

# DIGITALES ARCHIV

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft  
*ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics*

Pring, Coralie

## Book

# People and corruption: Latin America and the Caribbean : global corruption barometer

## Provided in Cooperation with:

ZBW OAS

*Reference:* Pring, Coralie (2017). People and corruption: Latin America and the Caribbean : global corruption barometer. Berlin, Germany : Transparency International, International Secretariat.

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/11159/2979>

## Kontakt/Contact

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics  
Düsternbrooker Weg 120  
24105 Kiel (Germany)  
E-Mail: [rights\[at\]zbw.eu](mailto:rights[at]zbw.eu)  
<https://www.zbw.eu/>

## Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieses Dokument darf zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen. Sofern für das Dokument eine Open-Content-Lizenz verwendet wurde, so gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte. Alle auf diesem Vorblatt angegebenen Informationen einschließlich der Rechteinformationen (z.B. Nennung einer Creative Commons Lizenz) wurden automatisch generiert und müssen durch Nutzer:innen vor einer Nachnutzung sorgfältig überprüft werden. Die Lizenzangaben stammen aus Publikationsmetadaten und können Fehler oder Ungenauigkeiten enthalten.

<https://savearchive.zbw.eu/termsfuse>

## Terms of use:

*This document may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes. You are not to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public. If the document is made available under a Creative Commons Licence you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the licence. All information provided on this publication cover sheet, including copyright details (e.g. indication of a Creative Commons license), was automatically generated and must be carefully reviewed by users prior to reuse. The license information is derived from publication metadata and may contain errors or inaccuracies.*





**TRANSPARENCY  
INTERNATIONAL**  
the global coalition against corruption

# PEOPLE AND CORRUPTION: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

---

Global Corruption Barometer



**Transparency International is a global movement with one vision: a world in which government, business, civil society and the daily lives of people are free of corruption. Through more than 100 chapters worldwide and an international secretariat in Berlin, we are leading the fight against corruption to turn this vision into reality.**

**[www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)**

**Author:** Coralie Pring, Research Coordinator, Global Surveys

**Cover photo:** iStockphoto

**Design:** Template by Kerstin Deinert, layout by Daniela Cristofori

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this report. All information was believed to be correct as of October 2017. Nevertheless, Transparency International cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of its use for other purposes or in other contexts.

ISBN: 978-3-96076-062-7

Printed on 100% recycled paper.



© 2017 Transparency International. All rights reserved.

# CONTENT

---

INTRODUCTION	4
ABOUT THIS RESEARCH	5
WHAT PEOPLE SAID ACROSS THE REGION	6
RECOMMENDATIONS	7

---

PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION: GOVERNMENT ACTION	9
RISING LEVELS OF CORRUPTION	9
POLICE AND POLITICIANS PERCEIVED AS THE MOST CORRUPT	11
MANY GOVERNMENTS DOING BADLY AT TACKLING CORRUPTION	12

---

EXPERIENCES OF CORRUPTION: BRIBERY	14
WE ESTIMATE 90 MILLION PEOPLE ACROSS 20 COUNTRIES	
PAID A BRIBE IN THE LAST YEAR	14
BRIBERY RATES ACROSS LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	15
BRIBES FOR SERVICES	17
WHICH SERVICES DO PEOPLE PAY BRIBES FOR?	18
WHO HAS TO PAY BRIBES?	20

---

PEOPLE SPEAKING OUT AGAINST CORRUPTION	24
SUPPORT FOR REPORTING CORRUPTION	24
FEW PEOPLE REPORT IN PRACTICE	25
PEOPLE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE	26

---

CONCLUSION	27
OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION – A CITIZEN SCORECARD	28

---

METHODOLOGY NOTE	30
CITIZENS' CORRUPTION SCORECARD RATINGS	32

---

# INTRODUCTION

In recent years, worrying trends have been observed in the Latin America and Caribbean region, including the erosion of human rights and the weakening of governance structures. Many countries are experiencing a rise in violent crime and insecurity and a clamp down on the free expression of activists, journalists and civil society organisations. In Mexico, there has been a 31 per cent increase in the number of murders committed already this year.<sup>1</sup> A recent assassination attempt on a board member of our national chapter in Honduras led to the death of a bodyguard,<sup>2</sup> while in Venezuela, two members of our national chapter were detained along with two journalists, during an investigation into a corruption scandal.<sup>3</sup>

Such abuses are exacerbated and sometimes only made possible by corruption, which undermines justice institutions, weakens the rule of law, distorts political processes and enables politicians to act with impunity. While a number of grand corruption prosecutions have recently exposed corrupt elites and their networks, too often the political will for turning the tide against corruption has not been sustained.

In Brazil, the Petrobras corruption scandal has led to a multi-billion dollar fine being imposed by the courts. Yet the new government has recently introduced legislation that will open up the prospect of prosecutors being sued for pursuing grand corruption cases, and the new president is now also alleged to be involved in a corruption scandal.<sup>4</sup> In Guatemala, elections in 2015 brought to power a new president with a large popular mandate after waves of public protest over a corruption scandal involving his predecessor. But his presidency quickly became marred by corruption scandals too, allegedly involving family members and his vice president.<sup>5</sup>

This new report from the Global Corruption Barometer series is based on surveys with over 22,000 citizens living in 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. We asked about first-hand experiences of bribery in public services and perceptions of the scale of corruption. Our report comes at a time when governments around the world are having to pay greater attention to tackling corruption as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – an ambitious set of 17 global goals – calls on governments to “substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms” (Goal 16.5).

Reducing corruption is key for a fair and equitable society, and tackling corruption effectively can strengthen development efforts, promote human rights and help eradicate global poverty.

---

## ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Latinobarómetro and Market Research Services conducted the surveys on behalf of Transparency International. Between May 2016 and December 2016 these survey organisations spoke to 22,302 people face-to-face in 20 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean about their perceptions and experiences of corruption.

We found that many people were worried about the level of corruption in the region: nearly two thirds of respondents to the survey said that they thought it was on the rise and over a half said that their government was doing a bad job at fighting corruption. Worryingly, two key institutions that play a vital role in good governance were perceived by citizens as the most corrupt – the police and elected representatives.

Bribery is a far too common experience for many people in the region who need to access basic services. We estimate that over 90 million people had to pay a bribe in the 12 months previous to the survey across the 20 countries surveyed – equivalent to nearly one in three who accessed basic services.<sup>6</sup> Healthcare and education were the worst bribery-affected services according to our survey, which also showed that people from all walks of life – men and women, young and old, and rich and poor – were at risk of having to pay a bribe.

Giving hope for efforts to fight corruption in the region, we found that a large cohort of people stands ready and willing to get involved in the fight against public sector graft. However, we also found that few people had reported corruption when they experienced it. Of those who had come forward, many had suffered negative repercussions as a result and few had seen the authorities take action against the perpetrators.

This is why we are calling on governments in this region to reduce corruption in the police force and strengthen judicial systems, so that investigations can be conducted to the highest standards, judges made independent and professional, and the courts system adequately resourced to deal with corruption complaints. Whistleblower protection laws must be strictly enforced and safe reporting mechanisms need to be created so that people who make a complaint are not at risk. Only then will citizens have the confidence to report an incident of corruption, safe in the knowledge that the perpetrator will face justice.

---

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID ACROSS THE REGION

### 1. Corruption is on the rise

The majority of people saw the level of corruption as increasing over the previous 12 months. In Brazil, Peru, Chile and Venezuela three quarters or more of respondents said that corruption was on the rise (from 78 per cent to 87 per cent). This compares with only two in five people in Argentina and Guatemala who said the same (41 per cent, 42 per cent).

### 2. Police and politicians are seen as the most corrupt

Nearly a half of respondents said that most or all police and politicians were corrupt (both 47 per cent), which was higher than any other institution we asked about. People living in Venezuela were the most likely to call the police highly corrupt (73 per cent), and in Paraguay citizens were the most likely to say that their elected representatives were highly corrupt (69 per cent).

### 3. Governments are doing badly

More than a half of people said that their government was doing badly at fighting corruption (53 per cent). Only 35 per cent said that their government was doing well. People in Venezuela and Peru were the most likely to rate their government badly – around three quarters of respondents gave a negative rating of their government's performance (76 per cent and 73 per cent). This contrasts with only around a quarter of people in Guatemala who said that their government was doing a bad job.

### 4. Nearly a third of public service users have paid a bribe (equivalent to over 90 million people in the 20 countries surveyed)

People in Mexico and the Dominican Republic were the most likely to say that they had paid a bribe when they had accessed basic public services in the previous 12 months (51 per cent and 46 per cent). Bribery rates were much lower in Trinidad and Tobago where only 6 per cent of people had paid a bribe when accessing basic services in the previous 12 months.

### 5. Bribery risks are highest for healthcare and schools

Around one in five people who came into contact with public hospitals and public schools in the previous 12 months had had to pay a bribe (20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively). These were the highest of the six services we asked about.

### 6. Few report corruption and those who do suffer from retaliation

Only 9 per cent of bribe payers in the survey actually came forward and reported it to the authorities. Of those who did report it, 28 per cent suffered negative consequences as a result.

### 7. Seven in ten stand ready to support anti-corruption efforts

The majority said that ordinary people could make a difference in the fight against corruption (70 per cent). People in Brazil were the most likely to feel empowered to fight corruption (83 per cent), followed closely by Costa Rica and Paraguay (both 82 per cent).

### 8. Both critical and positive responses from across the region

In Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela people were the most negative across five key questions in the survey, while in Ecuador, Guatemala and Uruguay people had the most positive responses (see p.32).

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings from the survey and our experience and knowledge of the region, we make the following recommendations:

### Take measures to reduce bribery in public services

- ▶ Governments should ensure that official fees for public services are clearly and publicly displayed.
- ▶ Governments should streamline bureaucratic procedures to avoid lengthy and discretionary decision-making processes.
- ▶ Governments should invest in e-government platforms to enable applications for services without face-to-face interactions with public officials.
- ▶ Governments should ensure that confidential channels are available for citizens to report on the quality of and their level of satisfaction with public services.

