

Towards Transparency Newsletter

February 2020

Vietnam Corruption Barometer (VCB-2019)

Surveyed citizens' concern for corruption remains high while their experiences of corruption have decreased

The Vietnam Corruption Barometer (VCB-2019), conducted by Towards Transparency (TT), collects data on citizens' perceptions and experiences of corruption, their views on the government's anti-corruption efforts, as well as the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Vietnamese people believe that corruption is declining and that the Government's anti-corruption efforts are effective. Notably, VCB-2019 marks for the first time since 2011 a bribery decrease in 7 assessed public services. These are signals of a positive momentum in the fight against corruption in Vietnam. Nevertheless, 73% of citizens still believe that corruption remains a serious problem in Vietnam, requiring further efforts of stakeholders to reduce corruption and ensure sustainable development. Thus, VCB-2019 provides government, policy makers and concerned stakeholders with information useful to make Vietnam's anti-corruption efforts more effective as well as how best to mobilize non-state actors and increase citizen participation in anti-corruption.

What is VCB?

The Vietnam Corruption Barometer (VCB-2019) is a survey based on Transparency International (TI)'s Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) methodology, which aims worldwide to gather citizen's views and experiences of corruption. Thus, VCB-2019 provides an picture of how corruption is viewed in Vietnam and

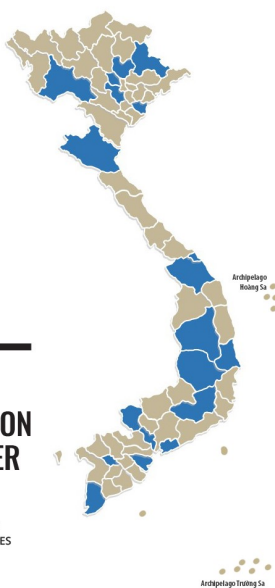
how efforts to curb corruption are assessed on the ground and over time.

VCB-2019 provides a measure of people's experience of bribery in the past year across 7 different public services. The survey asks 1086 Vietnamese citizens aged 18-65 years randomly selected in 19 provinces how effective they think the government has been in combating corruption, how they feel about reporting cor-

ruption and also probes their willingness to get involved personally in the fight against corruption.

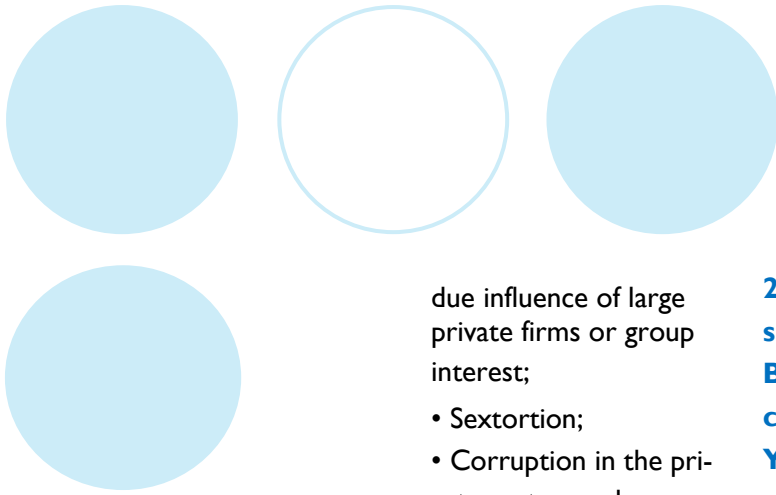
The core questionnaire remains the same year after year, allowing for comparisons of results over time. However, to enrich the scope of the survey and to address country-specific issues, eleven new additional questions are included in the VCB-2019 survey, related to:

- Emerging forms of corruption such as un-



**VIETNAM
CORRUPTION
BAROMETER
2019**

VIETNAMESE CITIZENS'
VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES
OF CORRUPTION



“Vietnamese people believe they can make a difference in the fight against corruption. Therefore, the Party and the State at all levels should create clear space and guide specific methods and mechanisms for people to participate in the fight against corruption”

Nguyen Thi Kieu Vien
Towards Transparency
Executive Director

due influence of large private firms or group interest;

- Sextortion;
- Corruption in the private sector; and
- Gendered aspect of corruption.

