

IPPR Readers' Survey No 2, February 2003

The IPPR Readers' Survey 2002

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The IPPR conducted its second readers' survey during December 2002 and January 2003. The survey received a total of 163 responses out of an expanded electronic mailing list of 571 addresses. This response rate of 28% is an improvement on last year's 20%. We put this down largely to the use of telephone interviews rather than just e-mailed questionnaires. Most respondents appear largely satisfied with the way research is being disseminated by the IPPR. The IPPR will attempt to follow up those experiencing problems in the course of the year as well as those who gave critical feedback on the research produced.

As part of an ongoing effort to assess its effectiveness, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) conducted its second Readers' Survey from December 2002 to January 2003. The IPPR was determined to improve on last year's response rate of 20%, that is to say, 84 responses out of an e-mail list of 412 addresses. Since November 2001, however, the IPPR's e-mail address list has grown from 412 to 571 addresses, an increase of almost 39% in a single year. Achieving a higher response rate meant that, in addition to e-mailing the questionnaire, IPPR readers were also contacted by telephone. A team of three, Ntwala Mwilima, Shihepo Kavambi and Peter Shidiwe, conducted telephone interviews during December and January. For those people on the mailing list who could not be reached by telephone, e-mails were sent out to them. The survey was sent out via e-mail by the 14th December 2002. All respondents had to do was click "reply" in their e-mail software and type in a cross in the appropriate boxes provided as well as answer open-ended questions. A final reminder was sent out on the 13th January 2003 with a deadline on 24th January 2003. By the final deadline a total of 163 responses had been received out of a mailing list of 571 addresses, a response rate of approximately 28%. This figure shows an increase from last year's response rate of 20%.

Here are the results of our survey question by question. Where possible we have tried to compare this year's results with the results of the IPPR Readers' Survey 2001:

Q1: Did you know that you are on the electronic mailing list of the IPPR?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	155	95%
No	8	5%
Total	163	100%

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The IPPR electronic mailing list was first established by including the e-mail addresses of as many people as possible who the IPPR considered would be interested in the research it produced. It was, therefore, more supply than demand based. With time, as the IPPR became better known, the number of people requesting to be placed on our mailing list has increased. With this first question we wanted to test to what extent those receiving our research electronically were aware that they were on our mailing list.

Of the 163 valid responses, 155 (95%) indicated that they were aware of the fact that they were on the IPPR 's electronic mailing list and only 8 (5%) indicated that they did not know that they were on the IPPR mailing list.

Q2: Have you ever read IPPR research that has been e-mailed to you?

Response	Number (2002)	Number (2001)	Percentage (2002)	Percentage (2001)
None	5	1	3%	1%
Some	79	52	49%	63%
All	74	30	45%	36%
No response	5	0	3%	0%
Total	163	83	100%	100%

Following on from the first question, we wanted to find out to what extent people on our mailing list bothered to read the messages we sent them.

From the total number of 163 valid responses, 5 (3%) indicated that they had read none of the IPPR research that had been e-mailed to them, 79 (49%) indicated that they had read some of the research, 74 (45%) reported that they had read all the IPPR research that had been e-mailed to them. Only 5 (3%) of the respondents did not indicate whether they had read IPPR research or not.

Q3: Do you want to continue receiving IPPR research in this way?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	160	98%
No	1	1%
No response	2	1%
Total	163	100%

This question was asked because we wanted to avoid sending people e-mail messages that they did not want to receive. To date we have received a small number of requests asking to be taken off the mailing list.

Most of the respondents 160 (98%) indicated that they were satisfied with the way they were receiving the IPPR research, which is through their e-mail, whereas only 1 (1%) of the respondents indicated that they wanted to change the way they received IPPR research. A small number of 2 (1%) did not indicate their choice in this particular question.



Q4: Can you read the e-mail messages the IPPR sends to you?

