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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Second survey on corruption
as experienced by the population

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

December 2019



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME
Vienna

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Scope of bribery

Bribery in Nigeria is slightly less prevalent than three years ago

Out of all Nigerian citizens who had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey, 30.2 per cent paid a bribe to, or were asked to pay a bribe by, a public official. This means that, although still relatively high, the prevalence of bribery in Nigeria has undergone a moderate, yet statistically significant, decrease since 2016, when it stood at 32.3 per cent.

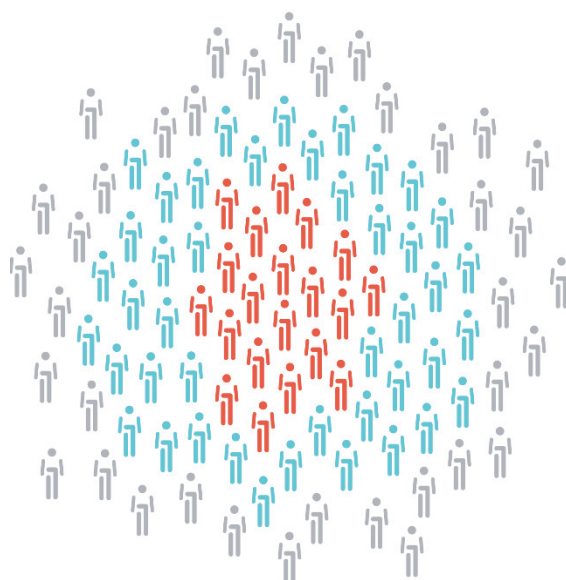
Three out of the country's six zones (North-East, North-West and South-West) have recorded decreases in the prevalence of bribery since 2016, with the North-West experiencing a considerable (and statistically significant) decline in the prevalence of bribery, from 36 to 25 per cent, while the two other zones recorded smaller decreases. By contrast, the North-Central, South-East and South-South zones recorded further increases in the prevalence of bribery from 2016 to 2019.

The prevalence of bribery may have decreased but the frequency of bribe-paying has not

Although a smaller percentage of Nigerians that had contact with public officials paid bribes, or were asked to pay bribes, those who did pay bribes continued to do so quite frequently: in 2019, Nigerian bribe-payers paid an average of 6 bribes in the 12 months prior to the survey, or one bribe every two months, which is virtually the same as the average of 5.8 bribes paid per bribe-payer in 2016. As a result, it is estimated that some 117 million bribes are paid in Nigeria on a yearly basis, the equivalent of 1.1 bribes per adult.

An increasing number of Nigerians are in contact with public officials

The 2019 survey shows a notable increase since 2016, from 52 to 63 per cent, in the overall proportion of Nigerians who had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the survey. This can be interpreted as a positive sign for the provision of public services in Nigeria.



63% of Nigerian citizens had a contact with at least one public official

30% of them paid at least one bribe

Healthcare professionals, namely doctors, nurses and midwives, and public utility officials are the two types of public official with whom the largest share (31 per cent each) of Nigerians had at least one contact in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey. Police officers came a close third, with 30 per cent.

Contradictory perceptions of corruption have little to do with the reality of bribery in Nigeria

Differently from actual trends of bribery experience, more than half of Nigerians believe that corruption increased in the two years prior to the 2019 survey. Furthermore, the analysis of the list of the most pressing problems afflicting their country, as reported by Nigerian citizens in 2019, shows that corruption has moved from 3rd to 5th position, as there has been a sharp increase in the level of public concern about security and health issues. Around 9 per cent of Nigerians considered corruption to be the most important problem facing their country, a significant decrease from the 14 per cent recorded in the 2016 survey. These findings all point to the fact that the perception of the public, whose understanding of the issue is of the utmost importance, does not always reflect the actual occurrence or experience of corruption, as they can be influenced by numerous factors, including the emergence of other priorities at the national level.

