

Corruption in Albania

Perception and Experience

SURVEY 2006

Summary of findings



March 2007

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Summary of findings

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the 2006 survey of the general public and public officials on corruption issues. The 2006 survey is a follow-up to the 2004 and 2005 surveys. The field work for the 2006 survey was conducted during November-December 2006.

The 2006 survey is based on two samples:

- 1) Mass public samples** - a national sample of 1,200 respondents and an over-sample of 672 respondents in 10 major cities¹ of Albania (a total of 1,872 respondents). The purpose of the over-sample was to create a comparison of sample results from the same 10 cities over a three-year period, using the same size sample of 1,200 respondents; in 2004, there was no national sample, only an urban sample of 10 major cities
- 2) Public sector sample** – a sample of 600 public sector employees, divided into four categories - central administration, local government, medical system and education system.

The main objective of these surveys was to measure, over time, the Albanian public's perceptions of corruption, and Albanians' attitudes and experiences regarding corruption. The survey used the same instrument and the same methodology, which allows for tracking changes in perceptions and attitudes over time.

Note: The 2006 survey was conducted in the context of a heated political debate that involved recriminations between opposition and government forces over election reform. The debate culminated in an opposition boycott of local elections and resulted in the postponement of the elections until February 18, 2007. This political climate may have had an impact on citizen responses to survey questions regarding trust, effectiveness or transparency of institutions.

1. For the sake of analysis, this report refers to the 10-city sample as an urban sample, although it does not strictly fit the definition of an urban sample. It was a sample of 10 major cities in Albania, rather than a sample of urban areas. However, this report uses the terms "10-city sample" and "urban sample" interchangeably.



The survey was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by the Institute for Development and Research Alternatives (IDRA) and Casals & Associates, Inc. through the Rule of Law project. The authors' views do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

2. Methodology and margin of error

Sample sizes:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1) National sample 2006 | - N=1,200 respondents |
| 2) Urban sample 2006 | - N=1,200 respondents (composed by N= 672 over-sample, plus N=528 respondents of 10 cities in the national sample) |
| 3) Public sector sample 2006 | - N= 574 public officials |

Sampling

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) National sample and 10 city over-sample | - multi-stage random samples |
| 2) Public sector sample | - representative samples of four categories of public officials in the central Administration, local administration, medical system, and education system |

Survey method – face-to-face

Margin of error

The samples of the general public in the national survey and in the 10-city survey, each involved 1,200 respondents, which provides for a sampling error of ± 2.8 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent. Technically, a sampling error of ± 2.8 percent means that if there were repeated samples of this size, 95 percent of them would reflect the views of the population with no greater inaccuracy than ± 2.8 percent. The sampling error for the surveys of public officials is ± 4 percent.

3. Presentation of findings

Most of the survey findings are presented on a 0-100 scale. The different scales in the questionnaire are converted to a scale of 0-100 for better understanding and presentation.

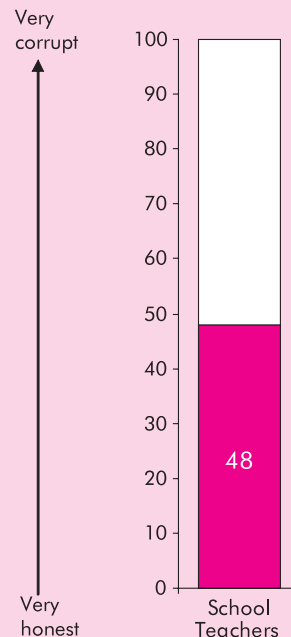
The following is an example of such a conversion of a question from the questionnaire:

Now, I will name various public and private institutions. I am interested to know how corrupt or honest do you think the representatives of these institutions are. Please, rate each one of them from 1 to 10, 1 being very honest and 10 very Corrupt.

INSTITUTIONS	Levels of Corruption										
	Very Honest									Very Corrupt	
PC19. Public school teachers	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(00)

The conversion is achieved by subtracting 1 from each point on the 1-10 scale so that the questions are scored on a 0-9 scale. The scale is then divided by 9, so that it ranges from 0-1, and multiplied by 100 to obtain a 0-100 range. In this scale, 0=very honest and 100=very corrupt. An illustrative graph is presented on the right.

In this sample graph, the category "school teachers" receives a score of "48." The score does NOT mean that 48 percent of the public thinks that school teachers are corrupt; it represents the perception of how corrupt an institution is on a scale of 0 to 100. The score of 48 points means that this group is in the middle of the scale of corruption as perceived by the public.



4. Perception of corruption

Compared with the survey in 2005, the 2006 survey shows little change in the way citizens perceive institutions or groups in terms of integrity or corruption.

Citizens see the majority of institutions or groups (13 of 19) as corrupt, giving them scores higher than 50 points on a scale from 0-100, where 100 represents very corrupt, 0 very honest. (Fig. 1)

As in 2005, the President, religious leaders and the military continue to be seen as the most honest among the different institutions and groups in 2006. Customs officials, tax officials, doctors, judges and members of parliament are seen as the most corrupt in 2006. (Fig. 2)

The President fares slightly worse in 2006 than in 2005 in terms of perceptions of honesty; he received a score of 21 points in 2005 and 30.9 points in 2006. (Fig. 2)

Only the President, religious leaders, military, media and NGO leaders fall under the mid-point of the scale 0-100, meaning they are seen, on balance, as more honest than corrupt. All other groups score higher than 50 points, indicating that they are perceived as more corrupt. (Fig. 2)

Of all categories rated, the largest one-year improvement is in the perceptions of policemen, with a change of almost 7 points, from 66.4 (2005) to 59.5 points in 2006. (Fig. 2)

In comparison to 2005, the 2006 survey shows little change in public perceptions of corruption in most categories. This stagnation may be related to the changes in Albania's political agenda. In 2005, general elections were dominated by corruption issues, but in 2006, the political agenda shifted; institutional and political conflicts became the focus.

