

## **SURVEY ANALYSIS OF THE CITIZENS' PERCEPTION OF THE OFFICIAL CORRUPT CRIMINAL ACTS**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption, as a complex phenomenon, is widespread in all vital institutional aspects of the country. Although we are dealing with a phenomenon that is quite difficult to combat, it is imperative to utilize all legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent and neutralize it to the greatest extent possible, with the sole purpose of having strong institutions that will provide services and respect the rights and freedoms of citizens.

This study was conducted using a survey questionnaire with non-probability sampling of the convenience selection type, sent electronically to different profiles of respondents. The purpose of this survey research is to get a picture of the attitude and perception of the respondents regarding the official corruption in the country. The survey was conducted over 2 months with 159 respondents.

*Keywords:* corruption, official corrupt criminal act, survey analysis, perception

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### **1. Introduction**

The word “corruption” comes from the Latin word *corruptio*, which means corruption, bribery, etc. Corruption as a phenomenon has reached the level of a systemic institutional pandemic that affects all political and social interests. There is no single, internationally recognized definition of the term corruption, because the phenomenon itself has different forms and dimensions. A common and simple definition or conceptualization is as follows: “abuse or use of public office, position or duty by exceeding or not exercising entrusted public powers for the realization of personal, private or party interests of a material or immaterial nature” (Labovic, 2006, p.52). According to the Law on the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests, “corruption” refers to the abuse of office, public authority, official duty or position for benefit, directly or indirectly through an intermediary, for oneself or another person (Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests, 12/2019, art.2, par.1).

The phenomenon of corruption represents the greatest evil that can threaten the entire society, and within that framework arise the most significant problems known to civilization, such as various conflicts, wars, terrorism, poverty, etc (Labovic, 2006, p.52). When we are talking about this multidimensional and global phenomenon, it should be pointed out that corruption is intertwined with law and morality, governance with bureaucracy, the struggle for existence with criminal activities, all to get rich, then various social political systems, dictatorship with democracy, the needs of the people for democratic order and humane justice with criminal organizations, the demand for better governance of the government (Gonça, 2004, p.9). Detecting and fighting against corruption is complicated when officials abuse their power to hide and obstruct the illumination of various forms of corruption. History has shown that corruption is also connected with the destinies of social systems. Indeed, when it comes to corruption, the cause-effect binomial exists in a vicious closed circle, where it is very difficult to recognize and distinguish causes from effects, and vice versa (Gonça, 2004, p.214). Corrupt networks consist of hidden criminal structures in public administration, state authorities, and various public institutions. Namely, many notorious facts and knowledge impose the opinion that the state, by allowing and not fighting corruption, becomes a corrupt system and this form

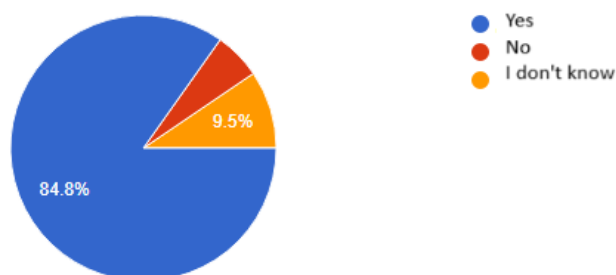
of crime not only legalizes it but also protects it through already created government mechanisms designed to prevent and fight against the corruption (Latifi, 2013, p.243).

Corruption as an ethical problem is something new for the systems of political institutions in the Balkan countries, which are marked by a tradition of pronounced normativism, i.e., with special emphasis on the positive right to regulate public administration, leaving the issue of supervising the integrity and assessing the moral profile of the public servant in the background. Many do not even recognize corruption as an ethical problem because, in certain forms, it has become part of the mentality and way of life. Because corruption is a primary problem in the field of public service, where authority and funds are made available on behalf of citizen taxpayers who finance the realization of the political will through the functioning of state authorities, the civil servant is expected to have a clear awareness of public responsibilities (Фатић, 2005, p.31).

