

Cabo Verdeans want more government action against corruption

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 304 | Cláudio Alves Furtado and José António Vaz Semedo

Summary

Cabo Verde has long enjoyed a reputation for financial transparency and severe sanctions against fraud, bolstered by its independent central bank, independent judiciary, and Court of Auditors (African Development Bank, 2012).

Despite a few corruption scandals involving current and former government officials (A Nação, 2017; A Semana, 2014), the country has consistently ranked among the 50 least corrupt countries in the world on the Transparency International (2019) Corruption Perceptions Index. The 2018 index rated Cabo Verde third-best in Africa (after Seychelles and Botswana) and 45th out of 180 countries worldwide, down slightly from No. 38 in 2016.

In 2017, the Minister of Justice announced additional anti-graft measures, including creation of an independent council at the Court of Auditors to audit whether public investments are efficient and in line with public interests (Sapo Notícias, 2017), although adequate funding for the council depends on annual budgets.

According to the latest Afrobarometer survey, a majority of Cabo Verdeans want more government action against corruption. Citizens who see corruption in the country as increasing still outnumber those who see it as decreasing, and the perception that most police officials are corrupt actually increased slightly from 2014. A majority of citizens say ordinary people can help fight corruption, but the same proportion fear retaliation if they report incidents of bribery to the authorities.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 35 countries in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys were completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer national partner in Cabo Verde, Afrosondagem, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Cabo Verdeans between 20 November and 6 December 2017. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Cabo Verde in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2014.

Key findings

- The proportion of Cabo Verdeans who say corruption increased during the previous year dropped by 10 percentage points, to 39%, but is still double the share who see corruption decreasing (20%).

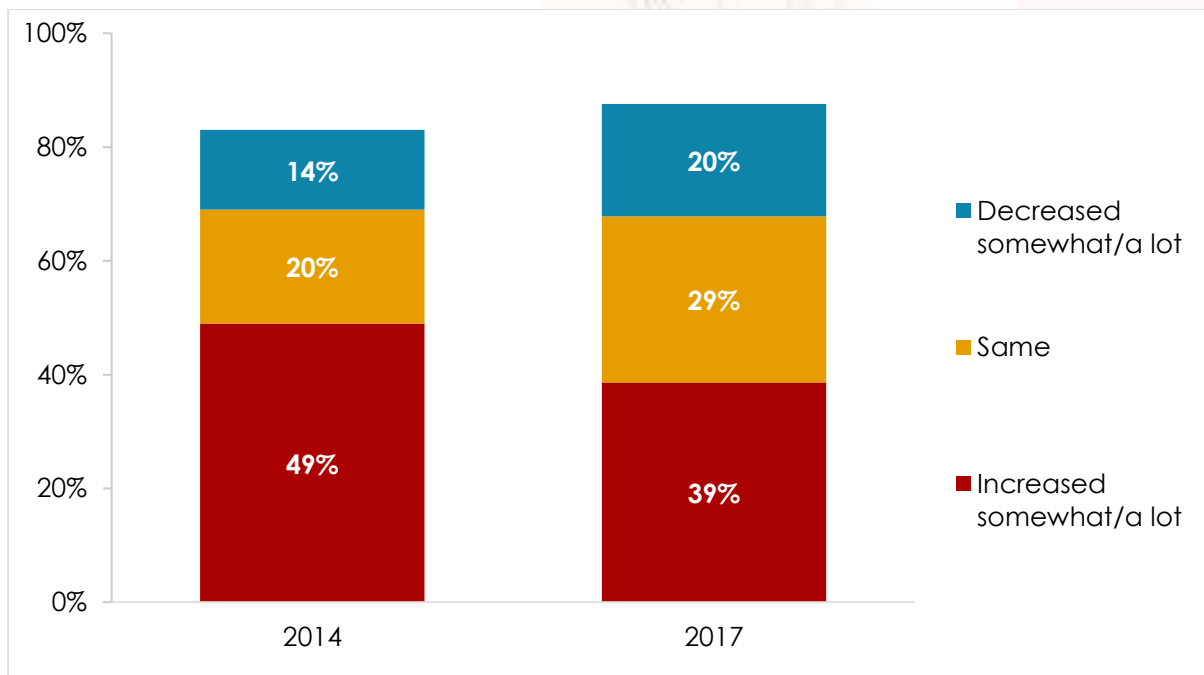
- A majority (61%) of Cabo Verdeans say the government is managing the fight against corruption “fairly badly” or “very badly.”
- Police continue to be perceived as the most corrupt public institution. Six in 10 respondents (62%) say at least “some” police officials are corrupt, including 23% who believe “most” or “all” are involved in graft.
- Fewer than one in 10 Cabo Verdeans who sought key public services during the previous year say they had to pay a bribe to obtain the needed service.
- Almost nine out of 10 Cabo Verdeans say rich people can probably use bribery or personal connections to avoid paying taxes, avoid going to court, or register land that is not theirs. Fewer than half say the same about ordinary people.
- Six out of 10 Cabo Verdeans think that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption (58%) and that the government will take action if corruption is reported (57%). But about the same proportion (60%) say they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they report incidents of corruption.

