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CORRUPTION

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Introduction

Throughout history, young people have been at the forefront of the fight for justice, accountability and a better world. In every generation, its youth have been vocal and radical in challenging power and demanding change. The current generation is no different. But today's youth have a lot to contend with – the existential threat of climate change, capitalism in all its manifestations, growing inequality, unemployment, addiction, gender-based violence, and economic collapse, while rampant corruption has undoubtedly placed a price tag on our futures.

Unaddressed systemic inequality, widespread abuse of state funds and public power, and constrictive economic policies have posed a major obstacle in achieving social, political and economic transformation in our country. As a result, not only are young people victims of corruption, but they are becoming perpetrators too. Normalised and condoned corrupt behaviours will lead to a generation viewing corruption as an accepted practice in order to obtain goods and services or to avoid consequences.

Corruption Watch understands that in order to tip the corruption scales in South Africa toward a corrupt-free society, young people have to be active in the fight against corruption. The mass looting of public funds and impunity within both the public and private sectors will result in the next generation inheriting a society that is more unequal and unjust than it currently is. We have a direct interest in ensuring good governance and accountability, because our future as South Africans depends on it.

It is in this light that Corruption Watch commissioned a study, in mid-2020, to understand youth perceptions and attitudes towards corruption in South Africa. The purpose of the survey was to shed light on the past and present behaviours and attitudes of young people, and to gain insight on what the future holds for this group, when confronted by corruption as a motivating factor for survival or self-enrichment. The findings presented in this report reflect a weighted and representative sample of 1 500 respondents, between the ages of 18 and 35 years old.



Based on the responses, the survey has concluded the following:

01

South African youth understand what corruption is and the effect that it has on our society;

02

Unemployment, abuse of power, greed, and low or no income are perceived to be major drivers of corruption;

03

Although most young people claim to have not committed corruption in the past, a significant increase in youth would be willing to pay a bribe in future in order to secure a job;

04

There is evidence of people being asked for sexual favours in exchange for employment;

05

Young people generally do not trust politicians and big business;

06

Youth view the South African Police Service and local government to be the most corrupt institutions in South Africa; and

07

Young people think that corruption is at a far higher level now than it was previously.

Therefore, during a time when South Africa, like other low-to-middle income countries across the world, is facing great levels of poverty and inequality, where the roles and responsibilities of government are under scrutiny, and the private sector is viewed with increased scepticism, the youth observe with

distrust and agitation as public and private institutions make a mockery of democracy. This report highlights the concerns and frustrations experienced by young people. Thus, it is a rallying call for us to not only introspect, but to act decisively and swiftly on the scourge of corruption.

Definitions, attitudes and experiences

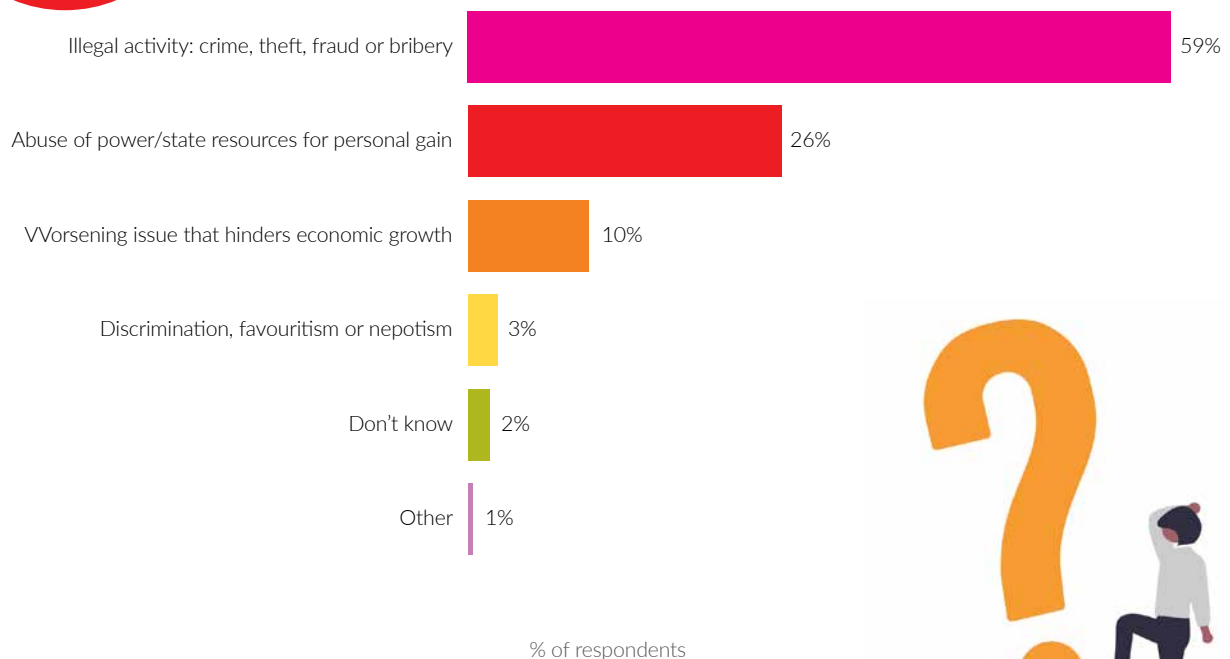
By gauging their beliefs, definitions, and behaviours, this section highlights the attitudes, understanding, and experiences of young people in relation to corruption in South Africa.

Definitions

Corruption Watch defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. We asked respondents to define corruption in their own words, as a means of assessing whether they understood what corruption is and what they view as permissible. These open-ended questions were coded into five main categories.

Some respondents (26%) view corruption as the looting of resources by those in positions of power – which is often driven by self-enrichment. Meanwhile, the majority (59%) have more nuanced definitions, including bribery and theft as well as criminal activity in their understanding of graft. Relating to the high levels of youth unemployment in South Africa, 10% of respondents understand corruption as a hindrance to accessing, and the availability of, employment opportunities.

How would you define corruption?



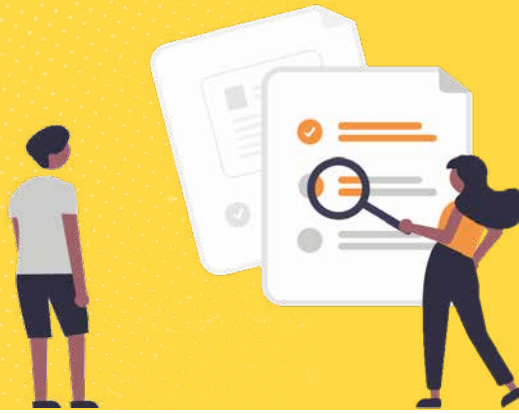
Further to exploring young people's understanding of corruption, we presented respondents with seven distinct petty corruption scenarios and asked whether they considered each case as corruption or not. Almost two-thirds (61%) of the respondents were able to identify at least half of the scenarios as corruption.

Importantly, understanding of petty corruption differed across income groups. Over half of the participants in the high-income group correctly identified all seven scenarios as acts of corruption, in contrast to only a third of low-income respondents. Whilst there is generally a high understanding of corruption, worryingly, 51% of respondents did not consider threatening to extort a teacher in exchange for high marks on a school paper as corruption. Similarly, only 51% of youth identified the giving of a monetary reward in exchange for a tender to be corruption.

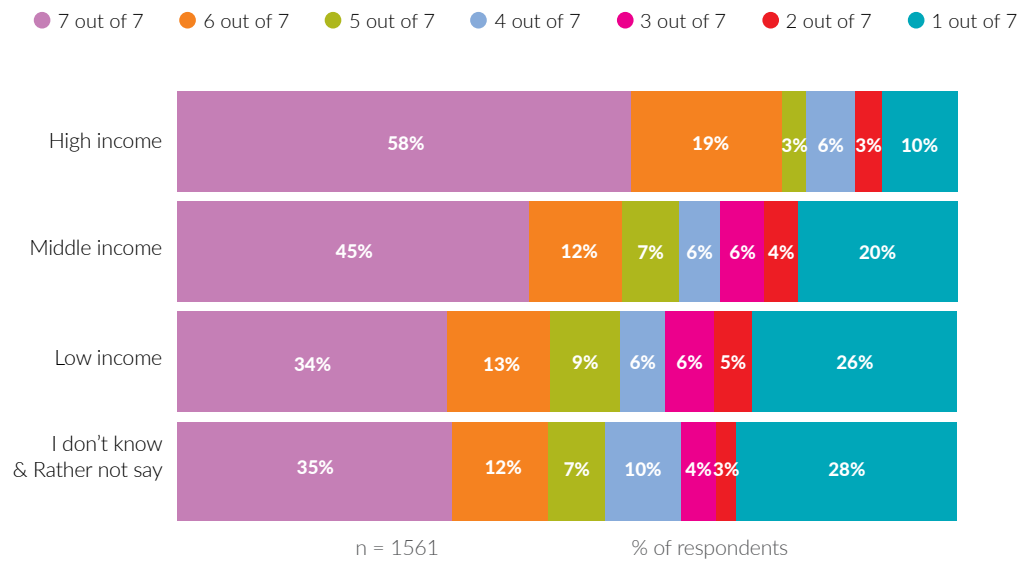
Overall, we can conclude that there is generally a high level of awareness and sensitisation to corruption amongst young people.