The multidisciplinary group on corruption at the Council of Europe gives the following definition of the term corruption: "Corruption is bribery and any other form of behavior about persons entrusted with authority in the public or private sector, which violates the resulting obligations from their status as civil servants, private employees, independent agents or some other types, to gain some benefit personally or for others" (OEBS, 2017, p.14). Under the definition of corruption, according to the Civil Law Convention, is included any form of direct or indirect solicitation, offering, giving or receiving a bribe or any other illegal benefit or its appearance, which in general violates the prescribed performance of a duty or behavior that is asked of the recipient of the bribe (OEBS, 2017, p.15).

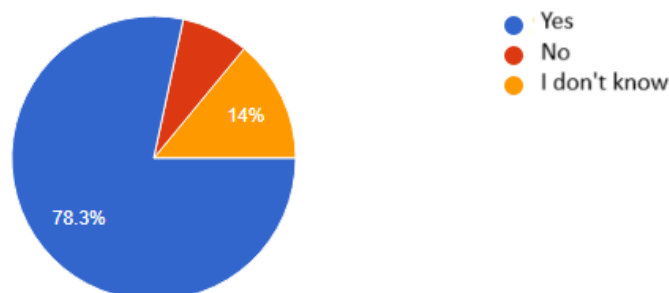
## 2. Results of the survey research

*Do you think that the dark figure (number of undetected cases) of official corruption crimes is high?*



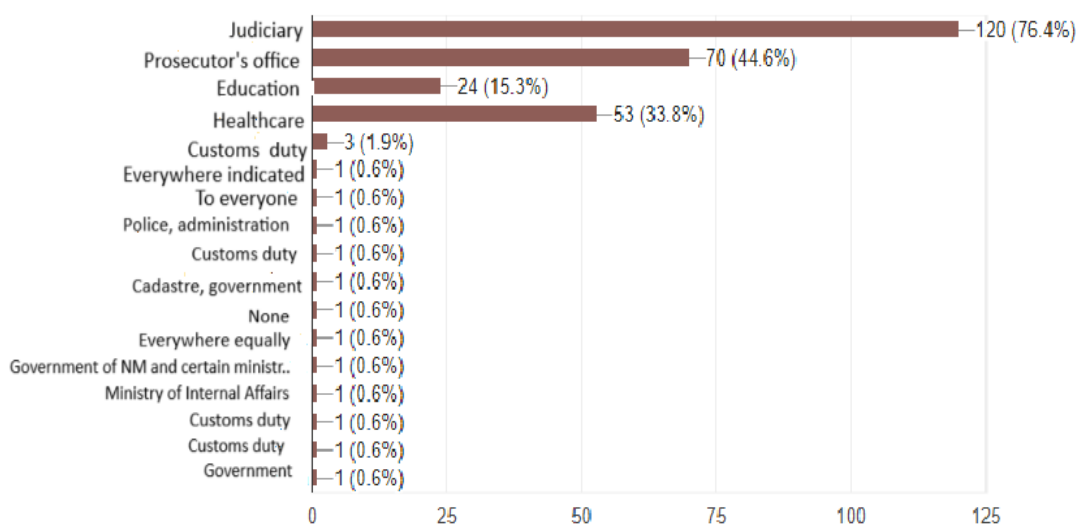
When asked if they believe that the dark number of official corrupt crimes is high, a high 84.8% of the respondents answered yes, 9.5% answered that they "don't know", and 5.7% of the respondents think that there is no high dark number of official corrupt crimes.

*Do you think that state institutions have a more tolerant attitude to official corruption crimes than to other forms of crime?*



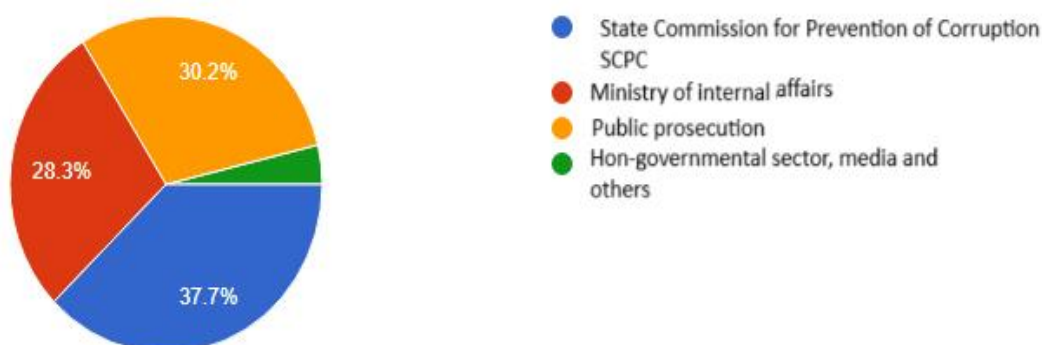
When asked whether they think that state institutions have a more tolerant attitude towards official corruption crimes than towards other forms of crime, 123 of the total number of respondents or 78.3% answered affirmatively, 12 or 7.6% answered negatively, and 14% of respondents belong to in the category of respondents who do not have an idea or opinion on this issue.