Level of corruption and government’s performance in fighting corruption

Cabo Verdeans are divided in their views of the overall level of corruption in the country: Four in 10 (39%) say corruption increased “somewhat” or “a lot” during the previous year, while 20% say it decreased and 29% think it stayed about the same (Figure 1). The proportion seeing increasing corruption is 10 percentage points smaller than in 2014 (49%).

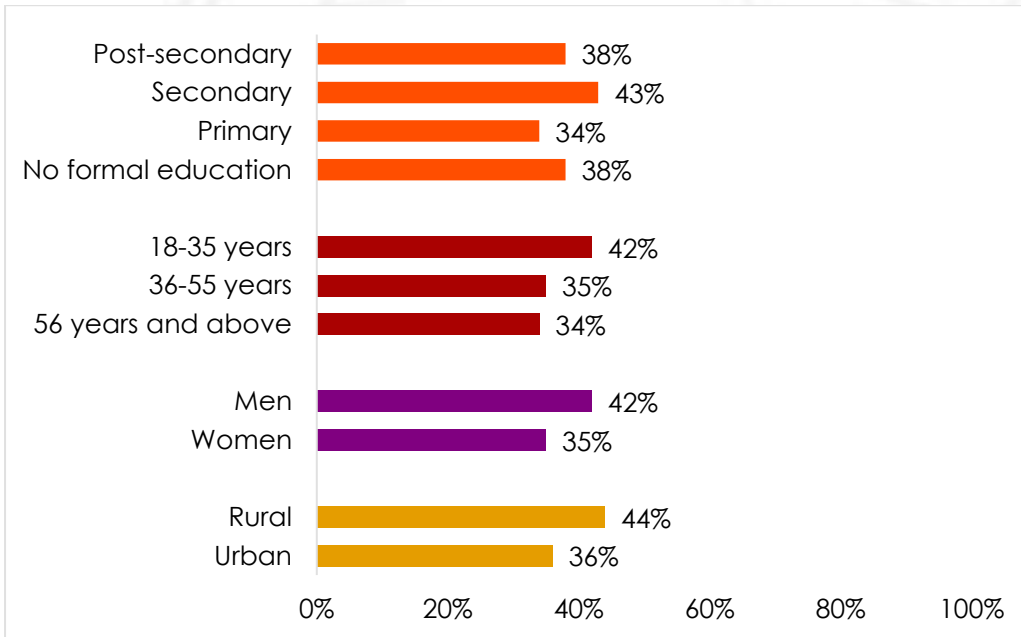
Men (42%), rural residents (44%), and young Cabo Verdeans (42% for those aged 18-35 years) are more likely to perceive an increase in the level of corruption than women (35%), urban residents (36%), and older respondents (34%-35% for those above 35 years) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Perceived change in level of corruption | Cabo Verde | 2014-2017



