

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION IN SRI LANKA

THE RESULTS OF
TWO PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS

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2020 - 07 - 17
4.30 PM - 6.30 PM

CINNAMON LAKESIDE COLOMBO

AGENDA

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2020 – 07 – 17

CINNAMON LAKESIDE COLOMBO

4.30 p.m Registration

5.00 p.m. – 5.10 p.m. Introduction **Mr. Indika Perera**
Program Director
EWMI

5.10 p.m. – 5.30 p.m. Presentation **Dr. Nishan De Mel**
Executive Director
Verite Research

5.30 p.m. – 5.50 p.m. Presentation **Ms. Kate Dier**
Project Manager,
Global Citizen Engagement
RiWi Corp.

6.00 p.m. - 6.30 pm Q & A Moderated by
AmCham

6.30 – 7.00 pm Reception and fellowship

The full reports of Verite Research and RiWi corp. are attached as appendices

INSIGHTS FOR MITIGATING CORRUPTION:

Summary Findings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) is the main anti-corruption agency in Sri Lanka. It is the dedicated body set up for the independent investigation of bribery and corruption in the public sector. This study conducted by Verité Research was motivated by the recognition that understanding the public's perception of corruption, as well as their confidence in the institutions that are available to combat corruption, are essential to developing effective anti-corruption strategies. The report provides insights that can assist CIABOC to take forward its mandate and to target its activities in ways that address the most pressing concerns, and thereby build social capital for its mandate.

Three types of data collection activities were carried out to inform the analysis that is captured in this study: 1) A nation-wide survey of 2,217 respondents; 2) Focus group discussion with members of the public from four provinces, covering a total of 18 participants; and 3) Key informant interviews with representatives from specific sectors, covering a total of 10 participants.

The study identifies the following key recommendations that can help CIABOC improve in delivering on its mandate in terms of reducing corruption through punitive and preventive actions.

1. Prioritise the reduction in corruption of police and public officials.

The study revealed that the public perceived the police as the most corrupt sector in the country, followed by the public sector and local government officials and agencies. Mitigating corruption in these spheres will address the deeply felt concerns of the public about the corruption in these sectors.

2. Establish the independence of CIABOC from the national police force.

CIABOC depends almost entirely on the existing police force, from which officers are assigned to CIABOC to conduct its investigations. The survey revealed that 40% of the respondents falsely believe that CIABOC is a department under the Sri Lankan police. This actual and perceived association with the police has a negative impact on CIABOC's overall reputation and independence. CIABOC can address these concerns by a) ensuring the integrity of investigations by maintaining a separate investigative unit dedicated to CIABOC; and b) increasing the public trust in CIABOC's investigations by symbolically differentiating the investigative staff of CIABOC from the national police – for instance, by providing the CIABOC investigative/police staff with a different coloured uniform and having a distinctive name for the CIABOC unit.

3. Reduce the risks associated with reporting to CIABOC.

The study revealed a lack of trust in CIABOC's ability to protect the identity of informers, whistleblowers and witnesses. Addressing the risk perception around reporting can be important for the success of CIABOC. CIABOC should take steps to build and strengthen the protection mechanisms for complainants; as well as build public awareness of how complainants to CIABOC are protected, and the recourses available in the case of any attempted reprisals against the complainants.

4. Reduce the cost of reporting to CIABOC.

People perceive a high cost of reporting corruption to CIABOC. One of the main costs relates to accessing CIABOC, which is headquartered in Colombo and has no regional presence. This is

particularly problematic given that walking in is the preferred mode of lodging complaints for over 35% of survey respondents. Therefore, reducing this cost of reporting by providing creative solutions such as the use of mobile units that visit the complainant to take down complaints and increasing the regional presence and reach of CIABOC are potential innovations that can be adopted.

5. Address the structural facilitation of corruption.

The study identified three pervasive structural factors in the operation of the bureaucracy that facilitate corruption: (a) the lack of clear procedures and written-down requirements, which increases the discretionary space of government officials; (b) the lack of essential information and understanding on where to look for such information, allowing officials to act as gatekeepers to information and extract rents in the process; and (c) artificial inefficiencies and delays in the processing that create burdens and allow rents to be extracted in exchange for reducing the burdens. These structural issues in the functioning of the bureaucracy facilitate the bargaining power of officials to extract rents in exchange for the normal delivery of services. CIABOC can envision the mitigation of corruption by also involving itself in the advocacy for dismantling these facilitating structures of corruption.

6. Increase the perceived benefits of reporting to CIABOC.

The study revealed an overall lack of public confidence in CIABOC's ability to investigate corruption allegations. CIABOC could benefit greatly by increasing the public's confidence that reporting corruption will be efficacious. This can be accomplished through investing in greater awareness of CIABOC's activities, and a communication strategy designed to enhance public confidence in CIABOC. Such a strategy can include intentional publicity of arrests, prosecutions and other such successful CIABOC actions, through mainstream and social media. To achieve this change in public confidence, CIABOC can consider establishing its own specialized CIABOC media unit to facilitate an improvement in its public engagement.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Task and Motivation

In Sri Lanka, the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), was established under ACT, No.19 of 1994. It is the main anti-corruption agency, a dedicated body set up for the independent investigation of bribery and corruption in the public sector. CIABOC focuses on transactions that involve the government or public servants. CIABOC specifically investigates cases of public servants misusing their agency to either cause wrongful loss to the government or to confer wrongful benefit through the government to themselves or others.¹ In addition to investigating and prosecuting allegations of bribery and corruption, CIABOC’s mandate has recently been expanded to include the prevention of corruption.²

The present study, conducted by Verité Research and commissioned by the East-West Management Institute (EWMI), was motivated by the realization that to effectively combat corruption, it is important to also understand why a society tolerates corruption, what in the social, cultural moral context is identified as corruption, and what drives engagement in corruption. An understanding of such factors will enable relevant actors, such as CIABOC in Sri Lanka, to develop appropriate interventions that can reduce the space and proclivity for corruption. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate Sri Lankans’ moral perceptions, social attitudes, and lived experiences of corruption and CIABOC. This report presents the summary findings of the study.³

1.2 Methodology

Three types of data collection activities were pursued to inform the analysis that is captured in this study:

1. A nation-wide survey of 2,217 respondents;
2. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with members of the public; and
3. Key informant interviews (KIIs) with representatives from specific sectors.

1.2.1 The survey and the sampling framework

Data for the nation-wide survey was collected from 2,217 respondents above the age of 18 from across the country. The Census of Population and Housing 2012 formed the basis of the sampling framework for the survey. The sampling framework was used to form a representative population for each of the 25 districts within Sri Lanka. The Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) was the district, and within the PSU different sub-sampling units were created, based on gender and ethnicity. The survey was conducted over the course of two months (June and July 2019) in Sinhala and Tamil.

Exhibit 1: Sampling distribution by ethnicity

Ethnicity	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Sinhalese	1,602	72.3%
Sri Lankan Tamils	417	18.8%
Muslims (Moors+Malays)	175	7.9%

¹ See CIABOC website: <https://www.ciaboc.gov.lk/contact/faqs>

² See CIABOC’s National Action Plan: <https://www.ciaboc.gov.lk/images/nap/NAP-Book-ENG.pdf>

³ This report is accompanied by a longer in-depth report, The Analytical Report, which presents further analysis on the data presented in this Summary Report.

Indian Tamils	16	0.7%
Burghers/Eurasian	7	0.3%
Total	2,217	100.0%

Exhibit 2: Sampling distribution by gender

Gender	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Male	1,121	50.56%
Female	1,096	49.44%
Total	2,217	100.00%

As gender and ethnicity were not statistically significant variables in the analysis of the survey data, the analysis that is included in this Summary Report is based on aggregate data.

1.2.2 Focus group discussions

The main objective of the focus group discussions (FGDs) was to obtain an in-depth understanding of corruption. We asked participants about their day-to-day experiences of corruption, and to tell us what they thought were the root causes and best solutions for corruption. The FGDs also helped to gather qualitative information to understand the underlying reasons for the issues identified in the survey.

The FGDs were split into two categories. One set of FGDs took place among business owners and the other set of FGDs was conducted among individuals identified through the nationwide survey. In total five FGDs were carried out with businessmen from five different districts capturing a total of 27 participants. The districts were Gampaha (Western province), Colombo (Western province), Kandy (Central province), Matara (Southern province) and Anuradhapura (North Central province). Four FGDs were scheduled to be conducted with selected survey participants in four districts (Colombo, Kalutara, Anuradhapura and Kandy). Each FGD comprised four to six participants. The participants were grouped according to their responses to selected questions in the survey to obtain a better understanding of the experiences they faced when dealing with both public services and CIABOC. In total, eighteen participants were interviewed in this category.

1.2.3 Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews (KIIs) focused on high-level inputs from those with significant oversight and experience in key sectors. A range of stakeholders that spanned the education sector, medical sector, public agencies and small and medium scale enterprises/businessmen were interviewed. The KIIs were conducted among ten individuals from the public sector who worked as teachers, university lecturers, ministry secretaries, directors-general and managers of government agencies and government ministers. Two KIIs were conducted with representatives of private business chambers and civil society.

1.2.4 Limitations of the study

This study was already underway when the Easter Sunday attacks of 21st April 2019 took place in Sri Lanka. The Easter Sunday attacks causes caused huge social upheaval and heightened security concerns

throughout the country.⁴ As a result, the survey implementation partner of Verité Research, Vanguard Survey, faced challenges during the data collection stage. These included difficulty in accessing survey participants, difficulty in enlisting participants for the survey and a lack of adequate cooperation by some respondents when quality check and backchecks were conducted after the completion of the survey. Furthermore, due to the prevailing emergency situation in the country, it was not possible to implement the original plan of conducting FGDs with selected members of the public in Anuradhapura and Kandy. Hence, in these two regions, face-to-face interviews were conducted with selected respondents of the survey.

In addition, the KIIs were limited by the number of sectors they covered. For instance, the KIIs did not include persons convicted of bribery, police officers, school principals, public sector doctors and large-scale private sector businessmen. Lastly, it should be noted that the perceptions and attitudes towards corruption are likely to be influenced by what and how issues are portrayed by the media and the prevailing security concerns.

⁴ On 21 April 2019, Easter Sunday, three churches and three hotels in Colombo, Sri Lanka were targeted in a series of coordinated terrorist suicide bombings. It is estimated that 253 people were killed, including 46 children <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/situation-analysis-5-dated-26-april-2019>

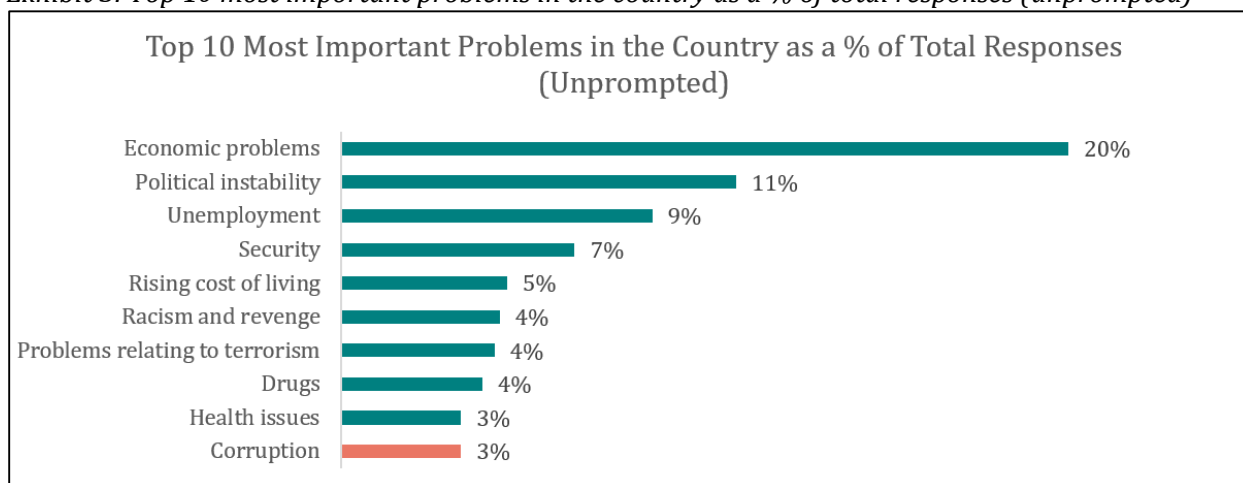
CHAPTER 2: SURVEY FINDINGS

2.1 Attitudes towards corruption

2.1.1 Salience of corruption

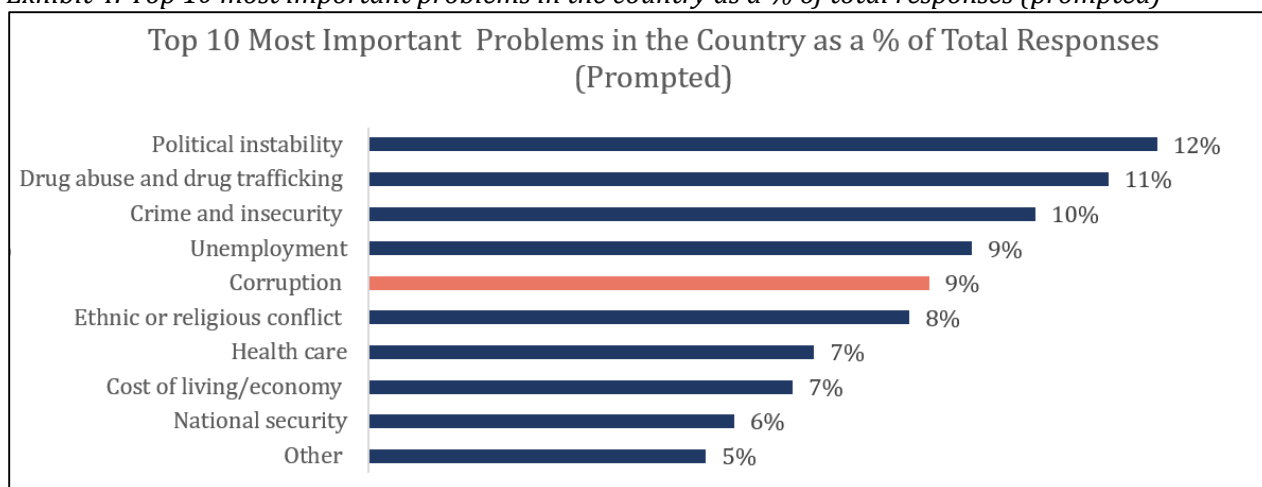
The salience of corruption refers to the tendency to notice its prevalence and see it as an important issue relative to other problems. The analysis of the survey results revealed that at the time of the survey, corruption had a relatively low salience. In a question that invited respondents to list out, unprompted, what they thought were the three most important problems facing the country, corruption accounted for only 3% of all the responses. In terms of the most frequently cited problem, corruption came in at number 10 (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3: Top 10 most important problems in the country as a % of total responses (unprompted)



However, when the same question was repeated with a prompted list of 10 issues, inviting the selection of three additional problems, 9% of the respondents cited corruption (see Exhibit 4).

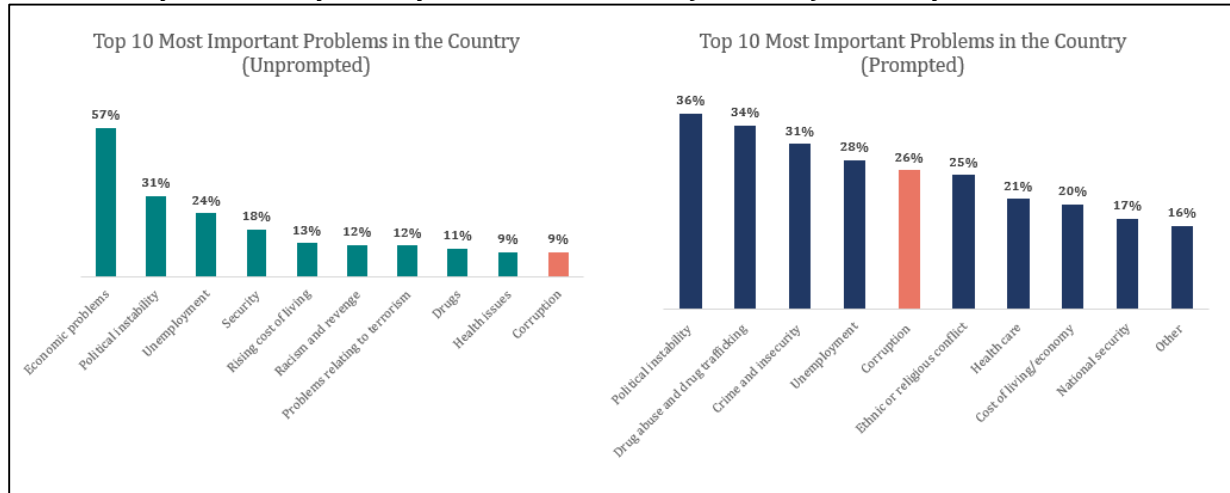
Exhibit 4: Top 10 most important problems in the country as a % of total responses (prompted)



The analysis of the same two questions above as a percentage of respondents reveal that 9% of respondents, unprompted, listed corruption as one of the most important problems in the country. A further 26% of the sample selected corruption when presented with a prompted list (see Exhibit 5).

Although corruption does not receive high rankings in comparison to other problems, overall about one-third of the sample see it as an important issue in the country.

Exhibit 5: Top 10 most important problems in the country as a % of total respondents



The survey also asked respondents to define corruption in their own words. An analysis of the findings revealed that participants overwhelmingly referred to corruption as ‘exploitation’, ‘illegal’, ‘stealing’, ‘bad’, ‘hidden’, and ‘dishonest acts’. Respondents referred to both material and financial forms of bribery and claimed that corruption was driven by selfish motives. There was also a general sense that corruption had increased in the recent past. With a few exceptions, participants were angry and frustrated that corruption and bribery were so commonplace and expressed a desire to eradicate corruption. A few respondents begrudgingly claimed that, because there was a culture of corruption in which the giving of bribes and the use of influence were normalized, they too must partake in corrupt activities to survive.

Interestingly, many respondents talked about corruption in terms of its consequences. Most referred to the fact that it hindered economic and social development and contributed to the ‘destruction’ of the country. Some claimed that it was the result of existing inequalities, while others claimed that it exacerbated inequality and resulted in poverty. Many claimed that it led to an increase in the cost of living. Some were also of the view that the poor suffered the most in a context of increasing corruption, as they struggled to keep up with constantly paying officials to get things done.

The analysis reveals the diversity in the public’s perception of corruption. Although corruption didn’t emerge as one of the most critical concerns of the public at the time of the study, respondents seem to view corruption as an important issue connected to more salient problems such as development.

2.1.2 Attitudes and types of corruption

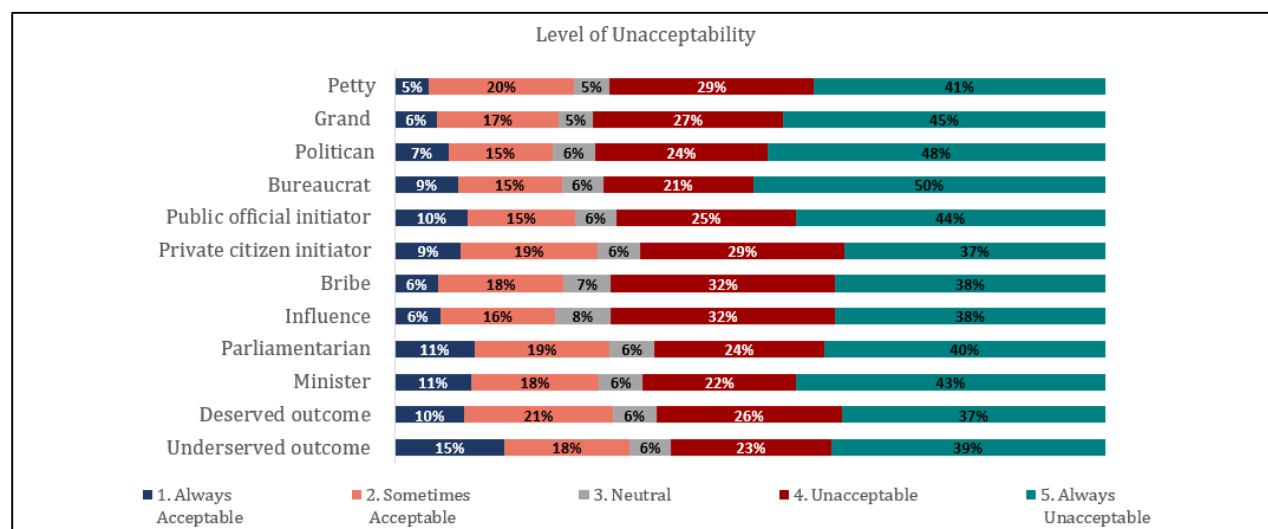
Corruption itself is fundamentally multi-faceted. It encompasses everything from bribery and extortion to nepotism and embezzlement. Furthermore, attitudes and perceptions towards different corrupt behaviors are not uniform. To obtain more clarity on how societal acceptance and perceptions differ in response to different types of corruption, the survey participants were asked to rate the level of unacceptability, the frequency of the occurrence, and the level of corruption for a series of 12 scenarios. The 12 scenarios are summarized in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6: Types of corruption

Question	Short name tag
A shopkeeper offers a tax collector a small amount of money to avoid paying taxes	Petty
A businessman offers a senior custom official a large amount of money in order to import goods without paying taxes	Grand
An elected official takes funds allocated for ministry renovations to finance his parliamentary election campaign	Politician
A local government officer takes funds allocated for a development project for personal use	Bureaucrat
A principal asks a parent to give him a cash gift to ensure that their child gets admission into a leading school	Public official initiator
A parent offers a cash gift to a principal to ensure that their child gains admission into a leading school	Private citizen initiator
A legal clerk takes a cash donation to push a legal case to the top of the case list	Bribe
A senior lawyer calls a legal clerk and requests to change the hearing date of a case	Influence
A newly elected parliamentarian facilitating some of his campaigners to get government jobs	Parliamentarian
A minister ensures that members of his constituency are included in the list of Samurdhi ⁵ recipients	Minister
A private citizen offers a cash gift to a public officer to speed up a very slow administrative procedure	Deserved outcome
A private citizen driving without his driving license is stopped by a police officer and provides a cash gift to the officer in order to successfully complete his journey	Underserved outcome

The level of unacceptability was ranked on a scale of 1 (Always Acceptable) to 5 (Always Unacceptable). The frequency of occurrence was ranked on a scale 1 (Uncommon) to 5 (Common). The level of corruption or the severity of corruption was also ranked on a scale 1 (Not at all corrupt) and 5 (Very corrupt). Exhibit 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the distribution of responses to the 12 scenarios for the level of acceptability, the frequency of occurrence, and the severity of corruption respectively.