*In which area do you think official corrupt crimes are the most common?*



Regarding the question of which areas of public service have the highest incidences of corruption, 120 respondents (76.4%) named the judiciary. The prosecutor's office came next, identified by 70 (44.6%) of respondents. In third place was healthcare, with a 33.8% response rate, followed by education with 15.3%. There were far fewer percentages of answers for the following areas: customs, the Ministry of the Interior, police, administration, and other areas. It is obvious from the answers to this question that the general public's trust regarding official corruption crimes in these institutions (judiciary and public prosecution) is incredibly low.

*Which institution/sector do you think should play a key role in the detection of official corrupt crimes?*



On the question of which institution/sector they believe should have a key role in the detection of official corrupt crimes, the perception is different, and 37.7% of respondents believe that it is the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, 30.2% - the Public prosecutor's office, 28.3% - the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and only 3.8% opted for the non-governmental sector and the media.

*Which institution do you think is the most successful in practice in the detection of official corruption crimes?*



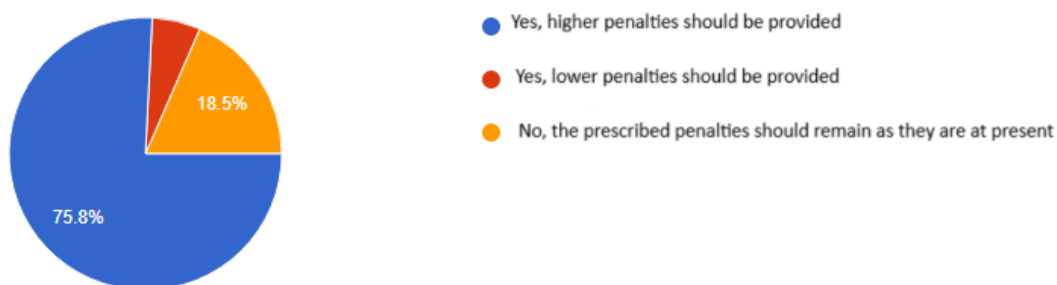
On the question of which institution is the most successful in detecting official corrupt crimes, 34.8% of the respondents identified the media, 21.5% suggested the SCPC, 18.4% selected the Ministry of the Interior, and 15.2% named the non-governmental sector, while only 10.1% identified the public prosecutor's office. Significantly, these perceptions suggest that the media and non-governmental organizations are an important tool in the detection and fight against official crime.

*Do you think that the courts impose adequate sentences for the perpetrators of official corruption crimes?*



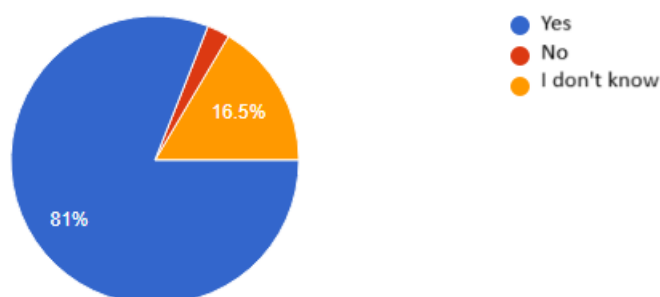
When asked about the court's imposition of punishments for the perpetrators of official corruption crimes, 113 (71.1%) of respondents answered that higher punishments should be imposed, 18.9% believe that the current penal policy is adequate, and 10.1% think that lower penalties should be imposed.