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

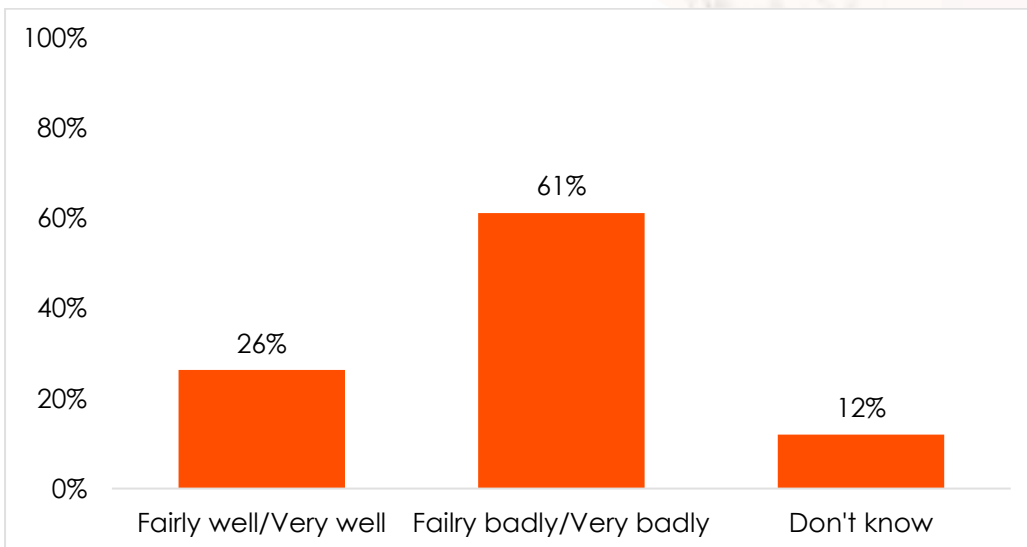
Figure 2: Perceived increased levels of corruption | by socio-demographic group
 | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same? (% who say "increased somewhat" or "increased a lot")

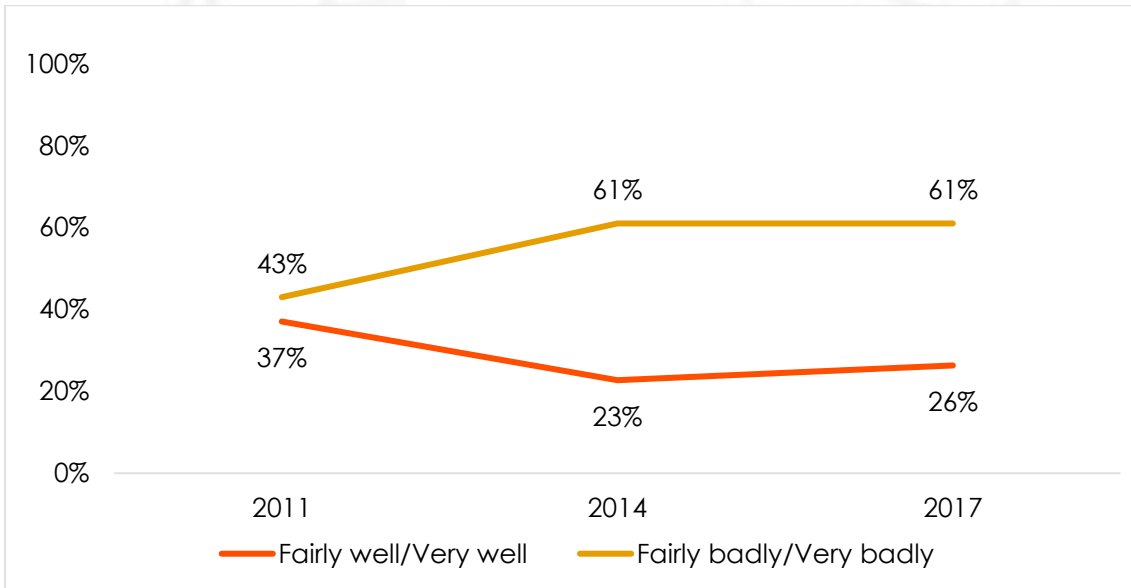
The Cabo Verdean government receives poor marks for its performance in fighting corruption. Only a quarter (26%) of citizens say the government is handling the issue "fairly well" or "very well," compared to six in 10 (61%) who say it is doing "fairly badly" or "very badly" (Figure 3). Confidence in the government's anti-graft performance has declined by 11 percentage points since 2011, when it received positive ratings from 37% of citizens (Figure 4). Conversely, the proportion of citizens who disapprove of the government's performance has increased by 18 percentage points (from 43% in 2011).

Figure 3: Government's performance in fighting corruption | Cabo Verde | 2017



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?