Exhibit 7: Level of unacceptability



⁵ Samurdhi refers to a social security scheme offered by the Government of Sri Lanka

Exhibit 8: Frequency of occurrence

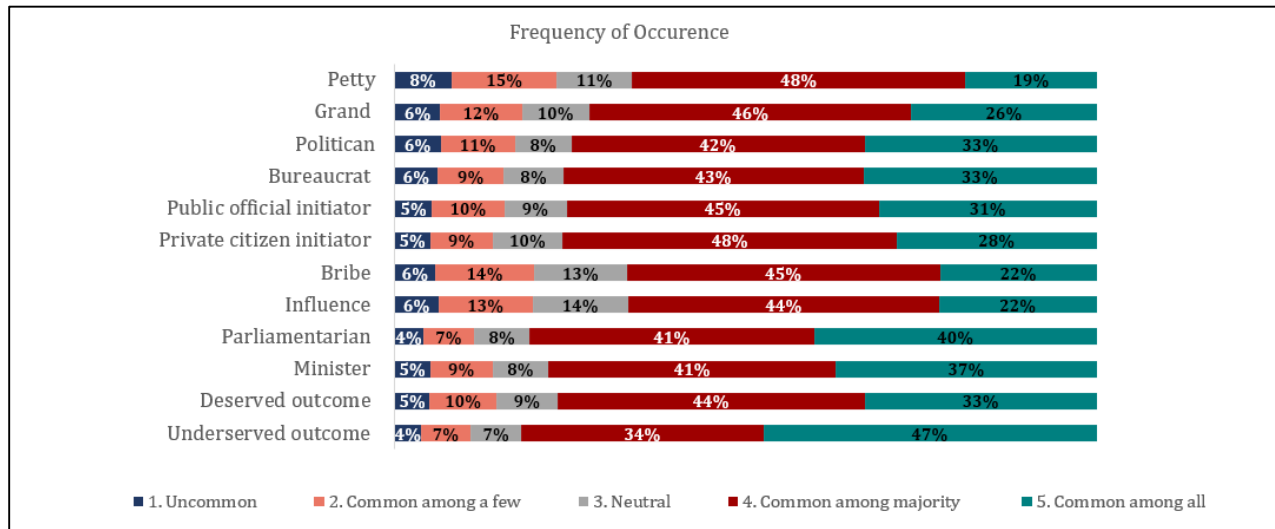
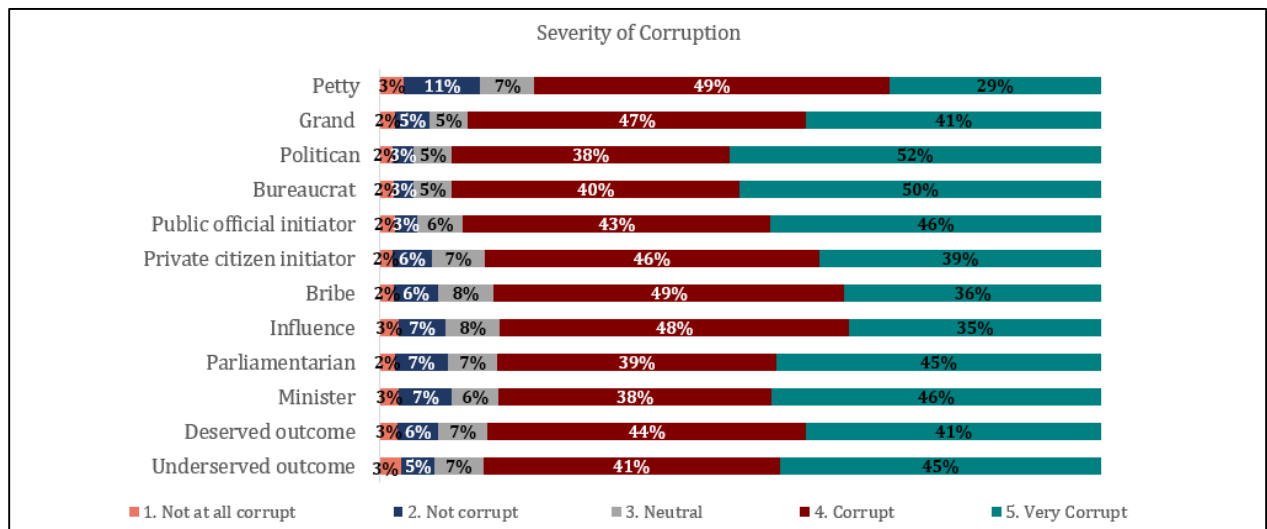


Exhibit 9: Severity of corruption



The mean scores for all three attitudinal measures of corruption are presented in Exhibit 10. Overall the means for all three measures recorded values greater than 3. This indicates that on average respondents felt that each of the 12 scenarios were unacceptable, occurred frequently and were representative of different forms of corruption. Of the 12 scenarios, in terms of the level of unacceptability, the corruption that was undertaken by the *Politician* was ranked as the most unacceptable scenario, followed by the *Bureaucrat*, and corruption that occurred on a *Grand scale*. The responses to the open-ended question⁶ corroborate this finding, where most respondents referred to corruption as ‘exploitation of public property/public money’, ‘rich people exploiting poor people’ and ‘exploiting country’s resources’.

⁶ The open-ended question asked respondents to define corruption in their own words.

Exhibit 10: Mean scores for attitudinal scales of corruption

	Level of Unacceptability 1= Always Acceptable; 5=Always Unacceptable	Level of Corruption 1 = Not at all Corrupt; 5 = Very Corrupt	Frequency of Occurrence 1 = Uncommon; 5 Common among all
Petty	3.81	3.90	3.54
Grand	3.88	4.19	3.74
Politician	3.90	4.35	3.84
Bureaucrat	3.88	4.33	3.88
Public official initiator	3.77	4.27	3.86
Private citizen initiator	3.64	4.16	3.86
Bribe	3.78	4.10	3.64
Influence	3.79	4.06	3.63
Parliamentarian	3.62	4.17	4.06
Minister	3.69	4.17	3.96
Deserved outcome	3.60	4.15	3.90
Underserved outcome	3.51	4.19	4.15

On average the mean score for the severity of corruption measure ranged from 3.9 to 4.5, which was higher than the mean scores for the level of acceptability. This indicates that although respondents recognized certain activities as corrupt, they were relatively accepting of those activities.

2.1.3 Prevalence of corruption in the public sector

To understand the prevalence of corruption in the public sector, the survey asked respondents to rate their perception of the frequency of occurrence of corrupt practices by public officials and politicians. These perceptions are recorded in Exhibit 11 and Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 11: Perception of the frequency of corrupt practices among public officials

Behaviours	Very Common	Fairly Common	Neither very common nor unusual	Never happens	Don't know
Influencing the hiring of friends or relatives in the public sector	46%	42%	6%	3%	4%
Influencing the award of government contracts to friends or relatives	48%	39%	7%	2%	4%
Requesting extra money or gifts for public services that should have been provided for free	30%	43%	14%	6%	6%
Requesting extra money or gifts to bypass government procedures	28%	38%	14%	5%	15%

Exhibit 12: Perception of the frequency of corrupt practices among elected representatives/politicians

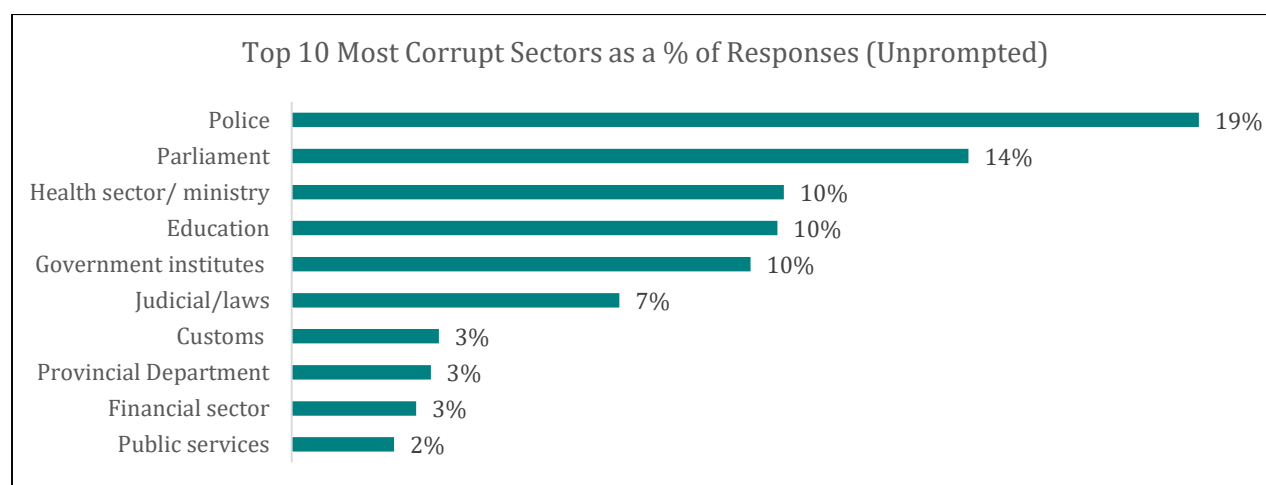
Behaviours	Very Common	Fairly Common	Neither very common nor unusual	Never happens	Don't know
Influencing the career advancement of their constituents' friends or relatives on the basis of patronage instead of merit	53%	38%	4%	1%	4%
Influencing the award of contracts to companies/individuals close to themselves	52%	38%	5%	1%	4%
Using public funds or property (eg: land, vehicles etc) for personal or family needs	50%	34%	7%	3%	6%
Taking cash or gifts to influence public contracts or public decisions	40%	39%	9%	3%	9%
Manipulating government records or public accounts	33%	34%	12%	3%	18%
Manipulating electoral processes/electoral fraud	35%	33%	12%	4%	16%
Compromising investigative functions	29%	29%	13%	4%	25%

The data shows that a majority of the public think that both public officials and politicians frequently engage in corrupt activities. In both cases, the use of influence to hire friends or relatives, or to advance the careers of constituents stands out as the most frequently perceived behaviour.

2.1.4 Sectoral corruption

The survey respondents were asked to list out, unprompted, three of the most corrupt sectors in the country. Exhibit 11 illustrates a summary of these responses. The police came out as the most corrupt sector, followed by the parliament,⁷ the health and education sectors, and government institutes.

Exhibit 13: Top 10 most corrupt sectors in the country as a % responses (Unprompted)

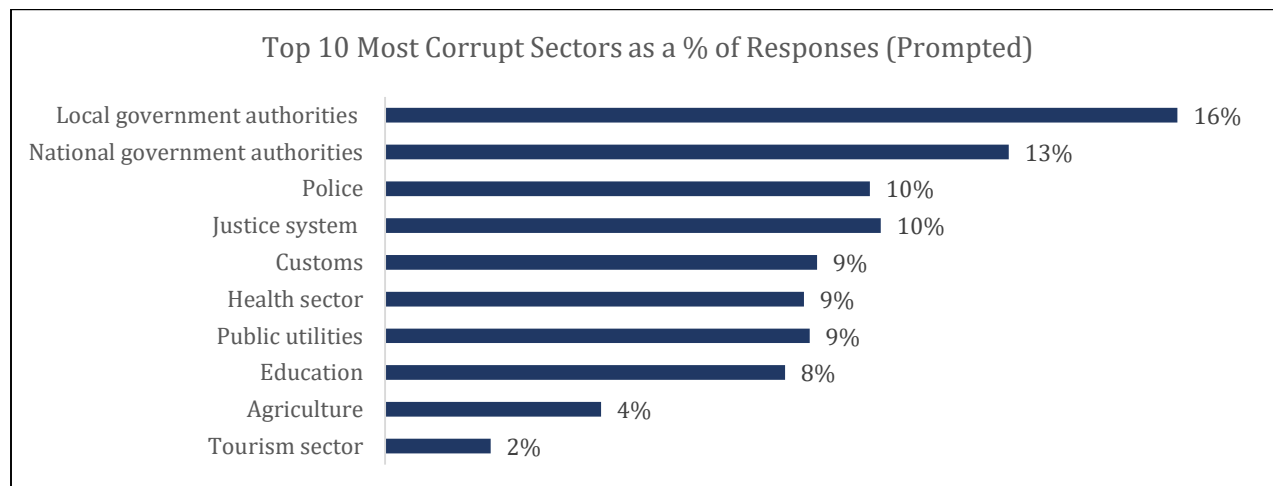


The same question was repeated with a prompted list of 12 areas, inviting the selection of three additional sectors (see Exhibit 14). In this selection, local government authorities were perceived as the most corrupt sector, accounting for 16% of all the responses, followed by national government

⁷ Although the parliament is not a sector per se, responses were coded according to the answers provided to the open-ended question. This includes responses related to the government, ministers and parliamentarians.

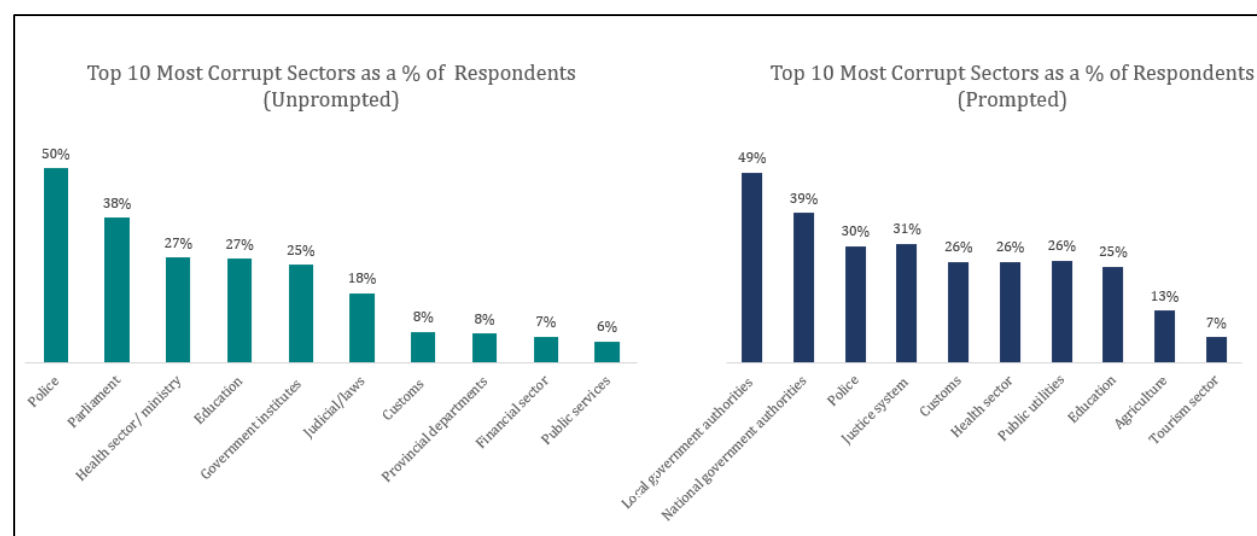
authorities that accounted for 13% of all the responses. The police came in third, accounting for 10% of the responses.

Exhibit 14: Top 10 most corrupt sectors as a % of responses (Prompted)



The analysis of the above unprompted and prompted responses as a percentage of respondents reveals that 50% of the sample, unprompted, selected the police as one of the top three most corrupt sectors. A further 30% of the respondents who did not select the police in the unprompted question, chose the police as the one the three most corrupt sectors when presented with a prompted list (see Exhibit 15). Next to the police the highest perceived level of corruption by authority figures relate to specific public sector and local government officials and agencies.

Exhibit 15: Top 10 most corrupt sectors in the country as a % of total respondents



2.2 Experience with public services

2.2.1 Reported rents extracted from public officials

The survey asked respondents to indicate the number of times they were required to pay extra cash, a counter favour, or a gift to a public official during the last 12 months. Exhibit 16 provides the break

down and the percentage of the sample who were in contact with public officials and who were required to engage in corrupt activities. The highest incidence was recorded for immigration officers followed by police officers and then teachers.

Exhibit 16: Percentage of the sample who experience corruption with public officials

Public Official	Yes
Municipal, district or provincial officials	5%
Grama sevaka ⁸	5%
Public utilities officers	7%
Customs officials	1%
Doctors	1%
Nurses	5%
Teachers/lecturers (from the public sector)	12%
Car registration/driving license agency officers	2%
Police officers	21%
Members of the armed forces	2%
Member of parliament	4%
Member of government	3%
Immigration service officers	33%
Judges	3%

Respondents were also asked to report payments made during the last 12 months to government officials to facilitate services. They reported a range between Rs. 2,000 and Rs. 60,000 to public utility officers, and between Rs. 100 and Rs. 40,000 to municipal, district, and provincial officials (see Exhibit 17).

⁸ Sri Lankan public officials appointed by the central government to carry out administrative duties in a Grama Niladari division, which is the smallest administrative unit in the country.

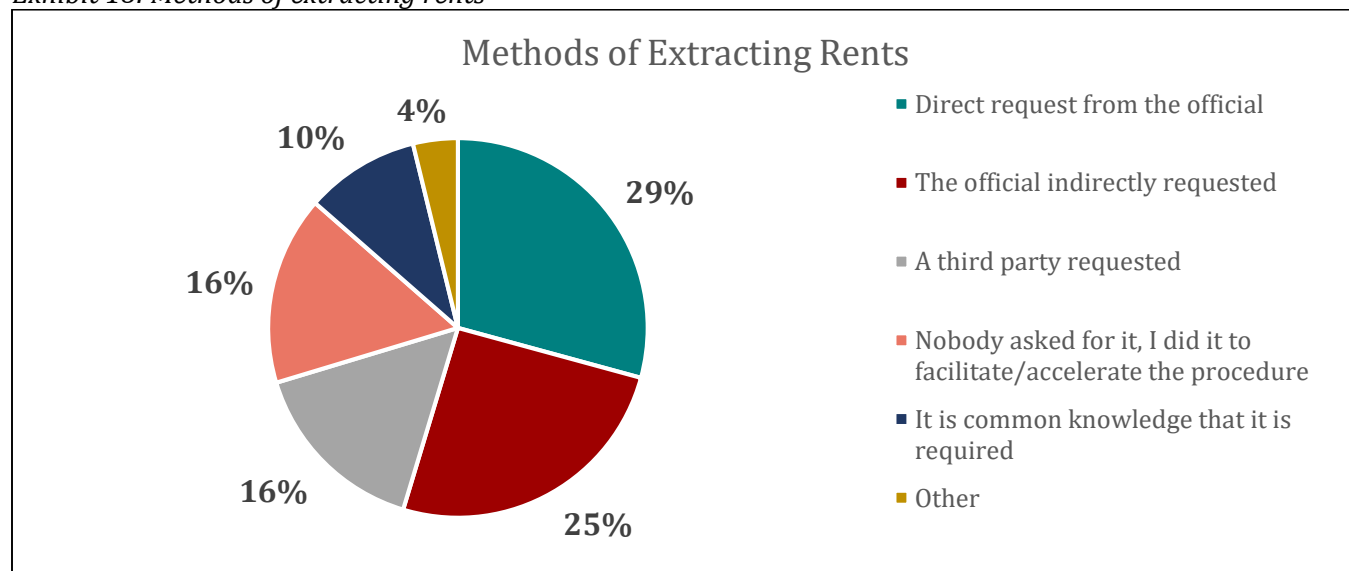
Exhibit 17: Size of monetary value of gifts or counter favours to a public official

	Municipal, district or provincial officials	Grama sevaka ⁹	Public Utilities	Customs officials	Doctors	Nurses	Teachers/lecturers (from the public sector)	Car registration/driving license officials	Police officers	Member of parliament	Member of government	Immigration service officers
Maximum Value	40,000	10,400	60,000	3,000	3,000	50,000	6,000	10,000	50,000	5,000	20,000	2,500
Mean	8,557	3,171	31,000	1,940	3,000	14,000	2,000	4,875	3,268	5,000	13,333	1,333
Minimum Value	100	200	2,000	200	3,000	500	500	500	100	5,000	5,000	500
Number	14	21	2	5	1	11	10	4	57	1	3	3

2.2.2 Methods of extracting rents

Of the survey respondents, 80% claimed that the extraction of bribes was ‘requested directly’ (29%) by the official concerned, ‘requested by a third party’ (16%), ‘common knowledge’ (10%), or ‘requested indirectly’ (25%) by the official concerned (Exhibit 18). Only 16% of the respondents indicated that the payment was self-initiated to speed up or overcome formal barriers to the delivery of the service.

