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News release

Kenyans grow more dissatisfied with government fight against corruption, fear retaliation if they report

A majority of Kenyans say the level of corruption in the country has increased and the government is doing a poor job of fighting it, a new Afrobarometer analysis shows.

Findings from a national survey in late 2019 show that among Kenyans who had contact with selected public services during the preceding 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.

And only a small minority believe that people can report corruption to the authorities without fear of retaliation.

Corruption hit the headlines again recently when a report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists implicated high-profile figures around the world – including prominent personalities in Kenya – in using secret offshore accounts to accumulate wealth.

Key findings

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of Kenyans say the level of corruption in the country increased “somewhat” or “a lot” during the year preceding the survey, a 23-percentage-point increase compared to 2014 (Figure 1).
- Eight in 10 citizens (79%) of citizens say the government is doing a “fairly bad” or “very bad” job of fighting corruption, a 13-percentage-point increase compared to 2014 (Figure 2).
- Only two in 10 Kenyans (18%) believe that ordinary people can report incidents of corruption to authorities without fear of retaliation or other negative consequences (Figure 3).
- The police are most widely perceived as corrupt: 68% of Kenyans say “most” or “all” police officials are corrupt. Substantial proportions of the population see widespread corruption by the president and officials in his office (33%), county assembly members (46%), and members of Parliament (47%) (Figure 4).
- Among respondents who had contact with key public services during the year preceding the survey, substantial proportions say they had to pay bribes to get police assistance (56%), avoid problems with the police (39%), or obtain identity documents (49%), medical care (24%), or public school services (18%) (Figure 5).

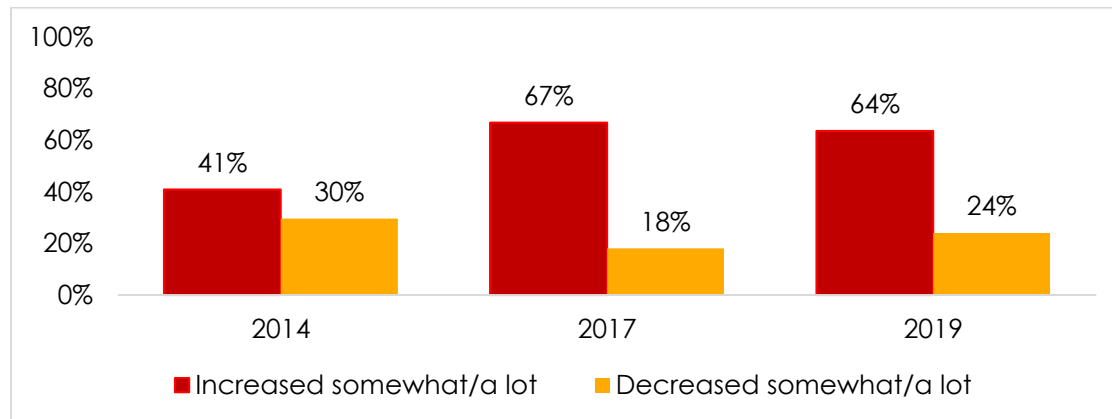
Afrobarometer survey

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. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Kenya, based at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, interviewed 2,400 adult Kenyans in August-September 2019. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Kenya in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016.