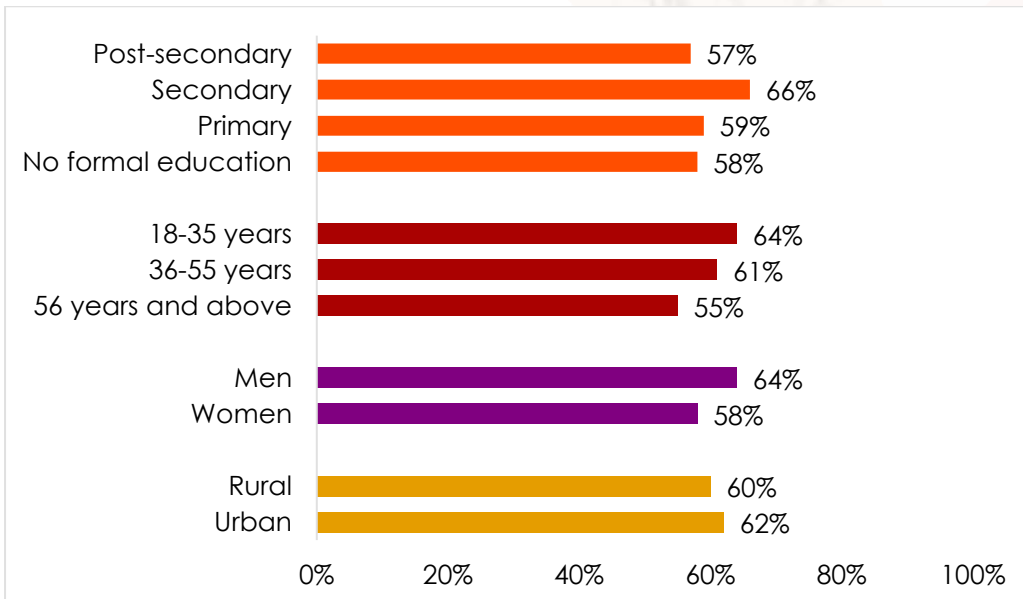
Figure 4: Government's performance in fighting corruption | Cabo Verde
 | 2011-2017



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?

The perception that the government is handling the fight against corruption badly is more common among men (64%) and young Cabo Verdeans (64% for those aged 18-35 years) than among women (58%) and older respondents (55% for those aged 56 years and above) (Figure 5). Rural and urban residents are about equally likely to rate the government's performance as poor.

Figure 5: Government performance in fighting corruption | by socio-demographic group | Cabo Verde | 2017



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? (% who say "fairly badly" or "very badly")

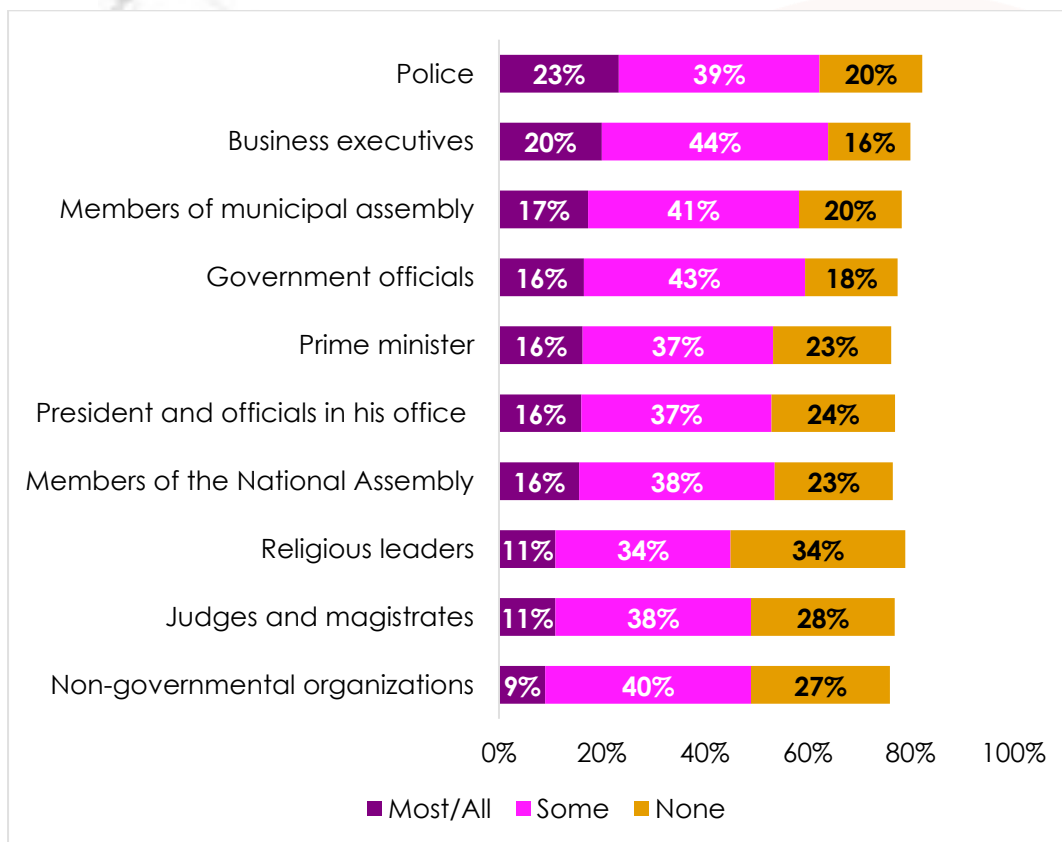
The police continue to be seen as the most corrupt public institution: About one in four Cabo Verdeans (23%) say "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt, a slight increase from 19% in 2014. In addition, four in 10 (39%) see "some" police officials as corrupt (Figure 6).