*Do you think that the legal solutions regarding the amount of punishments for official corruption crimes should be changed?*



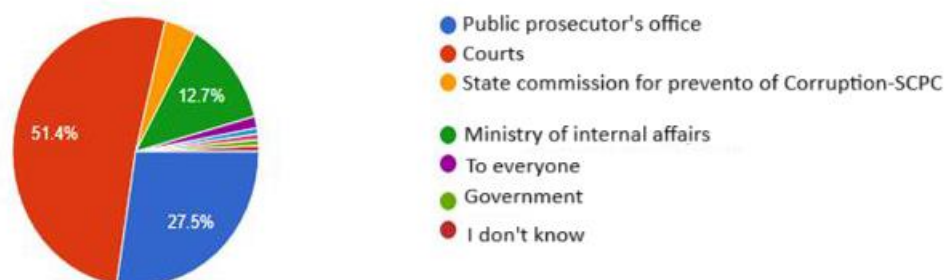
To the question about changing the penalties for official corruption crimes, 75.8% of respondents thought that there should be higher penalties, 18.5% believed that the prescribed penalties should remain as they are at present, and only 5.7% of respondents suggested that penalties should be lower.

*Do you think that official crime is also present in the institutions that are responsible for fighting such forms of crime?*



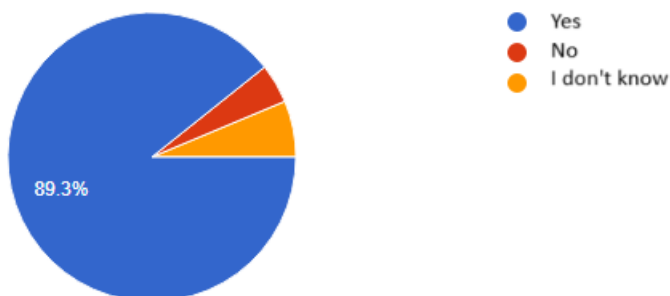
When asked if they believe that official crime is present in the institutions that are responsible for fighting such forms of crime, a high 81% of respondents affirmatively stated that it is present, 16.5% stated that they do not know about this problem, and 2.5% % are of the opinion that there is no official crime in these institutions.

*If you answered YES to the previous question, in which institution do you think there is the most official corruption crime?*



The following question, which followed up on the previous question to ask which institution participants think commits the most official corrupt crime, 51.4% declared the courts, 27.5% suggested the public prosecutor's office, 12.7% of the respondents identified the Ministry of Interior, and the rest were negligible in comparison. This confirms that, according to the perception of the citizens, the judicial authorities are the most corrupt and the most irresponsible in terms of upholding the law.

*Do you think that political parties contribute to the sphere of official corrupt crime (through influences on officials and officials in general who are their members or supporters)?*



When asked about political parties' contribution to the sphere of official corrupt crime (through influences on officials and officials in general who are their members or supporters), 142 respondents (89.3%) answered affirmatively that political parties contribute to official crime, 4.4% said that they do not contribute to official corruption, and 6.3% indicated that they do not know this issue. According to these responses, citizens perceive political entities in our country as significantly contributing to the growth of official corruption rather than playing a role in neutralizing the crime of corruption.

## Conclusion

Respondents to this survey included doctors, lawyers, professors, teachers, judges, court assistants, public administration officials, people working in the civil sector, civil servants in various ministries, notaries, students, and others, who were selected according to a non-random/non-probability sampling method. While the study offers valuable perspectives on public attitudes toward official corruption crimes, the use of this sampling method limits its representativeness. As such, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than generalizable to the broader population. When asked to state possible reasons for official corruption, respondents stated various reasons, namely the following: poverty and greed; instability of institutions; low incomes; party affiliation of state office holders, appointed and elected officials, and members of state and public administration; low criminality; non-transparent provision of services; party employment; insufficient material motivation in labor relations; disintegration of moral values in society due to lack of justice; politicization of public administration and systemic impunity; low rate of confiscated property and benefits; irresponsibility and insufficient control by non-state institutions; inadequate staff in institutions and ignorance of the system; and, personal reasons for wealth and influence. Several important conclusions stand out from this survey about citizens' perception of corruption: that the dark figure and the tolerant attitude of institutions towards official corrupt crimes are large and worrisome; that the penal policy is very lenient; that the citizens see the judiciary and the public prosecutor's office as the most corrupt institutions; that the media and civil society organizations, according to the general public, are important for the detection and fight against official crime; and, that political parties contribute significantly to the sphere of official corrupt crime.

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