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News release

Approval rating for government anti-corruption efforts drops after strong gains in 2017, new Afrobarometer study shows

A majority of Nigerians say the level of corruption in the country has increased and the government is doing a poor job of fighting it, a stark reversal from positive assessments three years ago, a new Afrobarometer study shows.

Among a variety of key formal and informal leaders, all are seen as plagued by widespread corruption by a significant proportion of the population. Among Nigerians who had contact with selected public services during the past year, substantial proportions say they had to pay a bribe to obtain the services they needed. The most frequent experience of paying a bribe was among citizens who sought assistance from the police.

In addition to negative reviews of the government's anti-corruption efforts, a large majority of citizens say they do not feel safe reporting corrupt acts to the authorities.

Since assuming office in May 2015, the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has taken several measures to curb corruption, including the establishment of the Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC), prosecution of high-profile corruption cases, suspension of top government officials alleged to be involved in corrupt practices, adoption of a whistleblower protection policy, and enhanced capacity building programs for officers of anti-corruption agencies. But critics express distrust in the government's anti-corruption campaign, voicing concerns about possible abuse of the whistleblower policy, institutional weaknesses, and perceived discrimination and lack of transparency in the management and distribution of COVID-19 funds and palliatives.

Key findings

- A majority (56%) of Nigerians say the level of corruption in the country increased “somewhat” or “a lot” during the past year (Figure 1).
- Six in 10 respondents (61%) say “most” or “all” police officials are corrupt, although this reflects continued improvement since 2012 (78%). About four in 10 citizens see widespread corruption among elected officials and judges, while traditional and religious leaders are least commonly seen as corrupt (by 26% and 30%, respectively) (Figure 2).
- Among Nigerians who had contact with key public services during the previous year, a large majority say they had to bribe the police at least once to get help (76%) or avoid a problem (68%) (Figure 3). Four in 10 (40%) say they paid a bribe to obtain a government document, while a quarter or fewer paid a bribe for school services (25%) or medical care (21%).
- Fewer than three in 10 citizens (28%) say the government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” in fighting corruption, half the proportion who approved of the government's performance in 2017 (59%) (Figure 4).

- Eight in 10 Nigerians (83%) say ordinary citizens risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they report incidents of corruption to the authorities, up from 77% in 2017 (Figure 5).

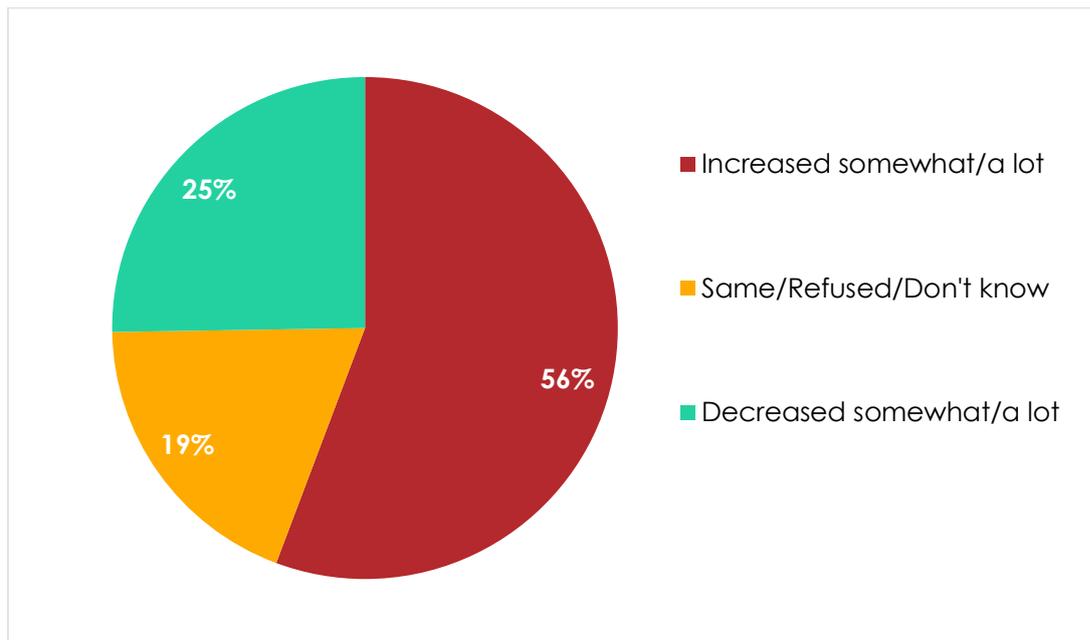
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2020 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Nigeria, led by NOIPolls, interviewed 1,599 adult citizens of Nigeria in January-February 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Nigeria in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