Response	Number (2002)	Number (2001)	Percentage (2002)	Percentage (2001)
Never	8	1	5%	1%
Sometimes	13	16	8%	20%
Always	137	65	84%	79%
No response	5	1	3%	1%
Total	163	83	100%	100%

We have in the past received a small number of complaints from people who could not read our e-mail messages. We wanted to check how widespread this was.

Out of 163 valid responses, 137 (84%) replied they could always read IPPR e-mails while 13 (8%) stated they could only read them sometimes. Eight (5%) respondents replied they could never read them and 5 (3%) abstained from giving their view on this question.

Q5: Do you open the attachments that accompany these messages?

Response	Number (2002)	Number (2001)	Percentage (2002)	Percentage (2001)
Yes	132	74	81%	88%
Sometimes	25	N/a	15%	N/a
No	4	8	3%	10%
No response	2	1	1%	2%
Total	163	83	100%	100%

We were keen to find out whether people opened the attachments we sent them. This would give us some indication of the extent to which people wanted to read more than just the summary enclosed in the e-mail message.

A total of 132 (81%) people replied that they opened attachments while 25 (15%) replied they only opened their attachments sometimes and only 4 (3%) reported that they did not open the attachments, the remaining 2 (1%) did not cite any comments on this question.

Q6: If not, why not?

Response	Number	Percentage
Security Reasons	0	0%
Attachments are scrambled	0	0%
Attachments are too big	1	0%
Software problems	4	3%
Other reasons	2	1%
Not applicable	140	86%
No response	16	10%
Total	163	100%

Shortly after establishing its electronic dissemination system, the IPPR had an unfortunate experience with outside viruses. As soon as the problem became apparent, the IPPR invested in

specialised mailing software (SV List) which would avoid such problems. We wanted to test whether earlier problems had put people off opening attachments from us.

With an overwhelming number of 132 people reporting that they open their attachments and an extra 25 indicating that they open their attachments sometimes, it does not come as a surprise that it is observed that this question proved to be not applicable to a large number of 140 (86%) people. Only 1 (1%) cited that the attachments are too big, 4 (3%) pointed out that they had software problems and the other 2 (1%) pointed out that they had other reasons. The remaining 16 (10%) withheld their point of view in this regard, so we can assume that this question did not apply to them as well.

Q7: Can you read these attachments?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	141	87%
Sometimes	10	6%
No	2	1%
No response	10	6%
Total	163	100%

We have received a small number of complaints from people who could not read our attachments. Again we wanted to test how widespread this problem was.

From a total of 163 valid responses, 141 (87%) people indicated that they could read the attachments and 10 (6%) reported that they could read these attachments sometimes whereas only 2 (1%) indicated that they could not read the attachments at all.

Q8: Do you forward IPPR research to other people?

Response	Number (2002)	Number (2001)	Percentage (2002)	Percentage (2001)
Yes	98	46	60%	55%
No	63	37	39%	45%
No Response	2	0	1%	0%
Total	163	83	100%	100%

Last year's survey suggested our research reached far more people than just those on the mailing list because recipients forwarded messages to other people. We wanted to confirm whether this was still the case.

Out of 163 valid responses, a total of 98 people (60%) replied that they forwarded IPPR research to other people while 2 did not respond. Of these, 76 forwarded research to less than five people, 17 forwarded research to between 6 and 10 others, 2 forwarded research to between 10 and 20 people and 5 (3%) forwarded research to more than 20 people. The other 63 (39%) indicated that they did not forward IPPR research to other people.



Q9: Do you know that you can download IPPR research from the internet on www.ippr.org.na?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	122	75%
No	38	23%
No response	3	2%
Total	163	100%

The IPPR puts considerable effort into maintaining its website and making sure all research material can be downloaded from it. We wanted to find out whether readers were aware of this facility.

A majority of 122 (75%) respondents indicated that they knew that they could download IPPR research from the internet whereas 38 (23%) of the respondents did not know that they could download IPPR research from the internet.

Q10: Have you ever downloaded IPPR research from the internet?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	76	47%
No	75	46%
No Response	12	7%
Total	163	100%

Following on from the previous question, we wanted to find out to what extent people actually used the website facility.