Percentage of respondents identifying the following petty corruption scenarios as corruption.

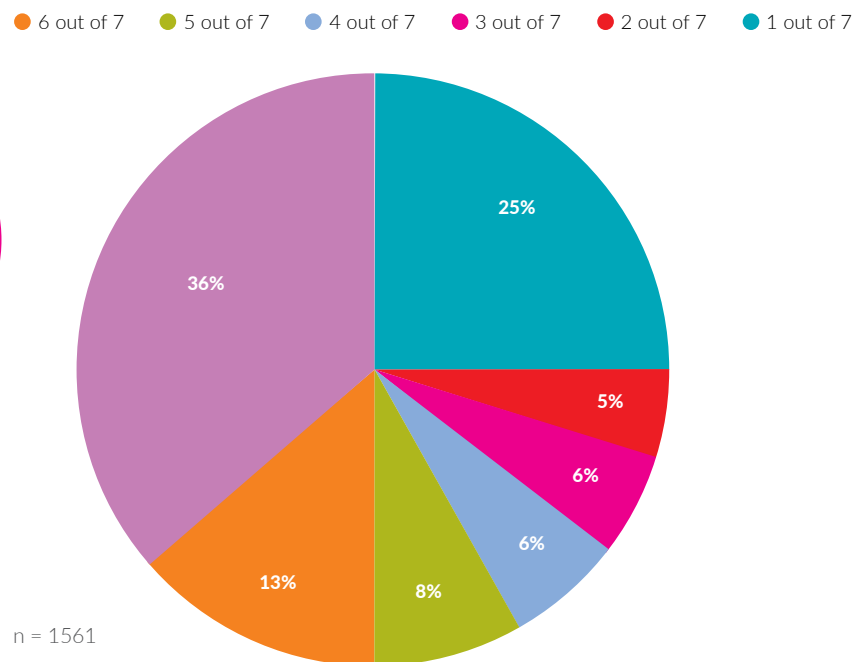




Respondent scores for identifying petty corruption scenarios as corruption (by income level)



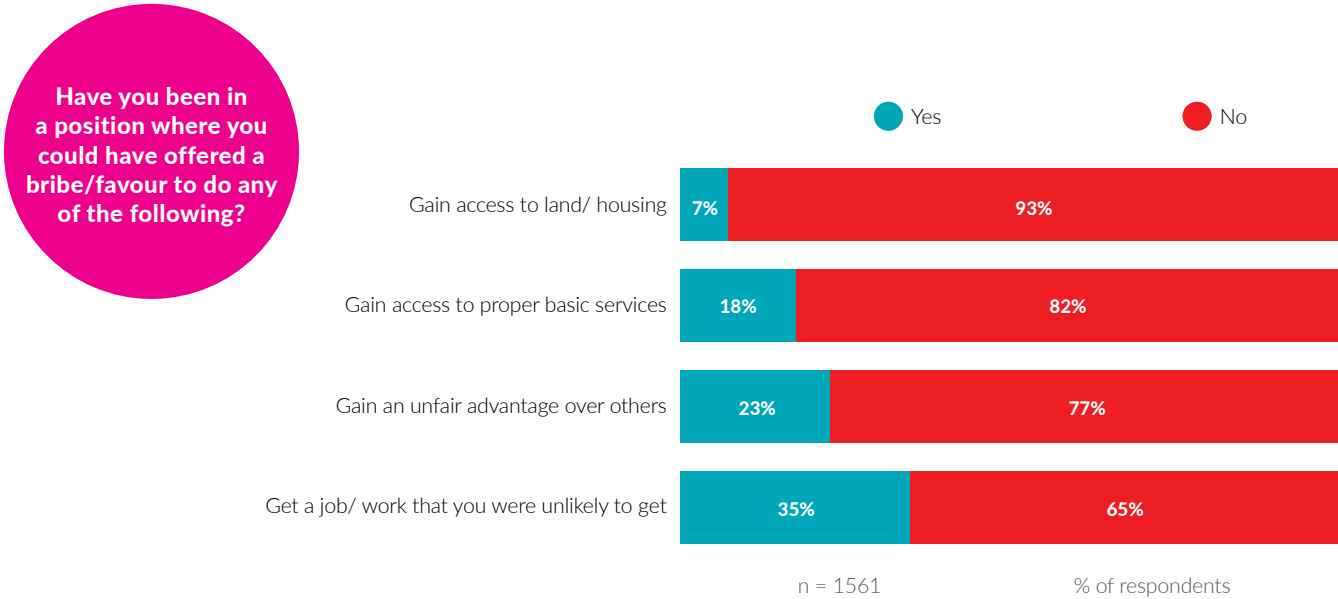
Respondent scores for identifying petty corruption scenarios as corruption



Experience of bribery in the past

Of four scenarios presented below, young people were twice more likely to have been in a position to offer a bribe or favour for a job than for access to basic services. Of the 35% having been in a

position to pay a bribe to secure employment, only 7% admitted to offering the bribe. Similarly, of 23% who were in a position to gain an unfair advantage over others, only 7% claim to have engaged in bribery.

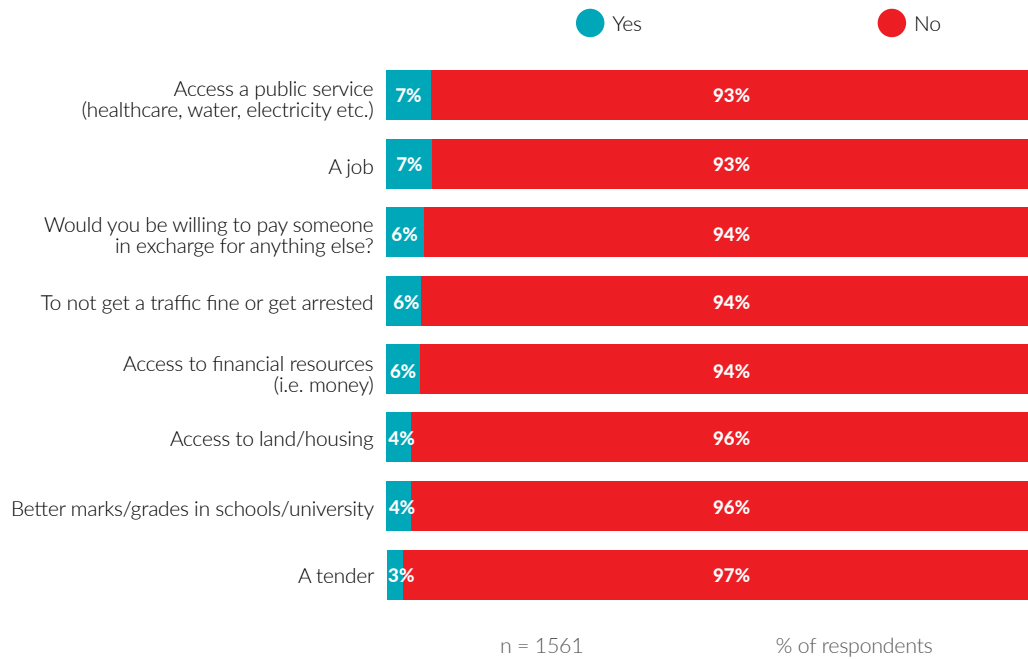


Most respondents noted that they have never offered a bribe or favour of any sort to gain access to housing, basic services, an unfair advantage, or a job. Based on our understanding, this suggests one of two things: either that corruption at an ordinary level is low and that despite the opportunities being available, young people choose not to engage in corruption, or that the results have been affected by a desirability bias. The latter concludes that due to the participants knowing that they are participating in an anti-corruption survey, they would not want to be seen as corrupt.