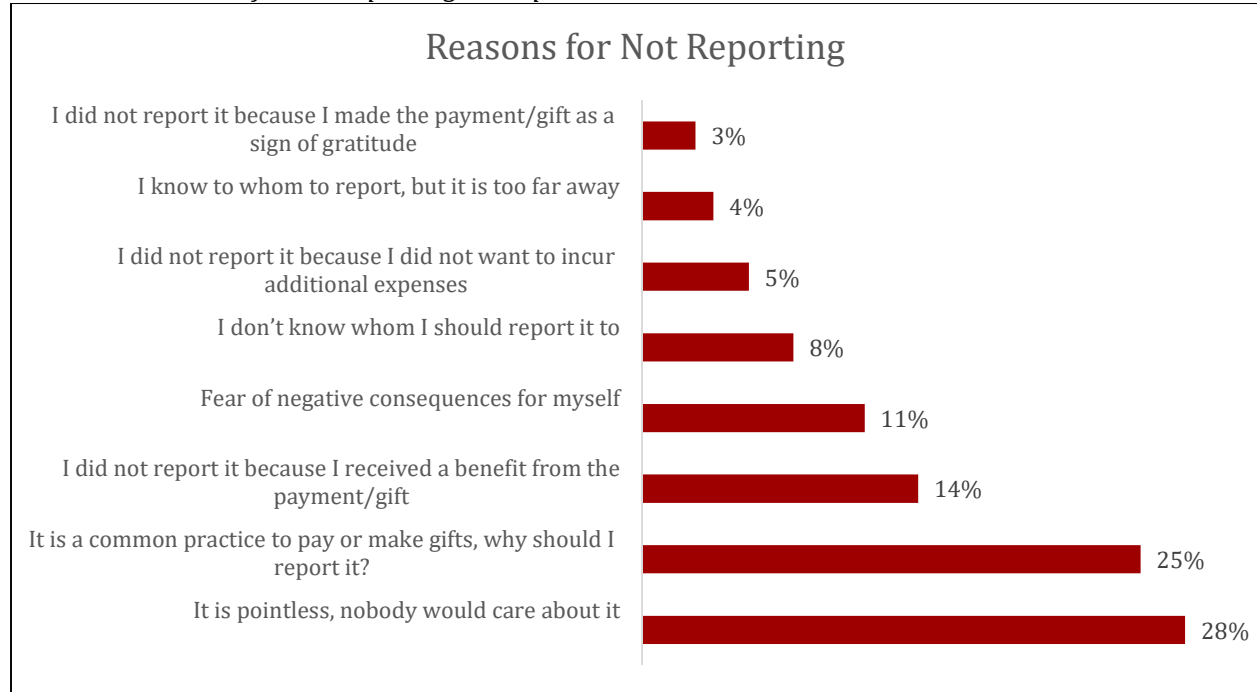
Exhibit 18: Methods of extracting rents



⁹ Sri Lankan public official appointed by the central government to carry out administrative duties in a grama niladari division, which is the smallest administrative unit in the country.

Respondents were also asked if they had reported such behaviour to either an official or unofficial authority. Only 3% of the sample stated that they had reported such behaviour to an authority. The reasons for not reporting by the remaining 97% are illustrated in Exhibit 19.

Exhibit 19: Reasons for not reporting corruption



2.3 Perception of CIABOC

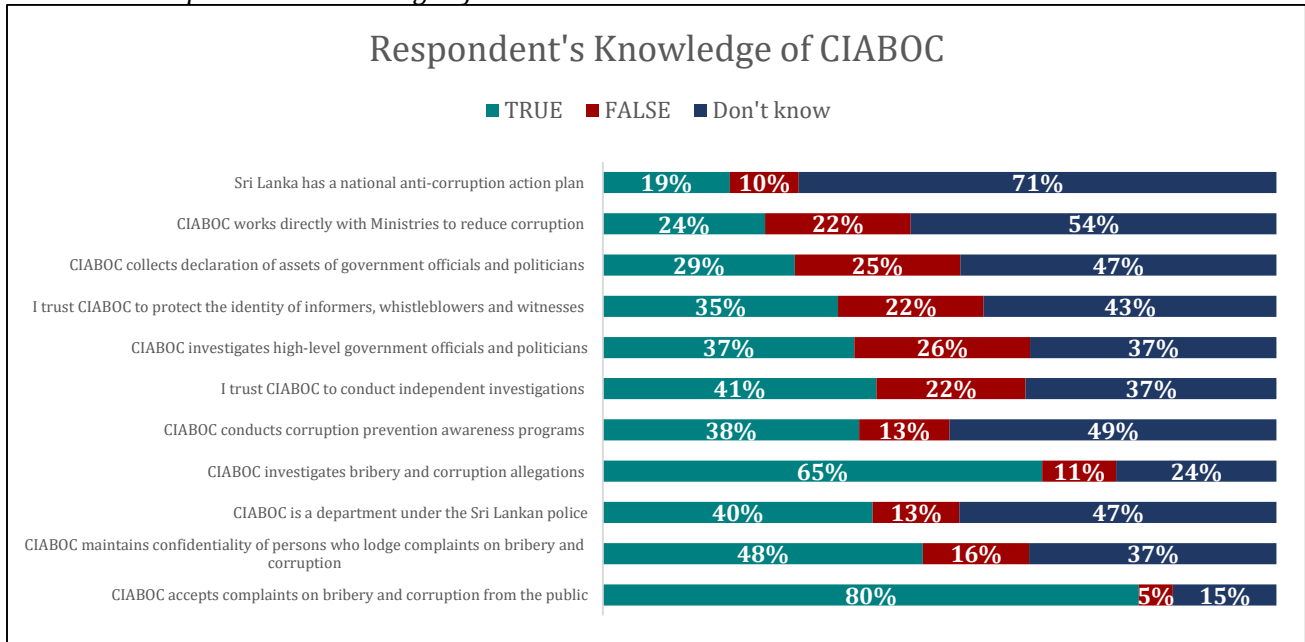
Public knowledge of CIABOC was high. While 82% of the respondents indicated that they knew CIABOC existed, only 2% (29/1810) of participants said they had interacted with the CIABOC. Only seven participants claimed that they had lodged a complaint with CIABOC.

2.3.1 CIABOC's' independence

Although CIABOC is well known, the results showed that it is not viewed as an independent institution. In fact, 40% of participants incorrectly believed that CIABOC was a department under the Sri Lankan police and 47% of the sample stated that they did not know whether CIABOC was a department under the police (Exhibit 20). Additionally, 22% of the respondents stated that they did not trust CIABOC to conduct independent investigations and 37% of the respondents stated that they did not know if CIABOC conducted independent investigations. Further, only 35% of the participants stated that they trusted CIABOC to protect the identity of informers, whistleblowers or witnesses, with the remaining participants stating that they either didn't trust or didn't know if CIABOC did the same.

These findings regarding CIABOC coalesce with the above reported more general finding in Exhibit 19 where 28% of the respondents said that they did not report corruption because they did not believe that anything will be done about it.

Exhibit 20: Respondents' knowledge of CIABOC



2.3.2 CIABOC's outreach

Walk-ins followed by written letters were the top two preferred methods of lodging a complaint with CIABOC. These two methods accounted for 60% of the sample (see Exhibit 21). Additionally, the most common method of obtaining information about public services was through written material provided by public services followed by oral information provided by public servants (see Exhibit 22).

Exhibit 21: Preferred methods of lodging a complaint with CIABOC

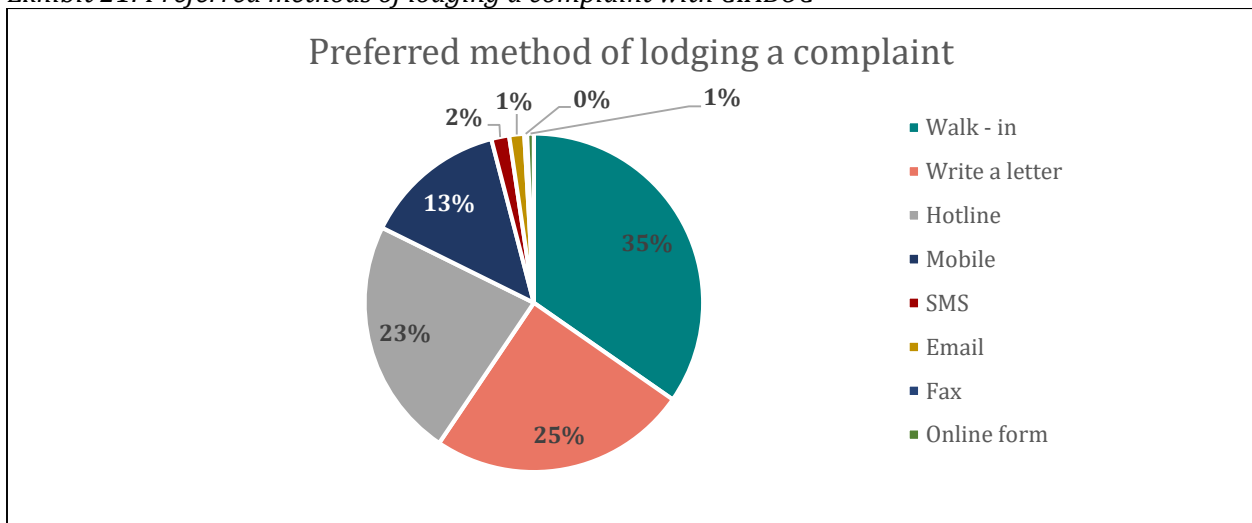
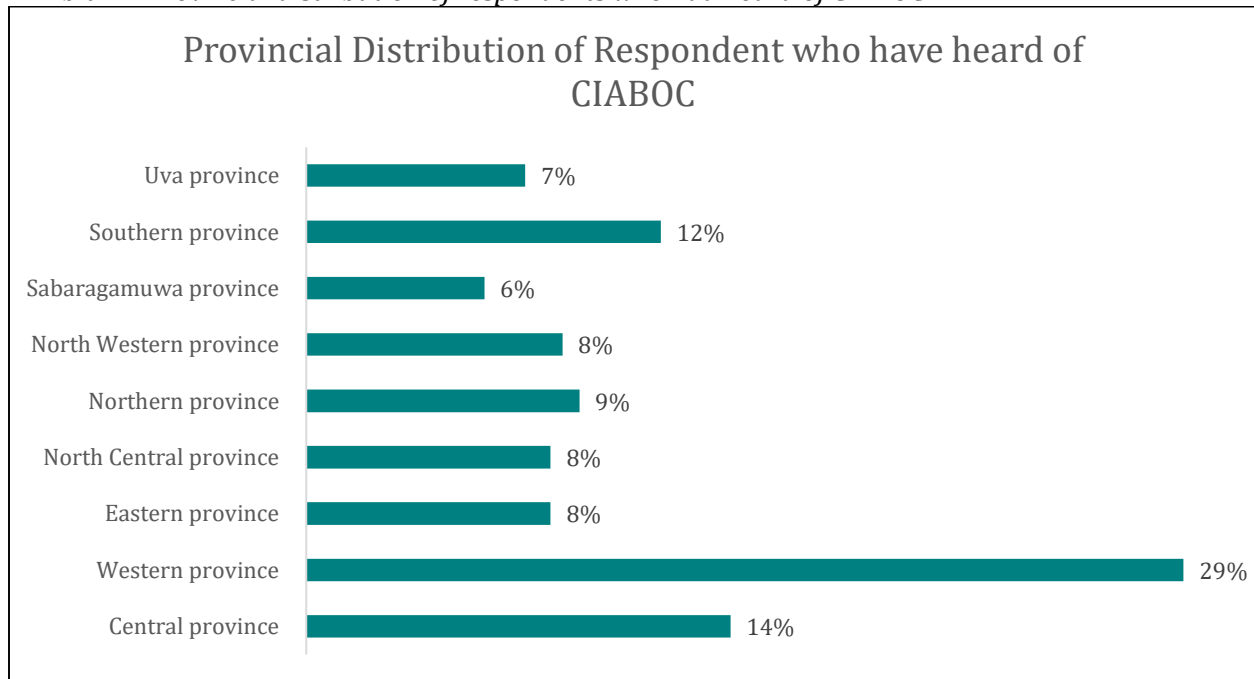


Exhibit 22: Methods of obtaining information

Methods of obtaining information on procedures of the public services	
Written information material provided by the public services (brochures, posters, etc)	23%
Oral information from public officials	22%
Informal information from relatives and/or friends	20%
Information through intermediary/ liaison person	10%
Information through internet/websites	7%
Information from other sources such as newspapers or television	18%

At present CIABOC only has offices in Colombo, which can be inaccessible to most of the country. This could hinder CIABOC’s outreach activities given the preferred methods of lodging complaints as well as the most common methods by which the public obtain information on procedures of the public services. Exhibit 23 illustrates the provincial distribution of the respondents who stated that they had heard about CIABOC.

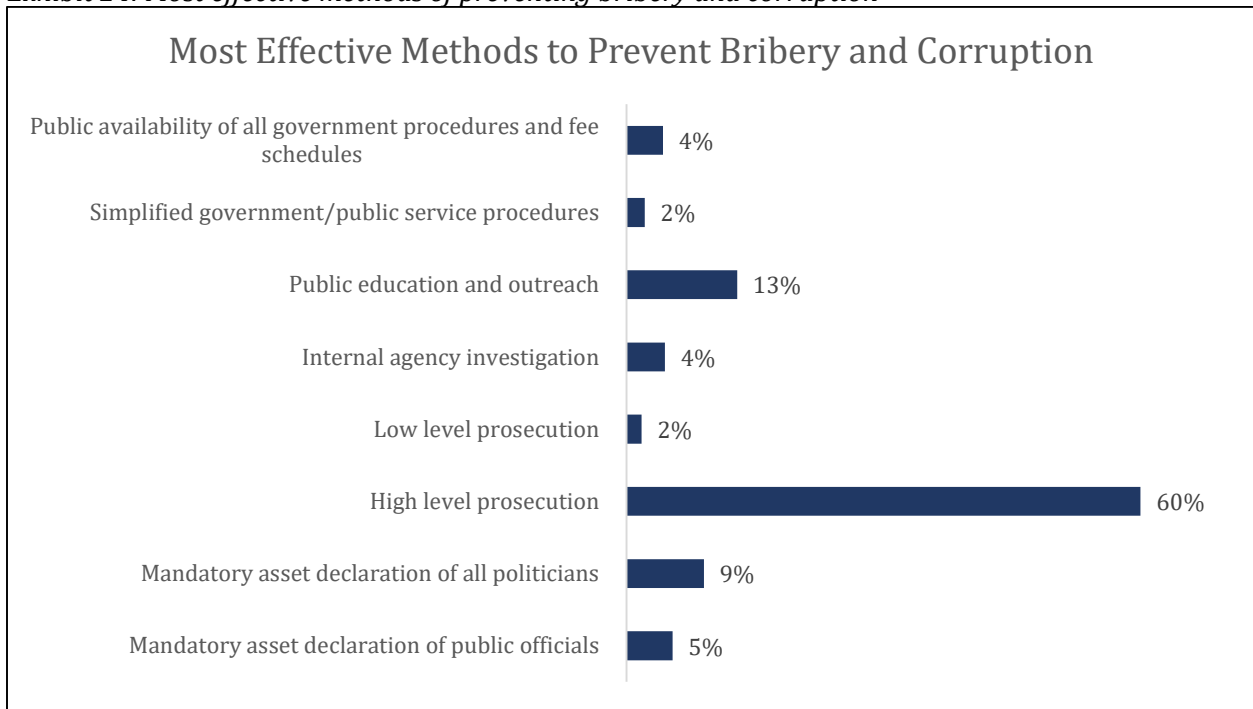
Exhibit 23: Provincial distribution of respondents who had heard of CIABOC



2.3.3 Combatting corruption

As shown in Exhibit 24, 60% of participants believed that the most effective way of combatting corruption is ‘high level prosecution’. Many participants also called for the implementation of existing punishments. Such measures would also differentiate CIABOC from the police and political sectors, thereby increasing trust in the institution.

Exhibit 24: Most effective methods of preventing bribery and corruption



CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS FROM FGDS AND KIIS

3.1. Perception and experience of government corruption

People depend on local government officials and regulators for permissions, approvals and access for business purposes and other important aspects of their lives. Approvals are necessary to start a business, continue business operations, engage in various trades, build, make changes to a building, access utilities, and a multiplicity of other activities that are a normal part of economic activity. They also depend on these officials to admit their children to schools, hospitals and to gain access to government services that are directed towards the public. This includes welfare payments, loan schemes, land permits and housing. The information provided by the FGDS made it clear that such contexts are routinely used by public officials as a bargaining chip to extract rents. The withholding of services is done both explicitly until the payment is made or implicitly until a payment is offered. The information gathered from the FGDS and KIIS was used to better understand the mechanisms and processes by which public officers and regulators leverage their power. These include: (i) Processing delays and stoppage; (ii) Permissions/access improperly provided or denied; (iii) Disruptions/withdrawals of services or permissions; and (iv) Normalization of corrupt practices by local government officials and other regulators.

(i) Processing delays and stoppage

Local government officials and regulators have the power to either delay or deny the starting of a process. For example, a participant applied for a license from the forest department. They had decided not to pay a bribe, and consequently waited for three years without their license being processed. It was not denied, it was simply delayed in processing for three years. Finally, the participant capitulated and made a payment. Shortly after that the forest department processed the license.

(ii) Permissions/access improperly provided or denied

The discretionary power given to officials allows them to give permissions and approvals based on their personal preferences. A director from the Ministry of Education (MoE) said that politicians often force MoE officials to admit children whose parents are loyal to their political party to the schools of their choice. Even in instances when the students are not eligible for admission, the minister can use his discretion and get the student admitted without due procedure. Similarly, party organizers in charge of particular areas have the power to decide who gets access to concessionary loans and Samurdhi support based on his or her recommendations. Another issue is that officials can engage in activities that generate conflicts of interest with one another. For example, a participant described how they paid a Technical Officer (TO) from their relevant municipal council to draw up and approve a building plan. The participant was then able to start building before the plan was approved because the person drawing up the plan was the person who had to approve the plan.

(iii) Disruption/withdrawals of services or permissions

Sometimes, acts of corruption are more forceful. For example, the owner of a three-wheeler service station claimed that an officer from the environment authority said he would shut down the participant's station if the participant did not pay him Rs.2,000.

One participant described how the continuation of their business required an approval from the local government. The participant waited one and a half years for the assistant engineer from the Anuradhapura Division Secretariat's office to visit their business and process the approval. As the business could not continue without approval, the participant eventually offered to make a payment to the assistant engineer. The assistant engineer made the visit a few days after this offer was made. This is similar to the case outlined above, where existing licenses or permissions are effectively withdrawn through holding up the process of renewal. Another participant claimed that they must pay the Pradeshiya Saba Rs. 1,000 every year to have the Public Health Inspector (PHI) visit and renew their license. If they failed to make this payment, the PHI officer would not renew their license and their business would cease to exist.

Many local government officials and regulators provide essential services, which they can hold as ransom in order to further their personal enrichment. One participant claimed that after weeks of complaining to the Water Board that they did not have water, the participant finally offered to make an irregular payment so that action would be taken to fix the problem. The representative from the Water Board went to the participants house to fix the problem within 30 minutes of this offer being made.

These practices are not only limited to public officials and regulators but also public sector employees. Participants also recalled their experience with garbage collectors who refuse to collect the garbage if an additional fee "kasala badda" is not paid. Restaurant owners claimed that garbage collectors would intentionally leave the owner's garbage outside unless they paid the garbage tax.

(iv) Normalisation of corrupt practices by local government officials and other regulators
Many participants stated that it is an accepted practice to give PHI officers envelopes with cash when they come for inspection. Participants told us that when Food and Drug (F&D) officers visit pharmacies, they call ahead of time so that the employees know to switch on the air conditioning (a requirement for pharmacies) and get the officer's envelope ready. It is claimed that sometimes the officer would not even inspect the premises and simply collect the envelope from their car.

Interestingly, even though the giving of bribes has been normalized, the handing over of monetary bribes (in an envelope in a book, which the officer does not have to explicitly ask for) is often still clandestine in nature, suggesting that the officers claiming these bribes are fully aware that such acts can be penalized.

