

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was set up in 1974 to tackle corruption, marking a milestone in Hong Kong's anti-corruption history.

Anti-Corruption Work Before 1974: As early as 1898, bribery was made an offence with the enactment of the Misdemeanours Punishment Ordinance. Replaced by the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance in 1948, the legislation was enforced by the Anti-Corruption Office of the Police Force. In May 1971, the Ordinance was further strengthened with new offences, heavier penalties and stronger investigative powers to become the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance of today.

In June 1973, a police chief superintendent fled Hong Kong while under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Office. The then Governor, Lord Murray MacLehose, appointed a Commission of Inquiry to look into the circumstances of the case, advise on the effectiveness of the anti-bribery law and suggest possible amendments. In response to the findings of the Commission of Inquiry and prevailing public opinion, the Governor set up an independent organisation to tackle corruption, heralding a new era in the fight against corruption.

The Birth of the ICAC: The ICAC was established on February 15, 1974, with the enactment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Ordinance. The Commission is independent of the civil service and the Commissioner is answerable directly to the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The ICAC is committed to fighting corruption through a three-pronged strategy of effective law enforcement, prevention and education to maintain Hong Kong's reputation as a clean and fair society.

The ICAC comprises four departments: Operations, Corruption Prevention, Community Relations and International Cooperation and Corporate Services. As at the end of 2024, it had an establishment of 1549 posts.

The work of the ICAC is closely scrutinised by four independent committees comprising leading citizens as members and non-officials as chairmen. The Advisory Committee on Corruption advises on Commission-wide policies and issues. The Operations Review Committee examines and monitors all ICAC investigations. The Corruption Prevention Advisory Committee monitors ICAC's corruption prevention audits for government departments and public bodies, and advises on corruption prevention strategies for both the public and private sector. The Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Relations advises on measures to foster public support in combating corruption and educate the public against the evils of corruption.

An independent ICAC Complaints Committee examines complaints against the ICAC or its staff, monitors the handling of complaints and advises on follow-up actions.

Operations: The Operations Department, which is the largest department of the ICAC, undertakes investigation of corruption and related offences in the public and private sectors under the command of the Head of Operations, who is assisted by two Directors of Investigation. The Head of Operations, who is also the Deputy Commissioner, reports directly to the Commissioner.

Investigating officers are empowered to conduct investigations, and exercise powers including arrest, detention, search, access to accounts, request for surrender of travel documents, restraint on suspects' possession or control of assets, in accordance with law or, where appropriate, with court authorisation.

The ICAC is responsible for undertaking corruption investigations, and analysing and forwarding the evidence gathered to the Department of Justice for consideration of institution of prosecution. Under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance, the consent of the Secretary for Justice is required for the prosecution of any of the offences listed in Part II of the ordinance, including solicitation or acceptance of advantages, bribery, corrupt transactions with agents and possession of unexplained property.

Complaints: Members of the public are encouraged to report corruption in person at the ICAC Report Centre or any of the seven Regional Offices. Alternatively, they may report corruption via the Complaint Hotline (25 266 366) or by letter (GPO Box 1000). In 2024, there were 2 058 corruption complaints [excluding election complaints alleging breaches of the Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Conduct) Ordinance], of which 1 636 were pursuable. Among those complaints, 1 438 (70 per cent) concerned the private sector, while 480 (23 per cent) related to government departments and 140 (7 per cent) involved public bodies. In 2024, 71 per cent of the complainants identified themselves when reporting corruption.

Reports that are found to relate to crimes outside the purview of the ICAC are referred to the Police or other law enforcement agencies. Reports that are found not to involve criminality, but disclose inappropriate conduct or systems considered conducive to corruption may be referred to relevant government departments for consideration of disciplinary or administrative actions or other relevant organisations for appropriate follow-up actions. Where identified, individual complainant's consent is sought for such referrals.

In 2024, a total of 95 election complaints were received, of which 85 related to the 2023 District Council Ordinary Election, five concerned the 2023 Rural Ordinary Election, two concerned the 2019 Rural Ordinary Election, two concerned the 2015 Rural Ordinary Election and one concerned the 2011 Village Representative Election. Among the 95 election complaints, 89 were pursuable.

Investigations and Prosecutions: A total of 207 persons in 104 cases, including election cases, were prosecuted in 2024. Among those prosecutions completed in 2024, 122 persons were convicted, resulting in a person-based conviction rate of 76 per cent and a case-based conviction rate of 84 per cent. By the end of 2024, the overall caseload stood at 1 217, including 108 election cases. A total of 318 persons in 117 cases were pending legal proceedings.

Corruption Prevention: The Commissioner has a statutory duty to examine the practices and procedures of government departments and public bodies and secure the revision of methods of work or procedures which may be conducive to corrupt practices. The Commissioner is also required by law to provide corruption prevention assistance on request to any member of the public. These duties are discharged by the Corruption Prevention Department.