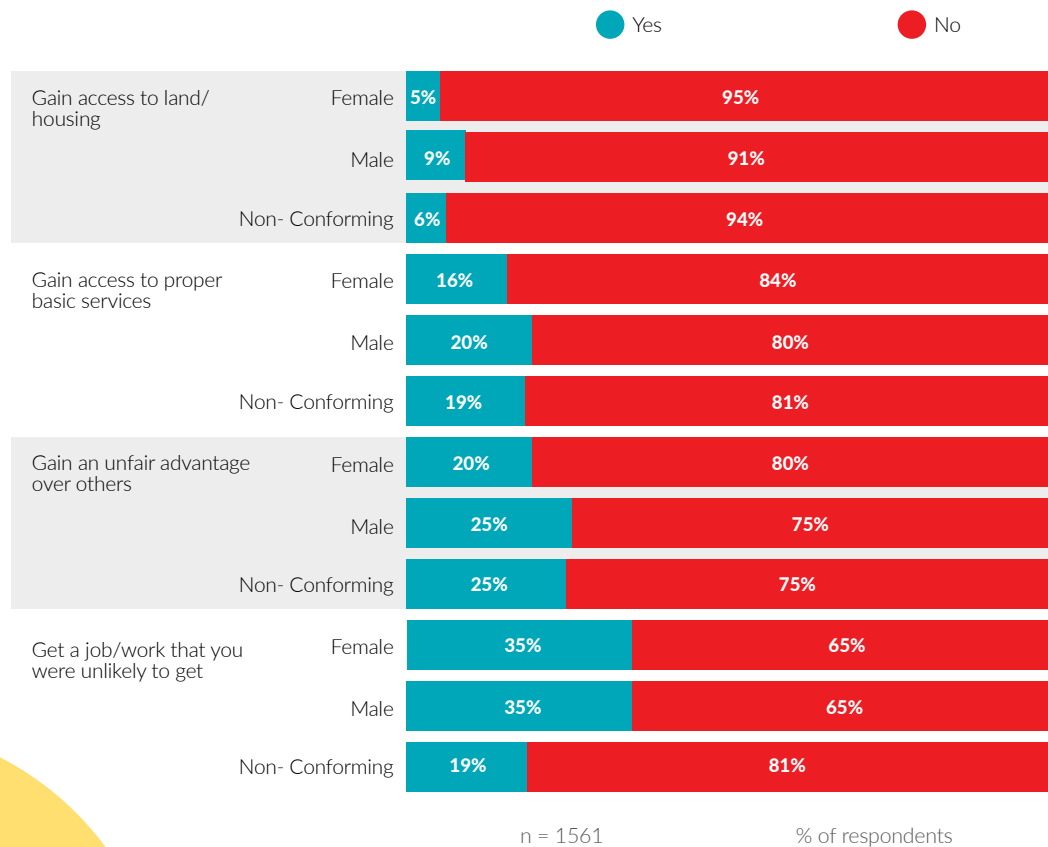
Overall, a higher percentage of male respondents have made a monetary exchange for something they needed.



In the past have you exchanged money for any of the following?



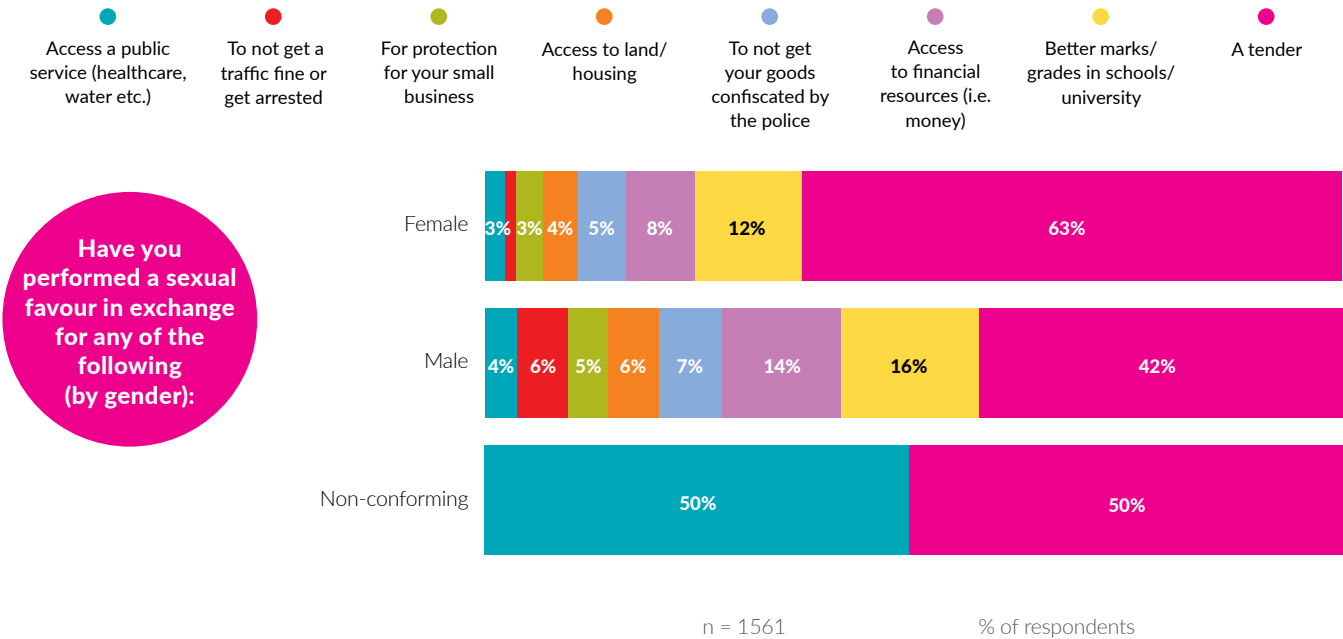
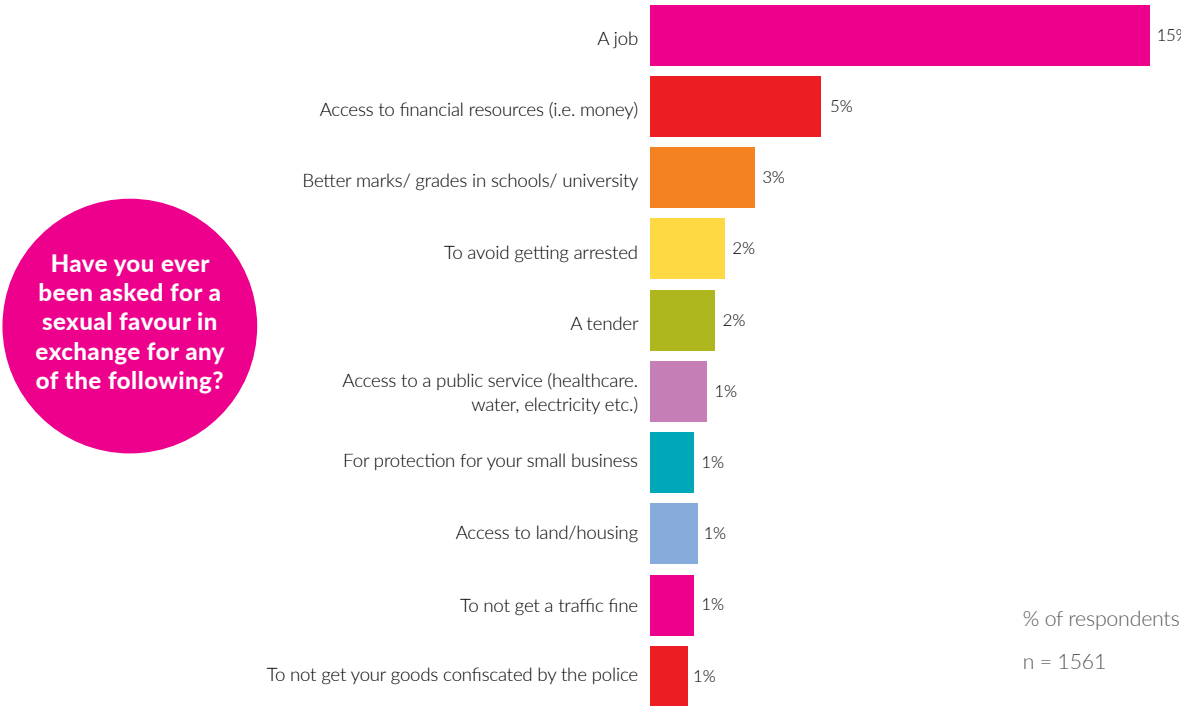
Have you been in a position where you could have offered a bribe/ favour to do any of the following: (by gender)?



