EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reach of bribery

Almost a third of Nigerian adults pay bribes when in contact with public officials

Almost a third of Nigerian adults (32.3 per cent) who had contact with a public official between June 2015 and May 2016 had to pay, or were requested to pay, a bribe to that public official. The magnitude of public sector bribery in Nigeria becomes even more palpable when factoring in the frequency of those payments, as the majority of those who paid a bribe to a public official did so more than once over the course of the year. According to the survey, bribe-payers in Nigeria pay an average of some six bribes in one year, or roughly one bribe every two months.

On average, almost one bribe is paid by every adult Nigerian per year

By combining the total number of people who paid a bribe to a public official with the frequency of those payments, it is estimated that a total of roughly 82.3 million bribes were paid in Nigeria in the 12 months prior to the survey. This results in an average of 0.93 bribes paid per adult, or almost one bribe paid by every adult Nigerian per year.

Roughly 400 billion Nigerian Naira spent on bribes each year

Taking into account the fact that nine out of every ten bribes paid to public officials in Nigeria are paid in cash and the size of the payments made, it is estimated that the total amount of bribes paid to public officials in Nigeria in the 12 months prior to the survey was around 400 billion Nigerian Naira (NGN), the equivalent of $4.6 billion in purchasing power parity (PPP). This sum is equivalent to 39 per cent of the combined federal and state education budgets in 2016.

Bribe-payers in Nigeria spend an eighth of their salary on bribes

The average sum paid as a cash bribe in Nigeria is approximately NGN 5,300, which is equivalent to roughly $61 - PPP. This means that every time a Nigerian pays a cash bribe, he or she spends an average of about 28.2 per cent of the average monthly salary of approximately NGN 18,900. Since bribe-payers in Nigeria pay an average of 5.8 bribes over the course of one year, 92 per cent of which are paid in cash, they spend an average of NGN 28,200 annually on cash bribes — equivalent to 12.5 per cent of the annual average salary.

Prevalence and frequency of bribery at the national level, urban/rural areas and by zone, Nigeria, 2016

Nigerians consider bribery the third most important problem facing their country

The above findings could explain why, after the high cost of living and unemployment, Nigerians consider corruption to be the third most important problem facing their country, well ahead of the state of the country’s infrastructure and health service. Public sector bribery is not the only form of corruption affecting Nigeria: the prevalence of bribery in relation to selected employees of private companies is 5.5
per cent, meaning that bribery is also significant in the private sector in Nigeria. However, the payment of bribes to public officials is the most familiar and widespread form of corruption directly experienced by the population and the one that most affects the lives of ordinary citizens.

How bribery works

Public officials in Nigeria show little hesitation in asking for a bribe

The vast majority of bribery episodes in Nigeria are initiated either directly or indirectly by public officials (85.3 per cent) and almost 70 per cent of bribes are paid before a service is rendered. With such a large portion of public officials initiating bribes, which are paid up front, it seems that many public officials show little hesitation in asking for a kickback to carry out their duty and that bribery is an established part of the administrative procedure in Nigeria.

While money is by far the most important form of bribe payment in Nigeria, the survey shows that other forms of bribe payment, such as the provision of food and drink, the handing over of valuables or the exchange of another service or favour, also exist. Qualitative research shows that such exchanges may sometimes include sexual services, although the actual extent of that particular form of bribe payment is unknown.

Provision of the most basic amenities can be subject to abuse of power

The survey shows that a large proportion of bribes in Nigeria (42 per cent) are paid to speed up or finalize an administrative procedure that may otherwise be delayed for long periods or even indefinitely, thus making bribery the most effective option for facilitating that service. The second largest proportion of bribes (18 per cent) is paid to avoid the payment of a fine, a frequent request in citizens’ encounters with the police, while 13 per cent of all bribes are paid to avoid the cancellation of public utility services, an indication that the provision of the most basic amenities, including water and sanitation, can be subject to abuse of power by public officials in Nigeria.

