

Citizen experiences of corruption

() Data in this post is extracted from the Global Corruption Barometer 2013 carried out by Transparency International through the coordination of its national contact in Vietnam – Towards Transparency (TT). You can read full report here.*

Experience with corruption across sectors

In 2013, 30% of Vietnamese respondents paid at least one bribe to any one of eight public services that are: police, medical and health services, land services, education, judiciary, registry and permit services, tax and customs and utilities.

Numerous respondents paid several bribes in 2013 to a range of different sectors or paid repeated bribes to the same sector. In some cases, respondents recorded paying more than five separate bribes in 2013 to the police, the education system, the judiciary and medical and health services.

The police (mostly the traffic police [1]), medical and health services and land services were found to have the highest incidence of reported experiences of corruption.

Figure 01: (%) of Vietnamese citizen that paid a bribe when coming into contact with any of 8 services in 2013



A comparison of the urban population of the five cities surveyed in 2010 and 2013 found that overall the number of respondents who paid a bribe has increased (49% of respondents paid a bribe in 2013, compared to 40% in 2010). This confirms perceptions that corruption levels are increasing. While incidences of bribes paid to the education system, tax and customs, utilities, registry and permit services all

decreased, there was a reported increase in the incidence of corruption in the police, judiciary and land services.

Figure 02: % of people in urban Vietnam that paid a bribe when coming in to contact with any of 8 service: 2010 versus 2013



The average size [2] of bribes paid by respondents varied by sector, with the lowest average amount of bribes paid to registry and permit services. The highest average amount of bribes were paid to the judiciary.

These figures appear to confirm previous estimations of average costs of bribes paid by Vietnamese citizens. In particular, the average amount of 486,257 VND (around 24 USD) paid to the education system falls squarely between the lower and upper bounds estimated in the 2012 Vietnam Provincial Government and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) of 98,000 – 572,000 VND (around 5 – 27.50 USD) [3]. Similarly, the average cost of the 422,800 VND (around 21 USD) paid to medical and health services falls between the average amounts of bribes paid to doctors at district (200,000 VND, around 10 USD) and central hospitals (500,000 – 1 million VND, around 25-50 USD) [4]. In comparison, the average monthly salary in 2012 in Vietnam was 3.84 million VND (around 185 USD).⁵

TABLE 01: AVERAGE COST OF BRIBES PAID, BY SECTOR



Reasons for paying bribes

The most commonly reported reason for paying a bribe in Vietnam is to speed things up. Taking a regional comparison, this places Vietnam closely in line with other Southeast Asian countries where speeding things up is by far the most common

reason given for paying bribes. However, more respondents in Vietnam, than in any other country surveyed in the region, gave a bribe because “it was the only way to obtain a service”.

In Vietnam, rural respondents appear to be more likely to pay a bribe as a gift or to express gratitude than urban respondents. 27% of rural respondents who paid a bribe in the past year stated that it was given as a gift or to express gratitude versus 19% of urban respondents. Urban respondents appear to be more likely to pay a bribe to speed things up (51% of urban respondents versus 35% of rural respondents). The proportion of urban versus rural respondents who reported paying a bribe because it was the only way to obtain a service shows little divergence (27% versus 24%).

However, younger respondents (up to 30 years old) appear to be more likely than adults to perceive bribes as being paid as “the only way to obtain a service” (29% of youth respondents compared to 24% of adults).

Vietnamese citizens appear to increasingly perceive that bribery is the only way to obtain a service. Comparing the responses from the urban population of the five cities surveyed in 2010 and 2013, there is a decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported paying a bribe in order to speed things up (from 82% to 59%), whilst the proportion of respondents who paid a bribe to “receive a service” increased from 6% to 24%.

TABLE 02: REASONS FOR PAYING BRIBES (SOUTHEAST ASIA)



[1] 90% of respondents who reported paying a bribe to the police noted that their last bribe was paid to the traffic police.

² The average bribe paid to utilities was not included due to the small amount of respondents who recalled the exact cost of the last bribe paid.

³ CECODES, VFF-CRT & UNDP (2013) The Viet Nam Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) 2012: Measuring Citizens' Experiences. A Joint Policy Research Paper by Centre for Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES), Centre for Research and Training of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front (VFF-CRT), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Hanoi, Vietnam. p.30.

⁴ Research and Training Centre for Community Development (RTCCD), TT, TI and Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) (2011) Towards a Transparent and Quality Healthcare System, p.26. This amount is higher than the upper bounds of bribes estimated in 2012 PAPI (146,000 VND) at public district hospitals, as the RTCCD, TT, TI and BUSPH report shows that bribes paid to district hospitals are significantly lower than the bribes paid to provincial and central hospitals

⁵ Thanh Nien, Vietnam average monthly wage rises to \$185, 25 January 2012, available at: <http://www.thanhniennews.com/index/pages/20120125-salaries-rise-in-vietnam-income-gap-still-wide.aspx>