Bribery in the private sector continues to be much less prevalent and frequent than in the public sector

The payment of bribes to private sector employees is much less prevalent than to public officials: the prevalence of private sector bribery in 2019 was 5.7 per cent, while the prevalence of public sector bribery was 30 per cent. Furthermore, the number of bribes paid per bribe-payer to private sector employees in the 12 months prior to the survey was 3.3 versus 6.0 paid to public officials. The prevalence of private sector bribery was virtually the same in 2019 as in 2016 (5.5 per cent), whereas the average number of bribes paid increased from 2.4 to 3.3. However, patterns in the two sectors are not directly comparable as the regulatory frameworks are as different as the types of interaction between citizens and employees of the two sectors.

How bribery works

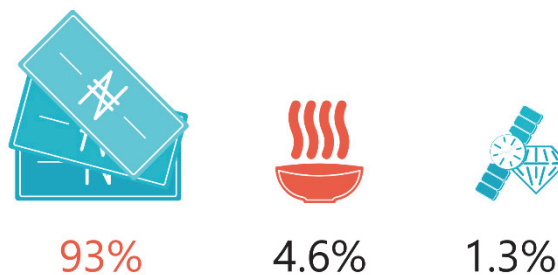
Public officials continue to be brazen about bribe requests, but less so than in the past

Bribery dealings can be initiated in different ways: direct bribery requests by a public official accounted for 60 per cent of all bribery transactions in Nigeria in 2019, representing a moderate decrease from the 66 per cent recorded in the 2016 survey. As in 2016, indirect requests for a bribe accounted for 20 per cent of all bribery transactions, while spontaneous payments to facilitate or to accelerate a procedure accounted for 8 per cent. Some 5 per cent of bribes were also paid with no prior request from the bribe-taker as a sign of appreciation to a public official for services rendered.

Around two thirds of bribes (67 per cent) are paid before a service is provided by a public official, according to the 2019 survey, a proportion only slightly smaller than the 70 per cent recorded in the 2016 survey. The consistently large share of bribes paid in anticipation of a service to be rendered by a public official is an indication that bribes are often requested before action is taken to deliver a service.

Cash continues to be the dominant type of bribe

More than 93 per cent of all bribes paid in 2019 were paid in cash, a slightly larger share than in 2016. According to the 2019 survey, the average cash bribe paid is 5,754 Nigerian Naira (NGN), a sum equivalent to roughly \$52 in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Overall, it is estimated that a total of roughly NGN 675 billion was paid in cash bribes to public officials in Nigeria in 2019, corresponding to 0.52 per cent of the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria. The economic cost of bribery becomes even more palpable when considering that, on average, bribe-payers pay an amount equivalent to 6 per cent of the average annual income of Nigerians.



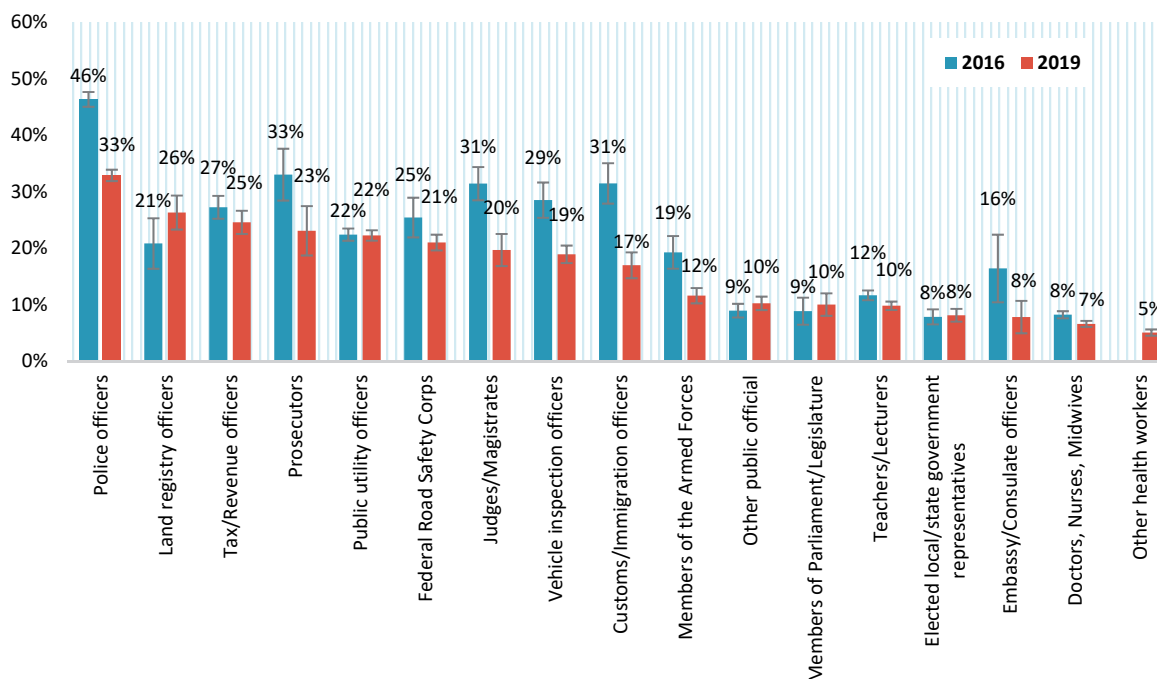
The vast majority of bribes are paid in cash; food and valuables account for small shares