Who takes bribes

Law enforcement and the judiciary are areas of particular concern

Police officers are the type of public official to whom bribes are most commonly paid in Nigeria. Of all adult Nigerians who had direct contact with a police officer in the 12 months prior to the survey, almost half (46.4 per cent) paid that officer at least one bribe, and in many cases more than one since police officers are also among the three types of public official to whom bribes are paid most frequently (5.3 bribes per bribe-payer over the course of 12 months) in Nigeria. At the same time, the average bribe paid to police officers is somewhat below the average bribe size. Although fewer people come into contact with judiciary officials than with police officers over the course of the year, when they do, the risk of bribery is considerable: at 33 per cent, the prevalence of bribery in relation to prosecutors is the second highest, closely followed by judges and magistrates, at 31.5 per cent. The experience of corruption in encounters with public officials whose duty it is to uphold the rule of law can lead to the erosion of trust in public authority.

Prevalence of bribery in relation to selected types of public official, Nigeria, 2016

Certain types of public official have a disproportionate impact on the lives of Nigerians

Other public officials with a high risk of bribery include car registration/driving licence officers (28.5 per cent), tax and custom officers (27.3 per cent), road traffic management officials (25.5 per cent), public utilities officers (22.4 per cent) and land registry officers (20.9 per cent). This shows that corruption takes
place across a number of different sectors of the public administration and that certain public officials have a disproportionate impact on the daily lives of Nigerians.

**Recruitment of public officials in Nigeria is itself subject to abuse of the system**

In addition to the propensity of public officials to request/take bribes from citizens, the survey points to the influence of bribery in the process that enables public officials to secure their jobs in the first place. The survey indicates that among those households with a member who applied for a post and was actually recruited into the public administration, more than 15 per cent admitted to the payment of a bribe to facilitate their recruitment. This type of behaviour is likely to have implications on the exercise of their duties throughout their civil service career.

**Who pays bribes**

**Gender and age play a role in the vulnerability of citizens to bribery**

In terms of the demographic profile of the people most vulnerable to bribery, a remarkable disparity in the prevalence of bribery exists between men and women in Nigeria: 37.1 per cent of men who had contact with at least one public official paid a bribe in the preceding 12 months, whereas the proportion among women was 26.6 per cent.

Young adults in Nigeria are more vulnerable to bribery than other age groups, especially those in the 25 to 34-year-old age group (36.4 per cent), after which the prevalence of bribery decreases, particularly after the age of 50. In fact, the highest age-specific prevalence rate of bribery — among 25-34 year olds — is almost twice that of people aged 65 years and older.

It is also noteworthy that the residents of urban areas in Nigeria are slightly more affected by bribery than people living in rural areas, and that the prevalence and frequency of bribery vary across the different zones of Nigeria.

**Higher levels of education and income lead to a greater risk of bribery**

While older age groups are associated with lower levels of bribery, the prevalence of bribery increases with the educational attainment of Nigerian adults, although the result varies greatly according to the type of public official receiving the bribe.

This pattern is paralleled in the distribution of the prevalence of bribery by income level as persons with a higher income have a higher prevalence of bribery than those who are less well remunerated. The disparity in the prevalence of bribery between individuals in the lowest income households and those in the highest income households reaches 15 percentage points (29.4 per cent versus 40.0 per cent). In other words, when they come into contact with public officials, households in the highest income group in Nigeria are 58 per cent more likely to pay bribes than households in the lowest income group.

**How citizens respond to bribery**

**Inability to refuse bribery may be caused by fear of negative consequences**

Nigerian citizens confronted with a bribe request do not always pay it. For example, 5.3 per cent of those who had contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the survey turned down the bribery request made by a public official on at least one occasion. On the other hand, 27 per cent always paid a bribe when requested to do so. Put differently, out of every 100 people who paid a bribe every time it was requested, 20 refused to do so on at least one occasion.

It should be taken into account, however, that of those 5.3 per cent, only 1.3 per cent never paid a bribe, while the remaining 4.0 per cent refused to pay a bribe at least once but paid a bribe on other occasions. Perhaps these figures are so low because more than half (56 per cent) of those who refused to pay a bribe after a request by a public official suffered negative consequences as a result of that refusal.
Nigerians seem to have little faith in the capacity of authorities to deal with corruption

Very few bribe-payers in Nigeria report their experience of bribery to anyone. Of all those who paid bribes in the 12 months prior to the survey, just 3.7 per cent reported the incident to official authorities. Limited trust in a number of state institutions in Nigeria, not least in the law enforcement and criminal justice system, may explain why Nigerians have little faith in the capacity of authorities to deal with corruption.