Requests for sexual favours in the past

When asked whether they have had to exchange sexual favours in the past to access goods or services, the majority of respondents (69%) noted that they had never. However, 14% were asked to perform a sexual favour in exchange for a job.

Participants who identify as female or gender non-conforming are more than 50% more likely to be asked to perform sexual favours in exchange for access to a job, financial resources and better marks, in comparison to males.

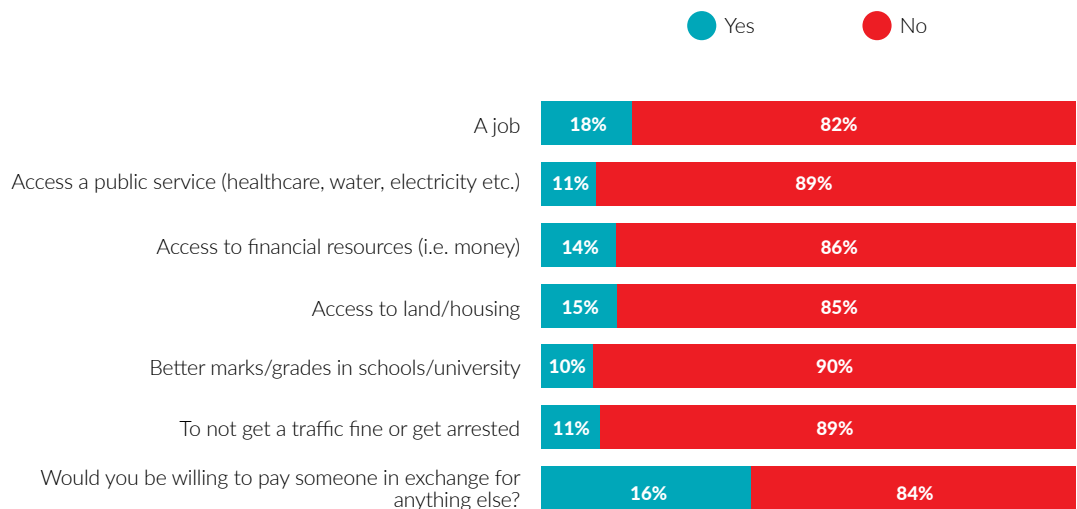


Willingness to offer a bribe or engage in illegal behaviour in the future

Similar to the results on bribes that have been offered in the past, most respondents are not willing to engage in corrupt activity in the future. Despite this, a greater percentage of young people are willing to exchange money in the future for a job (18%). More people also report to be willing to do something illegal in the future if someone close to them is

being threatened (19%) or if it will ultimately make their lives easier (15%), compared to the 8% and 9% respectively who had participated in the illegal activity in the past. It is also worth noting that participants from high-income groups are more likely to engage in illegal activity in the future, in comparison to other income groups.

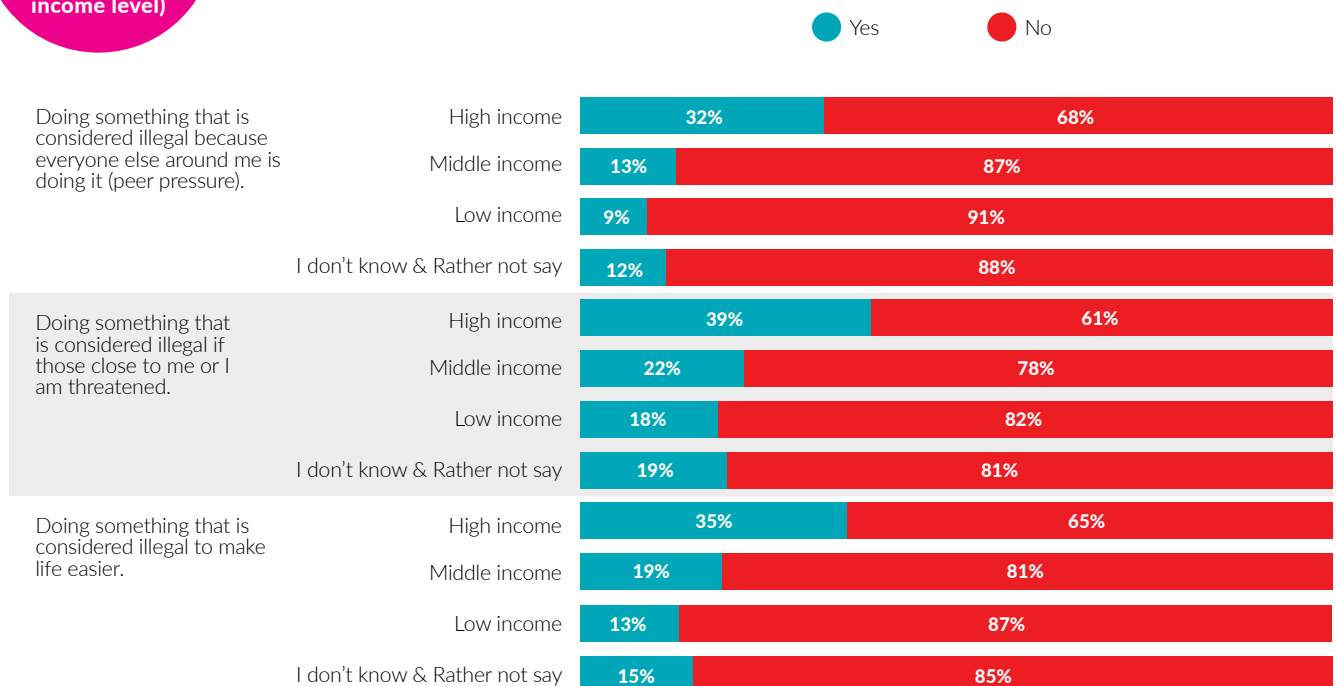
Would you exchange money for any of the following in the future?



n = 1561

% of respondents

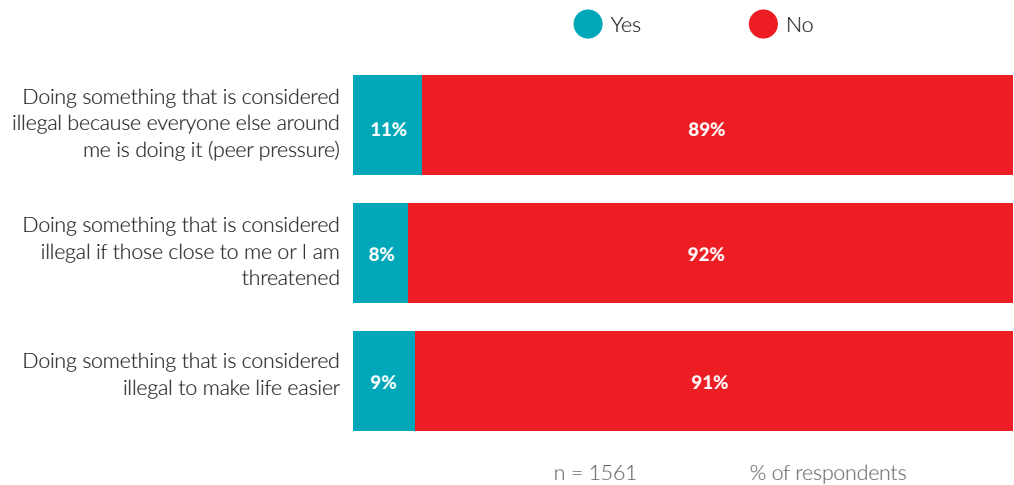
Would you be willing to participate in any of the following in the future? (by income level)