The department conducts detailed studies of practices and procedures of government departments and public bodies, and assists them in the effective implementation of corruption prevention measures. Up to the end of 2024, 4 348 reports of these studies had been issued, of which 69 were completed within the year, covering areas such as law enforcement, public procurement, public works, public health and safety, government funding schemes and regulatory functions. The department also provides timely consultation service to government departments and public bodies on corruption prevention concerning new legislations, policies, public services, and major projects. In 2024, government departments and public bodies were advised on 553 occasions.

Corruption prevention advice is available to the private sector upon request. In 2024, private organisations and individuals were advised on 1 230 occasions. Since its establishment in 1985, the Corruption Prevention Advisory Service has advised private organisations, ranging from small companies to large corporations and listed companies, on measures to prevent corruption through good governance, internal control and capacity building. Private organisations and individuals can obtain free and tailor-made corruption prevention advice through its hotline (2526 6363), email or online platform. Its web portal also provides handy graft prevention knowledge and resources.

The department also adopts proactive, public-private partnership and hybrid approach strategies. It launches and administers exclusive Integrity Charters for chambers of commerce and specific industries; and collaborates with trade regulators and bodies to promote anti-corruption systems and measures for companies in their respective industries. Under these Charters, companies are encouraged to incorporate integrity management requirements in their regulatory regime while the ICAC will provide corruption prevention guides and training. The ICAC also collaborates with relevant government departments and organisations to promote the digitalisation of work processes and public services to enhance their corruption prevention capabilities.

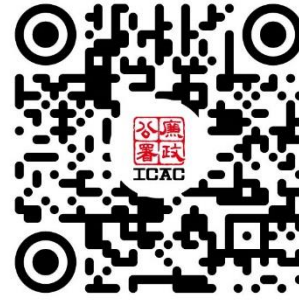
Community Education and Publicity: The ICAC educates the public against the evils of corruption and enlists community support in fighting corruption and promoting integrity. These duties are carried out by its Community Relations Department.

The ICAC adopts an “Ethics for All” approach which provides preventive education programmes for different sectors of the community, complemented by extensive media publicity and a wide network of strategic partnerships to amplify the impact of integrity promotion. The ICAC Annual Survey 2024 conducted by an independent research agency showed that the public continued to uphold a zero-tolerance attitude towards corruption. A vast majority of the respondents said that they had not come across corruption personally in the past twelve months. They also considered a corruption-free society important to the overall development of Hong Kong. These findings are similar to those in the past ten years, confirming the stable probity situation and the deeply-rooted core value of integrity in Hong Kong.

A clean and effective government is essential for maintaining the competitiveness of Hong Kong. The ICAC provides integrity training and e-learning materials for government officers at all levels. Briefing sessions are incorporated into the Civil Service College’s flagship leadership development programmes and the foundation training programme for new recruits. The ICAC also collaborates with the Civil Service Bureau to co-organise the “Ethical Leadership Programme” to consistently assist government bureau / departments to promote integrity management and fortify the probity culture in the civil service. Meanwhile, the ICACc provides a diverse range of anti-corruption services and resources to the public bodies, assisting them in upholding integrity among their management and employees.

Established in 1995, the Hong Kong Business Ethics Development Centre of the ICAC has remained at the forefront of promoting business ethics as the first line of defence against corruption. This is achieved through a public-private partnership strategy which has proved effective in the past three decades. It helps maintain a clean and fair business environment of Hong Kong, reinforcing its status as an international financial centre. With the strong support of the Hong Kong Business Ethics Development Advisory Committee, the ICAC continues to organise integrity training and provide anti-corruption education resources for business practitioners to enhance their corruption prevention awareness and corporate governance capabilities. The Centre also arranges thematic webinars on its online training platform “BEDC Channel” to support the business community in understanding the corruption risks and legal requirements. Furthermore, the ICAC actively promotes Hong Kong’s integrity culture among incoming talents and individuals seeking career development in the city through the Hong Kong Talent Engage and other organisations connecting talents from the Mainland. It also arranges briefings on anti-corruption legislation and distributes information packages to all imported workers under various labour importation schemes.

The ICAC works hand in hand with young people at different developmental stages to cultivate the core value of integrity in them. This includes producing moral education teaching packages for kindergarteners and primary school students and organising the “Little Coffee Bean Kids Theatre” to promote positive values;; supporting senior primary school students to implement the “i Junior Programme for Primary Schools” and organise moral education activities at schools;



engaging, senior secondary and tertiary students as partners of the ICAC through the “iTeen Leadership Programme” and the “ICAC Ambassador Programme” to promote integrity messages to their peers. Meanwhile, iTeen Leaders and ICAC Ambassadors displaying outstanding leadership potentials are selected as “iELITE Youth Leaders” who would be nurtured to become ICAC’s trusted partners in building a clean society and safeguarding the rule of law.

To tie in with various public elections, the ICAC launches a series of promotion and education activities during election years to widely promote clean election messages. Such initiatives include organising briefing sessions on the Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Conduct) Ordinance, producing information booklets for candidates and leaflets for electors, arranging district promotional activities, as well as setting up the clean election thematic website and enquiry hotline.