Apathy, fear and ignorance of authorities may explain limited reporting of bribery

In addition to the poor reputation of official authorities when it comes to corruption, further evidence of why most bribery incidents remain unreported can be found in the experience of those Nigerians who did report a bribery incident: there was no follow up in more than one third of cases (33.7 per cent); one fifth (20.0 per cent) of those who filed a report were advised not to go ahead with the complaint and almost one out of ten Nigerians (9.1 per cent) who reported a bribery experience suffered negative consequences in connection with reporting the incident. A formal procedure against the concerned public official was only initiated in slightly more than one sixth of cases (17.6 per cent).

Bribe payers who did not report their bribery experience to any authority explained that reporting would be pointless as nobody would care (34.6 per cent) or that payment and the giving of gifts are such common practices that reporting would not make a difference (33.4 per cent). In some cases, however, bribe-payers did not report their experience because they did not know to whom to report it (6.5 per cent), while others refrained from reporting because they were afraid of reprisals (5.8 per cent).

Bribery and other corrupt acts may not always be perceived as corruption in Nigeria

While the experience of bribery is widespread, and the refusal and reporting of bribery are still limited, the question arises as to whether bribery is actually a universally accepted practice in the country. On this point, the data are very clear: some two thirds of Nigerians actually consider most forms of corruption to be completely unacceptable, while only a minority of Nigerians find corrupt practices “always acceptable”.

However, even for those who engage in them, certain corrupt acts may not always be perceived as amounting to corruption. For example, almost a third of Nigerians consider the recruitment of public officials on the basis of family ties and friendship networks to be an acceptable practice, despite the fact that the Nigerian civil service professes to base professional recruitment purely on merit rather than on personal ties.

Moreover, 86 per cent of survey respondents declared that they would report a bribery incident to an official or unofficial authority, a figure in stark contrast to the bribery reporting rate of 3.7 per cent and a clear indication of a disconnect between the perceptions of many Nigerians as to how they think they would react when encountering corruption and how they actually behave in practice.
CHAPTER 6. SELECTED FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This extensive and representative household survey on corruption in Nigeria demonstrates that the bribery of public officials in all areas of public administration has a profound effect on the lives of ordinary Nigerians. The comprehensive picture of patterns, experiences and manifestations of bribery that emerges from the survey can be used to derive a number of concrete policy implications that can help reduce that effect; they include:

- The elevated risk of being requested to pay a bribe when citizens have dealings with the police force and judiciary is a particularly worrying sign for the enforcement of the rule of law. Experiences of this nature lead to the erosion of trust in public authority by ordinary citizens. Improvement of oversight in these sectors should be made a priority and implemented through a number of concerted efforts.
- Most bribes are solicited by public officials in return for public services that it is their duty to deliver, indicating that those officials have little fear of being sanctioned. A strict enforcement of legal and disciplinary measures for corrupt officials can help to reduce any feeling of impunity. Further, measures to strengthen integrity in public service, and to promote accountability and transparency could play an important role in reducing corruption and regaining the trust of citizens.¹
- The use of digital technology to access and deliver services directly to citizens (e-government), thereby avoiding direct face-to-face contacts with civil servants, can in some instances be an effective measure to decrease the risk of bribery. Promoting the use of cashless e-payment methods for public goods and services can directly reduce opportunities to exchange cash in corrupt transactions.²
- One finding of the survey is that bribes are paid to corrupt officials to speed up administrative procedures in order to avoid long delays in accessing public services such as public utilities, obtaining administrative licences and official certificates. Only those who can afford to do so (often the better off) are able to pay such bribes. As officials may exploit already slow procedures to solicit bribes from citizens, improving and fast-tracking administrative work processes in public services is thus essential to achieve a culture of accountability and transparency. Concrete measures to achieve this could include the following:
  - setting clear timelines for administrative processes at departmental level;
  - publishing timelines and encouraging members of the public to hold public officers accountable (transparency in process).