With regard to this question, an almost equal number of responses were obtained. A total of 76 (47%) of the respondents indicated that they had downloaded IPPR research from the internet whereas 75 (46%) reported that they had never downloaded IPPR research from the internet. Some of the respondents (7%) did not give their response to this question.

Q11: Do you download documents in PDF format?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	104	64%
No	42	26%
No Response	17	10%
Total	163	100%

Readers can download IPPR research in PDF format. This is the simplest way to exchange documents electronically. However, many people have problems with PDF and many do not have Adobe Reader on their computers. We wanted to find out how many of our readers had problems with this format.

The number of people who responded favourably to this question is 104, which is 64% out of the total of 163 valid responses whereas only about 42 (26%) of the respondents replied that they do not download documents in PDF format. Out of these, 12 (7%) indicated that they don't know



how, 3 (2%) don't like PDF and 7 (4%) indicated that they do not have the software. The remaining 12 (7%) did not indicate their response to this question, and it is possible that the reason why these people did not reply to this question is that they might not know what is meant by "PDF format".

Q12: Would you like help to be able to read PDF documents?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	25	15%
No	49	30%
Not applicable	2	1%
No response	87	54%
Total	163	100%

Because it is easier for us to place documents on the website in PDF format we want to know whether those who were not already using it would be prepared to learn to use this format.

We tried to find out whether people were eager to get help in reading PDF documents. Out of the 163 valid responses, only 25 (15%) responded that they would like help to be able to read PDF documents, 49 (30%) indicated that they did not need help. An outstanding number of 87 (54%) people did not indicate their response.

Q13: Would you like to download data from our website?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	118	72%
No	22	14%
No response	23	14%
Total	163	100%

The IPPR is presently in the process of putting as much data as possible on its website. We wanted to know whether there was demand for such a service.

Out of those that responded, it can be concluded that there are more people that are interested in downloading data from our website than those who are not. Proof of this is indicated from the 118 (72%) people who indicated that they would like to download data from our website whereas only 22 (14%) indicated that they would not like to download data from our website. 23 (14%) people did not take a stand on this question, so their response is not known.

Q14: Would you prefer to receive IPPR research by post?

Response	Number (2002)	Number (2001)	Percentage (2002)	Percentage (2001)
Yes	33	8	20%	10%
No	125	74	77%	90%
No response	5	0%	3%	0%
Total	163	83	100%	100%

Sending out documents electronically is the cheapest way of reaching readers. However, within our limited resources, the IPPR would also like to provide printed material to those wanting it.



Only 33 (20%) respondents stated that they would prefer to receive IPPR research by post while 125 (77%) preferred to continue to receive IPPR research by e-mail. 5 (3%) did not give any indication of their preference.

Q15: Are you more interested in the IPPR' s research on economics or on democracy and governance or both?

Response	Number	Percentage
Economics	39	24%
Democracy & Governance	12	8%
Both	110	67%
None	0	0%
No Response	2	1%
Total	163	100%

The readers were asked as to which one of our research they were more interested in. From the choices given, 110 (67%) indicated that they preferred both the research on economics and democracy and governance, 39 (24%) indicated that they preferred economic research and 12 (8%) replied that they preferred the research on democracy and governance. Only 2 (1%) people did not indicate their preference.

Q16: Do you have any suggestions on how to improve our research?

Respondents mentioned a wide variety of issues that they wanted looking at. No particular patterns were observable. Listed below are the suggestions of those who responded to this question. We have tried to group the feedback we have received into four categories: content, style, general approach, and other requests.

