduct:** Including unprofessional conduct towards a member of the public or a colleague (e.g. rudeness, verbal abuse, mistreatment); inappropriate sexual relationships and physical contact; reporting for duty while under the influence of alcohol or drugs; unauthorised absence from duty; being named as a respondent on a domestic violence order (or breaching the provisions of such an order); or any other personal conduct contravening a code of conduct.

Key risks for state government elected officials

- **Misuse of authority:** Acting beyond their delegations or directing public servants to take a course of action, including allegations about political interference in the recruitment of public sector employees, including senior executives and board members.
- **Improper influence:** Arising from members of the public or industry groups building trust and creating undue loyalty to influence decisions, often subtly and over extended timeframes, and can include lobbying elected officials, making political donations, or through coercive activity from foreign actors to gain improper advantage. Corruption occurs when being improperly influenced leads to biased decision-making that benefits the manipulator rather than the public interest.
- **Bribery, gifts or secret commissions:** For the explicit purpose of receiving preferential treatment. Gifts, favours or bribes can result in a perceived expectation for preferential treatment, decisions, or access.



- **Misuse of confidential information:** Including sharing sensitive government information without authorisation or using sensitive information their own or another person's benefit. Corruption occurs when unauthorised disclosures are used to benefit individuals, organisations, or foreign actors that compromises government integrity.
- **Conflicts of interest:** Such as undeclared or poorly managed conflicts and personal interests impacting impartial decision-making.

Other areas of risk for the public sector

- **Demand pressures:** Growth in Queensland's population, combined with an ageing population, social housing shortages and changes to law and justice priorities, has increased demand on public sector services, including health and education, infrastructure development, and put pressure on correctional and youth justice facilities.
- **Economic pressures:** These can be a contributing factor to fraud, as employees seek to supplement their primary income or deal with costs of living expenses. Financial challenges can increase risks associated with theft, fraud and growing numbers of public sector employees taking on secondary and poly employment, increasing the risk of undeclared conflicts of interest; misuse of public funding and assets; and misuse of confidential information.
- **Labour market dynamics:** Declining levels of job commitment, changing employee attitudes and expectations, including shorter job tenure and higher rates of employee turnover, puts pressure on the public sector to fill vacancies. Challenges in recruiting into specialised professions, such as health, manufacturing, construction, and professional, scientific and technical services, may lead to agencies overlooking pre-employment red flags to secure skilled or experienced workers.
- **Major projects and events:** Queensland is entering a period of increased investment in property and infrastructure development driven by population growth, economic diversification and major sporting events. Increased procurement, tendering and contract management activities, along with increased partnership with the private sector and large-scale recruitment to support the delivery of these initiatives, exposes risks associated with nepotism, favouritism, improper influence and the misuse of public funds.

Enablers of corruption

Our experience suggests that corruption risks in the public sector can increase due to:

- **Inadequate or absent conflict of interest management practices**, including robust processes for declaring and documenting conflicts of interest, and the development and oversight of appropriate management strategies.
- Poor organisational risk awareness about the **importance of recordkeeping and safeguarding confidential information**, and systems and processes which do not promote appropriate information control, restrict access or detect the unauthorised access and release of information.
- **Weak employee screening practices**, such as important background and probity checks not being conducted or overlooked.
- **Excessive discretionary authority or concentration of decision-making**, particularly where these are not supported by appropriate oversight, segregation of duties or other controls.
- **Unclear or missing policies, procedures, governance frameworks and training**, particularly on high-risk activities such as recruitment and selection, procurement, asset management, and conflicts of interest.

- **Poor recordkeeping and information management practices**, limiting transparency, accountability and ability to detect, investigate, respond and prevent corrupt conduct.
- **Inadequate supervision of employees**, limiting the early detection and resolution of corrupt behaviours and enabling the misuse of work time and public resources, fraud and theft.
- **The absence of accessible, effective and trusted internal reporting mechanisms** and support processes, reducing confidence in reporting wrongdoing and hindering the timely identification and management of corruption risks.



Perceptions of corruption in the public sector

In 2025, the CCC conducted research to measure perceptions of corruption in Queensland.

This is a snapshot of key findings from a survey of public service department employees, including employees of hospital and health services.