### Enable civil society to engage in the fight against corruption

- ▶ Governments should involve civil society as a part of their efforts to fight corruption. This would increase the credibility of these efforts.
- ▶ Governments should create a safe and enabling environment for the involvement of civil society and the media in anti-corruption efforts, including their de jure and de facto operational and physical freedom.
- ▶ Governments should enable civic engagement in monitoring and reporting corruption in government by effectively implementing access to information laws.

### Strengthen law enforcement and justice institutions

- ▶ Governments should invest in measures to strengthen access to justice and the rule of law, by ensuring an objective and transparent process for appointing judges, protections for judicial salaries and working conditions, and transparent criteria for case assignment.
- ▶ Governments should strengthen the institutions involved in the detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption-related crimes.
- ▶ Governments should consider making court decisions available online to allow civil society, the media and citizens to scrutinise and compare verdicts.
- ▶ Governments should lift political immunity for corruption-related cases.

### Clean up the police

- ▶ Governments should strengthen police investigative capacity with specialised intelligence techniques, reinforce internal disciplinary measures and establish permanent accountability mechanisms and integrity management systems across the institution.

### Protect whistleblowers

- ▶ Governments should create accessible, anonymous, reporting channels for whistleblowers, which meaningfully protect them from all forms of retaliation.
- ▶ Authorities and employers should ensure that any act of reprisal for, or interference with, a whistleblower's disclosure should be considered misconduct, and the perpetrators must be subject to employment/professional sanctions and civil penalties.
- ▶ Government legislation should ensure that whistleblowers whose lives or safety are in jeopardy, and their family members, should be entitled to receive personal protection measures.



## GUATEMALA

In Guatemala the survey results revealed a positive outlook: many citizens said that their government was doing a good job, and few thought that corruption was on the rise. At the time the survey was conducted, new President Jimmy Morales had recently been elected with much popular support. His predecessor, former President Otto Pérez Molina, had resigned following public protests regarding his alleged involvement in a corruption scandal. The scandal broke in April 2015, revealing a vast network of current and former government officials, importers and lawyers involved in customs fraud.<sup>7</sup> Wiretaps implicated the former president who was later arrested on charges of fraud, illicit association and corruption.<sup>8</sup>

President Jimmy Morales campaigned on an anti-corruption platform, with the slogan “Not corrupt, not a thief”. However, he now faces pressure of his own, with his vice president and family members being implicated in various corruption scandals, and more recently in two US\$80,000-a-month contracts that were signed with a US Lobbying firm. Activists are calling for an investigation into the contracts.<sup>9</sup>



# PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION: GOVERNMENT ACTION

## Rising levels of corruption

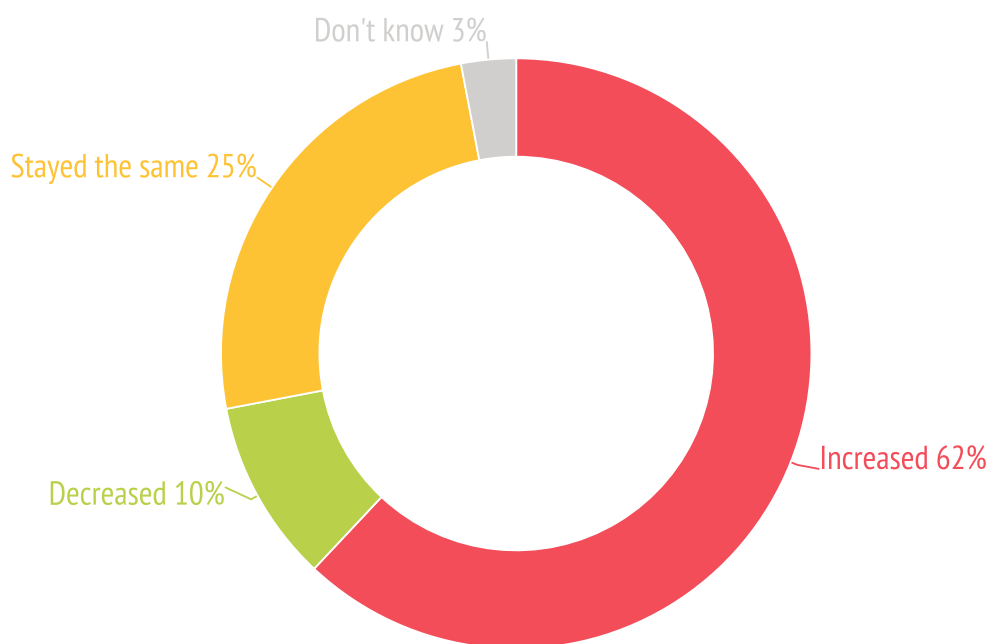
The Global Corruption Barometer survey asked people whether they thought the level of corruption in their country had increased, decreased or stayed the same in the 12 months prior to when the survey was conducted.

More than six in 10 people living in Latin America and the Caribbean thought that the level of corruption had increased (62 per cent). Only one in 10 thought that the level had declined (10 per cent), while a further quarter thought that there had been no change (25 per cent).

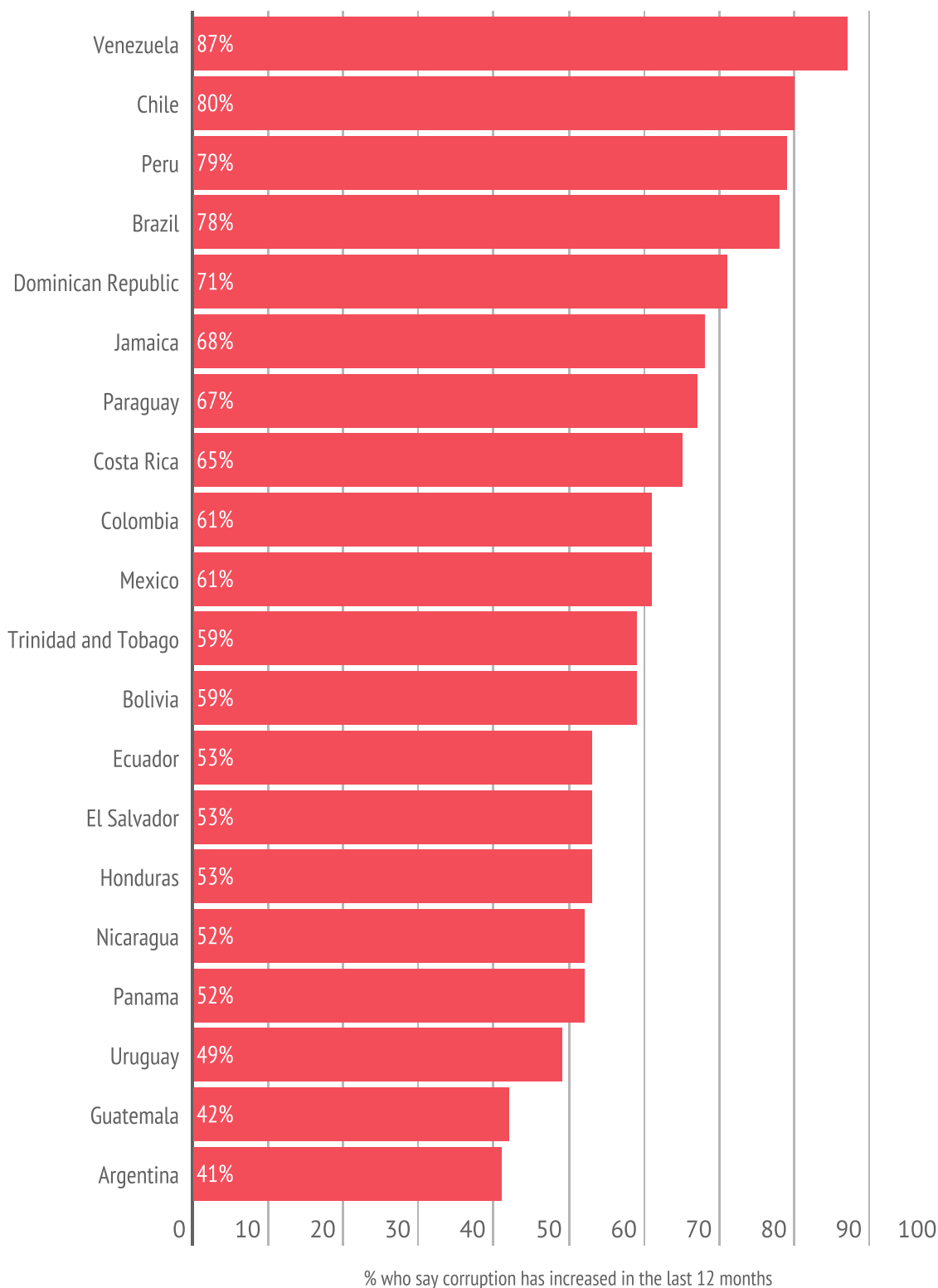
This picture was reflected in almost all of the surveyed countries. In 17 of the 20 countries a majority of citizens said that corruption had increased. In Venezuela, Chile, Brazil and Peru citizens were particularly critical, with over three quarters saying that corruption was on the rise (from 78 per cent to 87 per cent).

In contrast, in Argentina and Guatemala only around two in five citizens said that the level of corruption had increased over the previous 12 months (41 per cent, 42 per cent).

HOW HAS THE LEVEL  
OF CORRUPTION  
CHANGED IN THE LAST  
12 MONTHS?



PERCENTAGE WHO THOUGHT THAT THE  
LEVEL OF CORRUPTION HAD INCREASED  
– RESULTS BY COUNTRY



Q. In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same? Base: all adults. Results presented combine those who said “Increased a lot” and “Increased somewhat”. “Stayed the same”, “Decreased somewhat”, “Decreased a lot” and “Don’t know” responses are not shown for ease of comparison.

## Police and politicians perceived as the most corrupt

We asked people to tell us how corrupt they thought various powerful groups in their country were.

The regional results show that the police and elected representatives (such as members of parliament or senators) were considered the most corrupt. Almost a half of citizens in the region thought that people working in these institutions were mostly or entirely corrupt (47 per cent each).