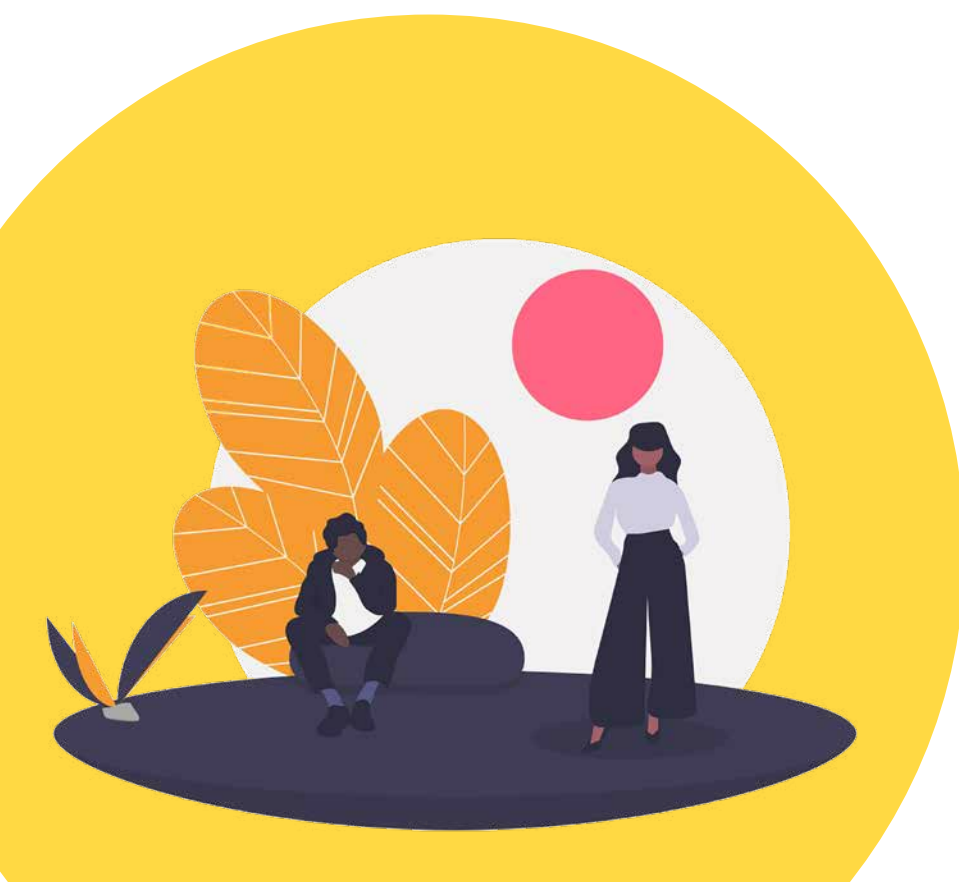
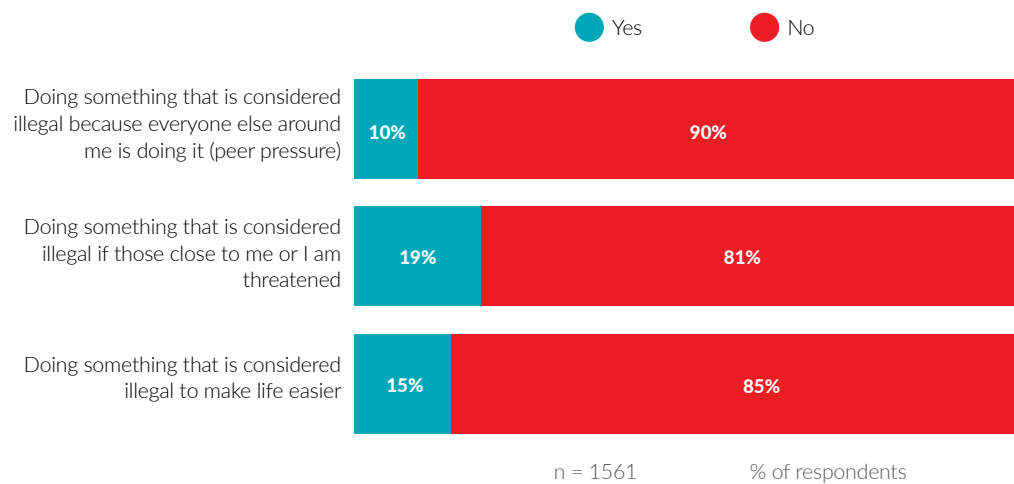
n = 1561

% of respondents

Have you participated in any of the following in the past?



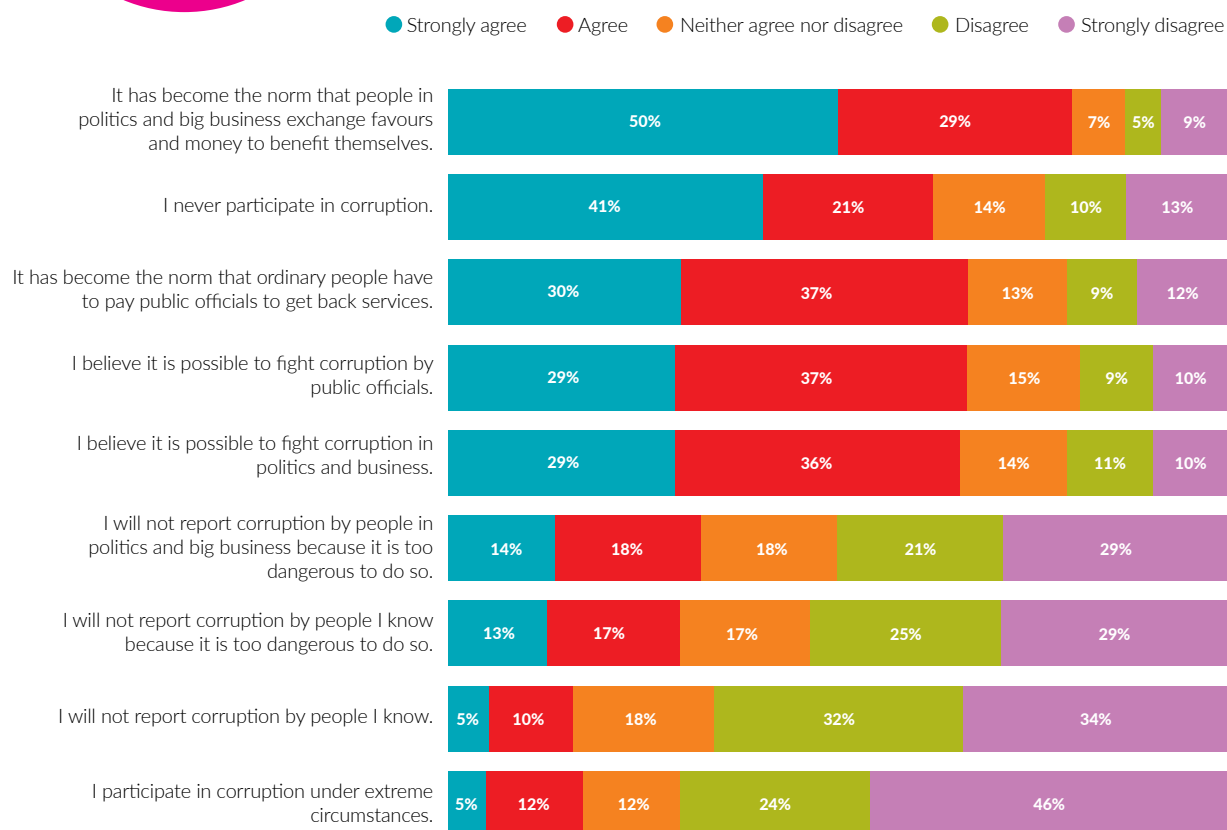
Would you be willing to participate in any of the following in the future?



The vast majority of youth believe that politicians and big business exchange money and benefits purely for self-enrichment. Although 62% of respondents claim that they have never participated in corruption, 67% believe that corruption has become the norm for ordinary people who have to pay to access basic services. In spite of this, young people believe that it is still possible to root out corruption in South Africa, with the majority noting that they are willing to report corruption – even if it is dangerous to do so.



Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:



n = 1561

% of respondents

Perceptions, driving factors and trends

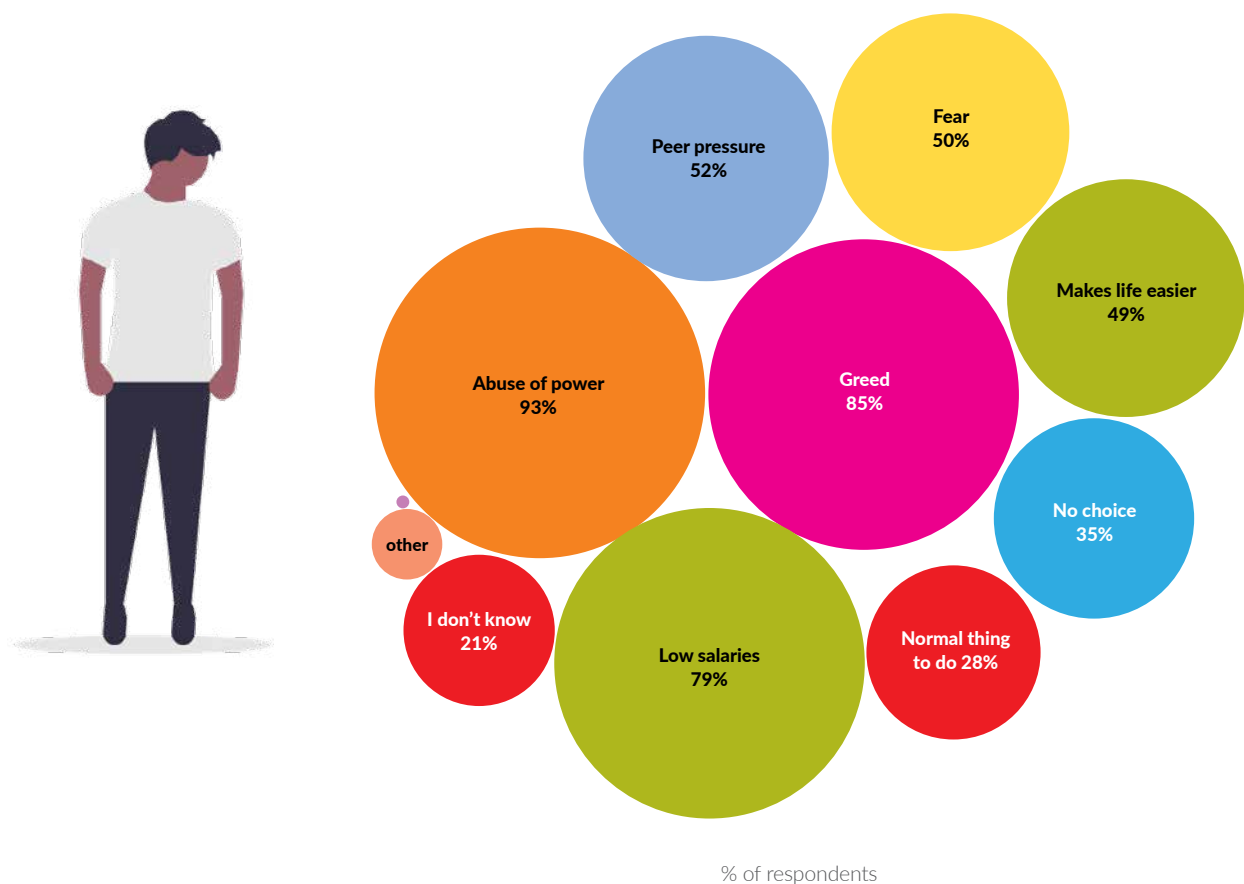
Perception acts as a lens through which we view reality. Our survey attempted to understand how respondents perceive corruption in South Africa, which is not a true (or false) indication of the facts, but merely a reflection of their realities.

Driving factors

When asked about the main causes for corruption in South Africa, the majority of respondents (93%) identified abuse of power, followed by greed (85%). This aligns with respondents' definitions of corruption mentioned earlier, where the majority

understood corruption as the act of looting done by those in positions of power, out of greed / self-motivation. People augmenting their low salaries (79%), peer pressure (52%), and fear (50%) were also identified as driving factors that cause individuals to engage in corrupt activity.

What are the top 5 causes of corruption?



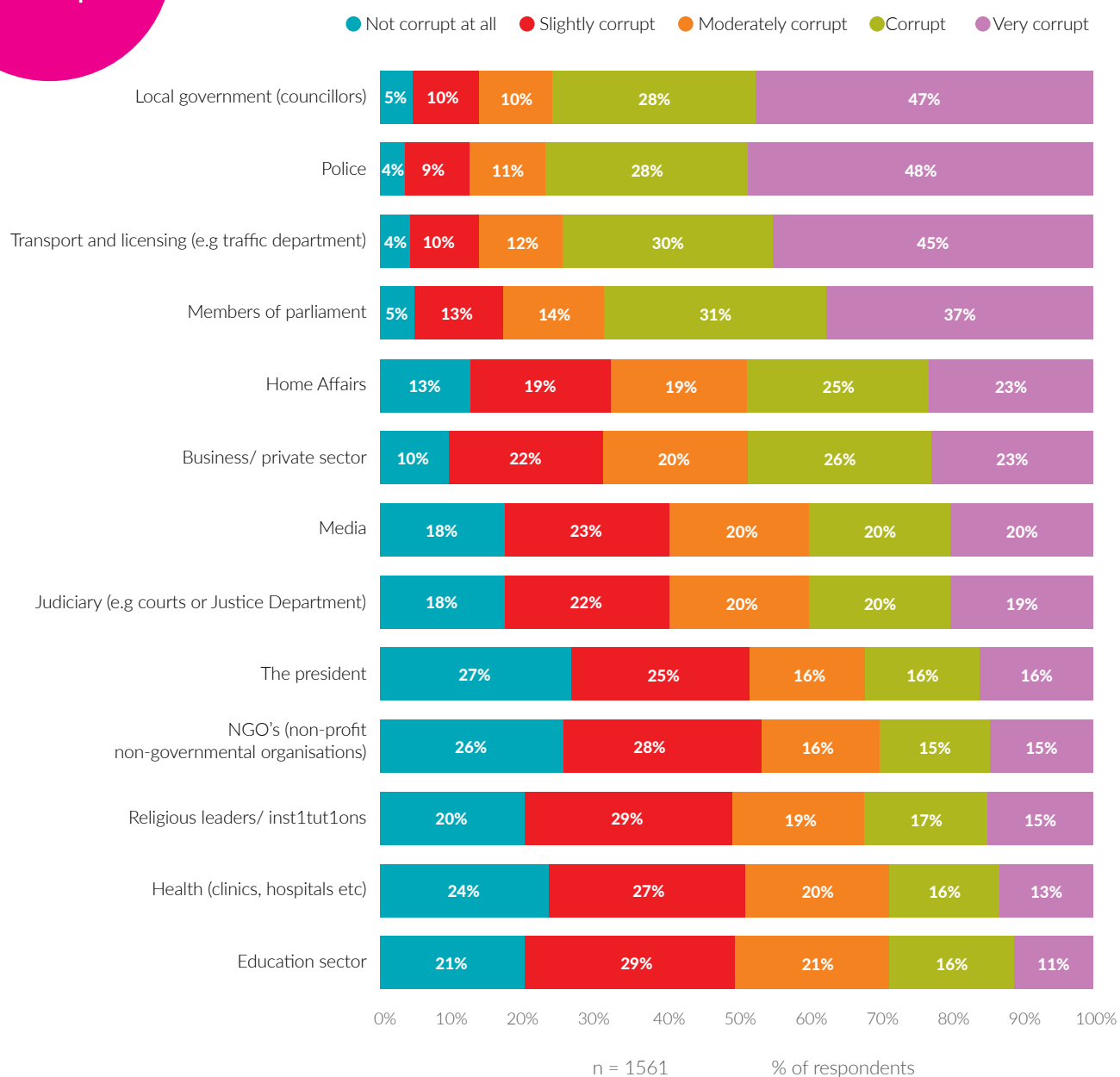
Perceptions

According to South Africa's youth, the top five most corrupt institutions in the country are the South African Police Service (76%), local government (75%), traffic and licensing departments (75%), Parliament (68%) and the business sector (49%). Similarly, young people have a general distrust of local government (77%), parliamentarians (70%), the police (70%), the transport and licensing department (69%), and the

private sector (51%) when it comes to their efforts in fighting corruption.

Interestingly, 36% of respondents do trust President Cyril Ramaphosa's efforts to fight corruption, followed closely by the educational sector institutions (35%) and religious institutions (32%).