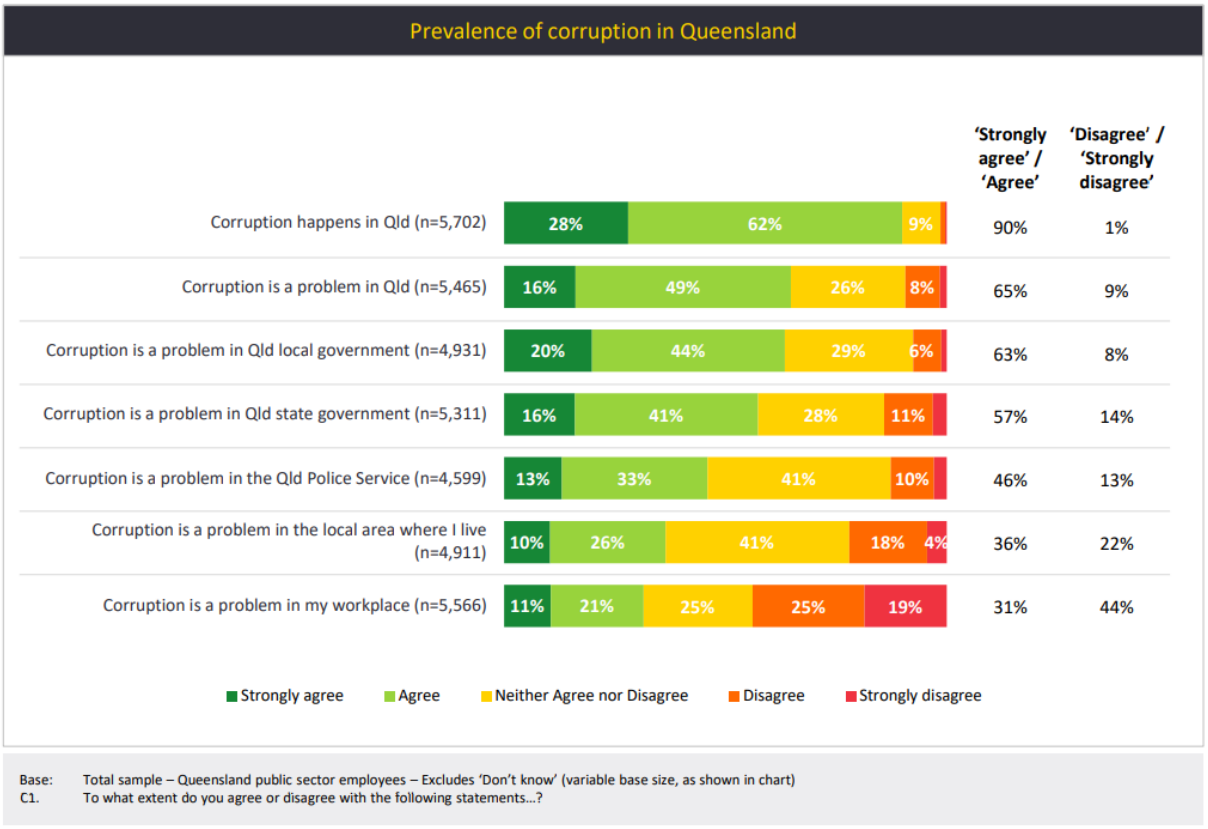
Perceived corruption risks

Prevalence of corruption

There was near universal agreement that corruption 'occurs' in Queensland, and a majority agreed that it 'is a problem' within the state.

- Nine in ten (90%) public sector employees agreed corruption happens in Queensland. Public sector employees believe corruption to be more of a problem in local government (63% agree), compared to state government (57%) and the QPS (46%).
- While almost half of public sector employees considered their workplace to be vulnerable to corruption (48%), only three in ten (31%) agreed corruption is a problem in their workplace.

Figure 1. Public service employees' perceptions of the prevalence of corruption in Queensland (Queensland Public Sector Employees Report, pg. 44).