Corruption of this nature is sometimes institutionalized, making it less salient as the bribes are hidden in fees and fines. A common example of this is the Department of Motor Traffic where driving schools charge an 'exam fee' and use a part of it to bribe those administering the driving tests. There is also a concept of 'official bribes' which are included in the fees small businesses must pay. An exporter of gems claimed that each time he exports gems, he must pay a bribe of around Rs.10,000. Essentially, the export process with the Gem and Jewellery Authority includes brokers who act as middlemen between the businessmen and the officials from the Gem Cooperation. It is mandatory to hire these middlemen to export gems. The middlemen charge more than the actual fees.

3.2. Perception and experience of police corruption

Most forms of corruption that people experience at the hands of government officials relate to the denial or delay of services for non-compliance with corrupt requests. However, only a subset of government officials have the power to go beyond denial and delay to cause harm if the corrupt requests are not complied with. The police are the most powerful in this respect. The police exercise an extraordinary level of power over people's lives, which is generally far greater than any other type of government official.

Many participants stated that they depended on the police to maintain the smooth running of their small business establishments. FGD participants referred to their relationship with the police as 'Sahajeewanaya' (co-existence) and talked about how they had to pay the police cash and in kind – for example, food, alcohol, and hotel rooms – so that they could run their businesses in peace. Some participants framed such instances as engaging in 'gratitude payments'. However, the gratitude was not necessarily for allowing malpractices in business to go unchecked, but for preventing harm being done if the police were not kept 'happy'. As such, even the participants who said that they had all their documentation and did not require any favours from the police said that they felt pressured to pay the bribes because, according to them, the police would find some way of undermining them if they did not.

Essentially, because of the power and control the police have at a local level, participants felt that they could not opt out of this form of corruption. Its mildest forms were revealed in anecdotes about the police calling and asking the business owners to have a roast chicken or a bottle of arrack ready, indicating that if they did not, the police would find some fault in their establishments and operations. However, examples were also provided of more harmful methods, where the police could cause loss, damage and even fabricate evidence to place people in situations which would enable the police to extract rents.

The three examples below were obtained from the FGDs, and highlight the increasing abuse of power exercised by the police: (a) One participant explained that his friend's bike was stolen, and this was reported to the police along with CCTV footage of the incident. The police suppressed the CCTV footage from being publicly released and asked for a payment to follow through on recovering his bike. While the bribe was paid by his friend, the police did not succeed in finding his bike; (b) One participant reported that a police officer stopped a motorbike, seeking an excuse to impose a fine (police collect a percentage of the official fines imposed). After not finding any fault, the policeman proceeded to break the signal light of the motor-bike and then impose a fine; (c) One participant narrated how the police planted drugs on her husband and forced him to sign a confession, after which the police asked his family to pay them Rs. 50,000 in exchange for his freedom.

Police corruption is found to be particularly threatening because the police are capable of escalating tactics of coercion to more harmful methods, including severe level of violence. In case (c) above, where the respondent alleged that the police had planted drugs and asked for payment in exchange for freedom, those contributing the information reported that the family had filed a complaint with Human Rights Commission. It was said that at this point they were contacted by the Officer in Charge (OIC), who asked them to withdraw the complaint. The respondent went on to state that when the

family did not comply with these demands, the victim was severely beaten by the police. The falsely accused was still in prison at the time of the focus group meeting.

3.3 Justification of corruption

3.3.1 To overcome information deficiencies

Participants justified corruption in two ways: first, when they wanted to get things done but there was no obvious procedure, and second, when there was a procedure but the requirements were unclear. There seemed to be both a lack of information and a lack of understanding on where to look for information. Oral information about procedures was often problematic as it left officials with the power to move the goal posts and continue to extract rents as people tried to proceed with their requests through the system.

3.3.2 To overcome inefficiencies

Participants claimed that where clear procedures do exist, they are inefficient and slow moving. For example, two businessmen who own hotels outside Colombo stated that it took them months and multiple trips to the Tourism Board in Colombo to obtain their licenses. These inefficiencies could be either because the actual process was arduous or because public officials were unwilling to do their jobs in an efficient manner. A constant term that was used by the participants to describe inefficiencies in government agencies was “Rasthiyadu wenawa” (wasting time). This provides an incentive for people to use bribes to overcome inefficiencies, and the respondents expressed that it was acceptable to use bribes to achieve such ends. Unfortunately, this culture results in public officials purposely delaying outcomes as illustrated, with the expectation that people will offer them a bribe.

3.3.3 To increase convenience and reduce costs

Unfortunately, even when efficient services exist, people sometimes engage in corrupt activities. Notably, using corruption as a tool of convenience was the only non-ethical justification that was mooted for corruption. One participant said that he got his passport from the Immigration Department within a day for Rs.2,000 by using a connection instead of paying the actual fast track service fee of Rs.10,000. He acknowledged that what he did was wrong, but claimed he did it because it was cheaper and more convenient. Similarly, because the fine for drunk driving is Rs. 25,000, a participant claimed that it was cheaper to pay the policeman a bribe than to pay the fine and did not see this as a moral issue. One participant commented that “Sri Lankans have VIP syndrome. We do not want to get anything done which takes time, so we bribe and get it done immediately”.

3.3.4 To level the playing field

Many participants stated that corruption was both the result of existing inequalities and a means of further exacerbating inequalities. Their acceptance of corruption by the common man and anger at corruption by the powerful reflects this belief – the common man must use corruption because of existing inequalities, while the use of corruption by the powerful magnifies these inequalities. Participants described bribes as a way of correcting for existing injustices. This is also linked to people’s understandings of justice and deserved ends – the common man uses corruption to attain what he deserves while the powerful use them to achieve unfair benefits.

Hence, if corruption helped to enhance the power or wealth of someone, the public considered it undeserved and detestable. Most participants referred to corruption as the 'exploitation of public property or public funds', 'rich people exploiting poor people' and 'exploiting [the] country's resources'. Politicians and bureaucrats are considered rich and powerful actors who both propagate and engage in corruption. Participants also specifically referred to poor political leadership and the examples set by politicians as causes for corruption.

Participants also indicated that because everyone engages in corrupt behaviours, they would be at a disadvantage if they did not. In this manner too, corruption was justified as a means of levelling the playing field.

3.4 Rationalisation of corruption

The overall attitude towards corruption seems to be that it is wrong but necessary for survival. People see corruption as the only way to navigate the existing system and claim that they are forced to comply with the system. This culture of corruption allows people to rationalize behaviours that they know are wrong and licenses public officials to ask for and sometimes even demand bribes. Participants claimed that bribes are often the first solution to problems because it has become the norm. One participant even stated, '*Horuth ekka hityothin apith horu wenawa*' (if we are to live with thieves, we must also become thieves).

The qualitative data also sheds light on the nuances of public perceptions of different forms of corruption. Participants considered monetary bribes as corrupt and wrong most of the time.

The giving of gifts, such as food, hotel rooms, or alcohol, appear to be more acceptable forms of bribery. In general, these 'gifts' were perceived as a way of maintaining cordial relationships with the public officials, especially the police, so that they can carry out their businesses in peace.

Participants were better able to justify the use of influence and political patronage. Some participants even claimed that such behaviours were not corrupt or wrong. For example, they argued that the exchange of jobs for help with election campaigns is not corruption. Participants claimed that it was hard to reject requests to use influence as it is not culturally acceptable to say no to someone who asks you for a 'favour'. Participants, particularly from the business FGDs, also argued that it was impossible to do business without connections.

Many participants referred to the pervasive nature of corruption as a justification for engaging in corrupt behaviours. Participants were more accepting of petty corruption and behaviours that they or others like themselves typically engaged in. With regard to such cases, they were sympathetic to the pressures that made such behaviours an attractive option.

Overall, the responses add up to a socially problematic negative cycle of justifications. Individual tolerance of corruption contributes to social permissiveness and increases the frequency of such behaviours. In turn, individuals use this very increase in frequency as an excuse for engaging in corruption themselves, citing the social reality that because everyone engages in corrupt behaviours to get ahead, they would be at a disadvantage if they too did not use similar means.

3.5 Barriers to reporting

3.5.1 Perception of CIABOC

CIABOC is viewed as inefficient in delivering on its mandate by a majority of the participants. Participants claimed that there was no point in complaining to CIABOC because they pursue very few cases and take a long time to convict perpetrators.

Many participants claimed that CIABOC was partial towards politicians and vulnerable to political interference, pointing to its failure to prosecute many powerful individuals (the only and frequently cited exception being the prosecution of the president's former chief of staff). Many participants stated that they did not know of any cases that CIABOC had successfully completed. Regardless of how many cases CIABOC has actually completed, the perception that CIABOC is not effective is concerning.

Participants from the KIIs also pointed to CIABOC's lack of resources, such as the dearth of good prosecutors willing to work for CIABOC, a lack of experts in each field, and the fact that they only have officers from the regular police force working on cases. This was raised in contrast to Hong Kong and Malaysia where similar organizations have technical experts working on corruption cases together.

Participants in the KIIs pointed to other limitations that make CIABOC seem ineffective and unsuccessful in the eyes of the public. They mentioned the lack of a media unit that can advertise the work CIABOC does, and that CIABOC has further eroded faith in their efficacy by refusing to give updates on pending cases. This lack of faith in justice being served makes people extremely reluctant to approach CIABOC.

3.5.2 Reprisal culture

The main reason people do not complain about corruption is due to a "reprisal culture". Many participants in the FGDs talked about how they feared losing their jobs or being unable to continue their businesses if they complained about corruption. This fear exists because the perpetrators of corruption, as discussed earlier, are often the police or public officials. Many participants said that if they were to complain, they would be singled out and targeted by the police or public officials. For example, a participant described what happened after a family member lodged a complaint against a technical officer (TO) at a Divisional Secretariat (DS). The backlash to his complaint included him not getting his 'pin padiya' (social security payment) from the DS office because the TO worked there, and even after he died the DS's office made it difficult for his family to obtain a death certificate.

There is also an ethnic element to this fear of reprisals. Many Muslim businessmen said that they face greater barriers than businesspersons from other ethnic communities when trying to do business, and therefore felt that paying bribes when asked was necessary. Furthermore, they felt that they would be unfairly targeted if they complained about corrupt behaviour. They stated that because the consequences of complaining were so high, it was better to 'shut up and mind your own business'.

3.6 Recommendations by the public

Some participants recommended a system of review in the public sector that gathers feedback on the work of public officials. Many participants also highlighted the need for internal controls and the digitalization of processes. Participants also claimed that online processes resulted in fewer

opportunities for public officials to ask for bribes or use their discretion in corrupt ways. Technology can also be used to increase transparency, make processes clearer and more efficient, and increase the ease of getting things done.

Interestingly, participants claimed that newer officers in the public sector were friendlier and more efficient than longer-standing officers. Many participants even went as far as to say that they needed to hire a whole new set of public officials and not allow them to mix with the older officers.

Many participants advocated for harsher punishments and claimed that strong political leadership was necessary to combat corruption. Some participants argued that there was no point in having punishments or even education in schools unless there was a systematic movement towards changing the culture that supports corruption. They stated that teaching children in school would be pointless if they went home and saw their parents, who they respect, engaging in corrupt practices, or when the norms of society tell them that it is the only way to get anything done.

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIABOC

These recommendations for CIABOC are based on the research findings. They address critical issues that can help improve CIABOC in delivering on its mandate in terms of reducing corruption through punitive and preventive actions.

4.1 Prioritise reduction in corruption of police and public officials

The survey results reported that 50% of the respondents selected the police as one of the top three corrupt sectors in the country. Respondents also ranked local government officials and regulators as some of the most corrupt sectors of society. The jobs of the police, local government officials, and regulators gives them significant power and discretion to make decisions that directly affect people at the local level.

The qualitative information gathered through the FGDs further suggest that this power is used to hold ransom the provision of permits, processes or services, and to allow illegitimate actions in exchange for payments. People are also fearful that the police and some public officials will go beyond denial and delay and cause harm if corrupt requests are not complied with. The police are perhaps the most problematic in that respect.

The corruption of the police and public officials, in addition to being pervasive, is also the most complained about and corrosive. Therefore, mitigating corruption in this sphere could be the greatest positive contribution that CIABOC could make to address the felt concerns of the public about corruption.

4.2 Establish independence from the national police force

Of the total respondents, 40% believed that CIABOC was a department under the Sri Lankan police and 47% of the respondents stated that they did not know if CIABOC was a department under the Sri Lankan police. Only 13% of the respondents were able to clearly distinguish between CIABOC and the police. This does not favour CIABOC's overall reputation, or the ability for people to have confidence in CIABOC, given that the police force is perceived to be the most corrupt sector in the country.

At present CIABOC depends almost entirely on the existing police force, from which officers are assigned to CIABOC to conduct its investigations. There are two problems that can be addressed in this respect.

(1) **Integrity of investigations:** The police assigned to CIABOC are presently drawn from the national police force.¹⁰ This can however create a conflict of interest and undermine investigations that involves corruption allegations against police officers. To avoid such a conflict of interest, CIABOC should maintain a separate investigative unit, with equivalent and appropriate powers, but separate from the national police force and dedicated to CIABOC.

¹⁰ This has been an issue previously identified as well. Refer: Transparency International, 'Anti-Corruption Agency Strengthening Initiative Assessment of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption', (2016), available at: https://www.transparency.org/files/content/feature/ACA_Assessment_Report_Sri_Lanka.pdf

(2) **Public trust in CIABOC investigations:** The survey results suggest that for about 50% of the people, the police are not a source of trust but a source of distrust. Therefore, to be effective in building public confidence, CIABOC may need to address a broader perception problem as well. One way in which this could be addressed is by symbolically differentiating the investigative staff of CIABOC from the national police – for instance, by providing the CIABOC investigative/police staff with a different coloured uniform and having a distinctive name for the CIABOC unit.

4.3 Reduce the risk of reporting to CIABOC

Only 35% of the respondents believed that CIABOC protected the identity of informers, whistleblowers, and witnesses, while 43% stated that they did not know, and 22% did not believe that CIABOC protected the identify of informers, whistleblowers, and witnesses. The substantial lack of understanding in this regard increases the perceived risk of reporting to CIABOC.

The qualitative data gathered through the FGDs corroborated these findings, where many participants stated that if they did complain to CIABOC, they would be forced to discontinue their businesses due to the reprisals they would face from those against whom they had complained. This risk – both real and the perception - deters people from complaining to CIABOC.

Therefore, addressing the risk perception around reporting can be important for the success of CIABOC. That task includes (a) building and strengthening the protection mechanisms available for complainants; as well as (b) building public awareness of how complainants to CIABOC are protected, and the recourses available in the case of any attempted reprisals against the complainants.

4.4 Reduce the cost of reporting to CIABOC

People perceive not only a high risk but also a high cost of reporting corruption to CIABOC. One of the main costs relates to accessing CIABOC, which is headquartered in Colombo and has no regional presence.

While CIABOC allows complaints to be made through various forms of remote communication (calling, texting, writing, and online forms), 35% of the respondents expressed a preference for walking-in and making their complaints in person to a CIABOC official. This was the most preferred method for making a complaint even though it was a costly method due to the time and travel involved.

Therefore, reducing this cost of reporting while allowing people to continue with their most preferred method of reporting, deserves creative attention. Considerations can be made for the establishment of mobile units that visit the complainant to take down complaints. Increasing the regional presence of CIABOC is also a method of reducing costs that can be considered.

4.5 Address the structural facilitation of corruption

The survey results also showed that 52% of the respondents obtained information on procedures of public services through oral information (through public officials, relatives, or intermediary persons). Additionally, participants stated that most often government procedures were slow moving, either because the actual process was arduous and impractical or due to deliberate inefficiency caused by the public officials. The lack of information on government procedures also

served to enhance the discretionary space of government officials, which in turn increased the space for corruption.

The qualitative data shed further light on the problem, suggesting that various structural factors in the operation of the bureaucracy were pervasive facilitators of corruption. These factors included: (a) the lack of clear procedures and written-down requirements. This allowed officials excessive discretion to impose arbitrary barriers for accessing the required service outcomes from the public sector. This in turn facilitated the extraction of rents from people in exchange for reducing the accessibility barriers; (b) the lack of essential information and understanding on where to look for such information. This then allows officials to act as gatekeepers to information and extract rents in the process; and (c) artificial inefficiencies and delays in the processing. This again creates an artificial burden, and allows rents to be extracted in exchange for reducing the burden. These structural issues in the functioning of the bureaucracy facilitate the bargaining power of officials to extract rents in exchange for the normal delivery of services.

Therefore, CIABOC can envision the mitigation of corruption by also involving itself in the advocacy for dismantling these facilitating structures of corruption. For example, it is possible for the government to transparently set service standards that include the processing time for requests. Additionally, it can be mandated that all required procedures be formally disclosed, creating accountability for any deviations from the disclosed procedures and delivery time targets. As a further step, CIABOC can also encourage a government initiative to simplify procedures and reduce processing time across all areas of government services. All of these will reduce bureaucratic discretion and shift power in favour of the public, in receiving the due service without being subject to unreasonable difficulties and requests for “facilitation” payments.

These initiatives can initially be piloted in institutions which have a high public footfall. Participants of FGDs offered opinions to the effect that the digitization of procedures, and creation of a digital documentation trail, could assist in achieving some of the above improvements in dismantling these structures of bureaucratic corruption.

4.6 Increase the perceived benefits of reporting to CIABOC

Of the survey respondents, 28% stated that they did not report instances of corruption to an official authority because they thought it was pointless and nobody would care about it. This was the most cited reasons for not reporting. This is despite 80% of the respondents stating that they were aware that CIABOC accepted complaints on bribery and corruption from the public. Therefore, there appears to be a lack confidence in CIABOC’s ability to investigate corruption allegations.

It is evident that CIABOC would benefit greatly by increasing the public’s confidence that reporting corruption will be efficacious. This can be accomplished through investing in greater awareness of CIABOC’s activities, and a communication strategy designed to enhance public confidence in CIABOC. Such a strategy can include the publicity of arrests and prosecutions through the mainstream and social media. To achieve this change in public confidence, CIABOC can consider establishing its own specialized CIABOC media unit to facilitate an improvement in its public engagement.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION IN SRI LANKA

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

May 2020

Prepared for: East-West Management Institute

Prepared by: RIWI Corp.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March and April 2020, East-West Management Institute (EWMI) commissioned RIWI Corp. (RIWI) to use its patented Random Domain Intercept Technology to collect online public perception data in Sri Lanka regarding bribery and corruption in the public sector. The data collected will be used to inform efforts to build the capacity of The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), establishing them as the leading anti-corruption agency in Sri Lanka. These data will give EWMI and CIABOC greater understanding of the Sri Lankan citizen perceptions of corruption, its prevalence, as well as their confidence in the available institutions to combat corruption. Due to the sensitivity of this work, the anonymity, safety, and privacy that RIWI respondents were afforded as a result of the data collection methodology were all vital in the successful execution of this research.

Specifically, these data highlight why or why not citizens report these incidents and the fears or experiences that influence these decisions. Data are cut along demographic variables and other key indicators, identified between EWMI and RIWI with insight from the 2019 Verité Report. This was done to identify key points of interest and test hypotheses in order to improve EWMI's programming in Sri Lanka.

OVERVIEW OF RIWI SURVEY METHODOLOGY

RIWI technology allows for the rapid capture and assessment of large samples of broad, truly randomized opinion and perceptions data on an ongoing basis. RIWI delivers anonymous opt-in surveys to Web users who are surfing online, with access to the entire global Internet population. When users land on one of the hundreds of thousands of domains that RIWI owns or controls at any given moment, these random, anonymous, and non-incented users are filtered through a series of proprietary algorithms and invited to participate in a language-appropriate survey. RIWI geo-targets respondents automatically by country, region, state, and city, and presents a language appropriate survey. Survey data are delivered on an interactive dashboard, through which variables of interest can be analyzed, together with hourly updated results, all downloadable in SPSS and Excel. No personally identifiable information is ever collected, stored, or transferred.

ANONYMITY & SECURITY OF RESPONDENT

RIWI has significant experience developing and launching anonymous digital data collection initiatives to reach anonymous Web users globally. RIWI is the only survey technology company that collects no personally identifiable information. All data captured, acquired, used, published or disseminated by RIWI technology and systems, or data released by RIWI, are fully compliant with all applicable laws. RIWI has conducted IRB-approved projects with researchers at various universities including Australian National University, Harvard University, Oxford University and the Medical University of South Carolina.

RIWI employs strategic security measures at all levels of the survey design, respondent experience, and data storage. Security measures are specific to the topic and region of deployment, as well as the recognized security risk, and can be adjusted as new information and geopolitical developments unfold.

For example, all answers are immediately stored in the RIWI system - and wiped from the device. Once a respondent exits the survey, there is no way to return to the survey through the same access point they first came across it. Respondents' interactions on the RIWI system are unviewable in their device or browser history. RIWI surveys are hosted on real, registered, non-trademarked domain sites that contain no malware and respondents are not contacted in any way via hack-able links in insecure email. No response is traceable to an individual.