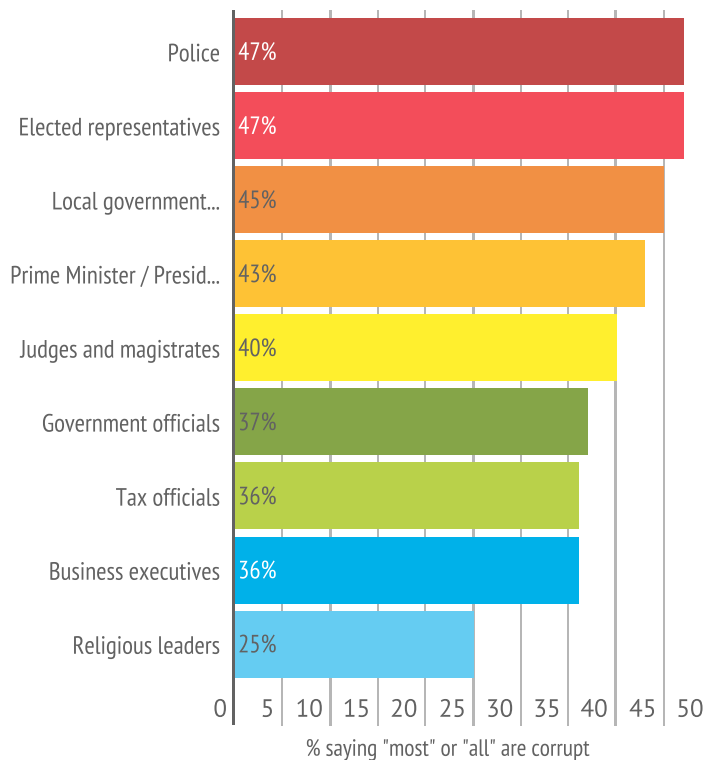
Similar proportions of people thought that local government officials, officials in the office of the president or prime minister, and judges or magistrates were highly corrupt. Between 40 per cent and 45 per cent of people across the region said these institutions were mostly or entirely corrupt.

By contrast religious leaders were seen as the least corrupt, although still a quarter of people in the region thought that they were highly corrupt (25 per cent).

Citizens living in Venezuela were the most likely to think that the police in their country were highly corrupt. Over seven in 10 said that most or all police officers were corrupt (73 per cent). People living in Trinidad and Tobago, Bolivia, Mexico and Paraguay also perceived high levels of police corruption (from 61 per cent to 64 per cent). In contrast fewer than one in five in Uruguay said that police officers were highly corrupt (19 per cent).

With regards to elected representatives, citizens living in Paraguay were the most likely to think that theirs were highly corrupt (69 per cent) followed by Peru and Chile (64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively), while in Uruguay only one in five said that their elected representatives were highly corrupt (20 per cent).

### HOW CORRUPT ARE DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS AND GROUPS IN SOCIETY? – REGIONAL RESULTS PERCENTAGE THAT SAID MOST OR ALL WERE CORRUPT



Q. How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? Base: all respondents, excluding missing responses. Chart shows percentage of respondents who answered that either "Most" or "All" of them are corrupt. "None", "Some" and "Don't know" responses are not shown for ease of comparison.



## Many governments doing badly at tackling corruption

**53%**

say their government is doing badly

**35%**

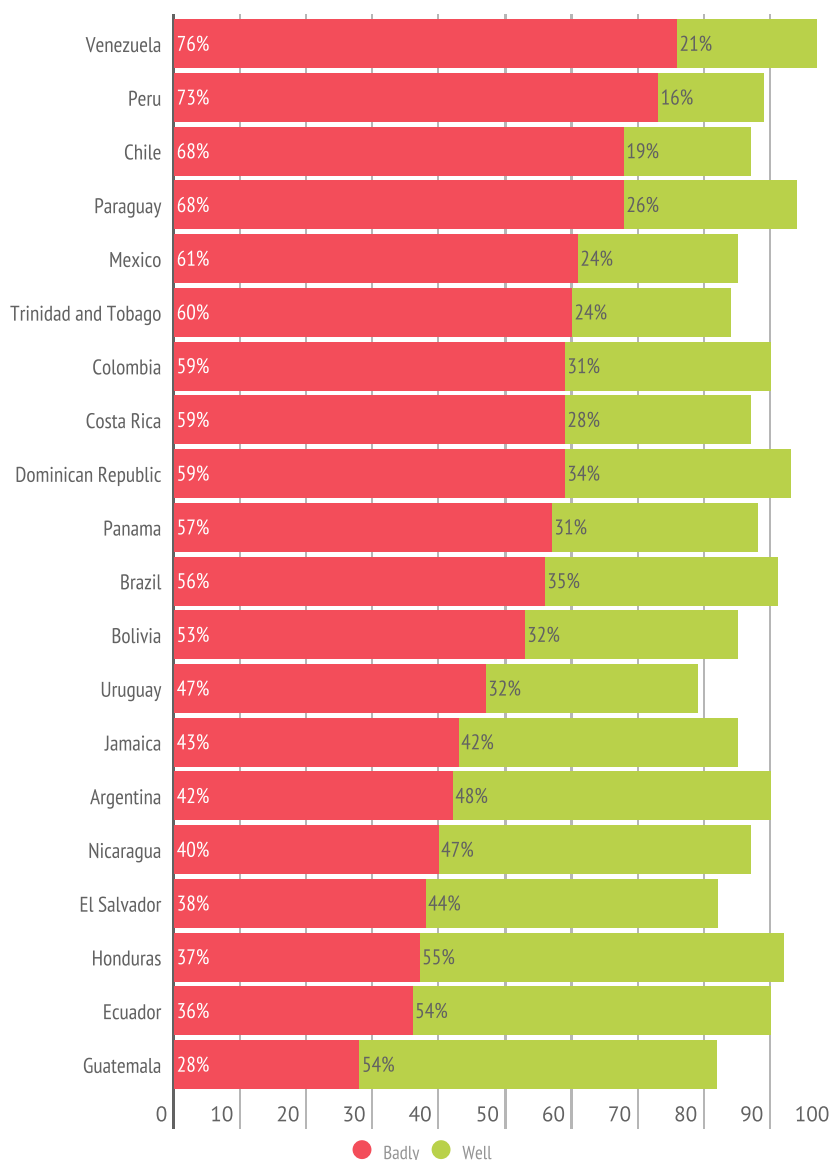
say their government is doing well

We asked people to tell us how well or badly they thought their government was doing in fighting public sector corruption. We found that just over a half of citizens in the region said that their government was doing badly (53 per cent) while just over a third said that their government was doing well (35 per cent).

Citizens in Venezuela were the most critical of government efforts to fight corruption; over three quarters said that their government was doing a bad job (76 per cent). High levels of disapproval were found in Chile, Paraguay and Peru where over two thirds of citizens in these countries gave their government a poor rating (from 68 per cent to 73 per cent).

In Ecuador, Guatemala and Honduras citizens were more positive about their governments' efforts to address corruption risks. In these countries over a half of respondents said that their government was doing well (54 per cent each).

### HOW WELL OR BADLY IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING AT FIGHTING CORRUPTION? – RESULTS BY COUNTRY



Q. 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". Base: all respondents, excluding missing responses. Response categories "Very badly" and "Fairly badly" are combined into "Badly"; and response categories "Very well" and "Fairly well" are combined into "Well". "Don't know" responses are not shown for ease of comparison.



## OPERATION CARWASH

Since 2014, Brazil has been rocked by the largest corruption scandal in its history, the ramifications of which are still on going. Over the course of the investigation – known as Operation Carwash – prosecutors have uncovered a huge bribery scheme, which implicated dozens of politicians and executives, and has so far led to 282 people being criminally charged and 165 convictions totaling more than 1,634 years of jail time.<sup>10</sup>

Implicated in the scandal, construction company Odebrecht admitted paying billions in kick-backs to officials running the state-owned oil company Petrobras<sup>11</sup> and in a landmark decision in April 2017, the company was ordered by the courts to pay a US\$2.6 billion fine to Brazil, Switzerland and the US.<sup>12</sup>

The federal prosecutors for Operation Carwash, started a national campaign, “10 measures against corruption”, which called on the Brazilian government to increase the powers of law enforcement to investigate and prosecute corruption, and ensure that diverted public funds are returned.<sup>13</sup> However, in November 2016 after review by the lower house of the Congress, a significant part of their recommended measures were rejected. Also, a controversial new provision allowing prosecutors to be sued for abusing their authority was added – a measure which the Carwash prosecutors have dubbed a “law of terror” and an attempt to intimidate prosecutors.<sup>14</sup>

One of the more recent developments in Operation Carwash was the presentation of charges against Brazil's President Michel Temer, for allegedly accepting a multi-million dollars bribe. The prosecution, however, was suspended by the lower house of the Congress, in which many Congressmen voted to block the judicial procedures at the Supreme Court, while the President is in office.<sup>15</sup>





# EXPERIENCES OF CORRUPTION: BRIBERY

**We estimate 90 million people across 20 countries paid a bribe in the last year**

We asked people whether they had come into contact with six key public services in the previous 12 months. Those who had had contact were then asked whether they had paid a bribe, given a gift or done a favour to the public official in order to get access to the services that they needed.<sup>16</sup>

We found that just under a third of citizens who had come into contact with a public service in the previous 12 months had paid a bribe (29 per cent).<sup>17</sup> Based on the bribery rates for each country and its adult population size, this is equivalent to over 90 million people living in the 20 countries surveyed in the region.<sup>18</sup>