With regard to most public officials, a majority of Cabo Verdeans say at least "some of them" are corrupt, ranging from 53% for the president's and prime minister's offices to 60% for non-elected government officials.

In the private sector, perceived corruption is highest with regard to businesspeople (20% say "most" or "all" are corrupt) and lowest for non-governmental organizations (9% most/all).

In each category, about one in five respondents say they "don't know" or preferred not to answer the question.

Figure 6: Who is corrupt | Cabo Verde | 2017

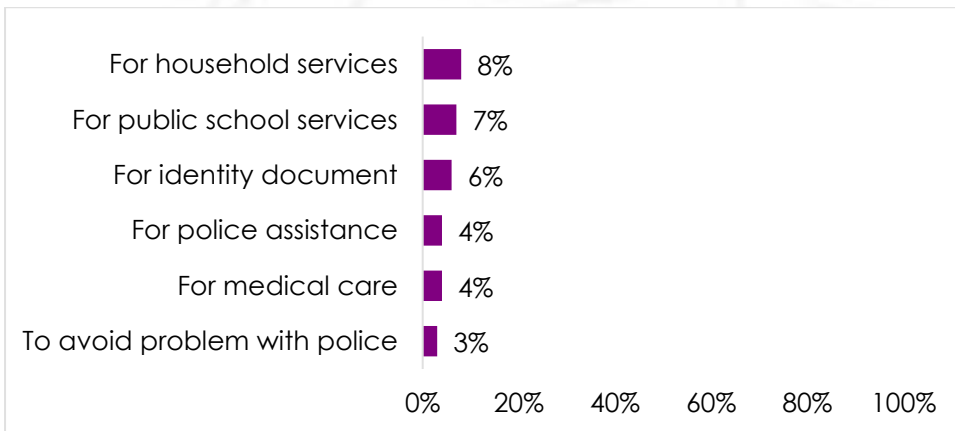


Respondents were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Cabo Verdeans' experience with corruption

Afrobarometer asked respondents whether they had contact with selected public services (schools, public health facilities, government agencies responsible for identity documents, household utilities, police) during the previous 12 months and, if yes, whether they had been required to pay a bribe or do a favour in order to obtain the services or assistance they needed. Among citizens who had sought these public services, fewer than one in 10 say they paid a bribe to obtain household services (8%), public school services (7%), identity documents (6%), police assistance (4%), and medical care (4%), and to avoid problems with the police (3%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Paying a bribe to obtain government services | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents who said they requested selected 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 teacher or school official in order to get the services you needed from the schools?

For a health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed?

For a government official in order to get the document you needed?

For a government official in order to get the services you needed?