SURVEY RESULTS

SECTION I: DEMOGRAPHICS

All respondents were asked to self-identify their gender and age. Using these data, RIWI applied weights based on the Sri Lankan national demographic figures.¹ In total, 8,584 people in Sri Lanka opted in to the survey and answered at least the age and gender questions. 2,721 respondents completed the entire survey. Because the target audience for this survey was the Internet-using population, the age and gender breakdowns of the total respondent sample differ from the natural population distribution of the country. In the total (unweighted) data, respondents follow the pattern of the Internet population, skewing towards the younger age groups and are more likely to be male. Overall, 48% of respondents in this survey are male and 52% are female. 58% of respondents are younger than 45 years old, and 42% are 45 or older. The majority of respondents (37%) live in the Western region of Sri Lanka, followed by the Central (13%), Southern (10%) and North Western (10%) regions. The survey was offered in both Sinhala and Tamil, with the majority of respondents choosing Sinhala (79%) as their preferred language.

SECTION II: CORRUPTION SCENARIOS AND PREVALENCE

To begin the survey, each respondent was asked if they believe Sri Lanka is going in the right or wrong direction in an effort to understand what people's opinions toward Sri Lanka's current situation is irrespective of corruption. Following this introduction, respondents were asked a variety of questions to gauge their attitudes and perceptions of various types of corruption present in Sri Lankan society. This was done by randomly exposing each respondent to two out of five corruption scenarios and whether or not they or someone they know have encountered this type of activity. To better understand how societal acceptance and perceptions differ in response to different types of corruption, respondents were asked to rate the level of acceptable and the frequency of occurrence. These scenarios were taken from the Verité investigation and subsequent report published in October 2019.

The level of acceptability was ranked on a four-point scale from *Very acceptable* to *Not acceptable at all*. Similarly, the frequency of occurrence was ranked on a four-point scale from *Very common* to *Not at all common*, with an additional *Don't know* option.

¹ RIWI uses the most recently available national census data for weighting purposes, according to the US Census Bureau.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

- **Encounter with Corrupt Scenario.** In an effort to measure the prevalence of corruption, respondents were asked whether or not they or someone they know had witnessed and encountered these types of corrupt activities. Across all scenarios the majority of respondents report never encountering these types of corruption. That being said the most encountered scenario of the five was corruption perpetrated by a government official (36%), followed by a Member of Parliament (MP) (35%). What stands out about this finding is that the corruption in both scenarios is undertaken by a public official. 71% of respondents who were exposed to these two scenarios say they had experienced or witnessed both.
- **Frequency of Occurrence:** The data show that corruption undertaken by a traffic police officer is a common activity with 39% of respondents reporting it is very or somewhat common. This is followed by a MP who forgoes the proper hiring process (38%). Across all scenarios a large portion of respondents (27%-40%) do not know how common these situations are within Sri Lankan society which illustrates the general lack of awareness among citizens.
- **Level of Acceptability:** On average (68%) respondents felt that each of the 5 scenarios were unacceptable. In terms of the level of unacceptability, acts of corruption committed by the school principal was ranked as the most unacceptable scenario (79%), followed by a member of parliament (72%). By contrast, corruption undertaken by the traffic policeman was seen as the most acceptable corrupt activity with 17% of respondents saying it is very acceptable and an additional 33% saying it is somewhat acceptable.

CORRUPTION SCENARIOS:

- **Direction of Sri Lanka:** Respondents who believe Sri Lanka is going in the wrong direction are more likely to believe that corruption is more common compared to those who believe Sri Lanka is going in the right direction. Similarly, respondents who believe Sri Lanka is going in the wrong direction are also more likely to have experienced, witnessed, or know someone who has experienced that type of corruption before, than respondents who think the country is going in the right direction. Respondents aged 65+ are more likely to believe Sri Lanka is going in the wrong direction than any other age group. Also interesting, from a regional perspective, 37% of respondents from North Central Province believe Sri Lanka is going in the wrong direction compared to 24% in the Eastern region.
- **Government Official:** 36% of respondents have encountered or know someone who has encountered a government official requesting money or gifts to provide a service. Making it the most encountered corruption scenario. Respondents aged 55-64 are most likely to have encountered this activity in some way (43%).
 - When asked how common this activity is within society, 42% of respondents said it is very or somewhat common. Respondents aged 65+ are most likely to report this as a

- common activity in society (54%). These views are shared by respondents aged 14-24 (43%), and 55-64 (44%) who also see this as a common occurrence.
- Interestingly, 40% of respondents 64+ and 36% of respondents aged 14-24 see this scenario as acceptable.
 - From a gendered perspective, men are slightly more likely to believe that a government official asking for bribes is unacceptable (70%), compared to women (67%)
 - RIWI respondents believe this is less common (42%) than those surveys by Verité (73%)²
- **Traffic Policeman:** Nearly one third (32%) of respondents have encountered or know someone who has encountered a traffic policeman accepting a payment or gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation. Respondents 65+ are most likely (44%) to have experienced or know someone who has experienced this form of corruption, followed by respondents aged 45-54 (39%).
 - This is reported as the second most common scenario with 18% of respondents reporting it as very common and an additional 21% saying it is somewhat common. 37% of respondents say they don't know how common it is.
 - This is a widely accepted activity, as 50% of all respondents report it being acceptable to some degree. That being said men are slightly more likely to believe a traffic policeman accepting payment is unacceptable (52%), compared to women (47%)
 - When compared to the Verité report, RIWI respondents see this as a less common and more accepted scenario, than Verité respondents. Despite this difference, This scenario was seen as the most accepted and common activity in the Verité report.³
 - Level of Unacceptability: 50% of RIWI respondents believe this is unacceptable compared to 61% Verité
 - Frequency of occurrence: 82% Verité respondents thinks its common within society, compared to 39% of RIWI respondents
 - This is interesting as police are also seen as the most corrupt sector in Sri Lanka (unprompted), according to the Verité report.
 - **Member of Parliament:** 35% of respondents have encountered or know someone who has encountered an MP who has hired a relative without going through proper procedures. Respondents aged 45-54 are most likely to have encountered this activity in some way (43%).
 - In terms of frequency of occurrence, 23% say it is a very common occurrence while an additional 15% say it is somewhat common. 32% of respondents say they do not know how common this activity is within society, the lowest percentage of any scenario.
 - RIWI respondents believe this scenario is much less common (38%) than respondents in the Verité report (91%). RIWI respondents were also more likely to say they don't know how common its is (32%) than seen in the Verité findings (4%)⁴

² Verité report, Page 14, Exhibit 11: Perception of the frequency of corrupt practices among public official: Requesting extra money or gifts for a public service that should have been provided for free”

³ Verité report, Page 12, Exhibit 6,7 and 8: “A private citizen driving without his drivers incense is stopped by a police officer and provides a cash gift to the officer in order to successfully complete his journey.”

⁴ Verité report, Page 14, Exhibit 11: Perception of the frequency of corrupt practices among public official: “Influencing the hiring of friends or relatives in the public sector”

- This is seen as one of the least acceptable forms of corruption with 72% of respondents saying it is unacceptable.
- **Favorable treatment by a court:** Someone offering payment or gifts to receive favorable treatment by a court is the least encountered scenario by respondents with only 23% of all respondents reporting they have, or know someone who has encountered it.
 - 29% of respondents report this activity being common, while a similar number of respondents (30%) say it is uncommon. A significant number of respondents reported that they did not know how common this was (41%).
 - 70% of respondents believe this activity is unacceptable.
- **School Principal:** 24% of respondents have encountered or know someone who has encountered a school principal asking for money or sexual favors in order for a child to be admitted into a prestigious school. Females (25%) are more likely to have encountered this activity than men (18%). Furthermore, those aged 65+ report a higher incidence rate of experiencing this activity than any other age group (29%).
 - 29% of respondents believe this is a common occurrence within society, while 36% believe it is uncommon. An additional 34% say they do not know how common this scenario is within society.
 - Over three quarters of respondents believe this form of corruption to be unacceptable, making it the least acceptable amongst all of the scenarios. 70% of respondents believe it is not at all acceptable, and 9% saying it is not very acceptable.
 - RIWI respondents believe this is more unacceptable, and less common activity than those surveyed in the Verité report⁵
 - Unacceptability: 79% of RIWI respondents and 69% of Verité respondents believe this is an unacceptable activity.
 - Frequency of Occurrence: 29% of RIWI respondents and 76% of Verité respondents believe this is a common occurrence in Sri Lankan society

SECTION III: REPORTING CORRUPTION

- **Experienced Corruption:** 13% of respondents say they, a relative or a close friend has experienced or witnessed corruption, with **70% saying they have not experienced corruption at all**. This finding is nearly identical between people who have positive or negative views of Sri Lanka's future. An additional 17% said they were not sure whether or not they have experienced corruption, leading us to believe many people are unclear as to what corruption is defined as.
 - **Tamil speakers are more likely to have experienced corruption (26%)** than Sinhala speakers (9%). Tamil speakers are also more likely to say that they don't know whether or not they have experienced corruption (28%).

⁵ Verité report, Page 13, Exhibit 9 and 8: "A principal asks a parent to give him a cash gift to ensure that their child gets admission into a leading school"

- **Experienced corruption and reported the incident:** Of the 13% of respondents who say they have personally experienced an act of corruption, **44% reported the incident.** 30% of those respondents reported their experience to the police, while another 30% reported it to a friend or family member, and 20% reported it to the Bribery Commission. “Media institutions” are the least common institutions where respondents would report the issue (5%). 14% of respondents say they reported the incident to an institution not included in the answer options, highlighting a need for further investigation. **29% of respondents report suffering negative consequences** after reporting the incident of corruption, 20% report formal procedures were initiated, 17% report nothing happening and 11% say the problem was solved informally.
- **Experienced corruption and did not report the incident:** Of the 56% of respondents who said they did not report the incident 35% say they did not report it because they were afraid of negative consequences. 24% say they did not report it because they did not believe anything would happen as a result of reporting.
- **Have not experienced corruption:** Of the respondents who have not experienced corruption, 60% say that if they were to experience it they would report it to the police. An additional 13% say they would report to the Bribery Commission, and 13% say they would report to friends or family members. 11% say they would not report the incident at all.

Survey Findings

Public Perceptions of Corruption in Sri Lanka

Age & Gender Distribution

Gender	No. of respondents	% of respondent (unweighted)	% of respondents (weighted)
Male	6,562	76%	48%
Female	2,020	24%	52%
Total: 8,582			

Age	No. of respondents	% of respondents (unweighted)	% respondents (weighted)
14-24	3,968	46%	21%
25-34	2,646	31%	18%
35-44	1,114	13%	19%
45-54	420	5%	16%
55-64	215	3%	13%
65+	219	3%	13%
Total: 8,582			

Province & Language Distribution

Province	No. of respondents	% of respondents (unweighted)	% of respondents (weighted)
Central	344	13%	13%
Eastern	209	8%	7%
North central	154	6%	5%
North western	264	10%	10%
Northern	184	7%	7%
Sabaragamuwa	245	9%	8%
Southern	292	11%	10%
Uva	119	4%	4%
Western	913	34%	37%
Total: 2,727			

Language	No. of respondents	% of respondents (unweighted)	% of respondents (weighted)
Sinhala	6,911	81%	79%
Tamil	1,668	19%	21%
Total: 8,587			

In your opinion, is Sri Lanka going in the right or wrong direction?

■ Right direction ■ Wrong direction



Q1: n= 8,589

A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service
Have you or someone you know encountered this type of activity?

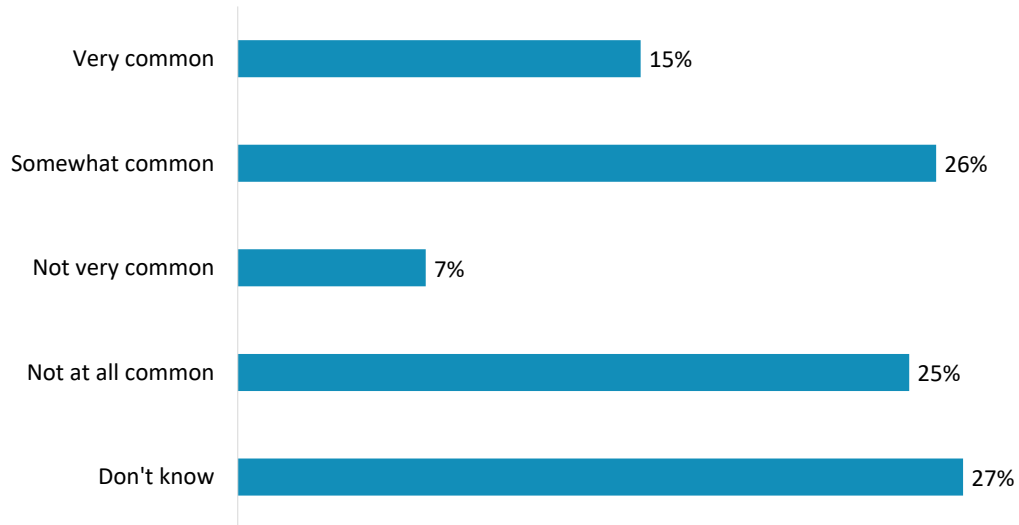
■ Yes ■ No



Q2a: n=2,341

A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service

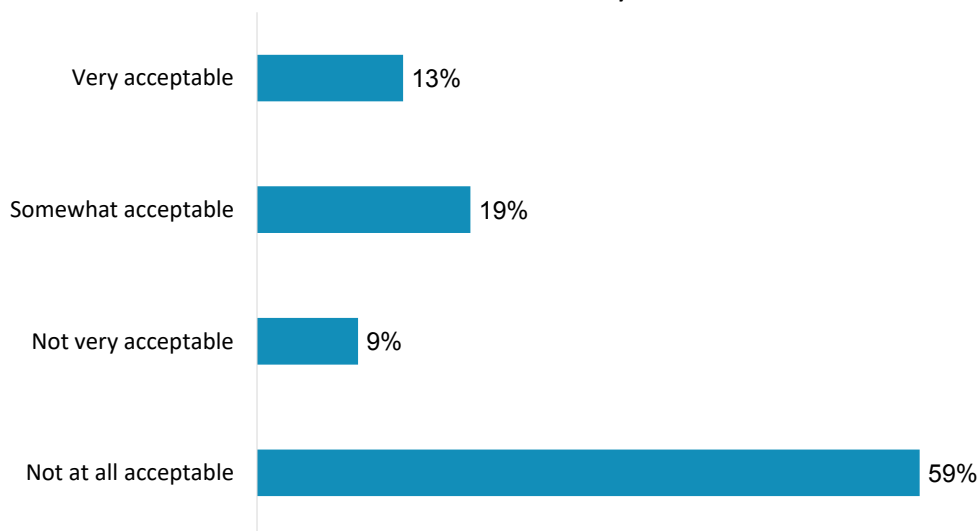
How common is this activity in society?



Q3a: n= 1,965

A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service

How acceptable would you say this activity is in Sri Lankan society?



Q4a: n= 1,722

A traffic policeman accepts a payment or a gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation

Have you or someone you know encountered this type of activity?

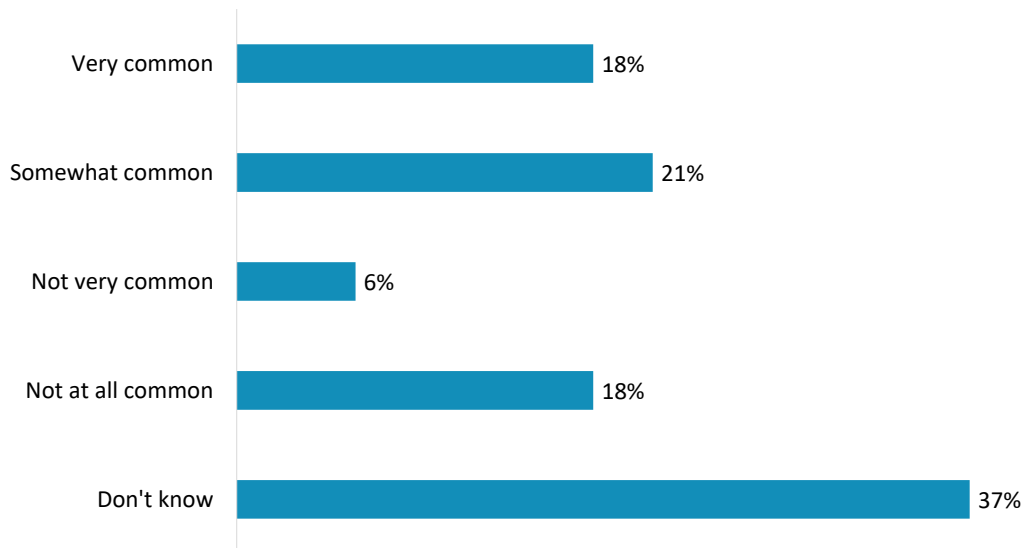
■ Yes ■ No



Q2b: n=2,373

A traffic policeman accepts a payment or a gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation

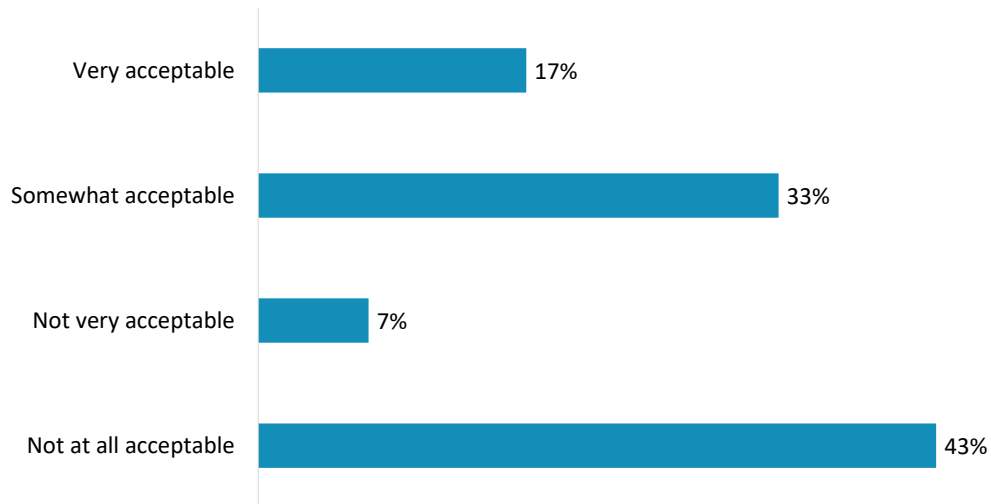
How common is this activity in society?



Q3b: n= 1,927

A traffic policeman accepts a payment or a gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation

How acceptable would you say this activity is in Sri Lankan society?



Q4b: n= 1,662

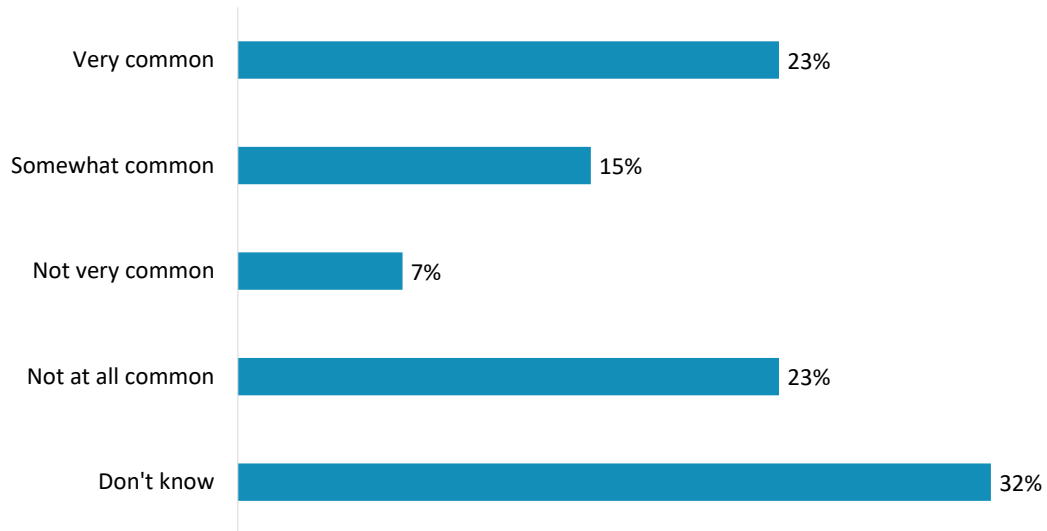
A member of parliament hires a relative without going through the proper process
Have you or someone you know encountered this type of activity?