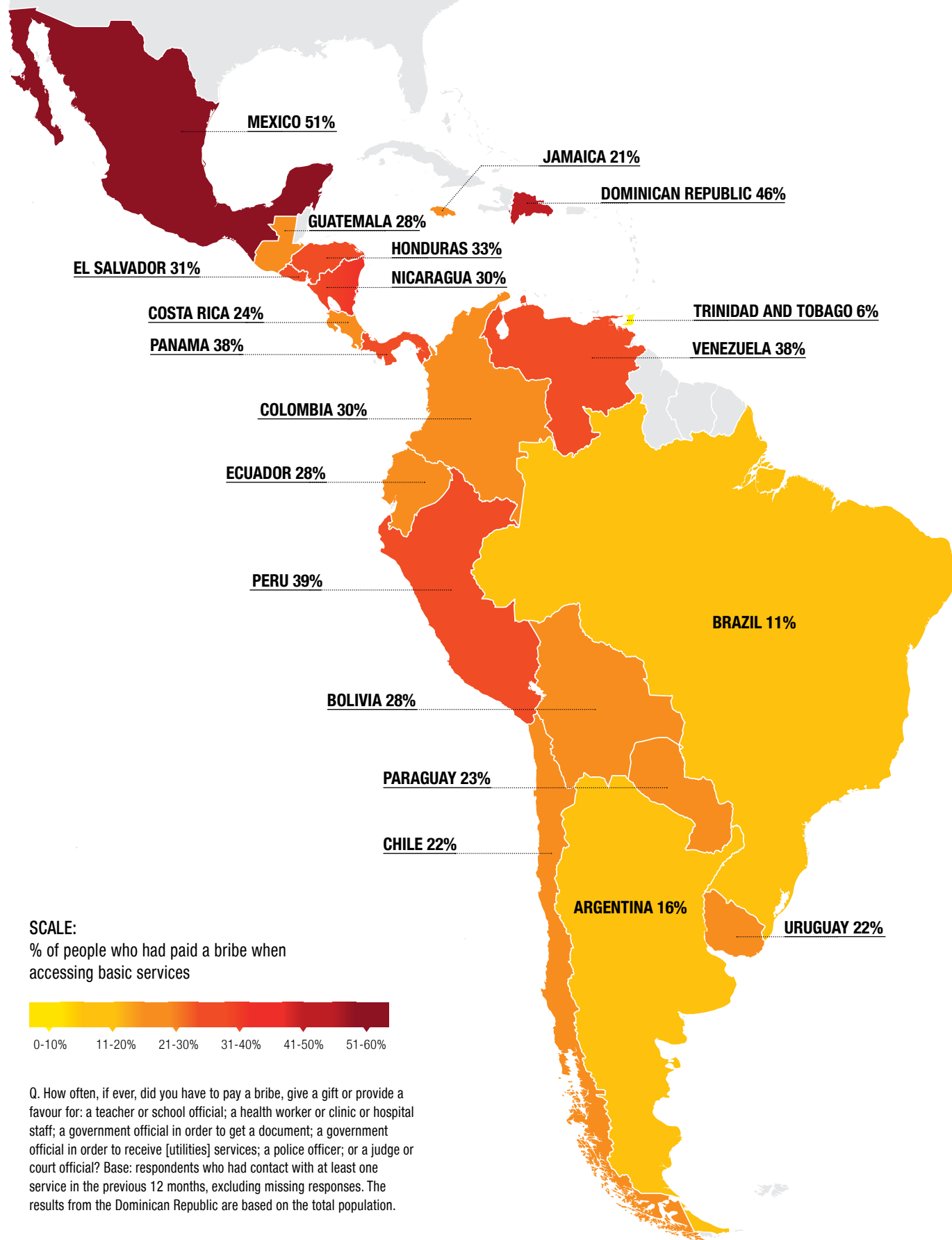
Bribery rates vary quite considerably between countries. Citizens living in Mexico and the Dominican Republic were the most likely to have paid a bribe for basic public services, with around a half saying that they had done so at least once in the previous 12 months (51 per cent and 46 per cent respectively).

Trinidad and Tobago by contrast had the lowest bribery rate of the countries surveyed. Here only six per cent of people who had come into contact with a public official in the previous 12 months had paid a bribe.

In 2016, Transparencia Venezuela launched a mobile phone app called “Dilo Aquí”. This enables users to submit corruption complaints, which are then processed and followed up by the chapter’s Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre. People can quickly and easily submit a complaint, while remaining anonymous. So far, more than 1,200 complaints have been sent via the App.<sup>20</sup> The App has recently been expanded to Guatemala and Honduras as well.



# BRIBERY RATES ACROSS LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN





The lack of investment in health is one of the most significant problems in countries like Brazil. Corruption in public administration ensures money intended for this purpose is lost, so people like Maria live a tough life. She is one of many people suffering from leprosy. Globally, Brazil has the second highest number of recorded cases of leprosy; only India has more. Public policy is needed to ensure prevention plans are in place to hinder more infections and ultimately lead to the eradication of the disease, which continues to truncate the lives of thousands of people, including children and adolescents (2015).



Image: © Marcelo Londono,

Photo competition winner, used with permission by Transparency International

## Bribes for services

We looked at the bribery rates for the six key public services to see which were at greatest risk of bribery.<sup>19</sup> We found that public health care services had the highest bribery rate. One in five (20 per cent) people who had accessed medical care in the previous 12 months – including urgent lifesaving treatments – had paid a bribe to get the care they needed.

Public education was also affected by bribery, with almost one in five people who came into contact with public schools in the previous 12 months paying a bribe in order to access education services (18 per cent).

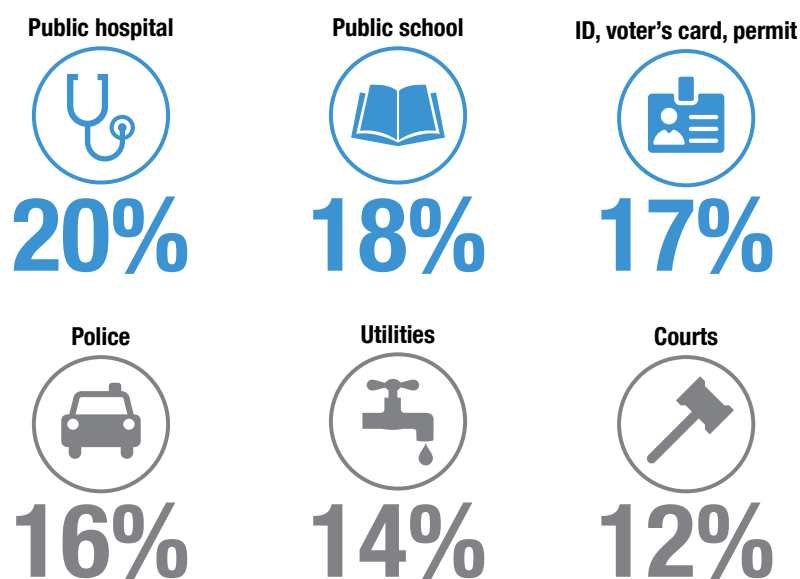
Bribery rates were lowest for the courts, although still one in eight people who came into contact with the courts had paid a bribe in the previous 12 months, demonstrating that there is still an acute corruption risk in this key law and order institution (12 per cent). Importantly, 10 per cent of those who had contact with the courts said that they “didn’t know” whether they had paid a bribe or not to the courts, suggesting either inability to recall their experience or hesitancy to admit paying a bribe.

When looking at the results by country (see infographic on the next page), the severe corruption risks in Mexico’s public service delivery are clear; particularly for schools, healthcare and ID documents, for which it had the highest bribery rates of all the 20 countries surveyed (from 33 per cent to 39 per cent).

Bribes to the police were most common in Venezuela for which more than two in five people paid a bribe in the previous 12 months when getting the help that they needed from a police officer, or to avoid arrest or a fine (41 per cent).

Bribes to the courts were also very high in Venezuela and Honduras, raising concerns that the law may not always be applied fairly in these countries (36 per cent and 56 per cent respectively).

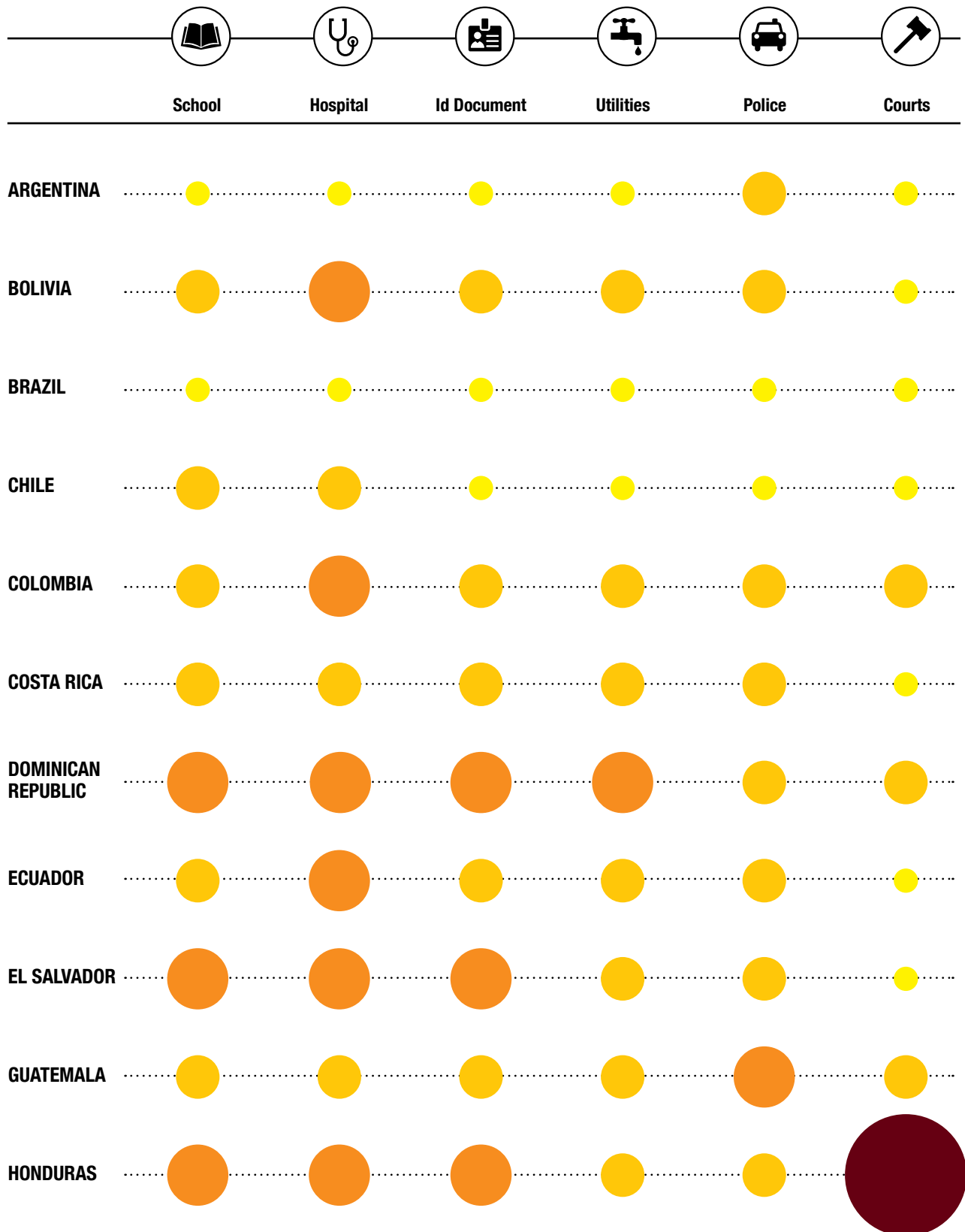
**SERVICE USERS WHO SAID THAT THEY HAD PAID A BRIBE**



Q. How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift or provide a favour for: a teacher or school official; a health worker or clinic or hospital staff; a government official in order to get a document; a government official in order to receive [utilities] services; a police officer; or a judge or court official?