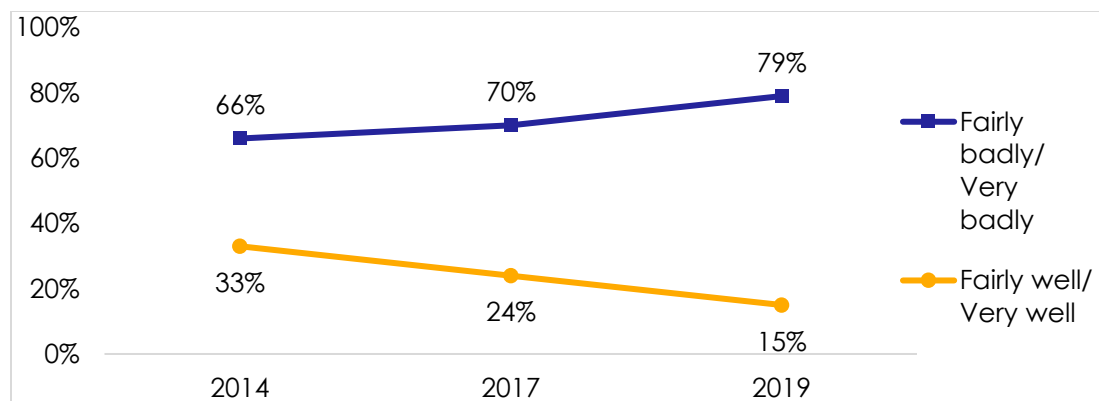
Charts

Figure 1: Level of corruption | Kenya | 2014-2019



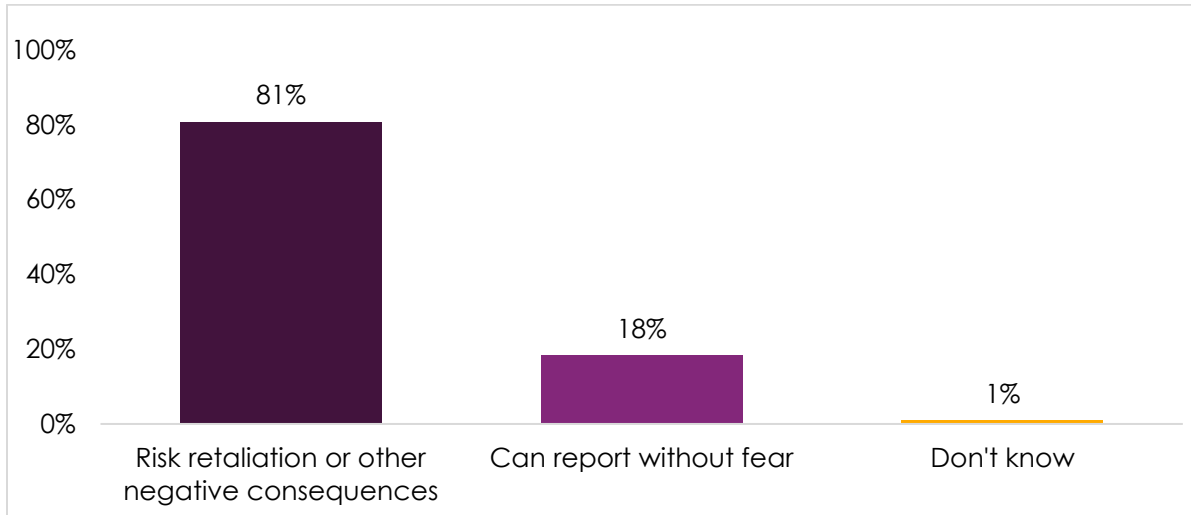
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Figure 2: Government performance in fighting corruption | Kenya | 2014-2019