■ Yes ■ No



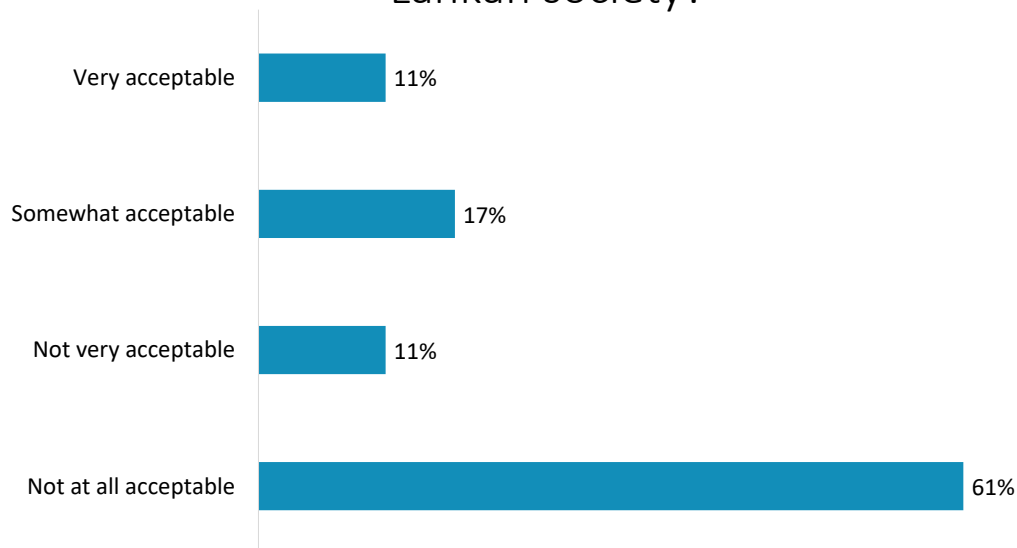
Q2c: n= 2,177

A member of parliament hired a relative without going through the proper process
How common is this activity in society?



Q3c: n= 1,770

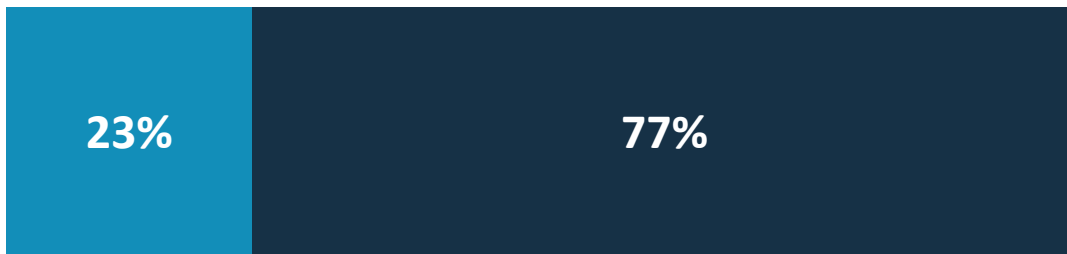
A member of parliament hired a relative without going through the proper process
How acceptable would you say this activity is in Sri Lankan society?



Q4c: n= 1,499

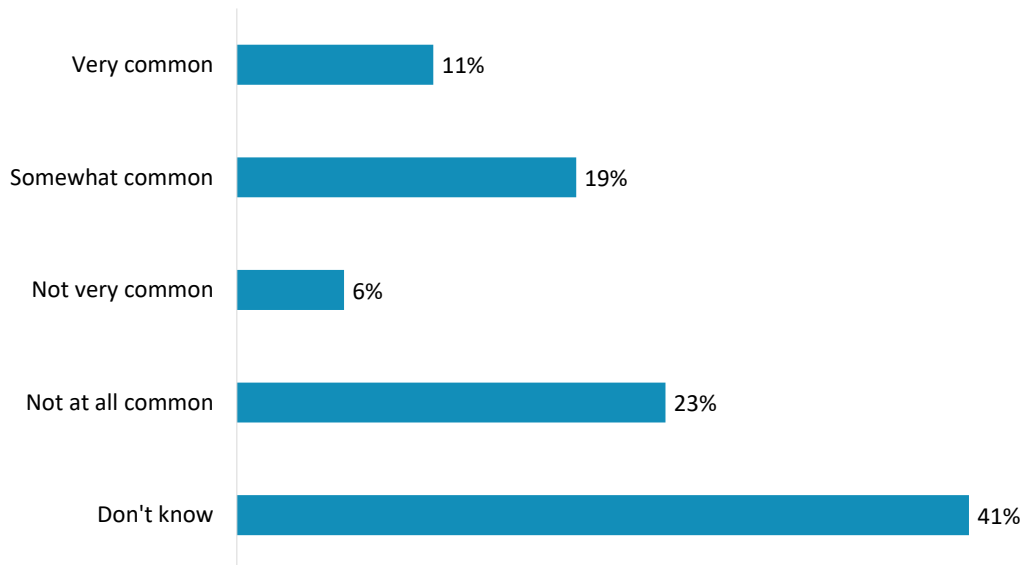
Someone offers payment or other gifts to receive favorable treatment by a court
Have you or someone you know encountered this type of activity?

■ Yes ■ No



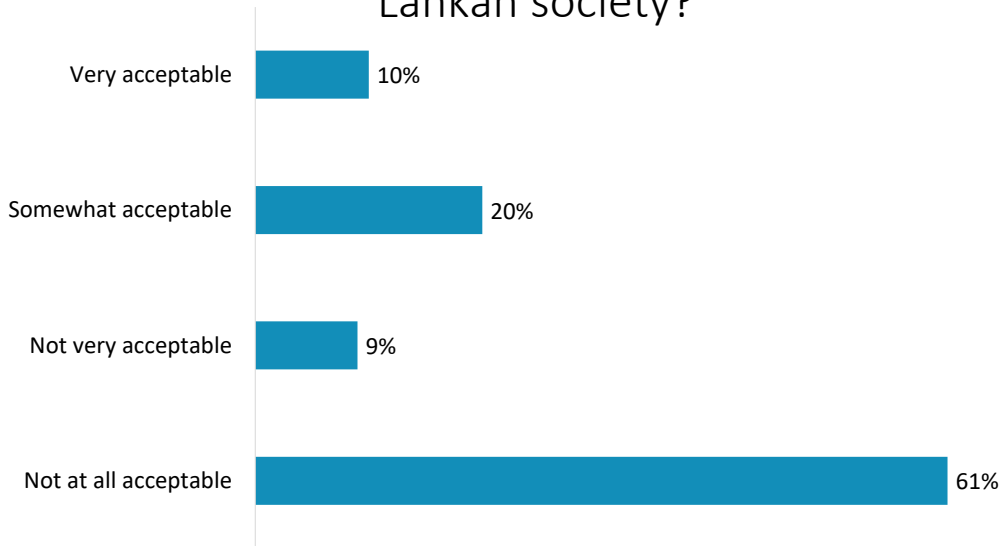
Q2d: n= 2,266

Someone offers payment or other gifts to receive favorable treatment by a court
How common is this activity in society?



Q3d: n= 1,863

Someone offers payment or other gifts to receive favorable treatment by a court
How acceptable would you say this activity is in Sri Lankan society?

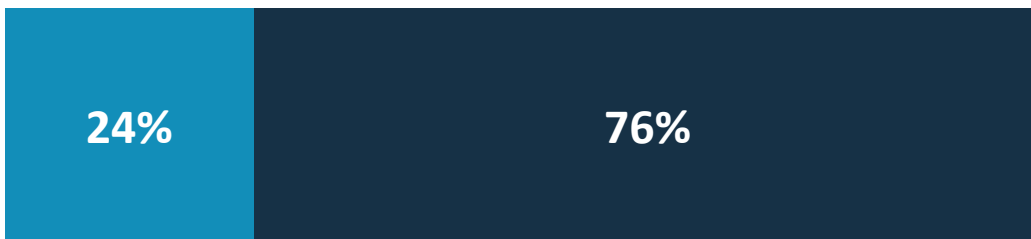


Q4d: n= 1,569

A school principal asks for money or sexual favors for a child to be admitted into a prestigious school

Have you or someone you know encountered this type of activity?

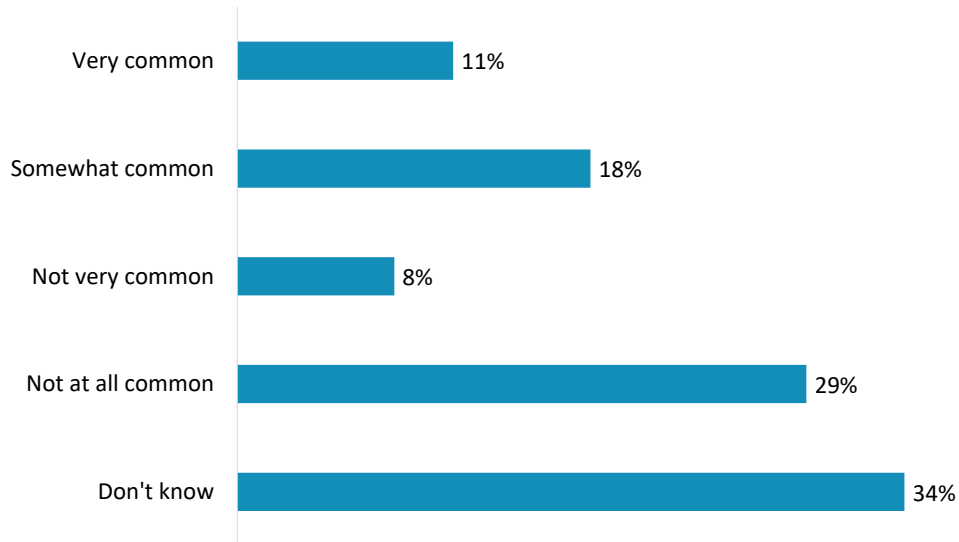
■ Yes ■ No



Q2e: n= 2,352

A school principal asks for money or sexual favors for a child to be admitted into a prestigious school

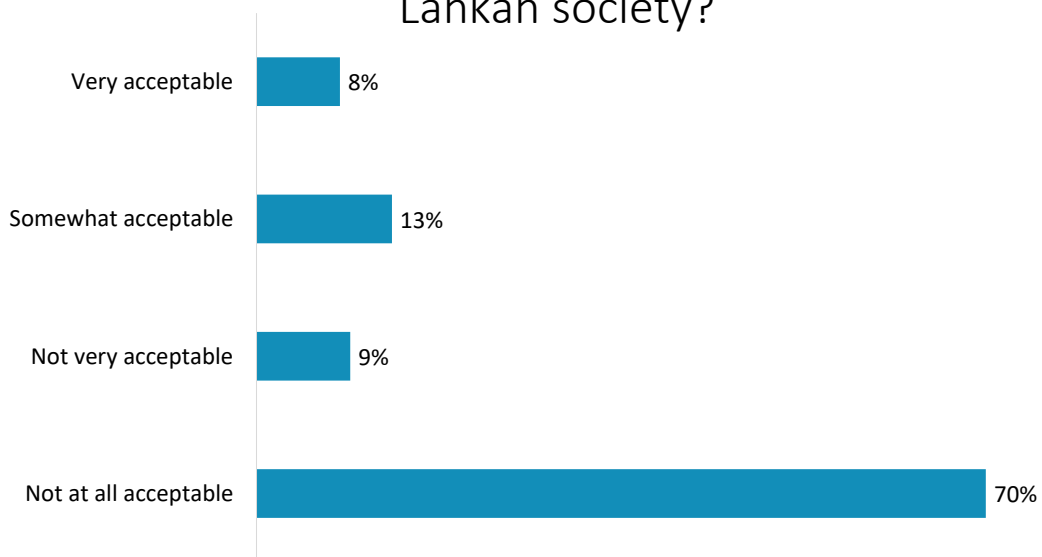
How common is this activity in society?



Q3e: n= 1,996

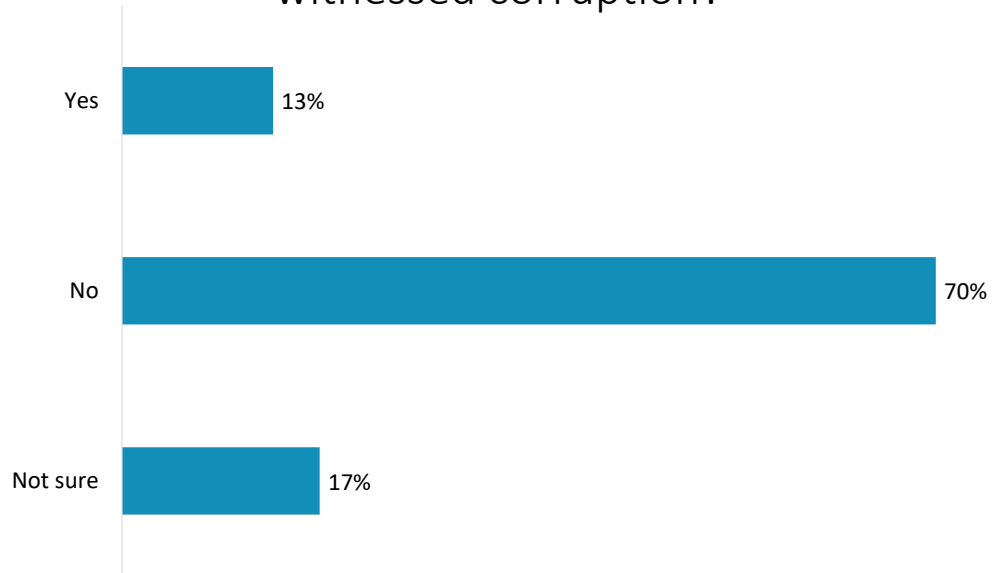
A school principal asks for money or sexual favours for a child to be admitted into a prestigious school

How acceptable would you say this activity is in Sri Lankan society?



Q4e: n=1,736

Have you, a relative, or a close friend ever experienced or witnessed corruption?



Q5: n= 3,189

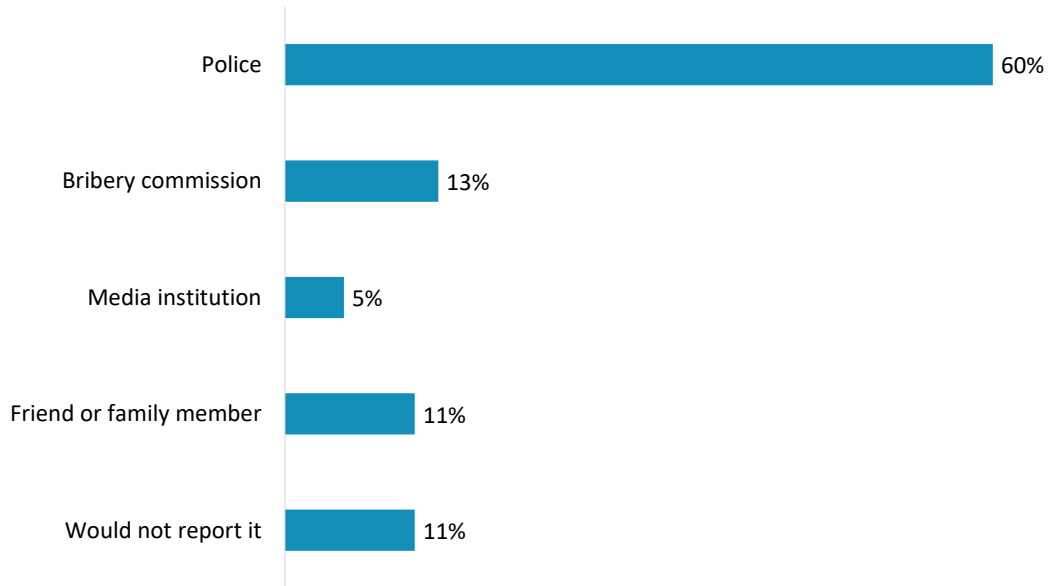
Did you report the incident?

■ Yes ■ No



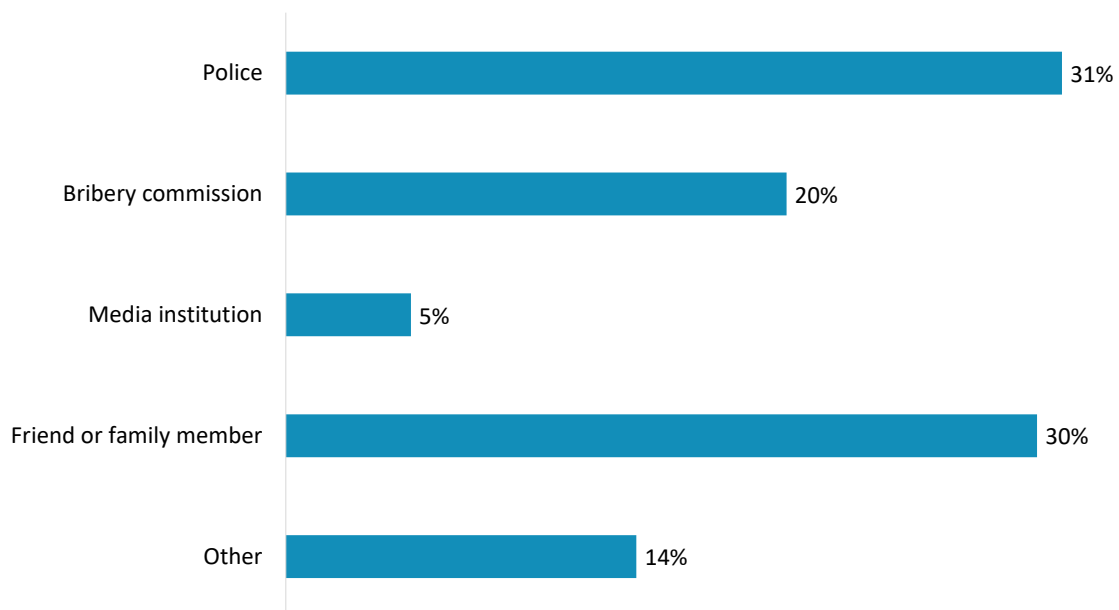
Q6a: n= 361

If you were to experience corruption, who would you report it to?



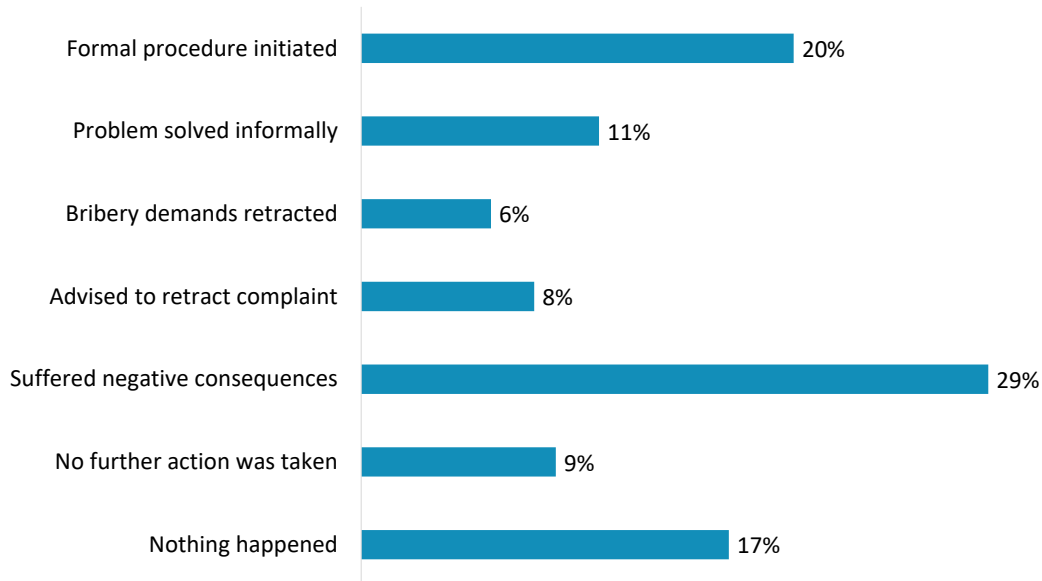
Q6b: n= 2,545

Who did you report the incident to?



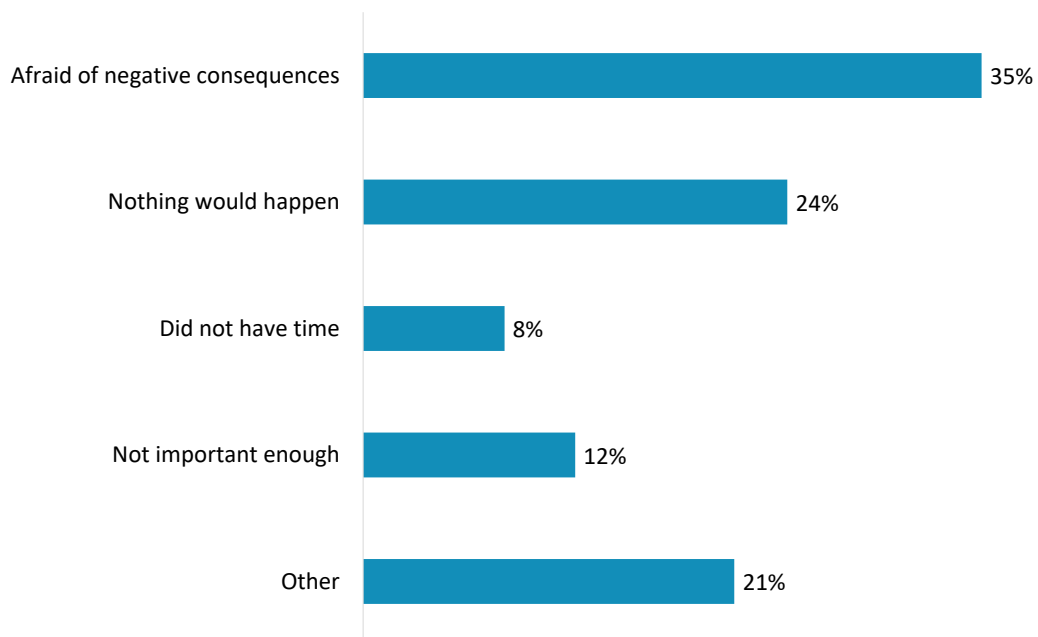
Q7: n= 148

What happened once you reported the incident of corruption?