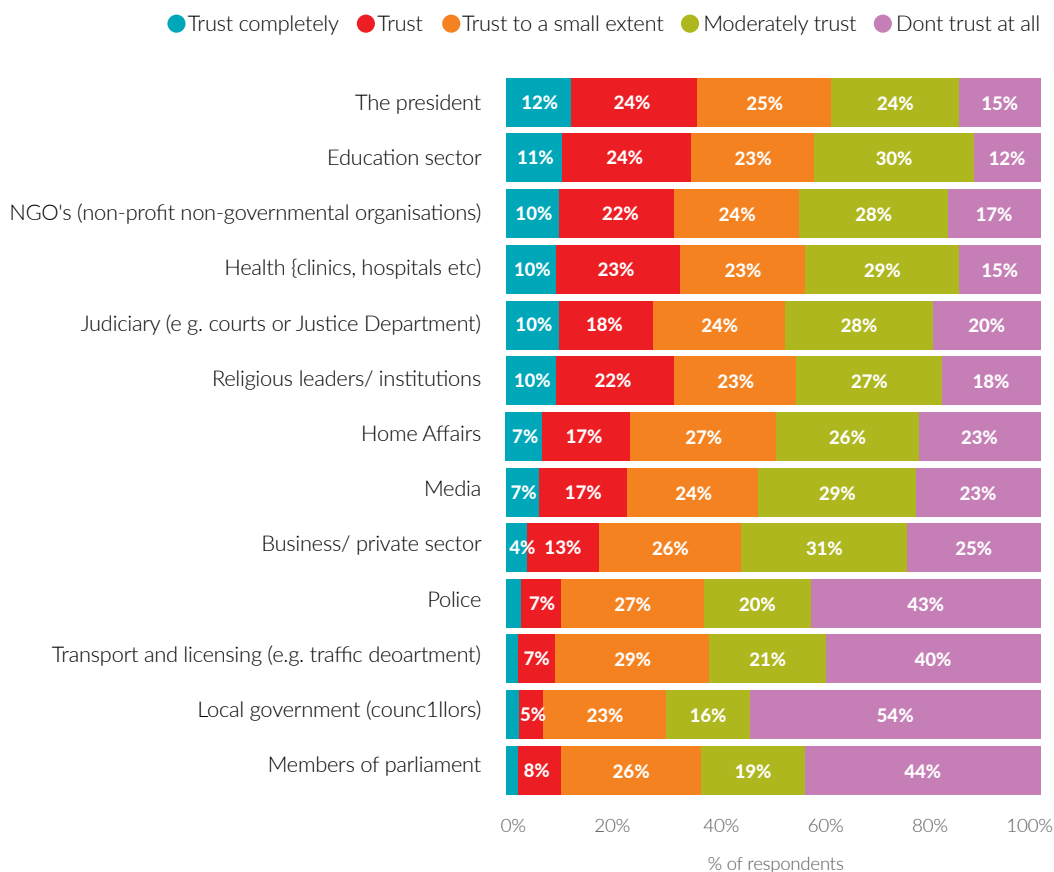
To what extent do you believe the following institutions are corrupt?



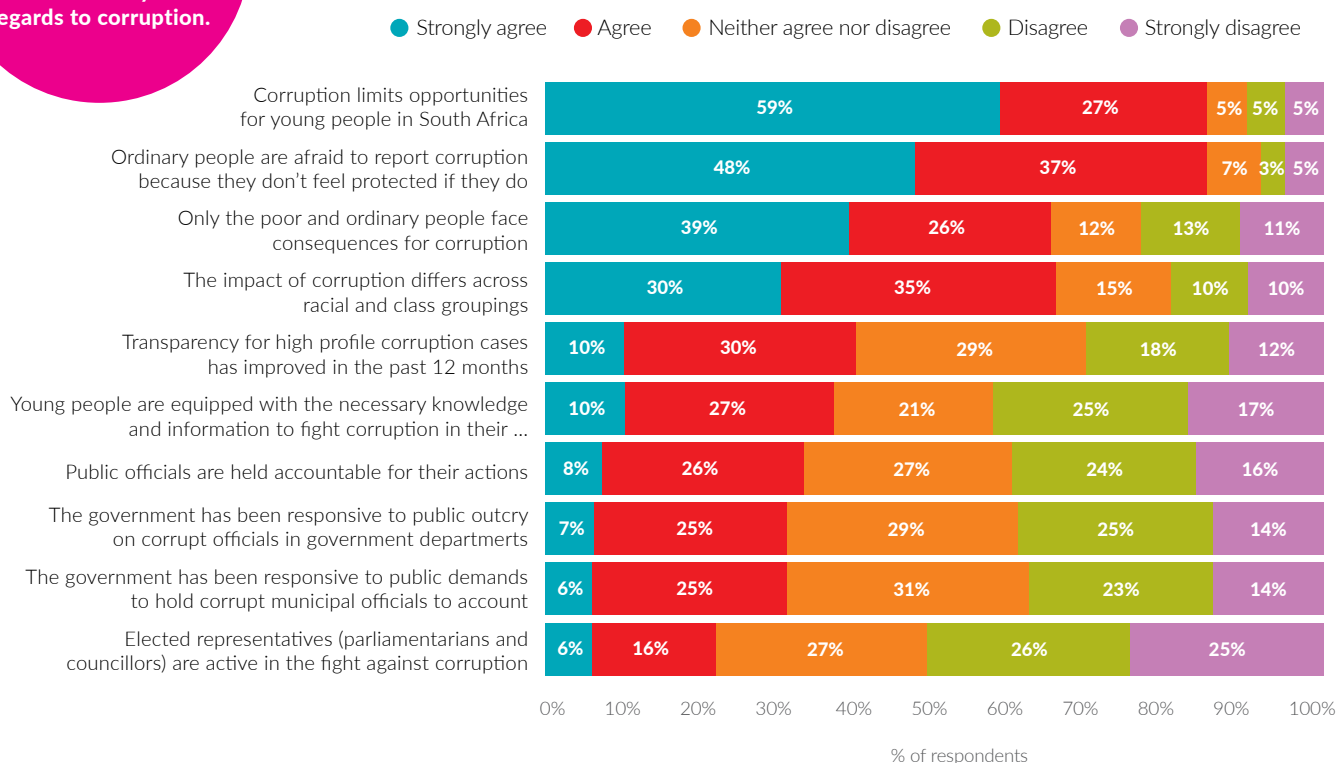
With youth unemployment at an all-time high, it is unsurprising that 86% of respondents feel that corruption limits the opportunities of young people in South Africa. Significantly, 65% of respondents note that only the poor and vulnerable face the

consequences of corruption and that its impact differs across racial and class lines. A further 85% feel that ordinary people are afraid to blow the whistle because they would not be protected.

Extent to which Respondents trust the efforts of the following institutions in fighting corruption.



Extent to which respondents agree with the following statements regarding governance and democracy with regards to corruption.

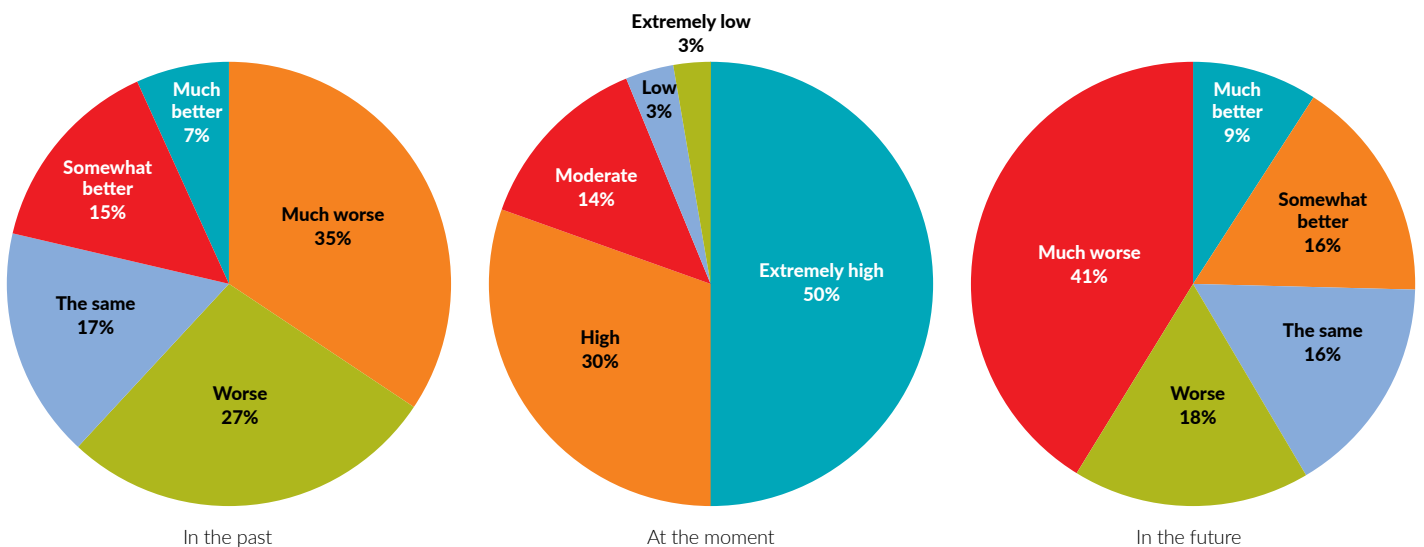




Corruption trends

When asked to rate the levels of corruption in South Africa, in comparison to the past five years, the majority of respondents (62%) believe that corruption has worsened, while 22% note that things were better previously and 17% claim that nothing has changed. There is a consensus amongst young people across income levels that corruption is worse now than it was previously, and that it's likely to get bleaker in the future. The general lack of trust in institutions and their ability to confront those who engage in corruption contributes to the perception that corruption is likely to get worse in the future.