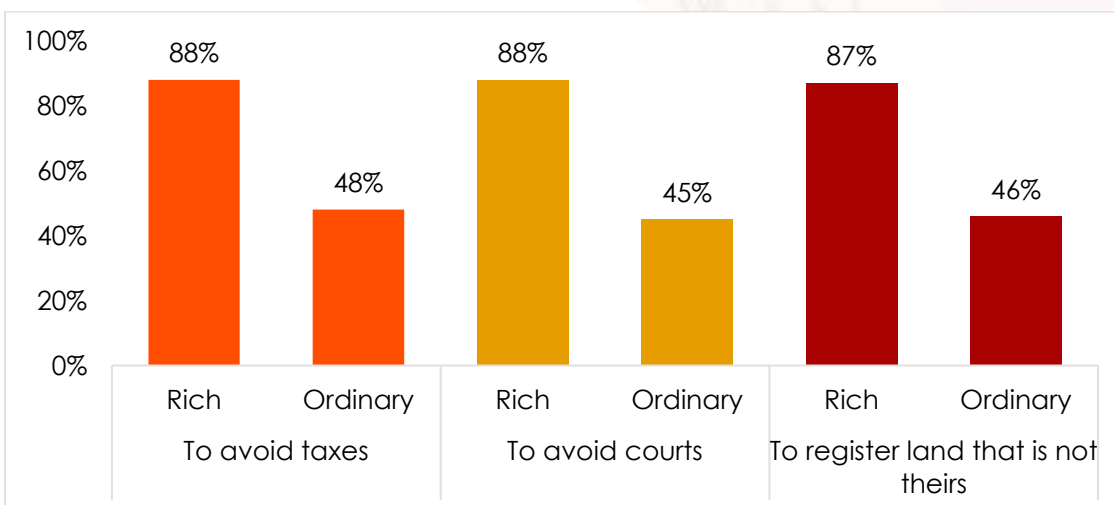
For a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed?

For a police officer in order to avoid a problem during one of these encounters?

(% who say "once or twice," "a few times," or "often." Note: Figure excludes respondents who said they had no contact with these public services during the previous year.)

Cabo Verdeans say rich people are more likely than ordinary citizens to be able to use bribery or personal connections to achieve illegal advantages. Almost nine out of 10 respondents say the rich are "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to get away with bribing authorities or using personal connections to avoid paying taxes (88%), avoid going to court (88%), or register land that not theirs (87%), compared to fewer than half who say the same about ordinary citizens (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Use of bribery or personal connections by the rich vs. ordinary people | Cabo Verde | 2017

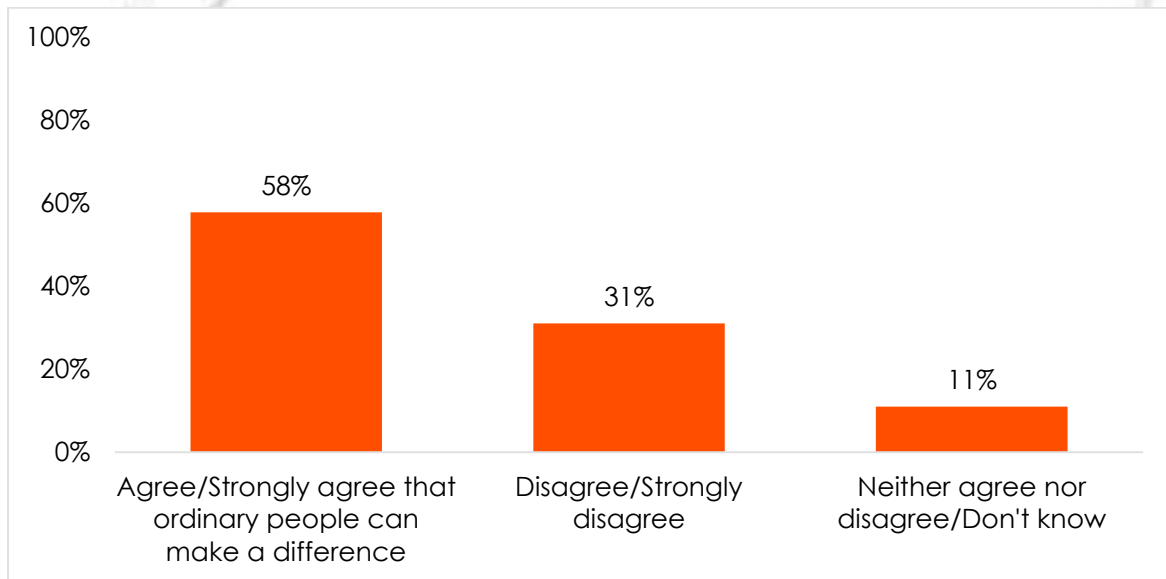


Respondents were asked: In this country, how likely do you think it is that [an ordinary person/a rich person] could pay a bribe or use personal connections to get away with: Avoiding paying taxes they owe to government? Avoiding going to court? Registering land that does not belong to them? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