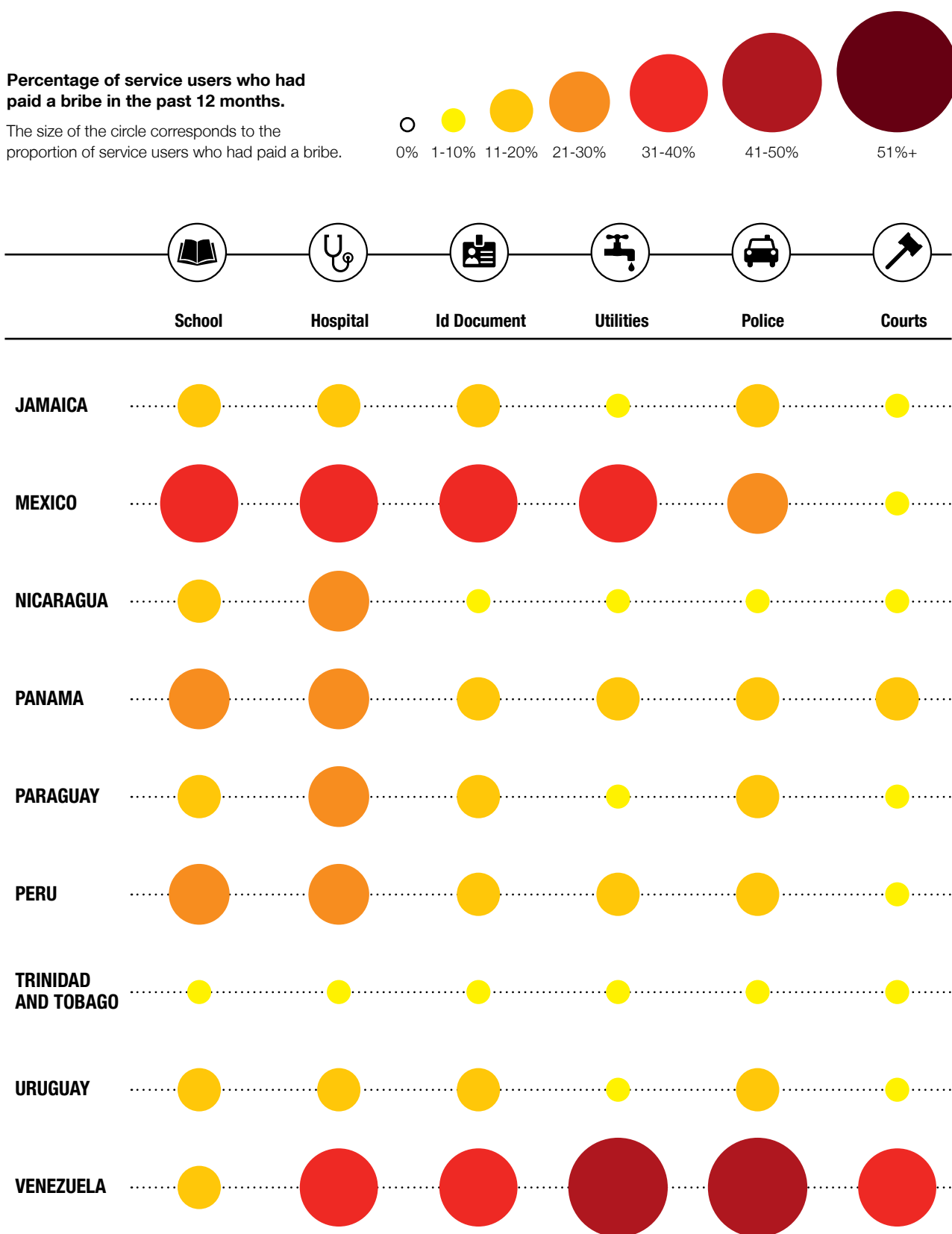
Base: pooled responses from across 19 countries, respondents who had contact with each service in the previous 12 months, excluding missing responses. Results exclude the Dominican Republic due to differences with how the questions were implemented.

# WHICH SERVICES DO PEOPLE PAY BRIBES FOR?



**Percentage of service users who had paid a bribe in the past 12 months.**

The size of the circle corresponds to the proportion of service users who had paid a bribe.

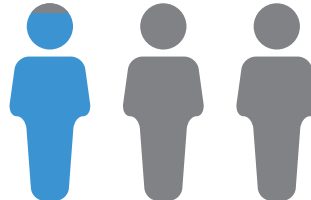


Q. How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift or provide a favour for: a teacher or school official; a health worker or clinic or hospital staff; a government official in order to get a document; a government official in order to receive [utilities] services; a police officer; or a judge or court official? Base: respondents who had contact with each service in the previous 12 months, excluding missing responses. Results for the Dominican Republic are based on the total population and do not exclude no contact.



# WHO HAS TO PAY BRIBES?

We found that more than 90 million people across the 20 countries surveyed had paid a bribe in the previous 12 months, or just under **one in three people** when they came into contact with public services.



**29%**  
OF PEOPLE WHO HAD  
CONTACT WITH A PUBLIC  
SERVICE PAID A BRIBE IN  
THE LAST 12 MONTHS

## EVERYONE IS AT RISK OF HAVING TO PAY A BRIBE

### WOMEN WERE JUST AS LIKELY AS MEN TO PAY BRIBES

When controlling for contact with public services, very **similar proportions** of both men and women had paid a bribe in the previous 12 months, demonstrating that both genders are at risk.



**28%**  
OF MEN PAID  
A BRIBE



**27%**  
OF WOMEN  
PAID A BRIBE

### BOTH RICH AND POOR PAID BRIBES IN FAIRLY SIMILAR PROPORTIONS

We found that 25 per cent of the most financially well-off people in the region paid a bribe when they accessed basic services compared with 30 per cent of the poorest people. However, as the poor have smaller disposable incomes than richer people, bribe payments can present a massively disproportionate strain on their limited resources.



**30%**  
OF THE  
POOREST  
PEOPLE PAID  
A BRIBE

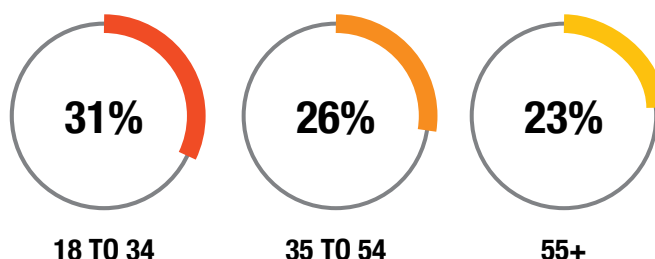


**25%**  
OF THE  
RICHEST  
PEOPLE PAID  
A BRIBE

---

## YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE BEING HIT HARDER

People aged under-35 were more likely than people aged 35 or over to pay a bribe when accessing basic services. However, even among those aged 55 and above, still around a quarter paid a bribe.