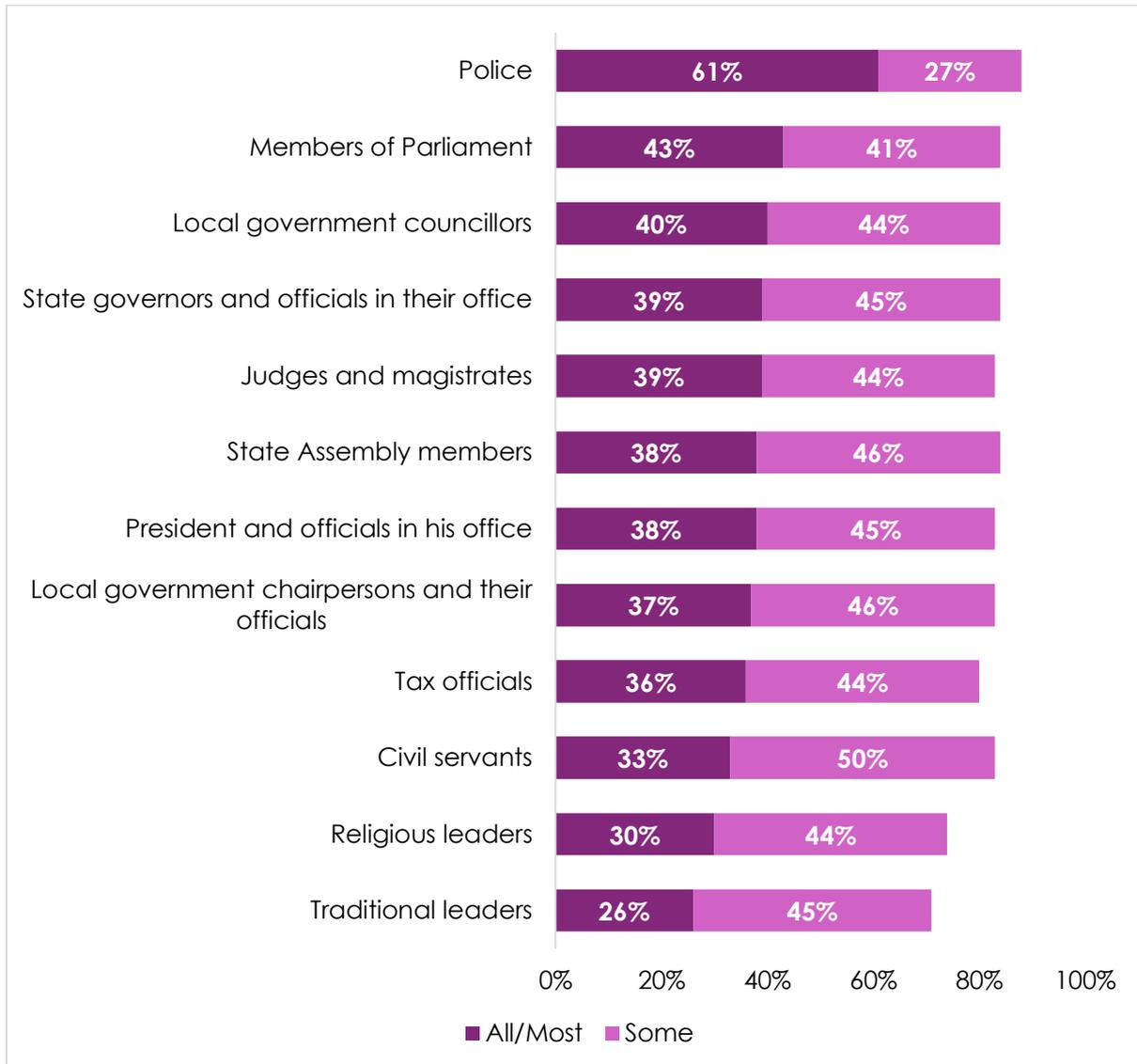
Charts

Figure 1: Level of corruption | Nigeria | 2020