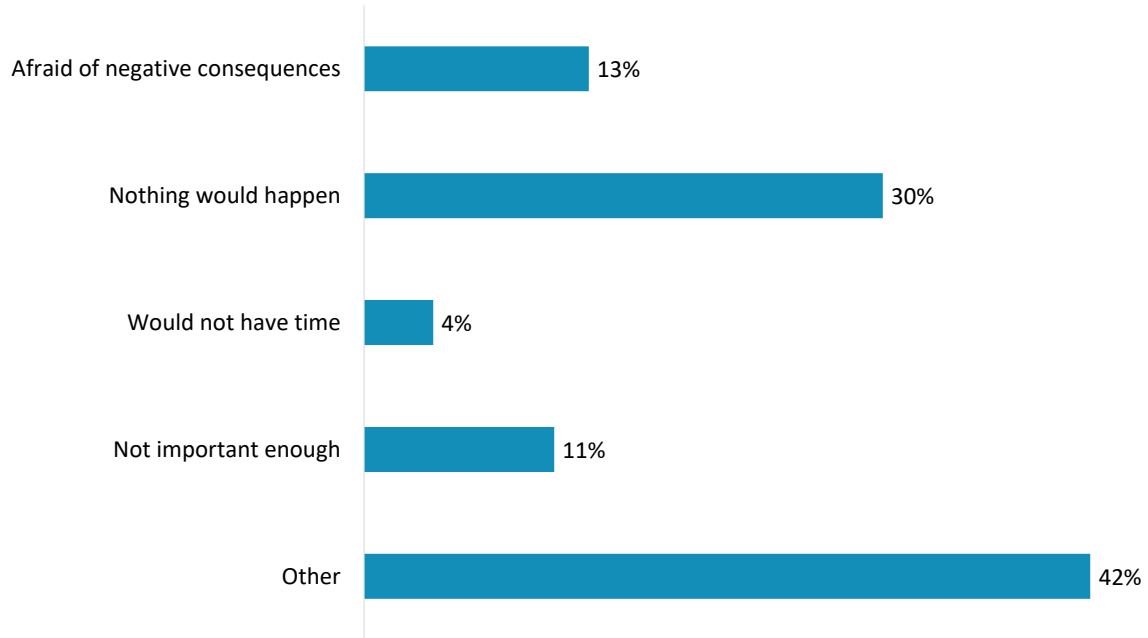
Q8: n= 127

Why did you not report the incident?



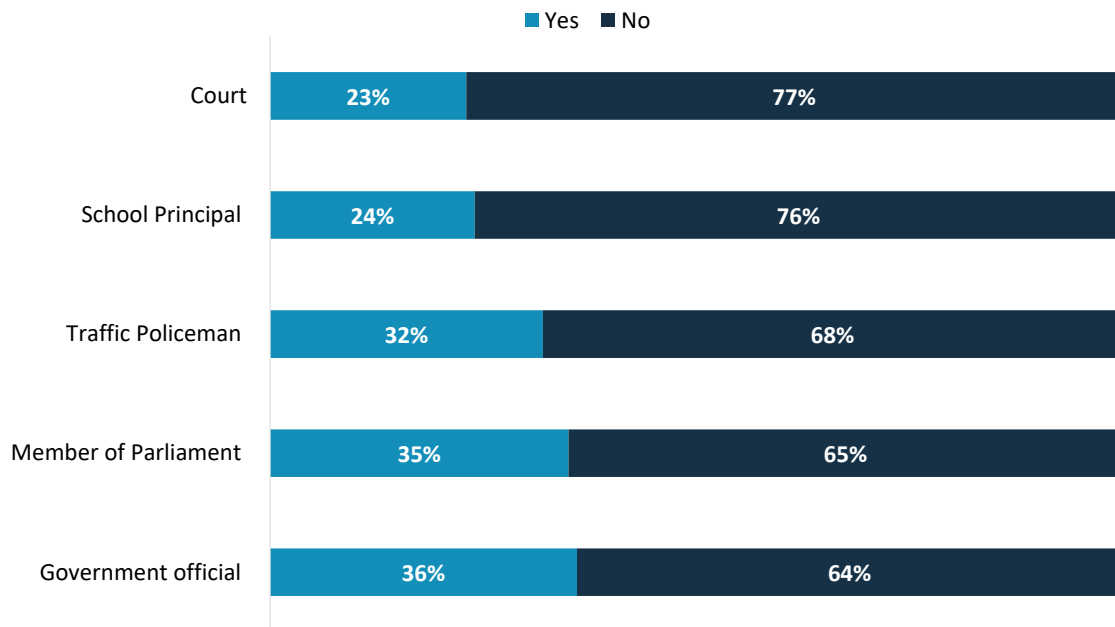
Q9: n=178

Why would you not report the incident?

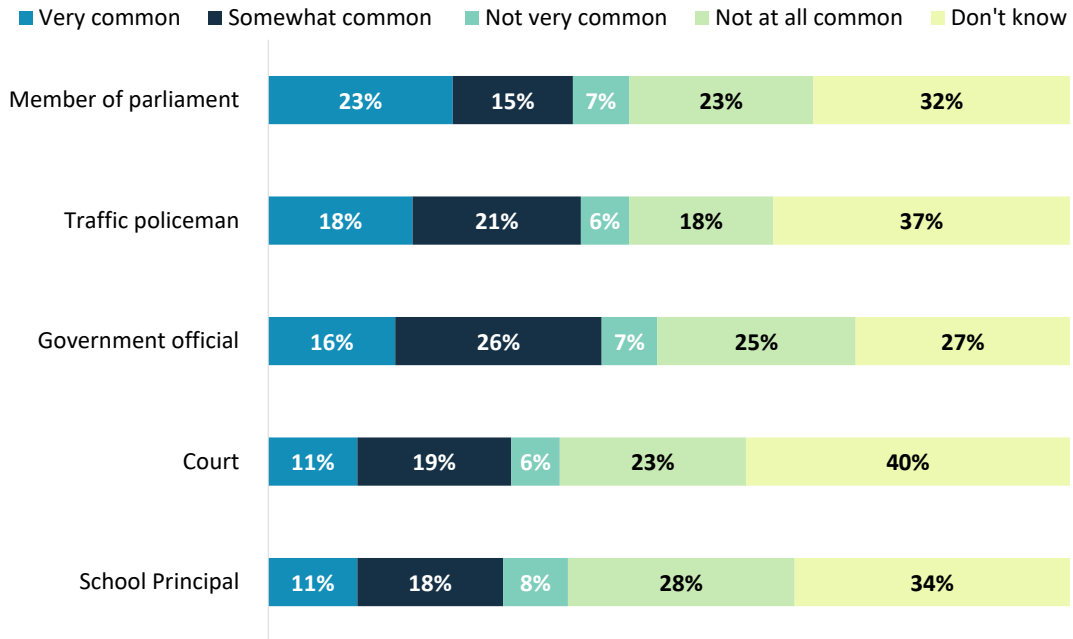


Q9b: n=250

Encountered Corrupt Activity

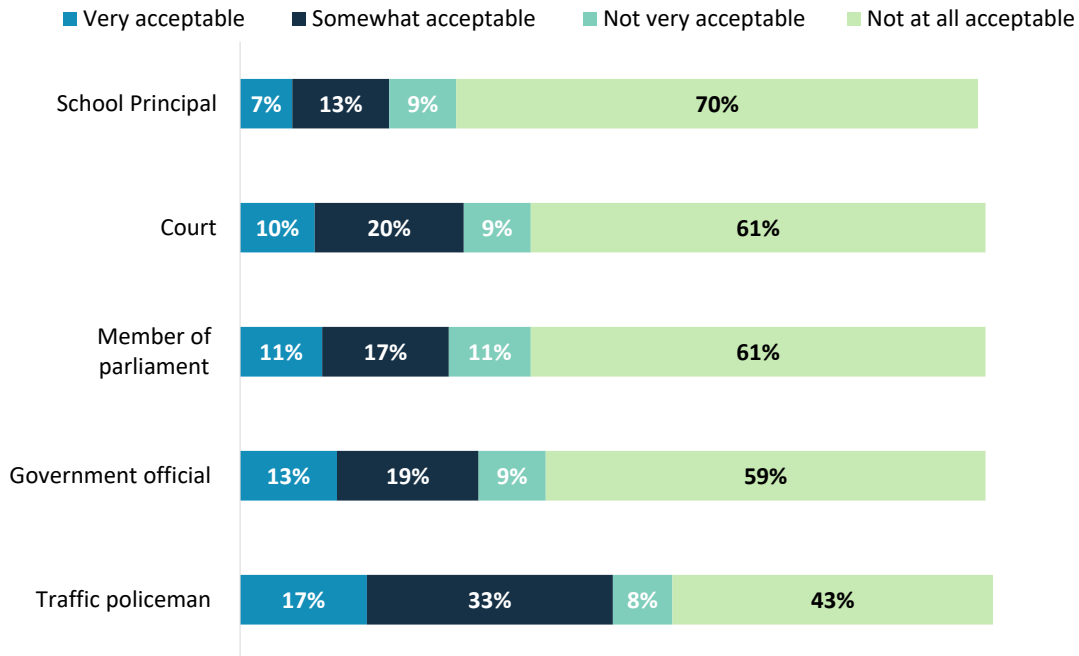


Frequency of Occurrence



Q3a,b,c,d,3: n= 9,518

Level of Unacceptability



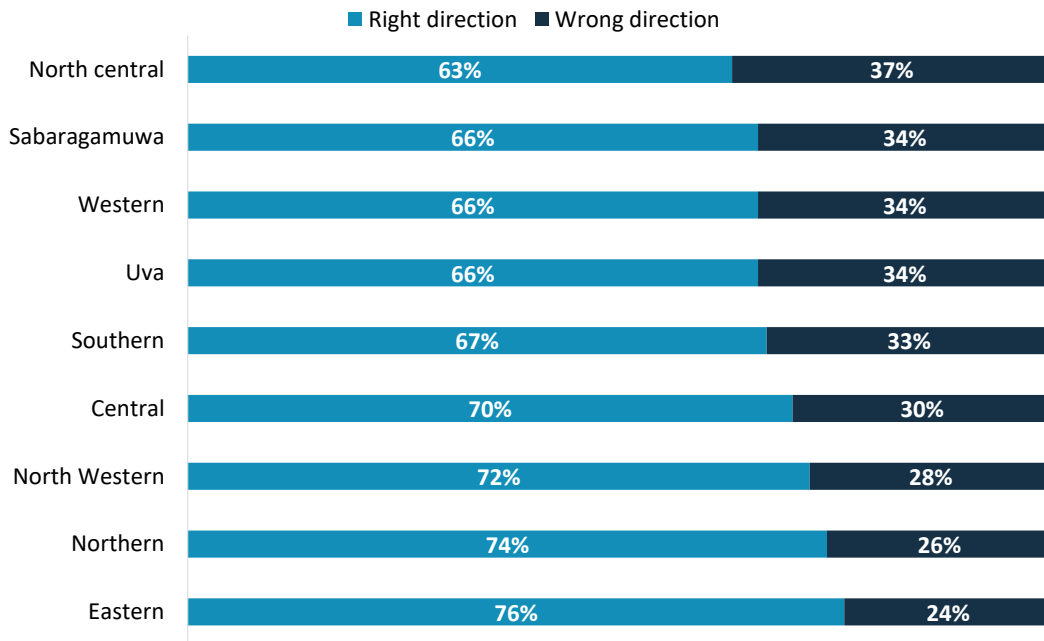
Q4a,b,c,d,e: n= 8,191



Survey Findings

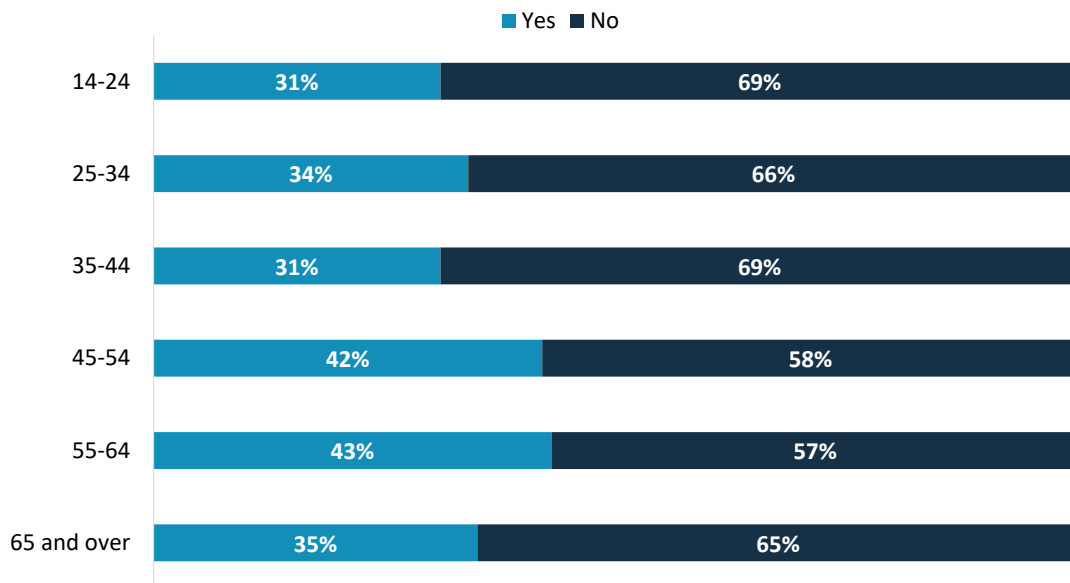
Cross Tabulations

Direction of Sri Lanka by Province



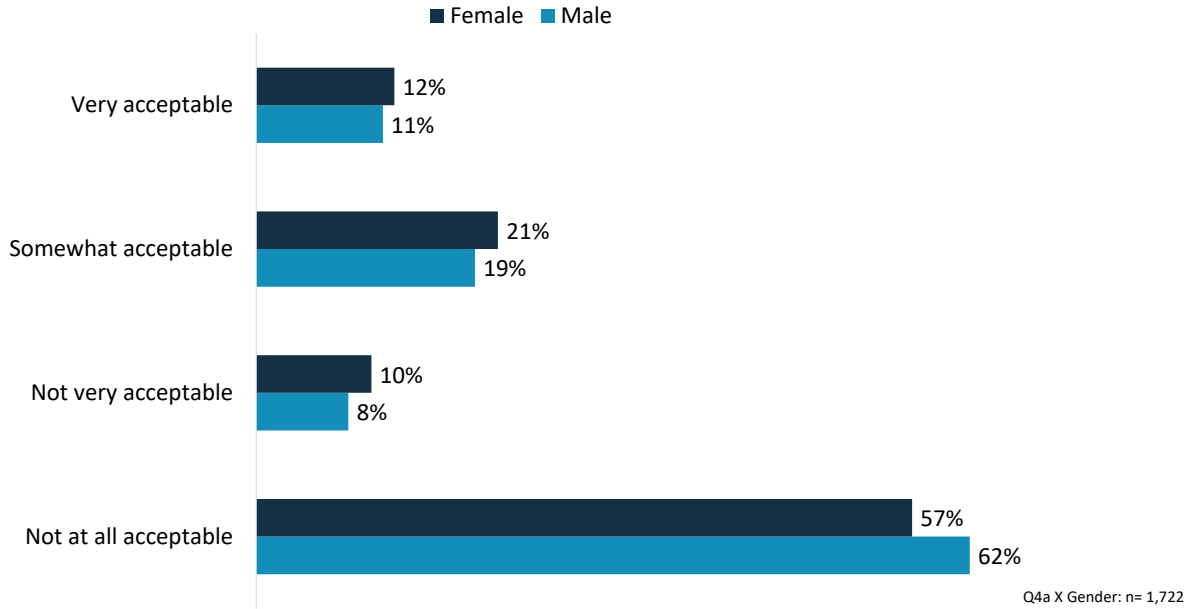
Q1 x Q10: n= 2,727

A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service Encounter Corrupt Activity by Age

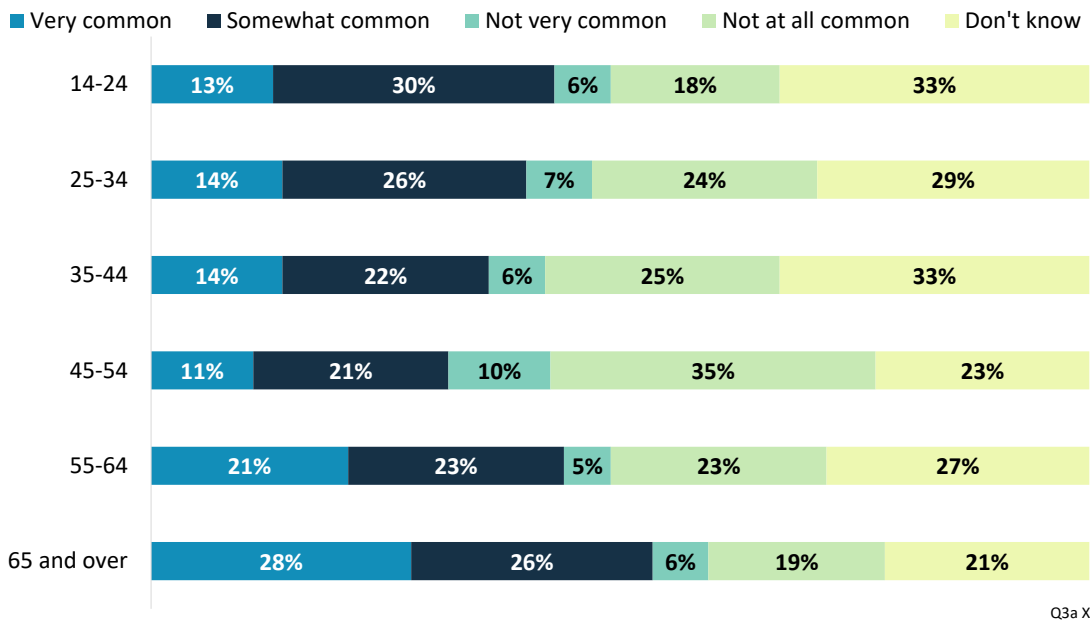


Q2a X Age: n= 2,341

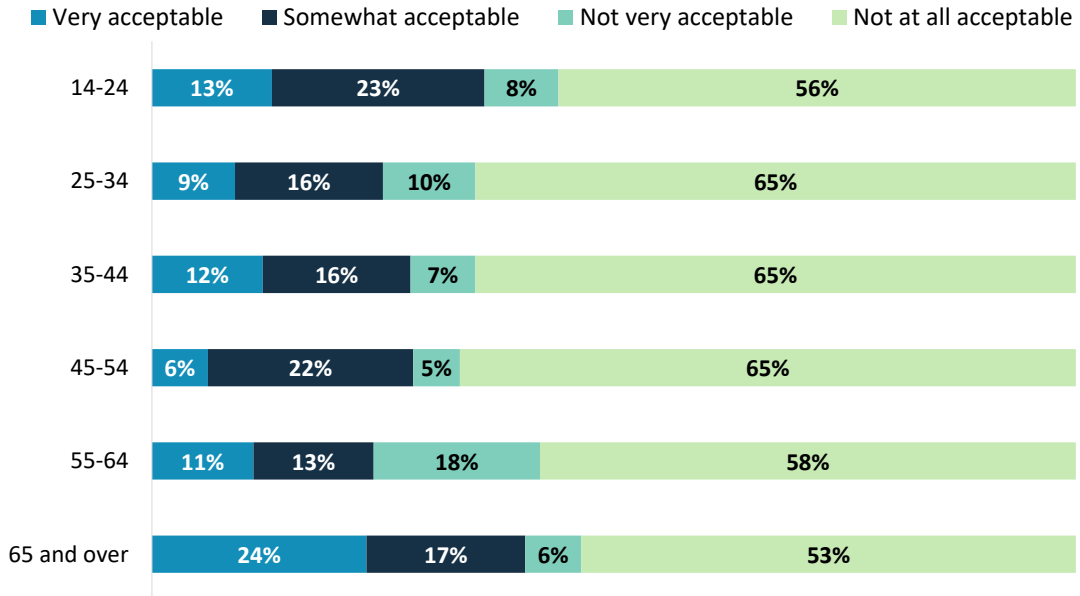
A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service
Level of Unacceptability by Gender



A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service
Frequency of Occurrence by Age