Through its seven Regional Offices across the territory, the ICAC reaches out to the public to enlist their support for the anti-corruption work in Hong Kong and encourage them to report corruption. Since the establishment of the “ICAC Club” in 1997, about 3 000 Club members have actively provided voluntary services in anti-corruption publicity activities and promoted integrity messages via their own networks over the years. In addition, the ICAC actively collaborates with relevant government departments, regulatory bodies and professional bodies to raise the anti-corruption awareness of the management committee members of owners’ corporations, property owners and property management practitioners, jointly promoting integrity and quality building management for a clean and desirable living environment.

The ICAC is committed to promoting integrity education through innovative approaches. The Café “1974” established in the ICAC Building combines education, publicity and the concept of “ICAC coffee”, allowing visitors to savour the signature “ICAC coffee” while exploring the ICAC’s work up close. Additionally, to enhance visitors’ experience, the ICAC carried out a thorough upgrade of its exhibition hall in 2025. The revamped exhibition hall incorporates a wide range of cutting-edge technological elements and seamlessly integrates with Café “1974”, encouraging the public to proactively step into the ICAC to gain an in-depth understanding of Hong Kong’s anti-corruption history and the work of the ICAC.

The ICAC also keeps pace with the times by consistently adopting innovative publicity approaches which include producing creative video clips and leveraging different social media platforms to engage with the public. These platforms include the “Hong Kong ICAC” Facebook page, Instagram account, official WeChat account, Xiahongshu account, “ICAC” Weibo page, YouTube “ICAC Channel” and “ICAC” LinkedIn account.. By tailoring contents to the unique characteristics of each social media platform and the preferences of target audiences, the ICAC regularly shares its updates and information to further enhance the transparency of its work and enlist public support. (<https://www.icac.org.hk/icac/socialmediahub>).

The Hong Kong International Academy Against Corruption:

The ICAC established the Hong Kong International Academy Against Corruption (HKIAAC) in February 2024 to showcase Hong Kong’s advantages in the rule of law and a probity culture. The HKIAAC provides an international platform to foster anti-corruption efforts and to promote exchange of anti-corruption experience among experts and scholars from Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and overseas, with a view to consolidating Hong Kong’s international status in integrity building.

In 2024, the HKIAAC conducted 34 overseas and local strategic anti-corruption training programmes for a total of about 2 600 participants. Capacity building programmes were tailor-made for anti-corruption agencies across the globe. Training programmes were also organised in Hong Kong in collaboration with international/regional organisations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA), covering topics such as financial investigation and cross-boundary asset recovery, leveraging innovation and technology in fighting and preventing corruption. Moreover, in tandem with the social developments in Hong Kong, the HKIAAC strategically offered bespoke anti-corruption training programmes for senior managerial staff of different sectors, aiming to enhance their anti-corruption awareness and reinforce the leadership’s commitment towards integrity management.

The HKIAAC is also committed to establishing an international platform for anti-corruption academic studies and had signed Memoranda of Understanding with Peking University, Tsinghua University, the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the University of Macau respectively. A number of anti-corruption research projects have been launched, covering areas such as integrity and compliance building for the banking industry, integrity compliance management system and corruption risk in building management.

International and Mainland Liaison: The ICAC strives to expand anti-corruption cooperation with other jurisdictions and relevant international organisations. The ICAC Commissioner serves as the President of the IAACA, while the ICAC operates the IAACA Secretariat. The IAACA collaborates with over 180 member anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies worldwide to advance international collaboration against corruption. The IAACA will hold its General Meeting and Annual Conference in Qatar in 2025 to deepen the exchange of anti-corruption experiences and international cooperation.

The powerful tripartite partnership formed among the ICAC, the IAACA and the HKIAAC further strengthens international networks and connections through training and exchanges with overseas anti-corruption agencies and international organisations, creating strong synergies. The 8th ICAC Symposium, co-hosted by the ICAC and the IAACA in May 2024, brought together over 500 representatives from more than 180 anti-corruption related agencies across nearly 60 jurisdictions. This partnership effectively showcases the anti-corruption achievements of our country and Hong Kong, the importance and success of the “One Country, Two Systems”, as well as Hong Kong’s rule of law and integrity culture to the international community. It underscores Hong Kong’s role as a “super-connector” between our country and the world, advancing global anti-corruption efforts, including in Belt and Road countries. Under the framework of the National 14th Five-Year Plan and the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the ICAC works closely with anti-corruption authorities in Guangdong Province and Macao to jointly promote integrity-building in the region.

The ICAC maintains effective operational liaison and cooperation with anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies in the Mainland, Macao and overseas. Upon active participation in various international conferences in person, mutual case assistance and collaboration have also become more frequent. The Commission attaches great importance to collaboration with its counterparts from other jurisdictions as well as international and regional organisations in preventing and eradicating corruption. In particular, the ICAC, either in the name of Hong Kong, China or as a member of the Chinese delegation, has participated in various activities hosted by international organisations, including the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network) under the auspices of the United Nations, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Anti-Corruption and Transparency Experts Working Group, and the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific jointly managed by the Asian Development Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.