A particular concern highlighted by the survey is the incidence of corruption when applying for employment in the civil service. Few Nigerians believe that the procedures of selection to a civil service position are fair and based on merit, rather than on nepotism or other types of favouritism. Such practices undermine both the reputation and the integrity of the public administration and need to be vigorously countered through greater transparency and accountability in the recruitment process, which guarantee that all applicants are competing on a “level playing field”; for example, by reviewing procedures for the selection and training of public officials or introducing mandatory rotation schemes between public service positions.³

¹ The United Nations Convention against Corruption, ratified by Nigeria on 14 December 2014, provides for an extensive list of such measures, including measures on prevention of corruption, law enforcement, international cooperation and asset recovery.
² Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offenses Commission (ICPC) and UNODC (UNODC; CONIG-2017): Corruption Risk assessment (CRA) report on e-government platforms. CLEEN Foundation and the Federal Road Safety Corporation (FRSC 2016): Tackling Corruption in Drivers’ License Application Process. Some limitations of these systems identified in the reports include poor power supply and vandalism of e-systems.
³ Chapter 2 (Preventive Measures), article 7 (public sectors) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption encourages state parties to “…endeavour to adopt, maintain and strengthen systems for the recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion and retirement of civil servants…” This includes “…adequate procedures for the selection and training of individuals for public
• Efforts to promote the integrity of civil servants and nurture a determination to reject bribery offers out of principle should be strengthened. Insights from behavioural research on anti-corruption strategies in Nigeria\(^4\) should be applied more broadly so as to shift social norms and expectations towards a culture of integrity. This survey has shown that most people regard corrupt behaviours as morally wrong and have higher aspirations for their own behaviour than they are able to realize. A strengthened culture of integrity should offer a path to help reduce the disparity between aspiration and reality.

• The vast majority of bribery cases are not reported to any official authority, such as the police, courts or anti-corruption agencies, as this is considered pointless and lacking any real consequences. The establishment of a strong system for encouraging and protecting people who report bribery is important for both holding public officials accountable and ending their impunity for perpetrating corrupt acts.

• Increasing the willingness of those affected by bribery and corruption to report corrupt acts is also vital for increasing the effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies, to which only a small share of all bribery incidents are reported. Behavioural change interventions that include citizen engagement can be essential steps in promoting a culture of reporting.

• The disconnect between people’s perceptions of how they think they would react on receiving a bribe request and how they behave in practice demonstrates that there is potential for breaking the cycle of silence and impunity surrounding corruption if more citizens are encouraged and empowered to report their experience of bribery and if there are palpable consequences and sanctions for those who break the rules.

• The survey shows that Nigerians who find certain corrupt practices less acceptable tend to engage less in bribery and a have a greater tendency to refuse bribe requests than those who find such practices more acceptable. This means that successful efforts to promote integrity can result in a decrease in the prevalence of bribery and should be part of a comprehensive corruption prevention strategy applied in the public administration. Practices for promoting integrity should include:
  • compulsory training and certification on a code of conduct for public officers as a prerequisite for promotion within the civil service;
  • periodic civil service exams and training on a code of conduct for public officials, feeding into the performance evaluation process.

• Education on integrity is particularly important for youth empowerment. The survey shows the greater acceptability and experience of corruption among the younger age groups, highlighting the importance of education addressing integrity issues in public service at an early stage — ideally during compulsory school education — as well as anti-corruption awareness-raising campaigns specifically targeting young people. One promising anti-corruption strategy is the empowerment of trendsetters to drive behavioural change in their immediate community.\(^5\)

• With the survey highlighting that bribery may be so engrained in Nigerian administrative practices that many of those who pay bribes do not truly realize that they are party to a corrupt act, public information and sensitization campaigns should be reviewed and reframed periodically to make sure they have clear and concrete messages that reach their audience in order to have a strong impact on corruption awareness and integrity.

• The survey provides objective indicators on the extent of bribery in different locations and institutions in Nigeria and concrete knowledge on where best to focus anti-corruption efforts. The value positions considered especially vulnerable to corruption and the rotation, where appropriate, of such individuals to other position”.


\(^5\) According to Chatham House (2017, op.cit.), trendsetters have at least two behavioural traits that make them likely to “violate” the norm – a high level of autonomy/independence and strong belief system. Empowering such individuals (for example, those openly refusing to pay bribes) through recognition and/or a reward system is thus encouraged.
of the data to policy will be further enhanced if the survey is repeated for monitoring trends over time. Linking anti-corruption strategies with concrete quantitative targets based on bribery prevalence can provide a benchmark for evaluating policy outcomes and the evaluation of anti-corruption policies.