Perceptions on the levels of corruption



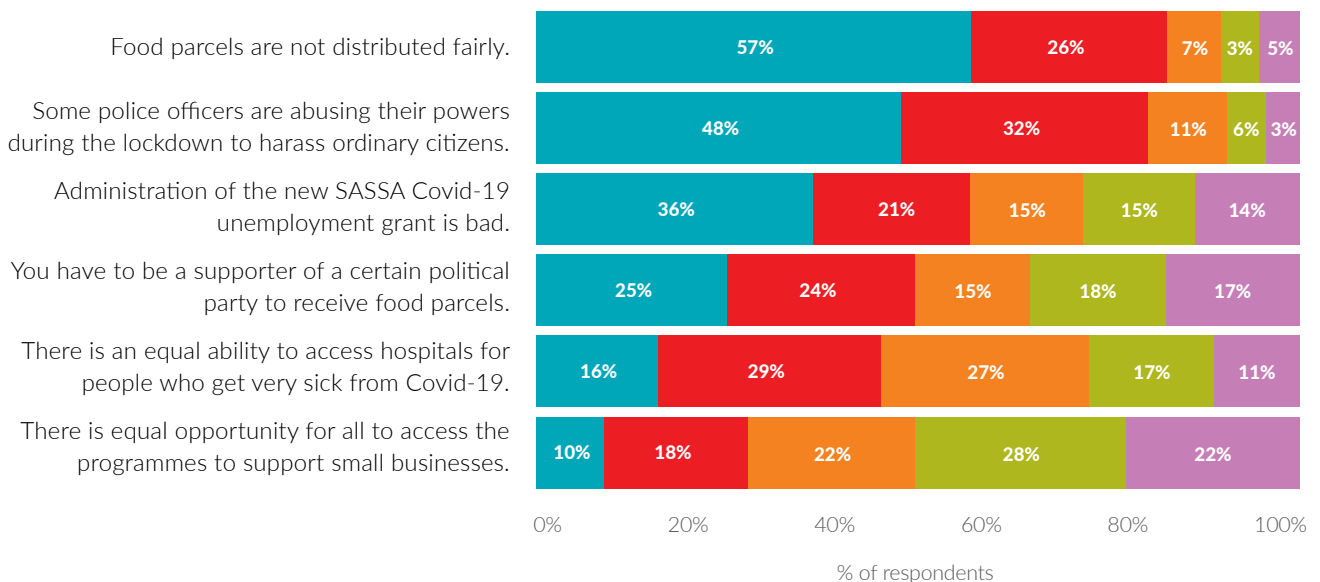
Covid-19 corruption

This survey was conducted during South Africa's nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19. In the aftermath of the initial hard lockdown, the public have become increasingly aware of the rampant corruption and flouting of processes in the country's pandemic response. In line with the whistle-blower reports that Corruption Watch has received since April 2020, 83% of respondents assert that food parcels were not being distributed fairly, with 49%

believing that you have to be a member of a particular political party in order to receive a food parcel. Again supporting Corruption Watch's whistle-blower reports, 48% of participants noted that the police were abusing their powers and harassing members of the public during the lockdown. Furthermore, there was little hope in the social assistance measures being provided by the State with 41% noting that the SASSA grant was being poorly administered.

Extent to which respondents agree with the following statements regarding the Covid-19 lockdown:

● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree



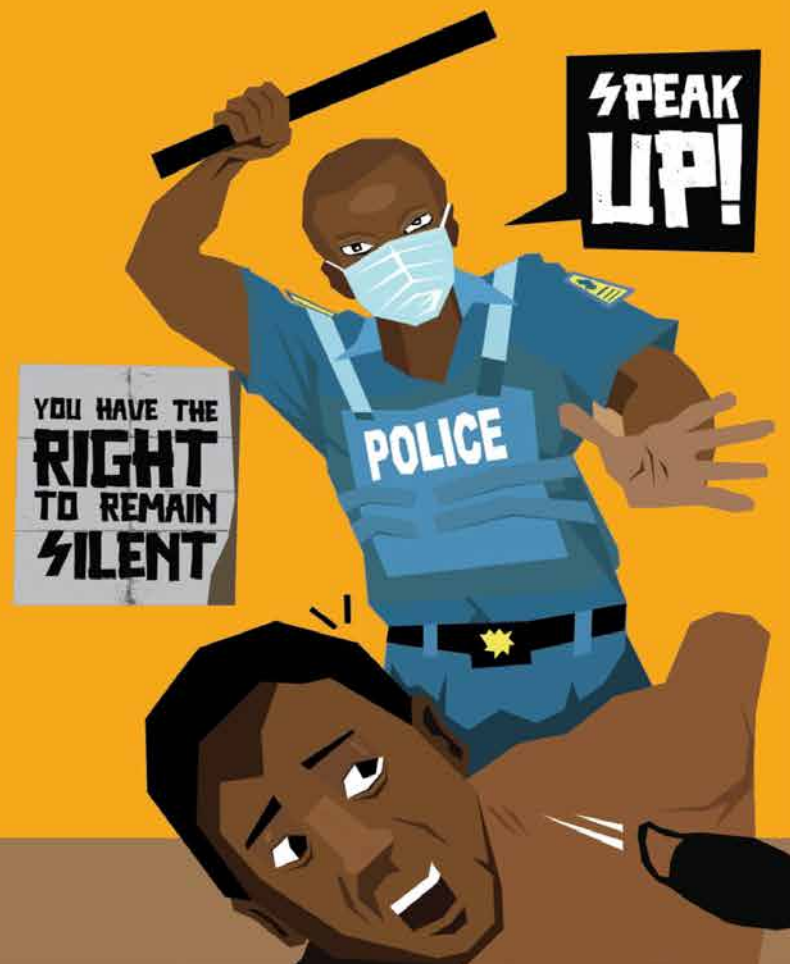
Conclusion

The young people surveyed in this study have illustrated that they comprehend how wide-ranging the acts of corruption can be, based on their agreement of how they define graft. They have demonstrated too the effects of corruption on their lives –whether it is the inability to access basic amenities at the local level of government, seeking safety and security from the police, or looking for gainful employment. Furthermore, the high levels of distrust that they have in the various state institutions, elected leaders and corporations does not bode well for a democracy at its infancy.

That said the onus lies upon the youth in South Africa to map a future that is principally opposed to the injustices that have become the norm in their communities. At the crux of systemic reform is the necessity to address corruption. A unified approach would resist corruption's propensity to instil fear via the unscrupulous persons it props up, and entrench divisions through its target on the poorest and most vulnerable in our midst.

There comes a time when every generation imprints on the conscience of society its hopes and dreams for a better life. Fortunately, for the modern group of young people, there are a number of examples of such moments over the past decades that they can learn from.

Therefore, in a country such as South Africa, the requirement for a person to do right by his or her fellow human is a virtue that does not need much motivation. Tens of millions of people, mostly youth, are confronted by the stark reality of homelessness, unemployment, being the sole providers for siblings, uncles, aunts and the elderly on meagre incomes, a widening gap of inequality exacerbated by greedy businesspersons, poor governance, and a brutal police institution. Thus, calling for transparency and accountability by blowing the whistle on corruption, and using democratic tools in pursuit of these principles, is incumbent upon all youth as we strive for a corrupt-free nation.





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