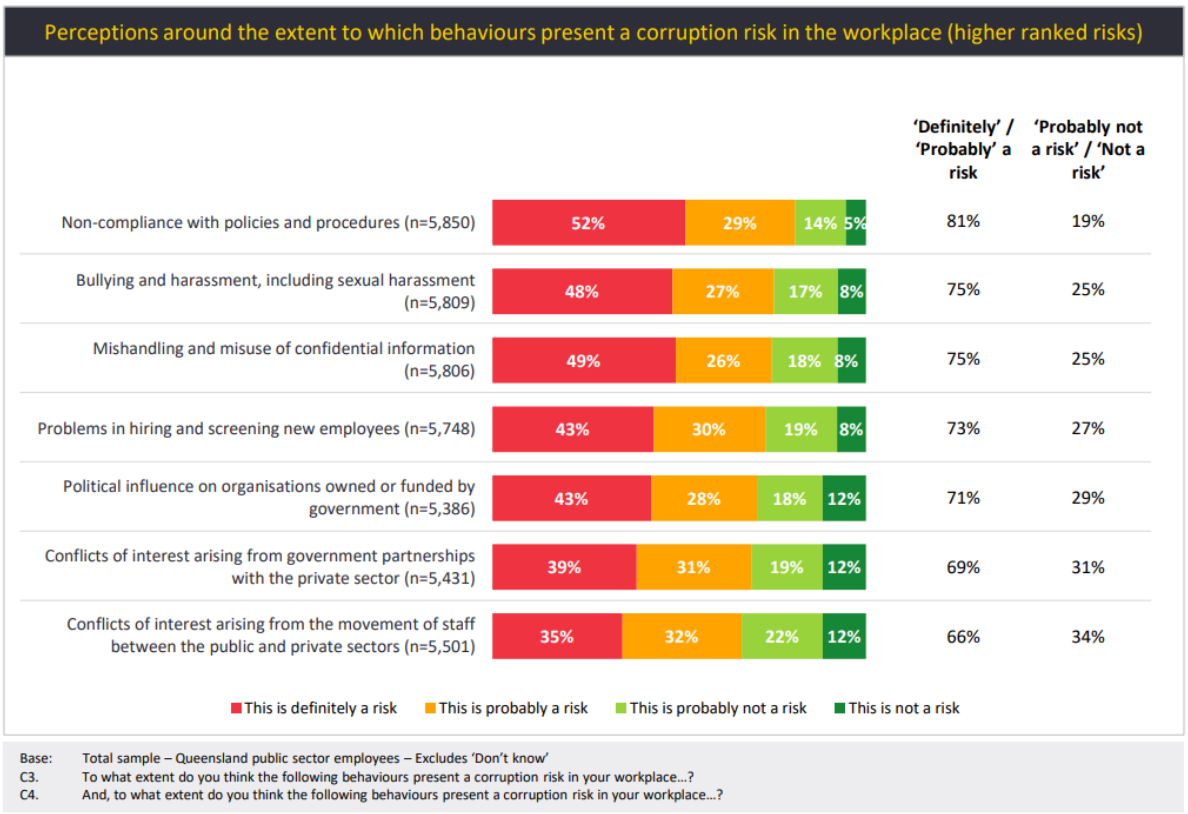
Base: Total sample – Queensland public sector employees – Excludes 'Don't know' (variable base size, as shown in chart)
C1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Concerns about corrupt behaviours

A high degree of corruption risk is associated with many behaviours.

- At least half of public sector employees were 'fairly' concerned about each of the corrupt behaviours assessed in the survey, with the levels of concern attributed to each behaviour relatively consistently.
  - A behaviour where employees were more likely to be 'very' concerned about is *corruption in police response to domestic and family violence* (46% 'very' concerned).
- All corruption behaviours assessed by public sector employees in this survey were deemed to pose some risk, with more than half attributing each behaviour as 'definitely' or 'probably' a risk to their workplace.
  - The behaviours considered the highest risk included *noncompliance with policies and procedures, mishandling of confidential information and bullying and harassment*, with around half considering these 'definitely' a risk.

Figure 2. Perceived extent to which behaviours present a corruption risk in the workplace (Queensland Public Sector Employees Report, pg. 56).