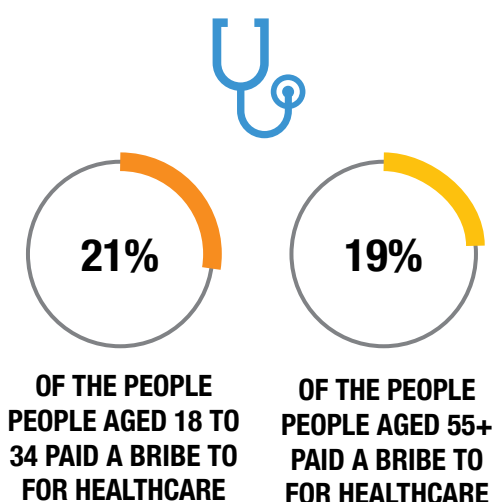


---

## MANY OLDER PEOPLE HAD TO PAY BRIBES FOR HEALTHCARE

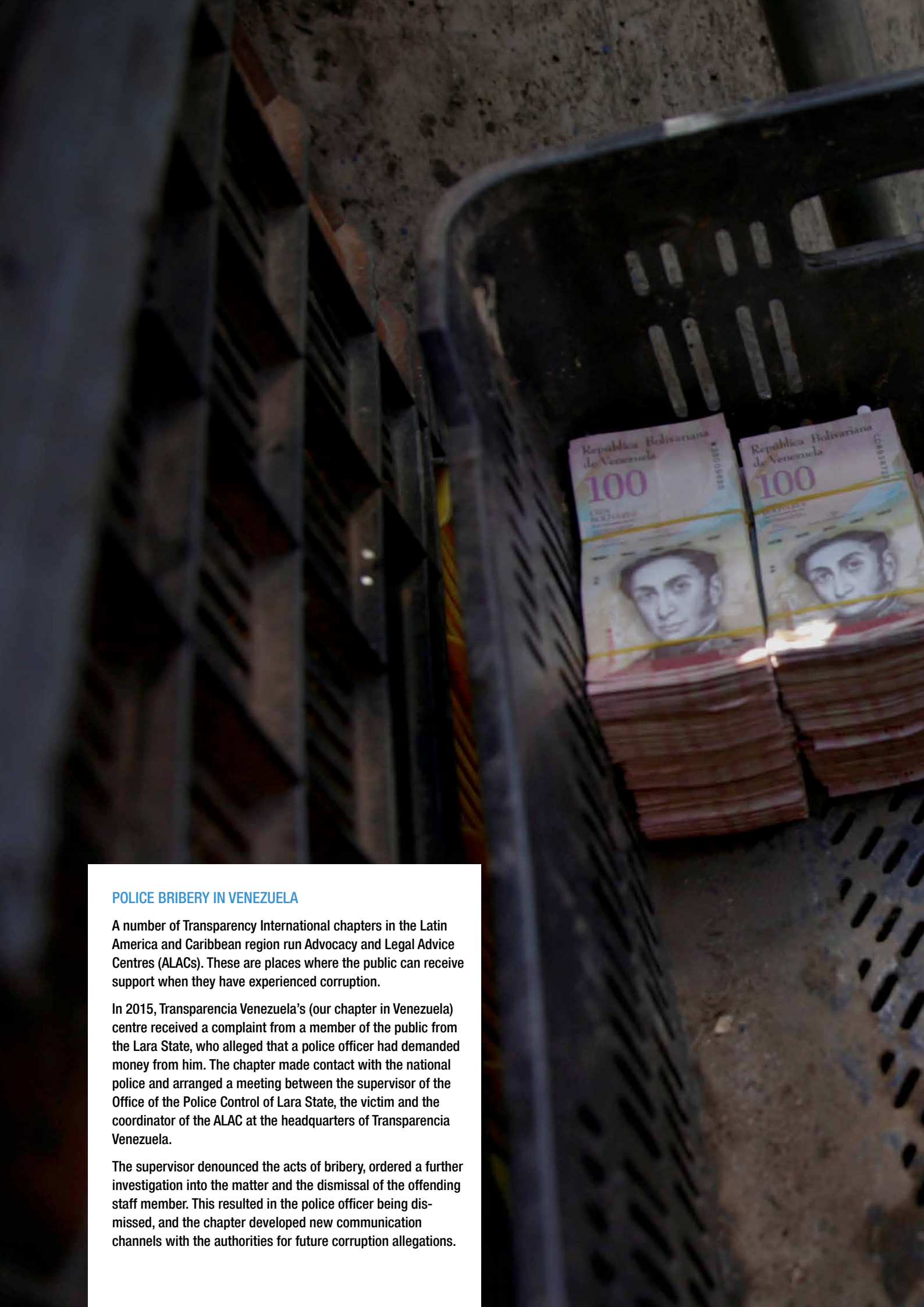
While generally across all the services older people were less likely than younger people to have paid a bribe when they accessed public services, for healthcare services this difference in bribery rate by age virtually disappeared:

As people generally require medical care more frequently as they get older, bribe payments for healthcare services presents an undue burden on the finances of older people who may no longer be working.



---

These results are based on those who have had contact with at least one service in the last 12 months. The results exclude the Dominican Republic due to a differences in how the bribery questions were implemented.



### POLICE BRIBERY IN VENEZUELA

A number of Transparency International chapters in the Latin America and Caribbean region run Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs). These are places where the public can receive support when they have experienced corruption.

In 2015, Transparencia Venezuela's (our chapter in Venezuela) centre received a complaint from a member of the public from the Lara State, who alleged that a police officer had demanded money from him. The chapter made contact with the national police and arranged a meeting between the supervisor of the Office of the Police Control of Lara State, the victim and the coordinator of the ALAC at the headquarters of Transparencia Venezuela.

The supervisor denounced the acts of bribery, ordered a further investigation into the matter and the dismissal of the offending staff member. This resulted in the police officer being dismissed, and the chapter developed new communication channels with the authorities for future corruption allegations.





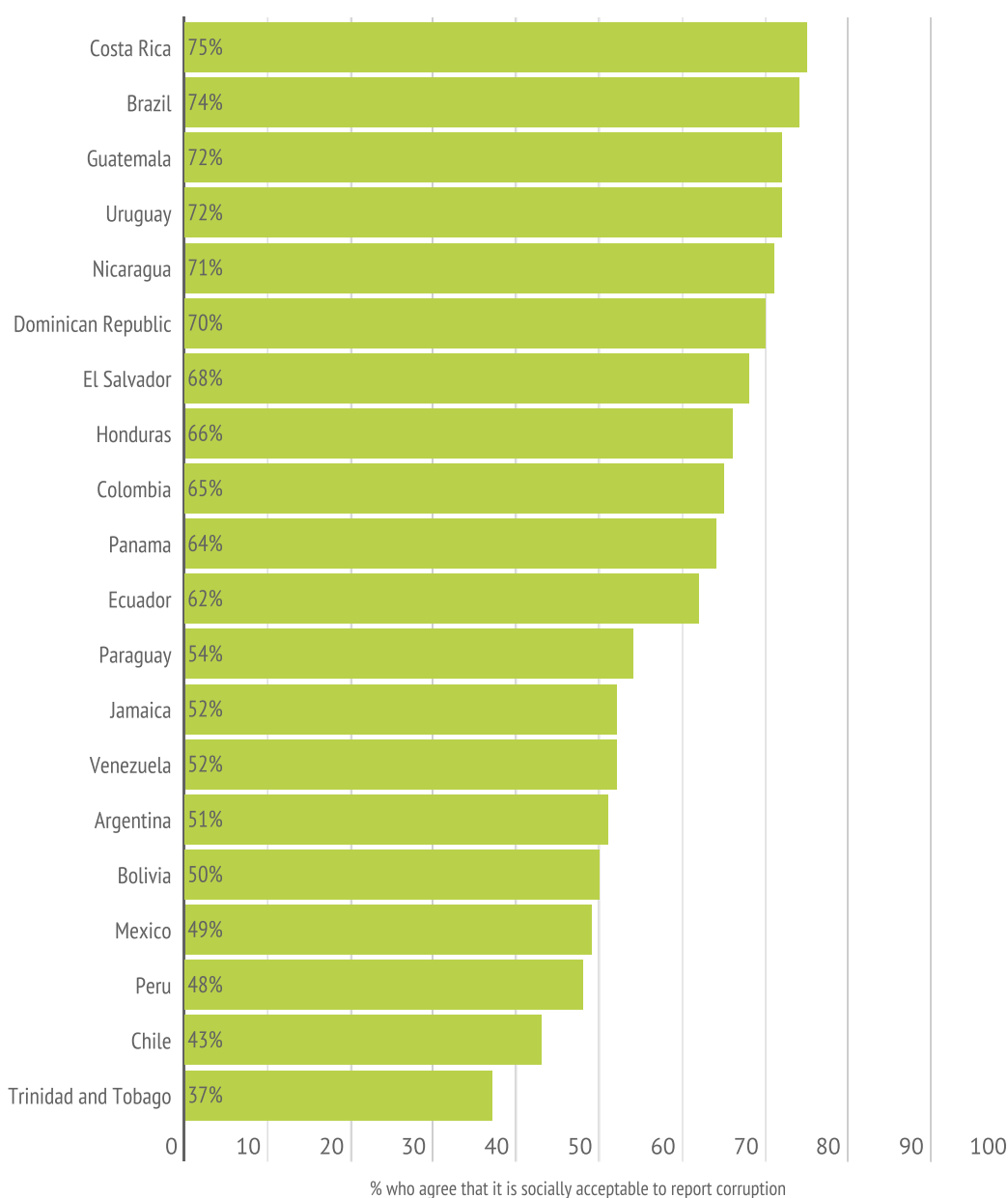


# PEOPLE SPEAKING OUT AGAINST CORRUPTION

## Support for reporting corruption

We asked people whether there is social stigma in their country against people coming forward to report corruption. Positively, six in 10 said that it is socially acceptable to report a case of corruption (60 per cent), while just over one in five said that it is not socially acceptable to do so (22 per cent).

### IS IT SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE TO REPORT A CASE OF CORRUPTION? — RESULTS BY COUNTRY (AGREE)



Q. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: "In our society it is generally acceptable for people to report a case of corruption they witness". Base: all respondents, excluding missing responses. "Strongly agree" and "agree" combined. "Neither", "disagree", "strongly disagree" and "don't know" are not shown for ease of comparison.

In Brazil and Costa Rica, citizens were most likely to agree that it is socially acceptable to report corruption, with around three quarters agreeing (74 per cent and 75 per cent).

However, in Trinidad and Tobago, Chile, Mexico and Peru fewer than a half of citizens said that reporting corruption is socially acceptable (from 37 per cent to 49 per cent).

Similar proportions of men and women agreed that it is socially acceptable to report (60 per cent of men versus 59 per cent of women), while younger people were slightly more likely than older people to agree (63 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 compared with 56 per cent of 55 and over).

---

## Few people report in practice

While reporting corruption was in theory seen as socially acceptable across most of the region, in practice few people actually reported corruption when they experienced it. Of the bribe payers in our survey fewer than one in 10 said that they had actually reported it to the authorities (9 per cent).

Low reporting rates are hardly surprising in the region, where many saw the police and courts as highly corrupt and the threat of violent payback was a real risk for people who spoke out.

Indeed, our survey revealed that those who did speak out sometimes put themselves at considerable risk, with few actually seeing any action being taken against the corrupt officials. The survey showed that of those who reported an incident to the authorities, one in five (21 per cent) said that any action was taken against the perpetrator, while more than a quarter (28 per cent) said that they had suffered negative consequences.<sup>22</sup>

It appears that for many victims of bribery, the benefits of holding corrupt officials to account for their criminal actions do not outweigh the risks involved.