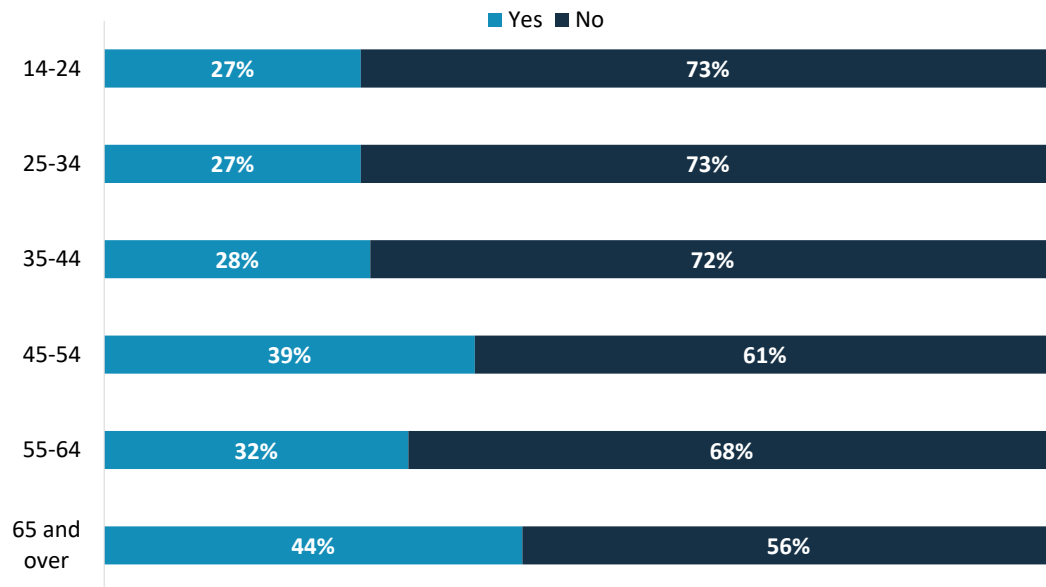


A government official requests money or gifts to provide a service
Level of Unacceptability by Age



Q4a x Age: n= 1,722

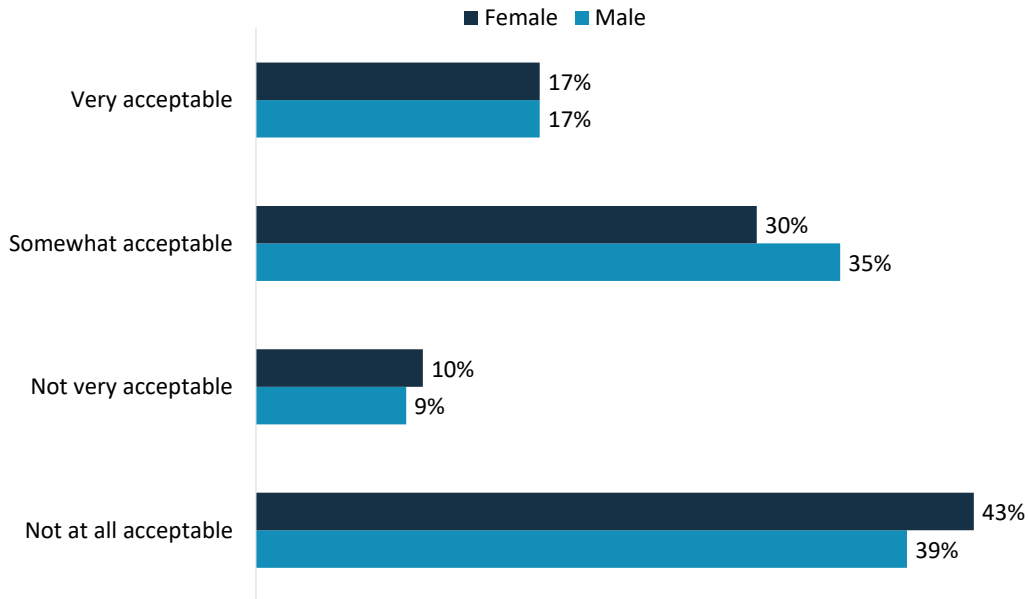
A traffic policeman accepts a payment or a gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation
Encounter Corrupt Activity by Age



Q2b X Age: 2,373

A traffic policeman accepts a payment or a gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation

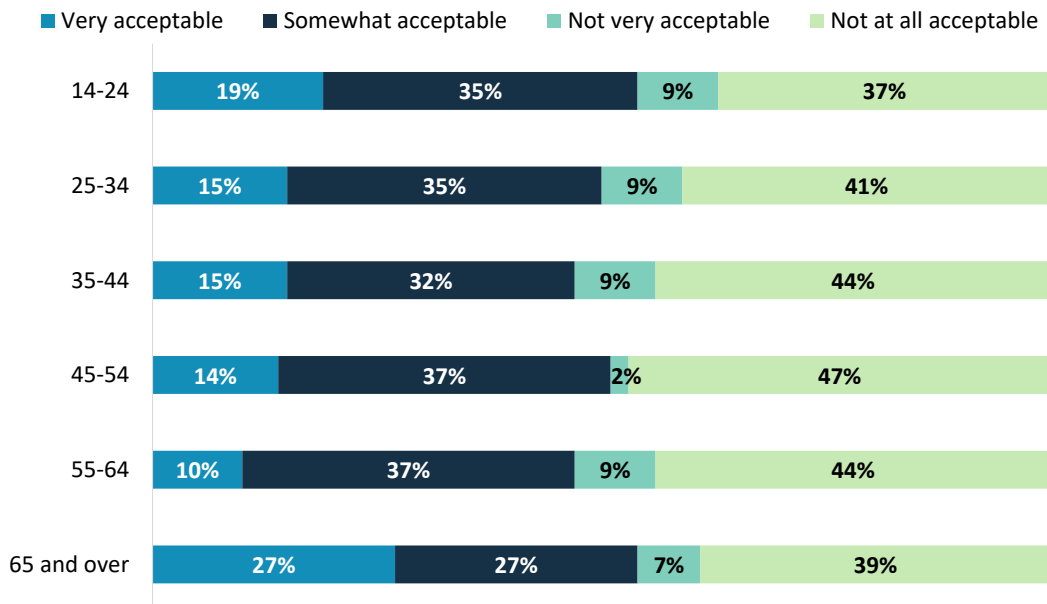
Level of Unacceptability by Gender



Q4b X Gender: n= 1,662

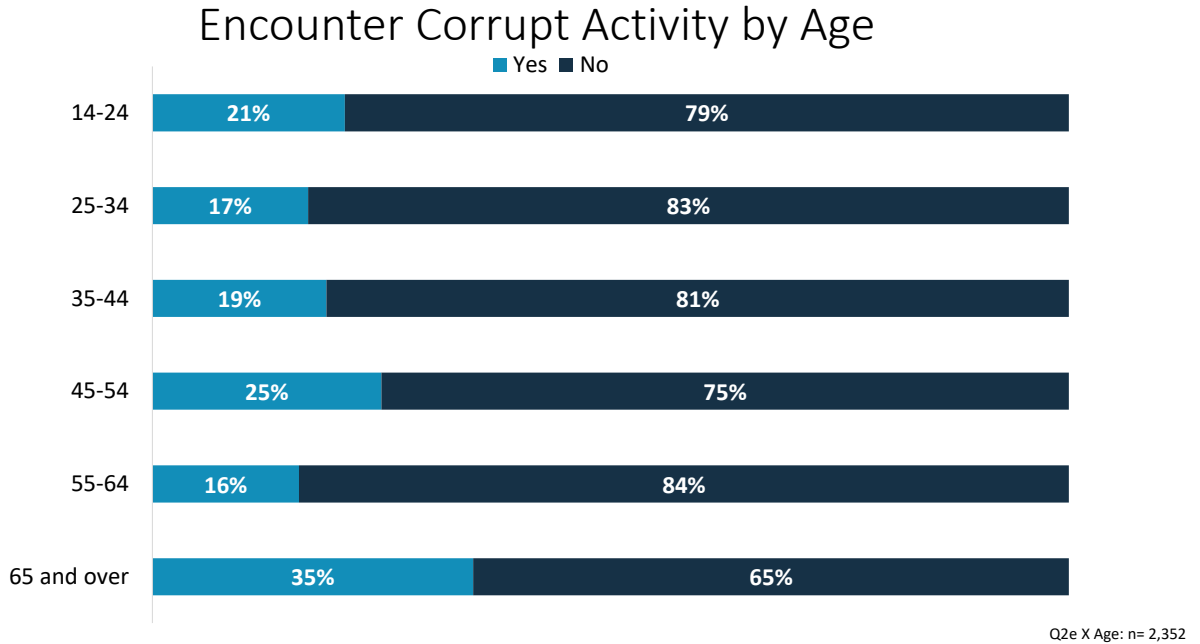
A traffic policeman accepts a payment or a gift in exchange for ignoring a traffic violation

Level of Unacceptability by Age

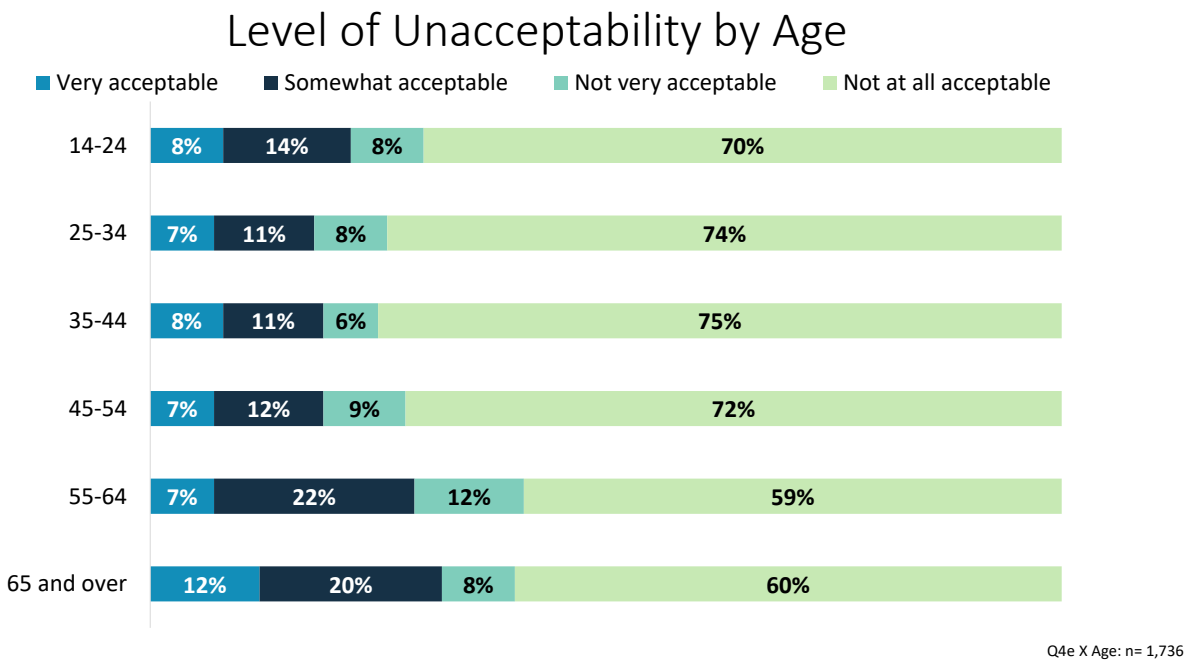


Q4b X Age: n= 1,662

A school principal asks for money or sexual favors in order for a child to be admitted into a prestigious school

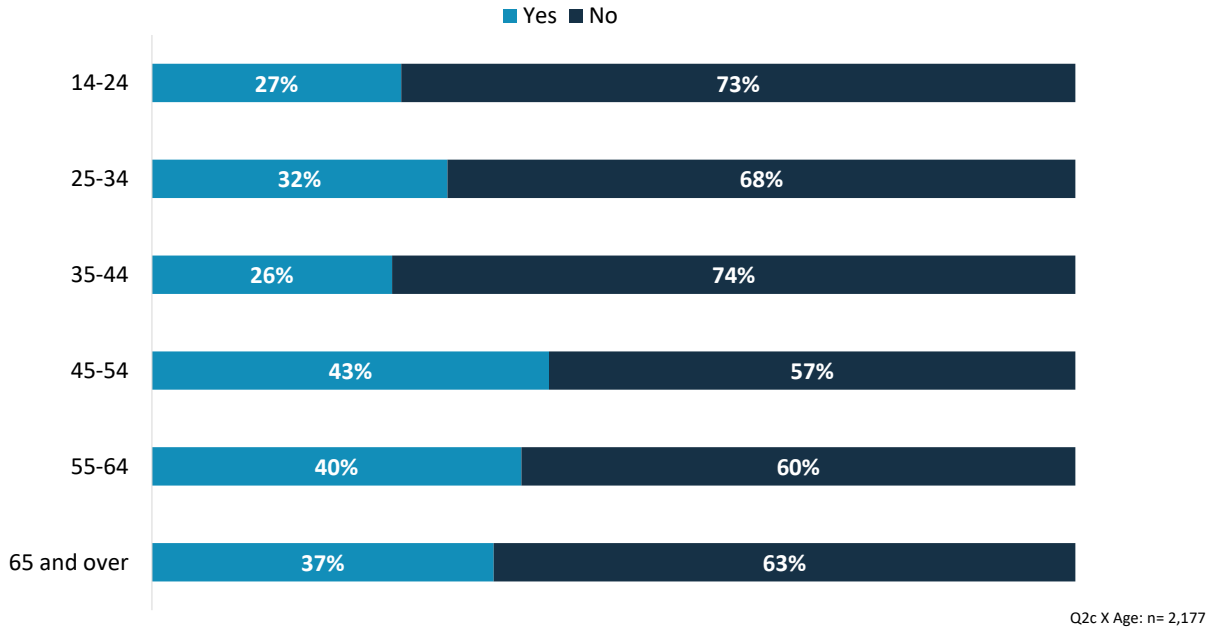


A school principal asks for money or sexual favors in order for a child to be admitted into a prestigious school

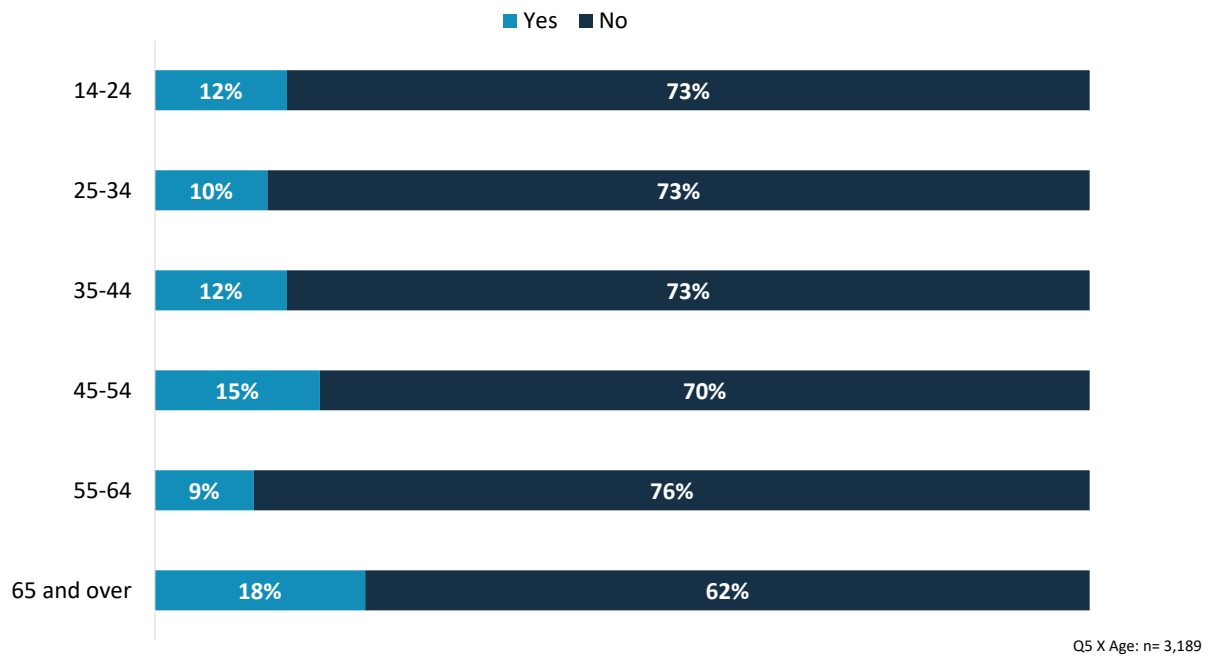


A member of parliament hires a relative without going through the proper process

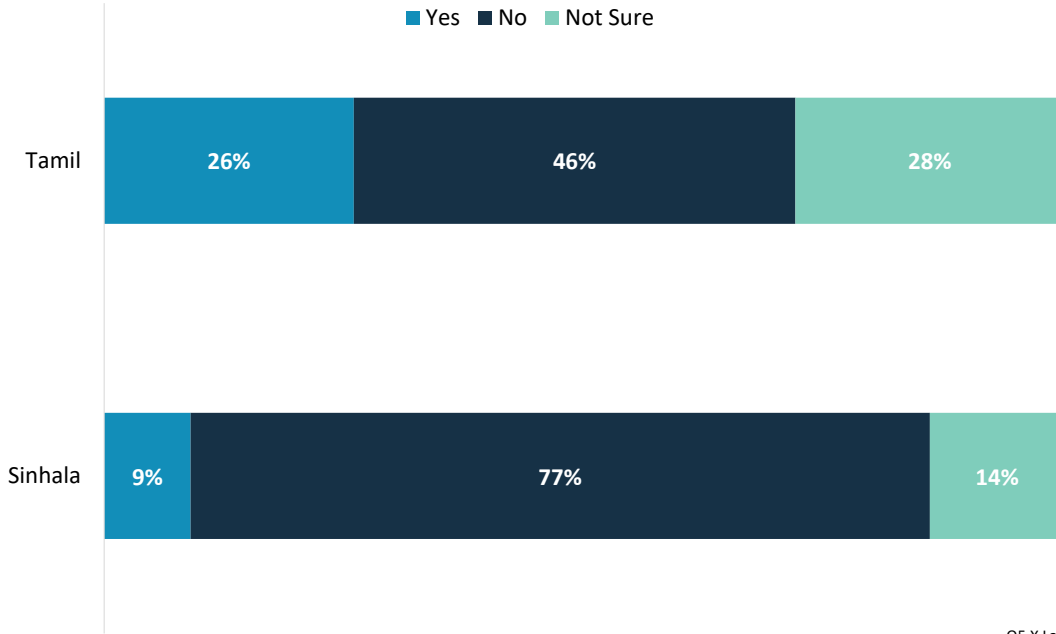
Encounter Corrupt Activity by Age



Experienced Corruption by Age

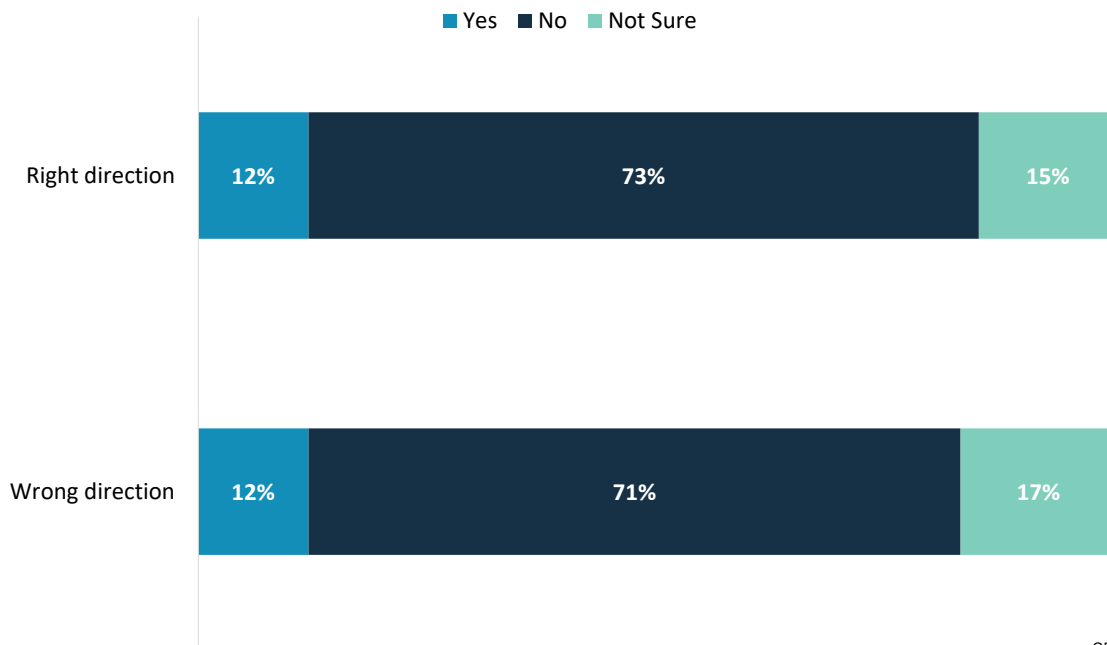


Experienced Corruption by Language



Q5 X Language: n= 3,189

Experienced Corruption by Direction of Sri Lanka



Q5 X Q1: n= 3,189

- INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY AND
THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION
HAVE TO BE PART OF THE CULTURE.
THEY HAVE TO BE TAUGHT
AS FUNDAMENTAL VALUES. -