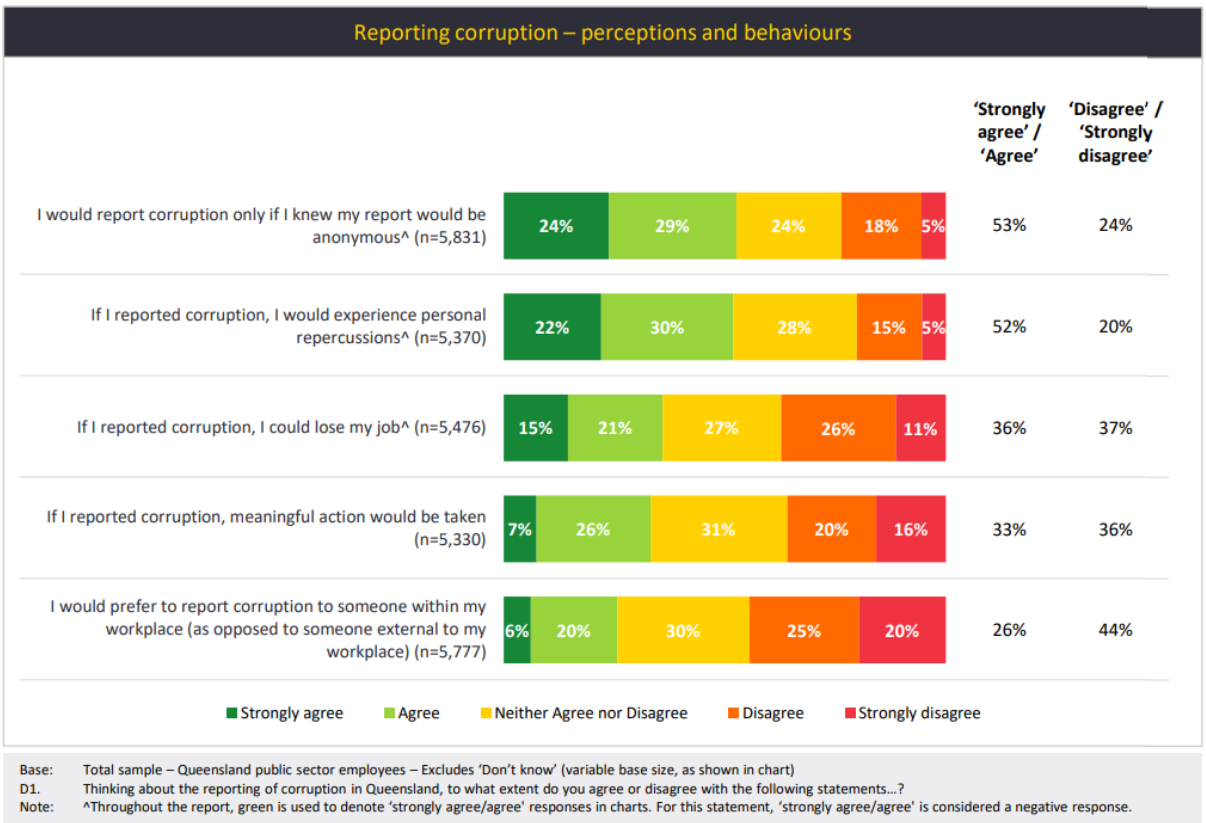
Base: Total sample – Queensland public sector employees – Excludes 'Don't know'
C3. To what extent do you think the following behaviours present a corruption risk in your workplace...?
C4. And, to what extent do you think the following behaviours present a corruption risk in your workplace...?

Identifying and reporting corruption

Most public sector employees believe they would recognise corruption, and they indicate a strong intention to report it. There is a strong preference for anonymity in reporting, with many fearing personal repercussions if not able to be anonymous.

- Close to three in four (72%) public sector employees agreed they would report corruption, while 7% indicated they would not report corruption.
- Close to half (45%) of public sector employees agreed they would feel comfortable lodging a complaint with their workplace if they had information about corruption, whilst one in three (36%) disagreed.
- Seven in ten would know if they have witnessed corruption (69%) and three in four would report it (72%). However, half of respondents (52%) expected they would experience personal repercussions if they reported corruption, and there was also a strong preference for anonymity in reporting.
- There was some scepticism around the outcomes of reporting corruption; one in three agreed meaningful action would be taken (33%), but similar proportions disagreed (36%).
- More than four in ten (44%) public sector employees indicated they would prefer not to report corruption to someone within their workplace. However, when looking at previous and intended reporting behaviour, internal channels (supervisor/manager and/or HR team/ethical standards unit) were the most common channels for reporting corruption, consistent across both those who have reported corruption and the expected reporting avenues for those who have not.

Figure 3. Public service employees' perceptions of reporting corruption (Queensland Public Sector Employees Report, pg. 64).