## People can make a difference

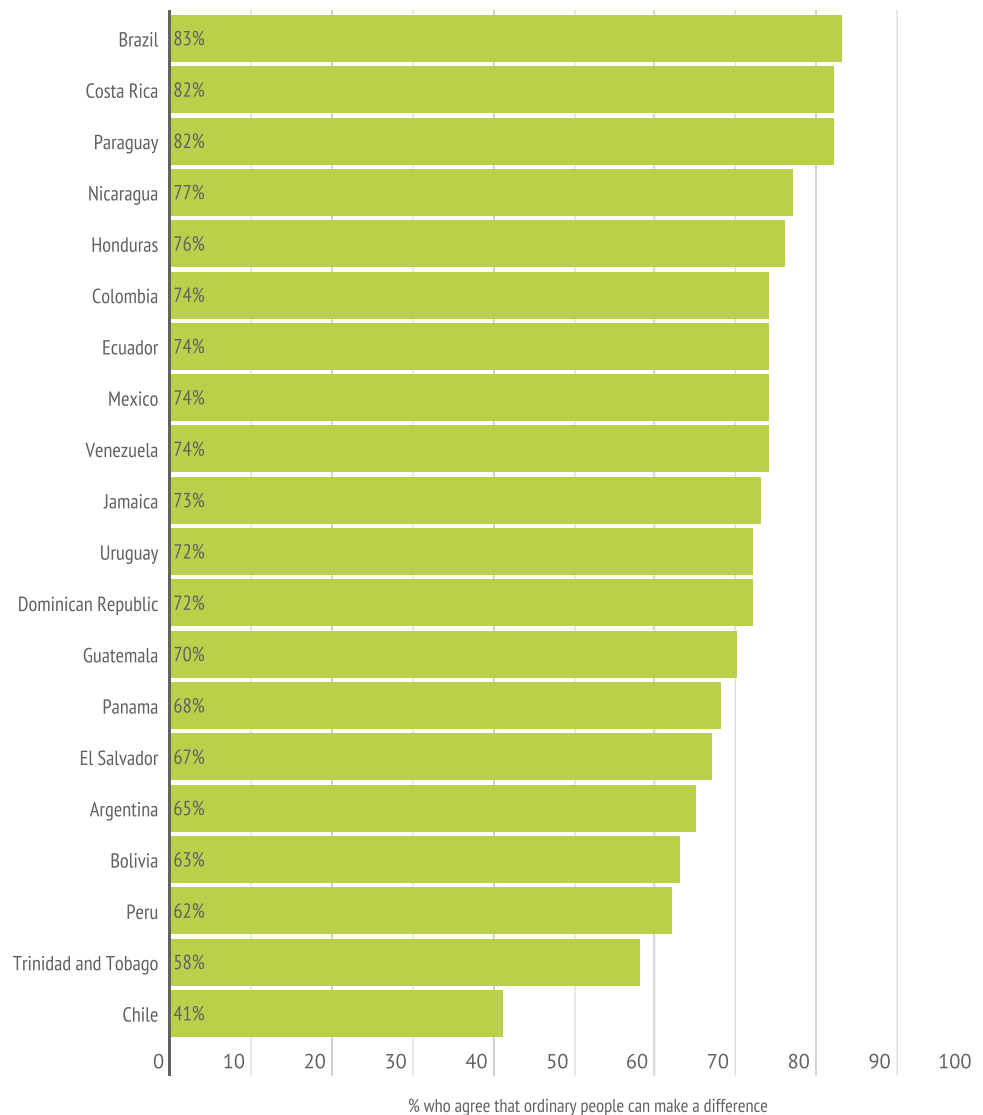
We asked people whether they thought ordinary people could make a difference in the fight against corruption.

A large majority of citizens said that they were hopeful about the positive role citizens could play in tackling graft. Seven in 10 (70 per cent) agreed that ordinary people could make a difference; compared with just 17 per cent who disagreed.

Citizens in Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay were the most likely to agree that citizens could play a role in fighting corruption (from 76 per cent to 83 per cent). This compares starkly with Chile, where only around two in five agreed (41 per cent).

Across the region, 72 per cent of men agreed that people could make a difference in the fight against corruption, compared with 69 per cent of women. Younger people were more likely to agree than older people – 74 per cent of people aged 18 to 24 compared with 66 per cent of those aged 55 and over.

### CAN ORDINARY PEOPLE MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION? – RESULTS BY COUNTRY (AGREE)



Q. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption". Base: all respondents, excluding missing responses. "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Neither" and "Don't know" answers are not shown for ease of comparison.

# CONCLUSION

Our scorecard on the following page summarises the anti-corruption performance of the 20 countries surveyed in the Latin America and Caribbean region, as reported by their own citizens. It is based on the results from the survey on the following key indicators: (1) the extent to which the level of corruption was perceived to have increased, (2) the perceived performance of governments in addressing corruption, (3) the perceived levels of corruption among the police, (4) the experience of bribery and (5) the extent to which people thought that ordinary people could make a difference in the fight against corruption.

According to the survey, citizens in Ecuador, Guatemala and Uruguay were the most positive on average across the 20 countries. Many people said that they were willing to get involved with anti-corruption efforts, and in Guatemala people were positive about government efforts to fight corruption. However, even among these three countries there was much room for improvement. Bribery was still fairly common among users of public services. In Guatemala many people saw the police as highly corrupt and only mediocre ratings were given for the how the level of corruption had changed recently, which indicates that more can be done to demonstrate to the public that the tide is turning against corruption.

Based on the responses of their citizens, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela fared the worst, as all received negative ratings across four of the five indicators. In these countries, bribery rates were high, the police were perceived to be highly corrupt and citizens were negative about both government efforts to address corruption and the change in the level of corruption over the previous 12 months. This suggests real and urgent corruption risks in these countries, which will require joined up action by all levels of government and civil society.

The results from other countries showed a mixed picture of positive, mediocre and negative ratings – which in part reflect the varied nature of the corruption challenges and political situation across the region. In some of these countries, like Honduras, the bribery rate was very high and people perceived the police to be highly corrupt, but citizens were fairly positive about government efforts to fight corruption and a clear majority felt they could make a difference in the fight against corruption. In Brazil, bribery for public services was much lower, but citizens were critical of government efforts to fight corruption and an overwhelming majority thought that the level of corruption was on the rise.

The scorecard clearly demonstrates the extent of the corruption challenges across the region: of the 100 ratings, only 20 were positive, while 33 were mediocre and a further 47 were negative. Despite these corruption challenges, across the region, many citizens stand ready and willing to join the fight against corruption. Engaging them in the anti-corruption movement and sustaining their enthusiasm must be the priority for governments and civil society organisations working to wipe out the scourge of corruption.

A strong, clean and transparent judicial system will be vital for sustaining this public engagement, with the public wanting to see public officials receiving due punishments for any crimes committed. Without this, citizens will become further disillusioned with the governance system in their country and this positive energy for change will be lost.



# OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION – A CITIZEN SCORECARD

The anti-corruption performance of the government and the corruption risks are rated by citizens as:



These groupings are meant to be indicative, and regionally contextual. It is important to keep in mind that they are based on the subjective perceptions and experiences of citizens in each country rather than on an assessment against a common objective benchmark.

This infographic summarises the results for five key corruption questions presented in this report. For each question, countries/territories/regions are categorised as either red, amber or green depending on how positively or negatively respondents from that place responded. Places are ordered from those who score the best according to their citizens to those who score the worst. See the methodology note for the full description of how the colours are assigned.



# METHODOLOGY NOTE

The Global Corruption Barometer 2017 question module was conducted via face-to-face surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a random selection of adults in all 20 surveyed countries.

Face-to-face household interviews were conducted either with Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) or Paper-and-Pencil Interviewing (PAPI). A random probability stratified clustered sample was designed in each project country. The sample was stratified by regions and by level of urbanisation. Households were selected at random, using a random walk, or using existing registers. The respondent was selected at random from all adults in the household.

## WEIGHTING

The survey samples were selected and, if necessary, weighted to be nationally representative of all adults living in each country/territory. The results have margins of sampling error of a maximum  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points (for a sample of 1,000) for dichotomous questions (for example, yes or no) at a 95 per cent confidence level.

In addition, an extra weight was applied so that the sample sizes for each country were equalised. The overall results for the region are equivalent to an average of the countries surveyed.

## POPULATION ESTIMATES

Population estimates have been made using available recent population data from the CIA Factbook. Using the national bribery rates (the percentage of all adults who had paid a bribe) we calculated the projected number of people in each country who had paid a bribe, and the added the projected number of bribe payers across all 20 countries, which gave a total number of 91,356,167. For ease of reporting we rounded this figure to 90 million.

PLACE	ORGANISATION	FIELDWORK	SAMPLE SIZE	POPULATION SIZE (18+)	BRIBERY RATE TOTAL POPULATION
ARGENTINA	Latinobarómetro	20.05.2016 -17.06.2016	1200	31,005,417	13%
BOLIVIA	Latinobarómetro	14.05.2016 – 19.06.2016	1200	6,776,907	23%
BRAZIL	Latinobarómetro	21.05.2016 – 10.06.2016	1204	148,782,091	9%
CHILE	Latinobarómetro	16.05.2016 – 09.06.2016	1200	13,254,786	18%
COLOMBIA	Latinobarómetro	12.05.2016 – 06.07.2016	1200	33,135,604	25%
COSTA RICA	Latinobarómetro	16.05.2016 – 06.06.2016	1000	3,515,700	21%
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Latinobarómetro	20.05.2016 – 03.06.2016	1000	7,153,832	46%
ECUADOR	Latinobarómetro	14.05.2016 – 14.06.2016	1200	10,764,181	24%
EL SALVADOR	Latinobarómetro	19.05.2016 – 26.06.2016	1000	4,141,131	23%
GUATEMALA	Latinobarómetro	19.05.2016 – 31.05.2016	1000	8,876,610	20%
HONDURAS	Latinobarómetro	18.05.2016 – 30.05.2016	1000	5,346,813	26%
JAMAICA	Market Research Services	13.07.2016 – 19.11.2016	1174	1,963,370	15%
MEXICO	Latinobarómetro	27.05.2016 – 08.06.2016	1200	83,050,614	44%
NICARAGUA	Latinobarómetro	20.05.2016 – 03.06.2016	1000	3,913,346	24%
PANAMA	Latinobarómetro	09.05.2016 – 09.06.2016	1000	2,525,678	32%
PARAGUAY	Latinobarómetro	04.05.2016 – 14.06.2016	1200	4,737,699	18%
PERU	Latinobarómetro	14.05.2016 – 13.06.2016	1200	20,838,479	30%
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	Market Research Services	22.07.2016 – 30.09.2016	924	939,634	4%
URUGUAY	Latinobarómetro	14.05.2016 – 13.06.2016	1200	2,507,383	19%
VENEZUELA	Latinobarómetro	14.05.2016 – 20.05.2016	1200	20,755,190	23%



---

## Citizens' corruption scorecard ratings

### 1. Change in level of corruption over previous 12 months

The scores were based on the percentage of respondents in each country who said that corruption had either “increased a lot” or “increased somewhat” over the 12 months prior to when the survey was conducted. The results were rebased to exclude “don’t know” responses.