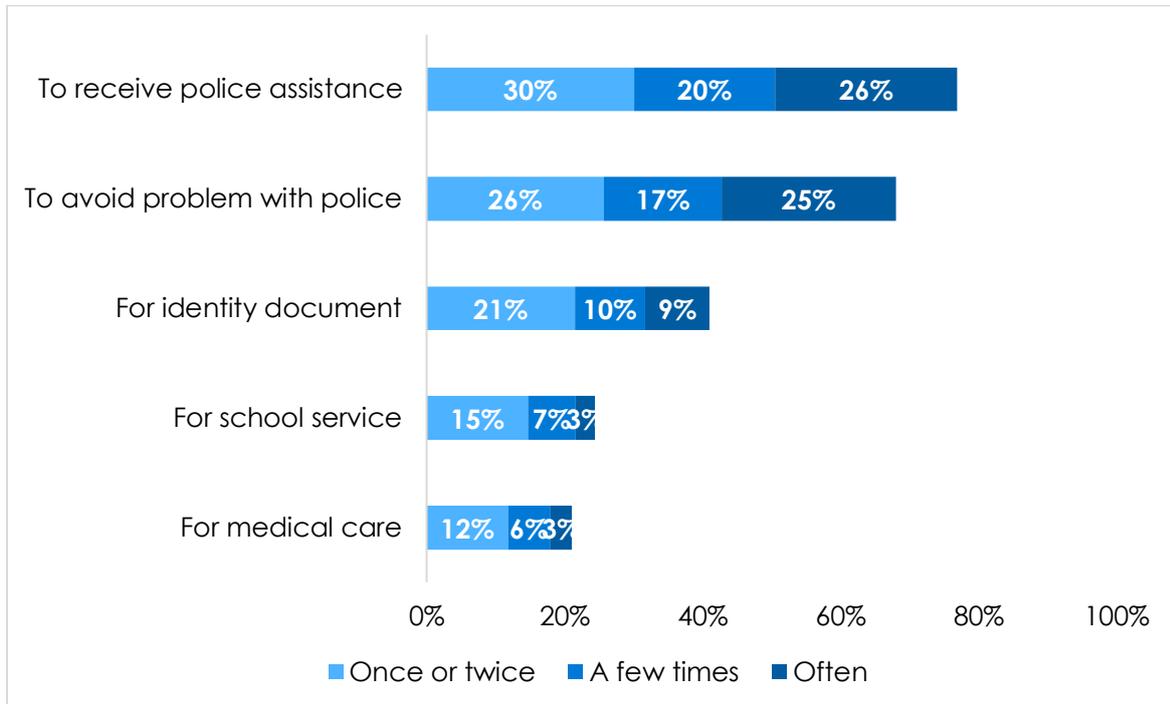
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?*