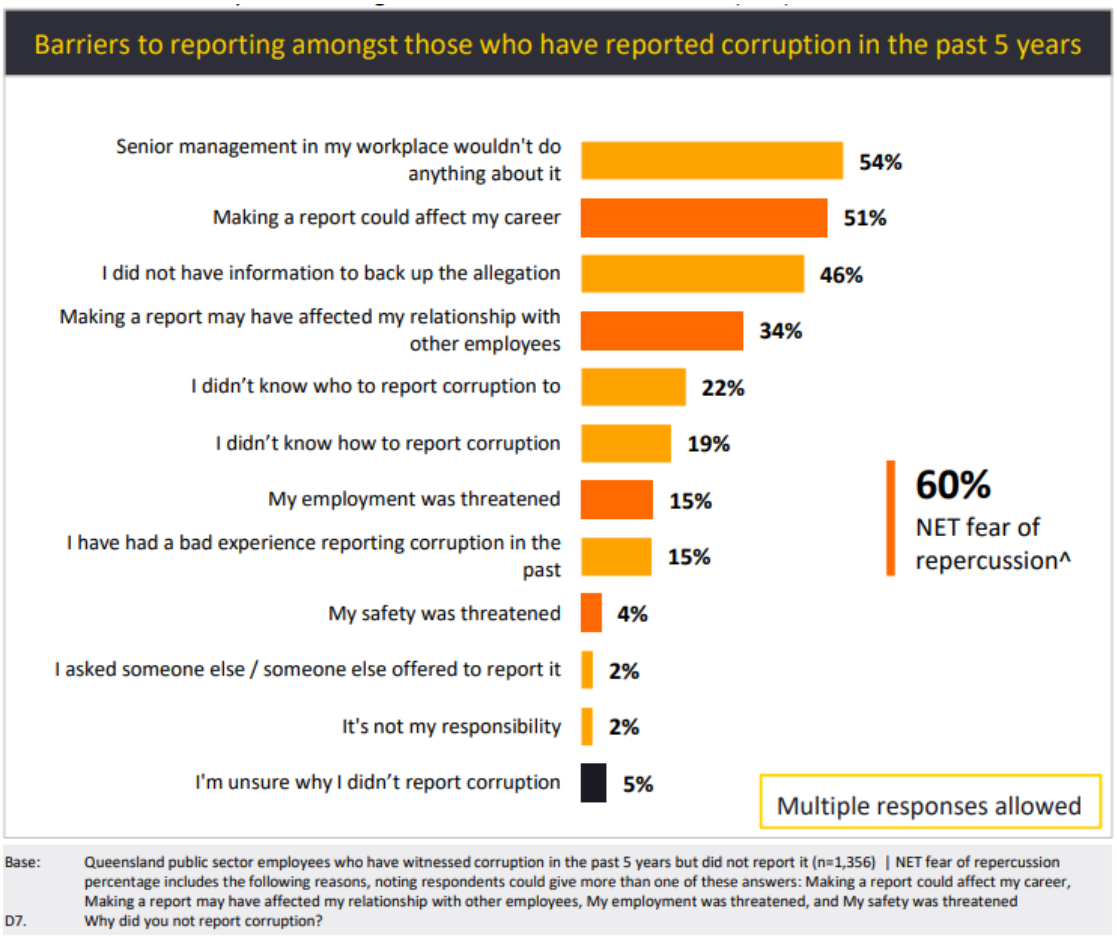
Base: Total sample – Queensland public sector employees – Excludes 'Don't know' (variable base size, as shown in chart)
D1. Thinking about the reporting of corruption in Queensland, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements…?
Note: ^Throughout the report, green is used to denote 'strongly agree/agree' responses in charts. For this statement, 'strongly agree/agree' is considered a negative response.

Barriers to reporting corruption

Perceived lack of outcomes and potential impact to career and relationships with colleagues are among the main barriers to reporting corruption.

- One in four (23%) public sector employees had either witnessed corruption, or thought they did, but did not report it. The dominant reason for not doing so was fear of repercussion (60%).
- A belief no action would be taken by senior management was another common barrier (54%).
- 2% of public sector employees indicated not having witnessed corruption, and not having any intention to report it if they did so.
- Among this cohort, the key barriers to reporting included a fear of impact to career (64%) and/or impact to relationship with colleagues (48%), an expectation of inaction (50%) and the need for proof (48%).

Figure 4. Perceived barriers to reporting corruption (Queensland Public Sector Employees Report, pg. 74).



Base: Queensland public sector employees who have witnessed corruption in the past 5 years but did not report it (n=1,356) | NET fear of repercussion percentage includes the following reasons, noting respondents could give more than one of these answers: Making a report could affect my career, Making a report may have affected my relationship with other employees, My employment was threatened, and My safety was threatened

D7. Why did you not report corruption?

Prevention strategies and resources

Public sector employees are governed by a range of legislative, policy, and ethical obligations, including the *Public Sector Act 2022* and *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*, other applicable legislation, whole-of-government policies and directives, agency-specific policies and procedures and relevant codes of conduct such as the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service.

These frameworks shape the way public sector employees carry out their roles, supporting consistent, ethical, and effective decision-making and service delivery. They establish clear expectations for integrity, accountability, transparency, impartiality, responsible use of public resources, risk management, and professional conduct.