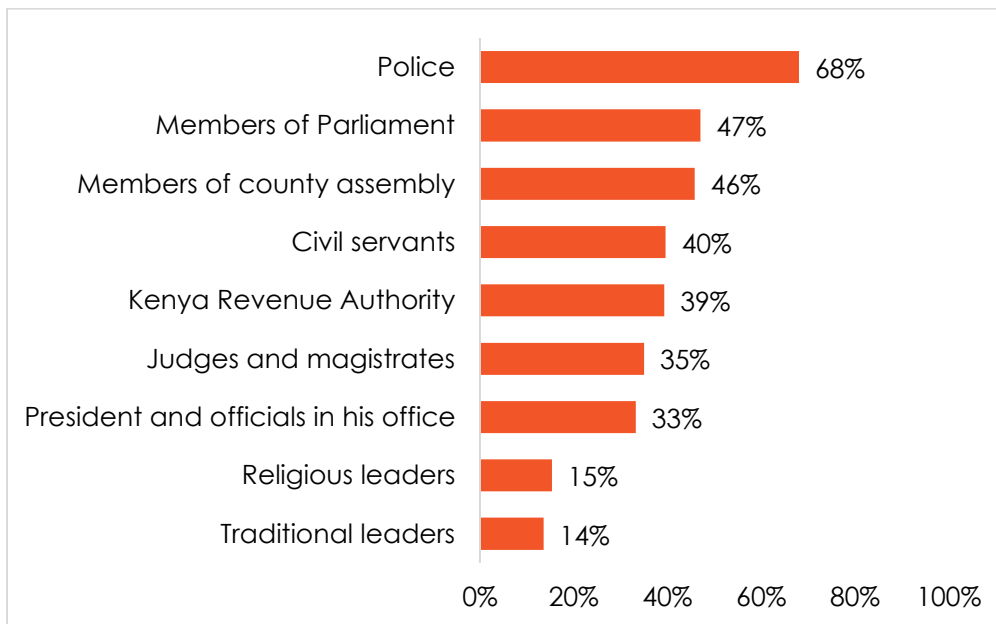
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government?

Figure 3: Can ordinary people report corruption without fear? | Kenya | 2019



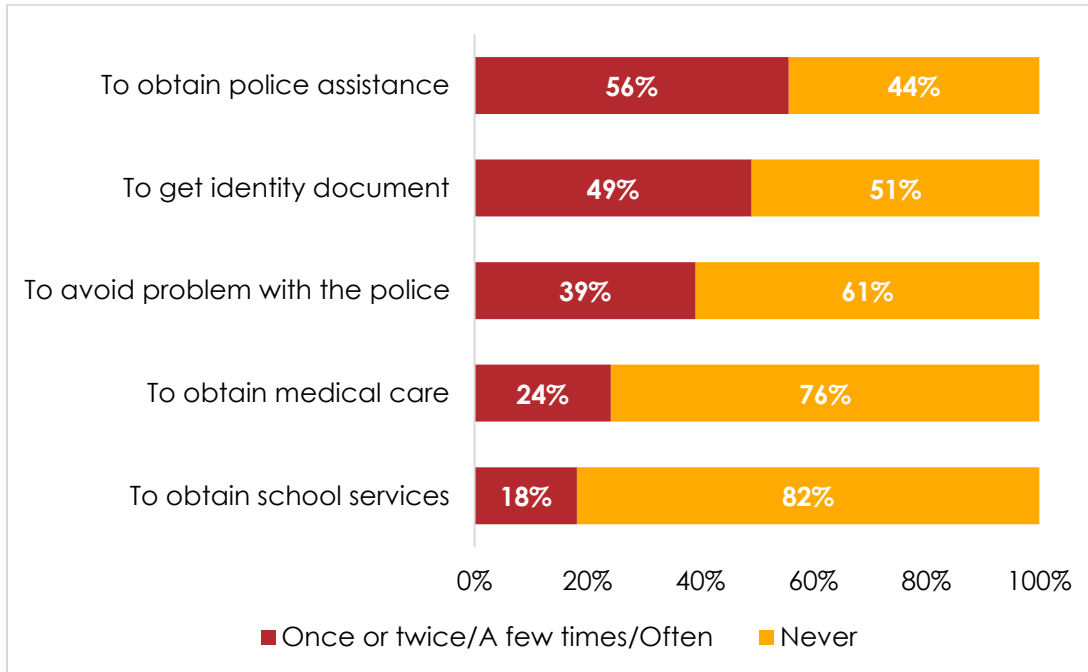
Respondents were asked: In this country, can ordinary people report incidents of corruption without fear, or do they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they speak out?

Figure 4: Perceived corruption among leaders | Kenya | 2019



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 5: Paid bribes to access public services | Kenya | 2019



Respondents who had contact with key public services during the year preceding the survey 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.)

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