The VCB complements TI’s *Corruption Perception Index (CPI)* in two ways: it focuses on the views of ordinary people, rather than the opinions of businesses and country experts, and it takes into account people’s experiences of corruption. Interestingly, Vietnam CPI-2019 increased scoring (+4 pts) is coherent with VCB-2019 findings.

VCB-2019 key findings

1. Corruption is an Increasing Concern for Vietnamese Citizens

Surveyed citizens indicated that corruption is their 4th biggest concern (following poverty reduction, food hygiene, and crime/safety), escalating from the 7th position of biggest concerns as documented in the GCB-2017 Edition.

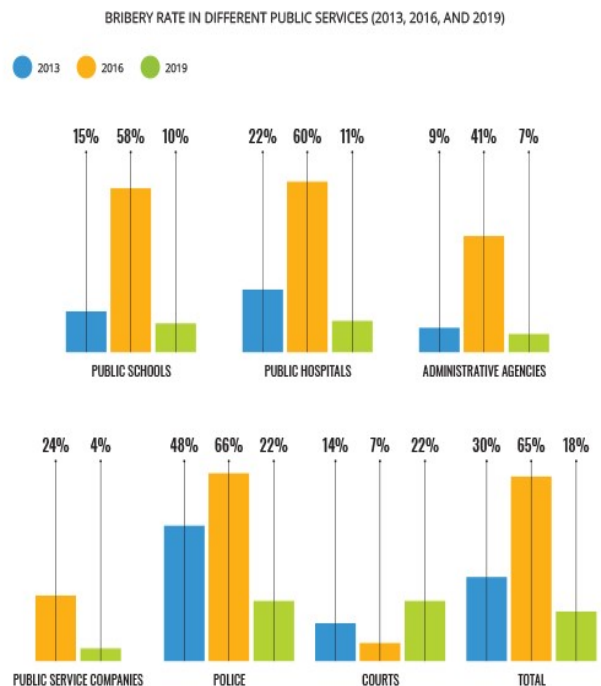
2. Nearly One in Five said They Paid a Bribe, a Large Decline from Previous Years

About 18% of respondents who had contact with one or more of the seven surveyed public services reported to

against corruption, that is more than twice the perception level in 2016 (21%).

4. More Citizens Believe That They Can Make a Difference in Combating Corruption

Respondents of the 2019



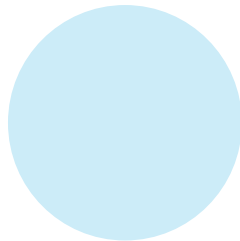
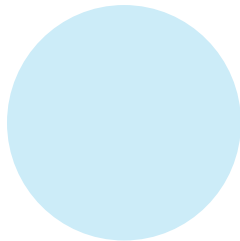
have paid bribes in the preceding year. This marks a large decrease from previous editions.

3. Government Action against Corruption Perceived as more Effective

Nearly one in two (49%) said that the government actions are effective or very effective in the fight

survey (71%) report they have a role to play in the fight against corruption. Up from 55% in 2016 and 60% in 2013, this is the highest rate ever recorded. However, nearly one in two does not report for fear of consequences.

5. Citizens Show Concern About Influ-



ences from Large Private Companies or Special Interest Groups

54% of respondents reported that they believe large private companies often/always influence government policies and decisions for their own interests.

6. Citizens Demand More Integrity from Public Officials

Citizens think that the integrity of public and government officers should be improved (36%) as well as strict punishment applied to public officials involved in corruption cases (39%).

7. Women Appear as Strong Players in Anti-Corruption

First, they tend to condemn corruption more than men (48% versus 38%). Second, women are perceived to be “cleaner” than men (only

4% of them are perceived to be corruption perpetrators versus 88% for men). Third, in practice, fewer women pay bribes than their male counterparts (15% versus 21%). As a result, anti-corruption efforts must include women and consider how women and others experience corruption.

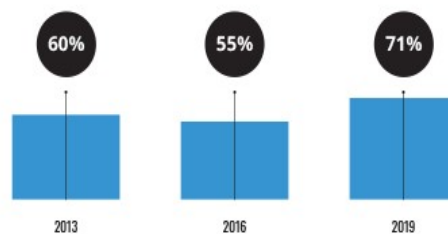
8. Sexual Extortion is an Issue of Concern

Nearly 4 out of 5 (78%) of respondents consider sexual extortion (sextortion) to be either “a problem” or “a severe problem” in Vietnam. 3% said they had experienced sextortion or know someone who has.

