

People see corruption getting worse but are ready to get involved, says biggest Transparency International global public opinion survey

North Americans and Europeans see biggest rise

Berlin, 9 December 2010 – Corruption has increased over the last three years, say six out of 10 people around the world, and one in four people report paying bribes in the last year. These are the findings of the [2010 Global Corruption Barometer](#), a worldwide public opinion survey on corruption, released today, [International Anti-Corruption Day](#), by Transparency International (TI).

Views on corruption trends are most negative in Europe and North America, where 73 per cent and 67 per cent of people respectively think corruption has increased over the last three years.

Despite these results, the survey also found that seven out of 10 people would be willing to report an incident of corruption.

“The fall-out of the financial crises continues to affect people’s opinions of corruption, particular in Europe and North America. Institutions everywhere must be resolute in their efforts to restore good governance and trust,” said Huguette Labelle, Chair of Transparency International. “It is heartening that so many people are ready to take a stand against corruption. This willingness must be mobilised.”

The [2010 Global Corruption Barometer](#) surveys more than 91,000 people in 86 countries and territories. It focuses on petty bribery, perceptions of public institutions and views of whom people trust to combat corruption.

Petty bribery: regional differences matter

The survey showed that in the past 12 months one in four people paid a bribe to one of nine institutions and services, from health to education to tax authorities. The police are named the most frequent recipient of bribes, according to those surveyed, with 29 per cent of those who had contact with the police reporting that they paid a bribe.

Sub-Saharan Africans report paying the most bribes: more than one in two people report paying a bribe in the past 12 months. This compares to 36 per cent of people surveyed in the Middle East and North Africa, 32 per cent in the Newly Independent states, 23 per cent in Latin America, 19 per cent in the Western Balkans and Turkey, 11 per cent in Asia Pacific and just 5 per cent in European Union countries and North America.

More than 20 countries report significantly more petty bribery than in 2006, when the same question was asked in the Barometer. The biggest number of reported bribery payments in 2010 is in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Cameroon, India, Iraq, Liberia, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda where more than 50 per cent of people surveyed paid a bribe in the past 12 months.

Almost half of all respondents say they paid bribes to avoid problems with the authorities and a quarter say it was to speed up processes.

Most worrying is the fact that bribes to the police have almost doubled since 2006, and more people report paying bribes to the judiciary and for registry and permit services than did so five years ago.

Bribery and the poor

The demographics of bribery continue to disadvantage the poor and the young. As in past surveys, lower income earners report paying more bribes than higher income earners. Poorer people are twice as likely to pay bribes for basic services, such as utilities, medical services and education, than wealthier people.

“Corruption is a regressive tax. This injustice must be addressed. The marginalised and poor remain the most vulnerable to extortion. Governments should do more to identify corruption risks in basic services and to protect their citizens,” said Labelle.

A third of all people under the age of 30 report paying a bribe in the past 12 months, compared to less than one in five people over 51 years of age.

Lack of trust in public officials

Sadly, few people trust their governments or politicians. Eight out of 10 say political parties are corrupt or extremely corrupt. The civil service and parliament are considered the next most corrupt institutions.

Half the people questioned say their government’s action to stop corruption is ineffective. This reflects little change over time; however, opinions have worsened slightly since 2007 in Asia Pacific, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa – while they have improved in the Newly Independent States and North America.

And although a large majority of people – seven out of 10 – say they would report a corrupt act if they saw one, if they are victims of corruption, this drops to about half.

“The message from the 2010 Barometer is that corruption is insidious. It makes people lose faith. The good news is that people are ready to act,” said Labelle. “Better whistleblower protection and greater access to information are crucial. Public engagement in the fight against corruption will force those in authority to act; and will give people further courage to speak out and stand up for a cleaner, more transparent world,” she added.

###

Transparency International is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption

Note to editors: The Barometer, now in its seventh edition, covers 86 countries. It was carried out between 1 June 2010 and 30 September 2010. Gallup International conducted the survey on behalf of TI in 84 countries. In Bangladesh the survey was conducted by TI Bangladesh and in Mongolia by the Independent Authority against Corruption of Mongolia.

Media Contact:

Deborah Wise Unger
dunger@transparency.org
Tel: + 49 30 34 38 20 662