Fighting corruption

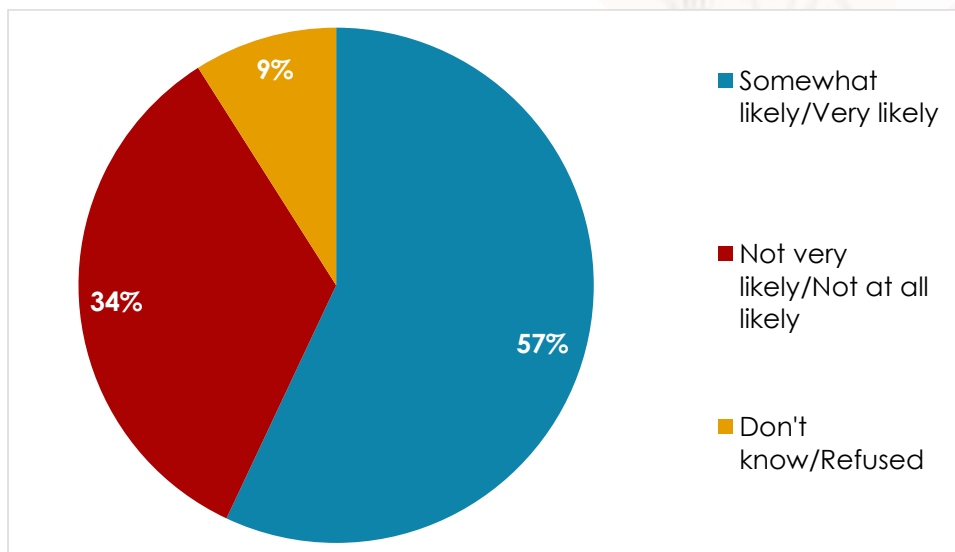
A majority of Cabo Verdeans believe that citizens have a role in fighting corruption and that authorities will respond if they report incidents of corruption. Six in 10 respondents (58%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that ordinary people can make a difference in this effort (Figure 9), and the same proportion (57%) see it as “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that authorities will take action when incidents of corruption are reported (Figure 10). About one-third see no role for citizens and consider government action unlikely.

Figure 9: Citizens and the fight against corruption | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption?

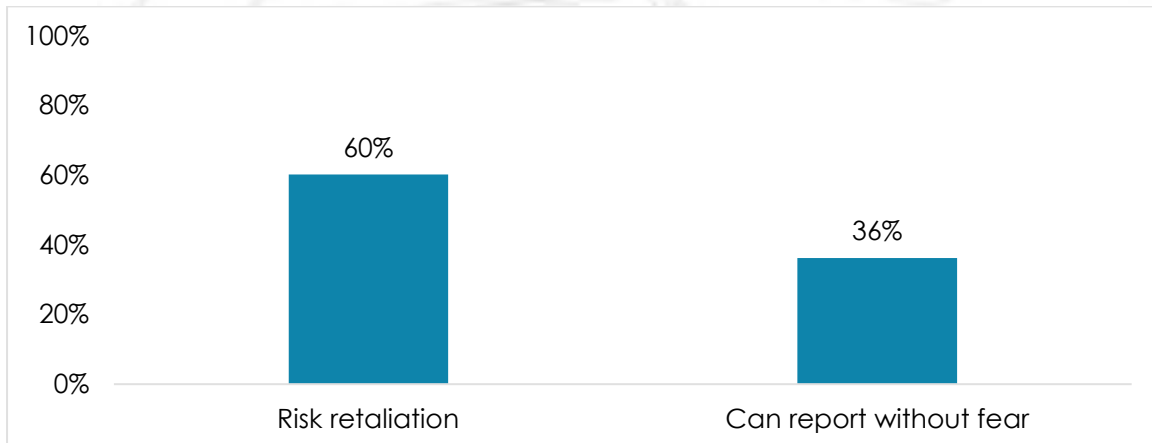
Figure 10: Will the authorities take action when corruption is reported? | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: How likely is it that you could get someone to take action if you went to your local government council to report corrupt behavior like misuse of funds or requests for bribes by government officers, police, or school or clinic staff?

However, six in 10 (60%) say that they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they report incidents of corruption; only about one-third (36%) say Cabo Verdeans can report corruption without fear (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Can people report corruption without fear? | Cabo Verde | 2017



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?*

Conclusion

Cabo Verde has a good anti-graft reputation, and Afrobarometer data show that relatively few Cabo Verdeans have to pay bribes to access public services. But a significant proportion of citizens still see corruption as increasing, and a majority think the government isn't doing enough to fight it. In addition to more drastic punitive measures, one approach may be to ensure that more citizens feel safe in reporting corruption to the authorities.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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