Key recommendations

The findings of this report give hope for positive change in Vietnam,

CAN ORDINARY PEOPLE MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION? (% OF YES)



but this momentum must be continued to further reduce corruption and enable sustainable development. Ahead of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party to be held in early 2021, Towards Transparency offers the following recommendations.

To The Party and State

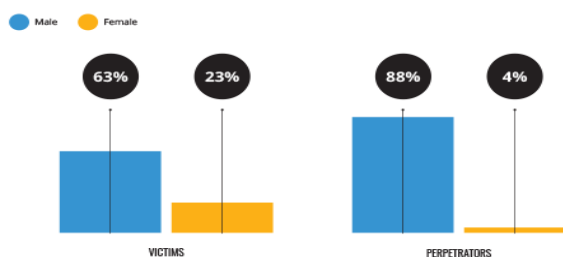
1. Continue to tackle bribery and other forms of corruption by increasing efforts to ensure the integrity of public officials through effective enforcement of the 2018 Anti-Corruption Law. Particular attention should be paid to provisions regarding conflicts of interest and asset declarations.

2. Regulate lobbying by large private companies and interest groups to avoid undue influence for their benefit at the

“The citizens’ belief that large companies and interest groups are manipulating State policies and decisions is very worrying. The state needs to come up with measures soon, like regulations on lobbying for businesses to restore and strengthen people’s confidence”

Chi Lan, senior economist, member of the Advisory Board of Towards Transparency

VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF CORRUPTION



“It’s believed that gender inequality in employee structure of government is incurring in which more males are holding important positions in the organization chart rather females”

Female respondent, 34 y.o., Sales executive at technology accessory company

cost of the citizens’.

3. Empower citizens, social organizations and media (including social media) to engage in anti-corruption by creating favorable conditions.

4. Engage women in anti-corruption through measures such as supporting their participation in public and political life.

5. Recognize and address specific gendered forms of corruption: The Party and State should legally recognize sexual extortion as a form of corruption and take measure such as recognizing it explicitly in the appropriate legislation guiding the penal code.

To Businesses, Citizens and Other Stakeholders

6. Businesses to improve integrity and transparency as a way to increase their comparative advantage. Consumers (2 out of 3 VCB-2019 respondents) are increasingly willing to pay more for products or services from companies with a “clean” reputation. The new 2018 Anti-corruption Law specifies that companies should develop codes of conduct and internal control mechanisms to prevent involvement in corrupt activities.

7. Development partners and business associations should work collectively to promote business integrity through developing and implementing strong anti-corruption strategies and programs.

8. NGOs, development

partners and research institutes should conduct studies on gender and corruption (e.g. impacts of “sextortion”; women’s perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards corruption; impacts of corruption on men and women; etc.) to better understand the gendered forms of corruption and inform policy and actions.

Concluding remarks

VCB-2019 brings hope for positive changes, fueled by

thering the aims of the current anti-corruption agenda set by the Party and the State.

However many challenges still lie ahead. While citizens’ overall experience of corruption decreased, the levels of perceived corruption among State agencies remains unchanged in the last decade. Specifically, institutional bodies that are perceived to be most involved in corruption continue to be the traffic police, the police, and tax officials.

The 2019 survey also shows some discrepancies between



Panel discussion with diverse voices from government, CSO and academics, Hanoi (7/1/2020)

reduced level of bribery, increased effective Party and State anti-corruption efforts and greater number of citizens willing to fight corruption. Indeed, further to improving and completing the legal framework on anti-corruption, the Government has implemented many measures and actions to prevent and fight against corruption, and brought to light an unprecedented number of large-scale corruption cases. This positive momentum in the country’s anti-corruption efforts, should help in fur-

citizens’ attitudes and behaviors towards anti-corruption. Specifically, while citizens believe that they can make a difference in fighting corruption and are willing to report corruption cases, in practice they rarely report it. The paradoxical gap lies mostly in the belief that reporting would not make any difference or worse, could bring negative consequences. This finding remains constant from past GCB editions and calls for the Party and State’s anti-corruption agenda to be revisited.