Figure 2: Who is corrupt? | Nigeria | 2020



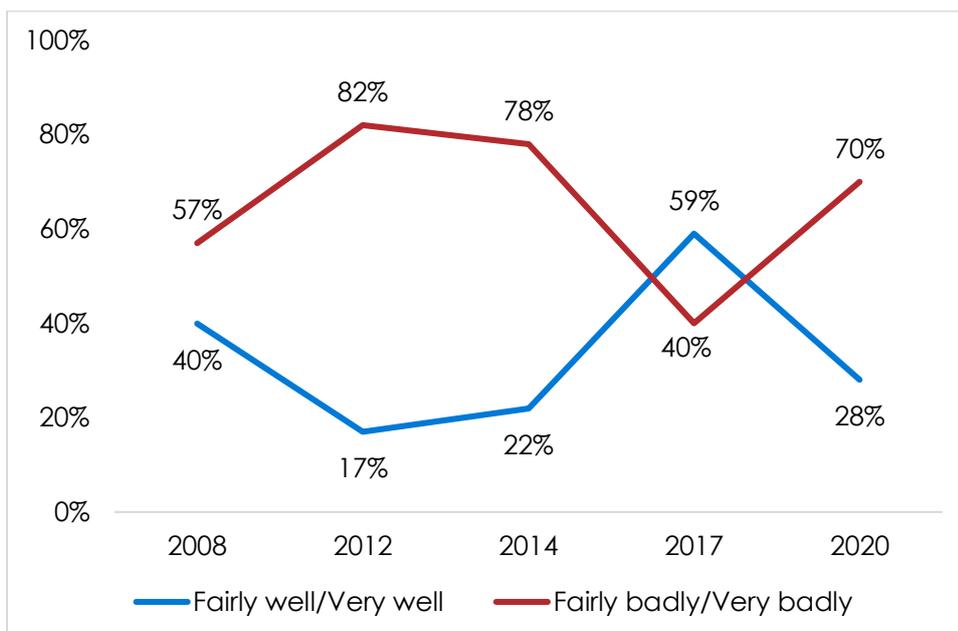
Respondents were asked: Respondents were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:

Figure 3: Paid bribes to access public services | Nigeria | 2020



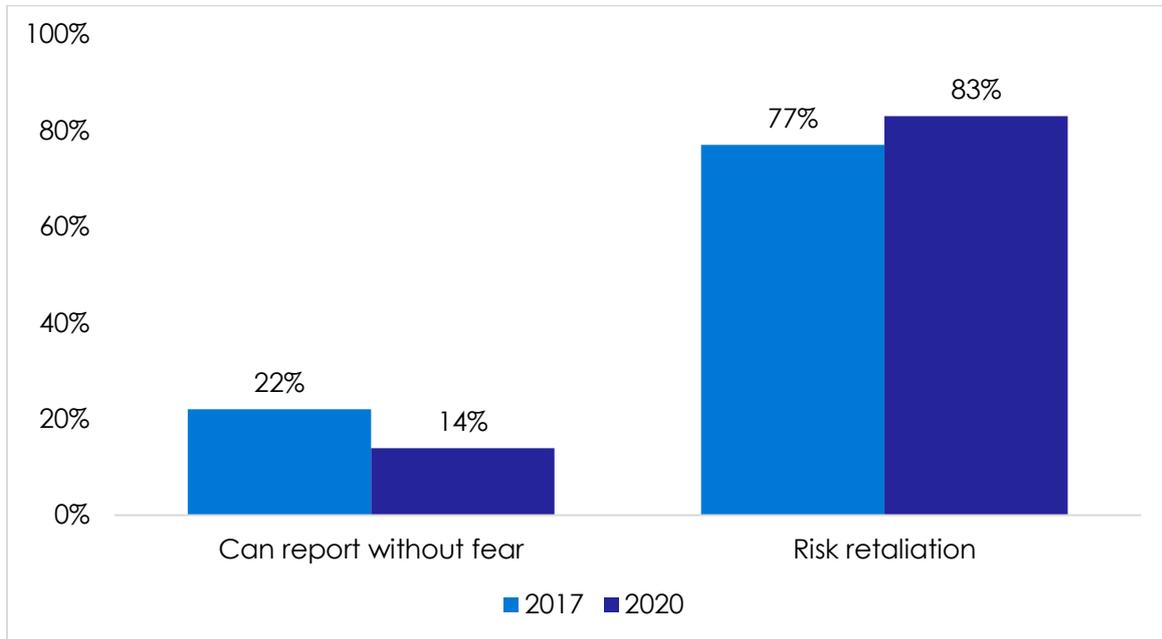
Respondents who had contact with key public services during the previous year were asked: And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour [for a public official to obtain the needed assistance or avoid problems]? (Note: Figure excludes those who had no contact with these public services.)

Figure 4 : Government performance in fighting corruption | Nigeria | 2008-2020



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government?

Figure 5: Risk of retaliation for reporting corruption | Nigeria | 2017-2020



Respondents were asked: *In this country, can ordinary people report incidents of corruption without fear, or do they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they speak out?*

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