Content

- The institute must investigate the possibility of more incentives for the Namibian manufacturing sectors to be more competitive against South Africa
- More research required on land and politics
- Produce articles on financial institutions
- Look at private companies
- More explicit political reviews
- Do research on other sectors such as tourism
- You are doing very well, especially on the economic issues. In particular, one case, I find the research very superficial, viz. on costs of foreign affairs
 - An issue that I would like to see some research on is the effect of the franchise companies such as Game, Hi-fi Corporation on small and medium enterprises in Namibia
 - Also interesting would be examining lethargy of consumers to stand up for rights, to fight against price escalations such as high telephone costs. This is also reflected in civic response or non-response to government policies and action
 - Research on telecommunication costs
 - Research on how companies are tackling the HIV/AIDS issue especially in terms of workers and responses of the various medical aides treatment.
- Comment on key areas of economy, such as fishing, mining, etc.



Style

- Be brief on economic documents
- Happy with the IPPR's performance
- Articles are sometimes too long
- Business Climate Monitor is too confined
- Produce a quarterly condensed document on everything every 6 months
- A couple of more in-depth research pieces a year would be a useful compliment to the regular paper.
- Economic readers sometimes find detailed information hard to read. Currently contemplating on studying economics and so the IPPR papers will come in handy
- Suggestion is given that a broader synopsis of the topic be given in the cover e-mail. This allows the reader to either open the e-mail or disregard it.
- The economic research is more up to date, but the research on Democracy and Governance is not really on current issues and thus the IPPR should improve on this

General approach

- I value your independent research approach
- Analysis are shaped in terms of perceptions, but they should be made in terms of government bills
- Grassroots inputs must be considered and travel to other regions to speak to governors
- Involve business in depth - would like to work jointly with NCCI
- Concentrate on fundamental research rather than interviews

Other requests

- Statistics should be made available more timely if it has to do with other topics that the FNB are not covering
- Try to discourage government from borrowing from foreigners
- Sometimes, I wonder whether researchers have spoken to the public servants concerned before putting pen to paper.
- Forward all documents to listed readers before the newspapers
- More public debates on the IPPR 's findings should encourage debate
- More statistics and find funding to re-establish statistics database on web. Also industry specific

Overall, most readers passed on their congratulations to the IPPR for doing useful work and encouraged the IPPR to continue doing the good work.

Conclusions and recommendations

This year the IPPR chose to supplement its e-mail based readers' survey with telephone calls. It proved to be quite a challenge in tracing our readers over the phone. Due to the fact that we could not find many of our readers, we tried to reach our readers through e-mail. This method was also not very effective as our readers probably decided not to bother replying either because they were too busy, did not consider it important enough, or could not reply due to technical reasons. It is impossible to estimate how many people this group contains. The challenge that continues to face the IPPR is how to be able to get more of its readers to take part in this annual survey.

What conclusions can we draw from the survey? The first is that a response rate of 28% is not so good, for which the readers were contacted first, by telephone and then through e-mail.

There are a number of reasons discussed as to why most people do not respond to this survey. Most people receive large numbers of e-mail messages they do not want. Many recipients of our research may be interested in the research yet still consider surveys of this type a nuisance. It is significant that we have not received requests from those who did not reply to the survey to take them off the mailing list. To date we have had only a handful of requests to do so. If people really did not want to receive our messages (which often contain large attachments), they would probably have requested us to delete their addresses.

Clearly the IPPR already has a fairly large number of hard-core readers and is reaching them in a fast and cost effective manner. Furthermore, the majority of these readers forward our material to others which, means more people are being reached than just this hard core. Statistics from our website, which show a steady rise in website use, support this finding.

As far as dissemination is concerned, those who are happy receiving our material by e-mail were in the majority by far. Despite this, a significant minority of respondents wants to receive material in other ways such as by post or via the internet in PDF format.

Suggestions to readers

- In order for the IPPR to be able to know what our readers want, especially when it comes to the kind of research the readers are interested in, the readers must have a voice. Thus the readers' survey that is conducted at the end of each year gives the readers a chance to have a voice. So for all the readers who did not respond to last year's reader survey, make sure you have a voice this year by answering a few questions from the survey so that the IPPR knows you are out there.
- If you know anybody who would like to be on the IPPR mailing list or receive IPPR publications, do not hesitate to introduce them to a world of free information that they can get from the IPPR website or directly through e-mail.