Members of Parliament are subject to the Code of Ethical Standards and Rules Relating to the Conduct of Members. Ministers (including Assistant Ministers) are also subject to the Ministerial Code of Conduct. Ministerial staff are subject to the Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff Members, and Parliamentary Service staff are accountable to the Code of Conduct for the Parliamentary Service.

Together, these set expectations for integrity, accountability, transparency, and the appropriate use of authority.

Prevention strategies

Some strategies that can help prevent corruption in the public sector include:

- **Thorough recruitment and selection processes** which include transparent and documented selection practices, appropriate management of recruitment related conflicts of interest, strong employment screening practices and the segregation of decision-making authority.
- **Effective induction and onboarding of employees**, including initial and ongoing training on ethical obligations, common ethical dilemmas, and areas vulnerable to corruption (or the perceptions of it) such as recordkeeping and information security and declaring and managing conflicts of interest.
- **Specialised training for employees working in high-risk roles or work environments**, such as de-escalation and behavioural management techniques for employees working in correctional and youth detention centres, and those who have interactions with vulnerable persons.
- **Strong governance arrangements through clear and accessible policies and procedures**, transparent decision-making authority and delegation frameworks and effective oversight measures, such as detailed and accurate documentation of decisions.
- **Robust information handling and recordkeeping practices**, including policies and procedures for the management and dissemination of confidential information.
- **Strong workforce management practices** by improving controls and systems relating to payroll, timesheets, leave, overtime, and rostering supported by monitoring, auditing, segregation of duties, employee guidance.
- **Developing the capability of managers and supervisors to ensure they effectively supervise employees** and are alert to the types of behaviours that may be indicative of misconduct or corruption.
- **Oversight of procurement and contract management to support transparent, accountable, and value-for-money purchasing decisions**, including strong procurement controls, contractor governance, invoice verification and financial delegation arrangements.



- **Appropriate operational safeguards for high-risk activities** involving vulnerable groups, high-value assets, and security-related functions to ensure these areas are effectively controlled, monitored and regularly reviewed.
- **Internal assurance over high-risk corporate activities**, including procurement activities and expenditure, recruitment decisions, and audits of timesheets, travel and allowance claims.
- **Fostering a positive workplace culture** by reinforcing expected standards of behaviour, addressing inappropriate conduct, and applying fair and consistent processes for managing complaints, including corrupt conduct matters.
- **Awareness raising about strategies to identify, detect and resist attempts of improper influence**, and oversight of compliance with obligations to declare and document contact with registered lobbyists, declare gifts, benefits and other hospitality, and conflicts of interest.

CCC resources

Advisories, case studies and factsheets

- Corruption prevention advisories
- Prevention in focus: case studies
- Minimising fuel fraud in the public sector
- Preventing Fraud: How to prevent fraud in the public sector
- Understanding Fraud: Identifying and reporting fraud in the public sector
- Corruption priorities: How they guide our work
- Managing gifts and benefits: a guide for Hospital and Health Service employees
- Misuse of confidential information: What you need to know
- Assessing complaints of corrupt conduct: A guide for assessors and decision-makers
- How to classify matters of corrupt conduct pursuant to section 40 directions - A five-step guide for public officials and delegated decision makers
- Assessing allegations of corrupt conduct: A guide to recordkeeping under section 40A
- Guide to assessing allegations about misuse of confidential information

Corruption Perceptions Survey 2025

- Queensland Public Sector Employees Report

Corruption Investigation Reports

- Investigation Apricot: An investigation into alleged corrupt conduct at the Parole Board Queensland
- Influence and transparency in Queensland's public sector
- Investigation Workshop: An investigation into allegations of disclosure of confidential information at the Office of the Integrity Commissioner
- Investigation Keller: An investigation report into allegations relating to the former Chief of Staff to The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade
- An investigation into allegations relating to the appointment of a school principal

- Operation Impala - A report on misuse of confidential information in the Queensland public sector
- Taskforce Flaxton An examination of corruption risks and corruption in Queensland prisons
- Australia's first criminal prosecution for research fraud: a case study from the University of Queensland
- Fraud, financial management and accountability in the Queensland public sector: An examination of how a $16.69 million fraud was committed on Queensland Health

Other resources

- Public Sector Commission
- Queensland Ombudsman
- Queensland Audit Office
- Office of the Information Commissioner
- Office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner
- Queensland State Archives – Records management
- Department of Home Affairs – Countering Foreign Interference




Crime and Corruption
Commission
QUEENSLAND