Who takes bribes

Positive signs about bribery and the criminal justice sector

The prevalence of bribery in relation to several types of public official has decreased significantly since 2016. The greatest change is in relation to police officers, meaning that the share of people who paid a bribe to a police officer, out of all those who had at least one contact with a police officer in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey, decreased from 46 to 33 per cent. The prevalence of bribery in relation to prosecutors decreased from 33 to 23 per cent, judges/magistrates from 31 to 20 per cent, customs and immigration officers from 31 to 17 per cent and embassy/consulate officers from 16 to 8 per cent. The decrease in the prevalence of bribery in relation to customs/immigration officers, judges/magistrates and police officers was particularly significant in rural areas, but less so in urban areas. By contrast, the overall prevalence of bribery increased in relation to just a few types of public official, among them land registry officers.

Prevalence of bribery, by type of public official, Nigeria, 2016 and 2019



Public officials who are entrusted with some of the core functions of the State, not least those involved in law enforcement and administering justice, account for some of the largest shares of direct bribe requests:

in around two thirds of all bribes paid to police, prosecutors or judges/magistrates and members of the Armed Forces, the bribe payment was initiated by a direct request by these officials.

Who pays bribes

Urban men are almost twice as likely as rural women to pay bribes

As in the 2016 survey, a significant disparity in the prevalence of bribery between men and women was also noted in the 2019 survey. This disparity becomes even larger when factoring in the urban/rural dimension, as the data show that women living in rural areas are those least likely to pay bribes (21.6 per cent),¹ whereas men living in urban areas are the most likely (39.3 per cent). To a lesser extent there was also a consistent disparity between men and women in the average number of bribes paid. When looking at the age-specific pattern of bribery prevalence by sex, an interesting aspect about the age of bribe-payers in Nigeria can be observed: at a prevalence of 39 per cent, the peak among men aged 25–34 is much more pronounced, while there is almost no variation across age groups among women.



Men are more likely than women to pay a bribe

The socioeconomic gap in bribe-paying is widening

The difference in the prevalence of bribery between the most and least educated groups in Nigeria widened from 9 to 18 percentage points from 2016 to 2019, which was driven by a limited and decreasing experience of bribery among people with a lower level of education in the population.² In both the 2016 and 2019 surveys, it was found that the higher the level of educational attainment, the higher the prevalence of bribery. More specifically, in the 2019 survey, Nigerians with the highest level of (tertiary) education were almost twice as likely as people with no formal education to report that they had paid a bribe when in contact with a public official. A similar pattern exists in relation to economic status indicators of households, as the prevalence and frequency of bribery of the most prosperous households in Nigeria are more than double those of the poorest.

¹ Meaning that 21.6 per cent of women living in rural areas paid a bribe to a public official, out of all women living in rural areas who had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey.

² The prevalence of bribery among the most educated was 37.7 per cent in 2016 and 39.9 per cent in 2019; the prevalence of bribery among the least educated was 28.6 per cent in 2016 and 22.5 per cent in 2019.

Why bribes are paid

An increasing share of bribes are paid for speeding up procedures and for avoiding fines

According to the 2019 survey, almost one in two bribes (45 per cent) are paid for the purpose of speeding up or finalizing an administrative procedure. In a large share of cases, bribes are paid for purely speeding up a procedure (38 per cent), while the share of bribes paid to avoid the payment of a fine reached 21 per cent in 2019.