- ▶ Green: fewer than 40 per cent said “increased a lot” or “increased somewhat”.
- ▶ Amber: from 40 per cent up to 60 per cent said “increased a lot” or “increased somewhat”.
- ▶ Red: 60 per cent or more said “increased a lot” or “increased somewhat”.

### 2. How the government is handling the fight against corruption

The scores were based on the percentage of respondents who said that their government had performed either “very badly” or “fairly badly” in the fight against corruption in government. The results were rebased to exclude “don’t know” responses.

- ▶ Green: fewer than 40 per cent said “very badly” or “fairly badly”.
- ▶ Amber: from 40 per cent up to 60 per cent said “very badly” or “fairly badly”.
- ▶ Red: 60 per cent or more said “very badly” or “fairly badly”.

### 3. How corrupt the police are perceived to be

The scores were based on the percentage of respondents who said that “most” or “all” police were corrupt. The results were rebased to exclude “don’t know” responses.

- ▶ Green: fewer than 20 per cent said that “most” or “all” police were corrupt.
- ▶ Amber: from 20 per cent up to 40 per cent said that “most” or “all” police were corrupt.
- ▶ Red: 40 per cent or more said that “most” or “all” police were corrupt.

### 4. Bribery rate

The scores were based on the percentage of people who said that they had paid a bribe to at least one of the following public services in the 12 months prior to the survey: public medical care; public schools (either vocational, or primary and secondary); official documents; unemployment benefits; other social security benefits; the police; or the courts. The results exclude those who said that they did not come into contact with any of these services in the previous 12 months.

- ▶ Green: fewer than 10 per cent said that they paid a bribe.
- ▶ Amber: from 10 per cent up to 30 per cent said that they paid a bribe.
- ▶ Red: 30 per cent or more said that they paid a bribe.

### 5. Ordinary people can make a difference

The results were based on the percentage of people who either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement “Ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption”. The results were rebased to exclude “don’t know” responses.

- ▶ Green: 60 per cent or more said “strongly agree” or “agree”.
- ▶ Amber: from 40 per cent up to 60 per cent said “strongly agree” or “agree”.
- ▶ Red: fewer than 40 per cent said “strongly agree” or “agree”.

# NOTES

1. Webber, J. 2017. "Acapulco blighted by Mexico's wave of violent crime", The Financial Times. [www.ft.com/content/e5d81556-67ee-11e7-8526-7b38dcaef614?mhq5j=e1](http://www.ft.com/content/e5d81556-67ee-11e7-8526-7b38dcaef614?mhq5j=e1)
2. Transparency International Secretariat. 2016. "Transparency International condemns attack on Honduras national chapter board member which killed a bodyguard". [www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/transparency\\_international\\_condemns\\_attack\\_on\\_honduras\\_chapter\\_board\\_member](http://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/transparency_international_condemns_attack_on_honduras_chapter_board_member)
3. Transparency International Secretariat. 2017. "Transparency International calls for the immediate release of two members of its Venezuelan chapter". [www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/transparency\\_international\\_calls\\_for\\_the\\_immediate\\_release\\_of\\_two\\_members\\_o](http://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/transparency_international_calls_for_the_immediate_release_of_two_members_o)
4. OCCRP. 2017. "U.S. fines Odebrecht a landmark US\$2.6 billion for bribery". [www.occrp.org/en/daily/6348-u-s-fines-odebrecht-a-landmark-us-2-6-billion-for-bribery](http://www.occrp.org/en/daily/6348-u-s-fines-odebrecht-a-landmark-us-2-6-billion-for-bribery); And, Shveda, K. 2016. "Brazil approves new anti-corruption measures", Global Investigations Review. [www.siqueiracastro.com.br/Noticias/SCAMidia/GIR\\_Brazil%20approves%20new%20anti-corruption%20measures\\_DEZ%202016.pdf](http://www.siqueiracastro.com.br/Noticias/SCAMidia/GIR_Brazil%20approves%20new%20anti-corruption%20measures_DEZ%202016.pdf)
5. Lakhani, N. 2017. "Guatemala president under pressure over lobbying firm linked to Mike Pence", The Guardian. [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/guatemala-president-jimmy-morales-lobbying](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/guatemala-president-jimmy-morales-lobbying)
6. This estimate was made using the approximate total number adults living in each of the surveyed places according to available population data. The total adult population size for the 20 countries surveyed is estimated to be 413,984,464 and the total number of bribe payers is estimated to be 91,356,167. See the methodology section for full details.
7. Lohmuller, M. 2016. "Guatemala's government corruption scandals explained", InSight Crime. [www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/guatemala-s-government-corruption-scandals-explained](http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/guatemala-s-government-corruption-scandals-explained)
8. Peralta, E. 2015. "Guatemalan president resigns, is jailed amid corruption scandal", NPR International. [www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/03/437158681/guatemalan-president-otto-p-rez-molina-resigns-amid-corruption-scandal](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/03/437158681/guatemalan-president-otto-p-rez-molina-resigns-amid-corruption-scandal)
9. Lakhani, N. 2017. "Guatemala president under pressure over lobbying firm linked to Mike Pence", The Guardian. [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/guatemala-president-jimmy-morales-lobbying](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/guatemala-president-jimmy-morales-lobbying)
10. Lava Jato, 2017, "A Lava Jato em números" <http://lavajato.mpf.mp.br/atualizacao-na-1a-instancia/resultados/a-lava-jato-em-numeros>
11. Addley, E. 2016. "Why is Brazil's government in crisis? – the Guardian briefing", The Guardian. [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/17/brazil-government-crisis-briefing-dilma-rousseff-lula-petrobras](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/17/brazil-government-crisis-briefing-dilma-rousseff-lula-petrobras)
12. OCCRP. 2017. "U.S. fines Odebrecht a landmark US\$2.6 billion for bribery". [www.occrp.org/en/daily/6348-u-s-fines-odebrecht-a-landmark-us-2-6-billion-for-bribery](http://www.occrp.org/en/daily/6348-u-s-fines-odebrecht-a-landmark-us-2-6-billion-for-bribery). Note: Transparency International takes "billion" to refer to one thousand million (1,000,000,000).
13. Transparency International Secretariat. 2016. "Brazil's Carwash Task Force wins Transparency International's Anti-Corruption award".
14. Shveda, K. 2016. "Brazil approves new anti-corruption measures", Global Investigations Review. [www.siqueiracastro.com.br/Noticias/SCAMidia/GIR\\_Brazil%20approves%20new%20anti-corruption%20measures\\_DEZ%202016.pdf](http://www.siqueiracastro.com.br/Noticias/SCAMidia/GIR_Brazil%20approves%20new%20anti-corruption%20measures_DEZ%202016.pdf)
15. Phillips, D. 2017. "Brazil's president keeps job as congress votes against corruption charges," The Guardian, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/03/brazil-michel-temer-president-corruption-charges-vote](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/03/brazil-michel-temer-president-corruption-charges-vote)
16. For the sake of readability we use the term "bribe" to refer to those who said that they paid a bribe, gave a gift or did a favour for a public service. It is important to note that questionnaire changes for the Global Corruption Barometer bribery question means that the results for previous Global Corruption Barometer surveys cannot be compared with the findings presented here. The question was changed from asking about household to individual bribe payments, and from any service provider to only services provided by the government.
17. Unweighted n=17,812 respondents who came into contact with at least one public service in the previous 12 months. Results for the Dominican Republic are based on the total population due to differences in how the survey module was implemented.
18. This estimate is made on the basis of the approximate total number of adults living in each of the surveyed places according to available population data, which is 413,984,464. We extrapolated from the bribery rates by country using the country population estimates, which gave a figure of 91,356,167. See the methodology section for full details.
19. Contact rates for each service were: public school 51 per cent; public hospital 62 per cent; ID document 47 per cent; utilities 38 per cent; police 38 per cent; and courts 31 per cent.
20. True as of September 2017.
21. Unweighted base: 5,196 respondents who said that they had paid a bribe to at least one of six public services in the previous 12 months.
22. Unweighted base: 483 respondents who said that they had reported a bribery incident to the authorities.

---

## Acknowledgements

Generous support for this report was provided by EY, Global Affairs Canada, la Universidad del Rosario and Transparency International Honduras.

We gratefully acknowledge these contributions. Responsibility for the content lies entirely with the author. The contributors do not necessarily share the expressed views and interpretations. For a full list of all contributors and to find out how you can support our work please visit

[www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)



# CREATE CHANGE WITH US

## ENGAGE

More and more people are joining the fight against corruption, and the discussion is growing. Stay informed and share your views on our website and blog, and social media.

## VOLUNTEER

With an active presence in more than 100 countries around the world, we're always looking for passionate volunteers to help us increase our impact. Check out our website for the contact details for your local organisation.

## DONATE

Your donation will help us provide support to thousands of victims of corruption, develop new tools and research, and hold governments and businesses to their promises. We want to build a fairer, more just world. With your help, we can. Find out more at:

[www.transparency.org/getinvolved](http://www.transparency.org/getinvolved)

And join the conversation:

 [transparencyinternational](#)  
 [anticorruption](#)

Transparency International  
International Secretariat  
Alt-Moabit 96, 10559 Berlin, Germany

Phone: +49 30 34 38 200

Fax: +49 30 34 70 39 12

[ti@transparency.org](mailto:ti@transparency.org)

[www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)

[blog.transparency.org](http://blog.transparency.org)

[facebook.com/transparencyinternational](https://facebook.com/transparencyinternational)

[twitter.com/anticorruption](https://twitter.com/anticorruption)