Accounting for 26 per cent of all bribe payments, the most common service sought when paying a bribe in the 2019 survey was a public utility service, followed by the issuance of an administrative licence or permit. Other commonly sought services reported in the 2019 survey include a medical visit, exam or intervention, the issuance of an administrative certificate or document or of a tax declaration or exemption, and the import/export of goods. Furthermore, around 3 per cent of cases were related to payments to the police for “bail from jail”, a type of payment that does not refer to the legal type of bail administered by courts, but rather to payments extracted by corrupt officials for the release of arrestees from jail prior to the formal commencement of a trial.

The proportional distribution of services was remarkably similar in both the 2019 and 2016 surveys, with rare exceptions. This similarity suggests the motivations and reasons for the payment of bribes remain consistent, at least in the short-term.

How citizens respond to bribery

Nigerian public officials continue to meet with little resistance when requesting bribes

When confronted with a bribe request, just one in five Nigerians (19 per cent) refused to pay, a slight increase since 2016 (16 per cent). The power relationship between public officials and citizens typically favours the former and when a public official elicits a bribe, they tend to be successful and do so with impunity – an outcome that may embolden corrupt officials to make even more bribe requests.

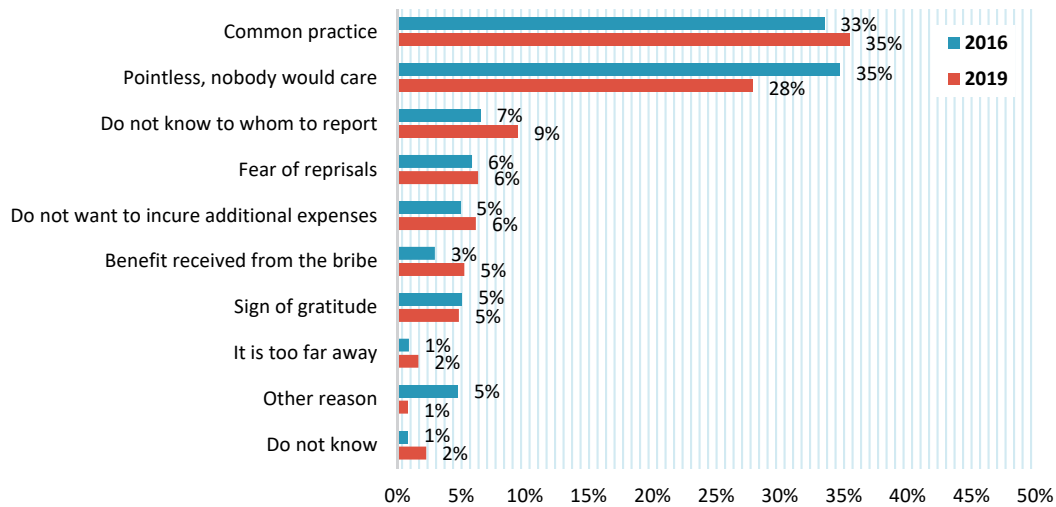
Worse still, 48 per cent of adult Nigerians who refused to pay a bribe in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey reported suffering negative consequences because of that refusal, although this share has decreased from the 56 per cent found in the 2016 survey.

Mechanisms for reporting bribery remain the Achilles’ heel of the anti-corruption system

In 2019, out of all citizens who had to pay a bribe, only 3.6 per cent reported their latest bribe payment to an official institution capable of conducting an investigation or otherwise following up and acting on that report. Although this situation has remained virtually unchanged since 2016, when the bribery reporting rate was 3.7 per cent, a significantly smaller proportion of bribery reports were made to the police in 2019 than in 2016 (out of all bribe-payers who reported the bribery incident to an authority in 2016, 56 per cent reported it to the police, versus 43 per cent in 2019) and, by contrast, reports to anti-corruption agencies increased from 4 to 8 per cent.

The low level of bribery reporting is largely explained by the fact that 51 per cent of those who reported a bribery incident experienced either no follow-up, were discouraged from reporting or suffered negative consequences. Furthermore, the main reasons for not reporting a bribe, among those who experienced a bribe, were that paying a bribe is such a common practice in Nigeria that it is not worth reporting it (35 per cent of all bribe-payers who did not report the incident) and that filing a report would be pointless as nobody would care (28 per cent).

Percentage distribution of the main reasons why a bribery incident was not reported to an official or unofficial institution, Nigeria, 2016 and 2019



Nepotism and vote-buying

Recruitment in the public sector, an area in need of improvement

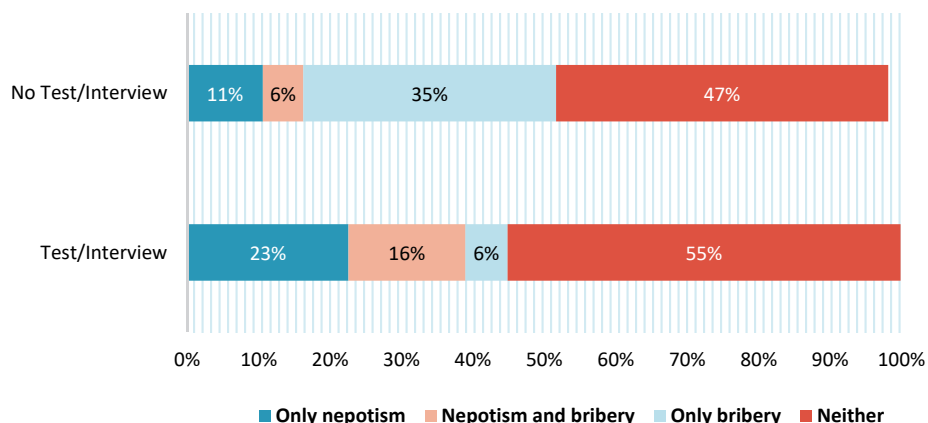
The selection process used to recruit public officials plays a crucial role in shaping the culture of integrity that should drive the civil service as well as ensure that new recruits have the highest standards of professionalism and merit. However, the survey findings indicate that the public sector recruitment process requires closer monitoring as almost one third (32.5 per cent) of people who secured a job in the public sector in the last three years admitted that they paid a bribe, either personally (16.4 per cent) or through a member of their household (16.1 per cent), to facilitate their recruitment, more than double the share in 2016, when the combined total reached 16 per cent.

The 2019 survey also found evidence that a considerable number of people recruited into the public sector secured their posts with the help of a friend or relative, many in addition to paying a bribe: of all successful applicants surveyed in the last three years, 28 per cent were helped by friends or relatives. Indeed, almost half of all public sector applicants in Nigeria are still hired as a result of nepotism, bribery or both.

Transparent recruitment process can reduce corrupt practices

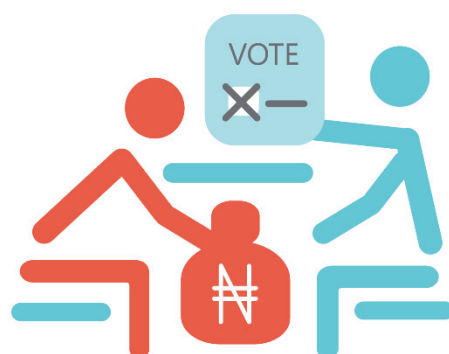
The 2019 survey data show that approximately half of those who secured a position in the public sector in the three years prior to the survey passed a written test and/or oral interview during the recruitment selection process. Importantly, the data suggest that the means of selection had a role in facilitating or preventing the use of illegal practices during recruitment. Among those who underwent an assessment procedure (written test/oral interview), 6 per cent made use of bribery, while the share was as much as 35 per cent among those who were not formally assessed.

Share of successful applicants for public sector positions who used nepotism, bribery or both, by completion of written test and/or interview, Nigeria, 2019



More than one out of five citizens were offered a bribe for their vote in the last election

In May/June 2019, 21 per cent of the adult population of Nigeria reported that in the last national or state election they were personally offered money or a favour in exchange for their vote. This practice needs to be tackled properly in order to increase confidence in the electoral process, as 86 per cent of the population reported that they perceived electoral fraud to happen either very frequently or fairly frequently in Nigeria.



1 out of 5

Nigerian citizens were offered money or a gift or favour in exchange for their vote

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