Fig. 1 Honesty vs. Corruption (National sample 2006)

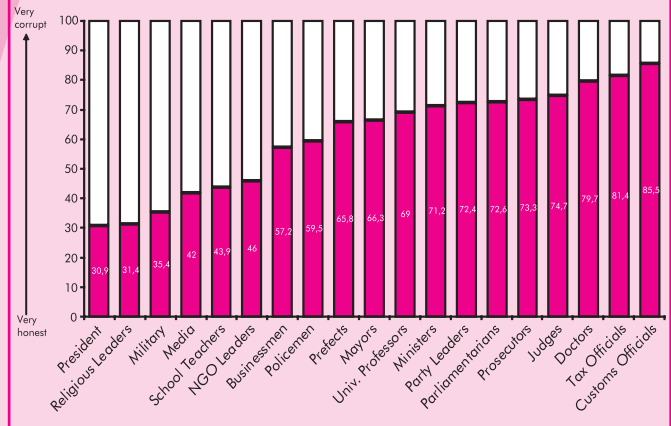
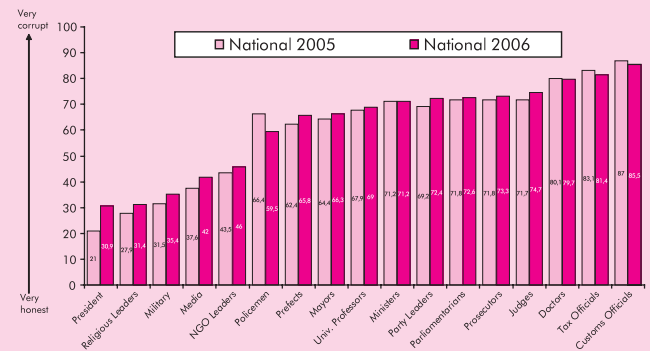


Fig. 2 Honesty vs. Corruption (National samples 2005-2006)



Cities show results similar to that of the nation as a whole in terms of the ranking of institutions/groups by their level of corruption or honesty.

Nationally, the findings regarding perceptions of police hold for urban areas, where police were ranked 67.3 points in 2005 on the 0-100 scale, compared to 63.4 points in 2006, an improvement of four points.

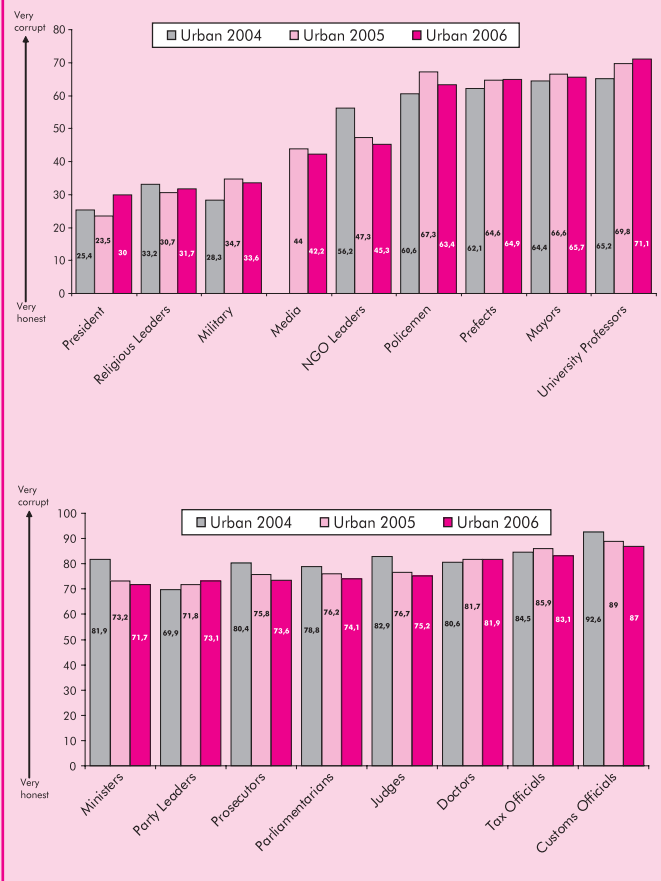
Despite the lack of major change in perceptions in the one-year period 2005-2006, there are significant differences in the urban findings in the two-year period 2004-2006.

- An 11-point improvement in perceptions of NGO leaders, who scored 56.2 points in 2004 and 45.3 in 2006. (Fig. 3)
- A 10-point improvement for Ministers over the same two-year period. (Fig. 3)
- An improvement in perception of Judges and Prosecutors, who scored respectively 75.2 and 73.6, down from 82.9 and 80.4 in 2004. (Fig. 3)
- Even customs officials, still seen as the most corrupt Albanian officials, have improved by nearly 6-points in public perceptions between 2004 and 2006. (Fig. 3)

All the above-mentioned groups (except NGO leaders) are still perceived by citizens as highly corrupt, however.

Perceptions of University Professors and, to a certain extent, Party Leaders and Prefects have declined in the 2004-2006 period.

Fig. 3 Honesty vs. Corruption in selected institutions/groups (Urban samples)



An analysis of responses to the question, "How widespread is corruption among public officials based on your experience or knowledge," shows an improvement in perception across samples. The overall perception of the extent of corruption, however, is still very high. (Fig. 4)

Public officials themselves perceive corruption in public administration to be widespread, though their perception in 2006 is slightly more positive than in 2005 (72.2 points, down 4 points from 2005). (Fig. 4)

When asked if corruption increased or decreased during the last year, 38% of public officials said that it has decreased; 20% more than in 2005. (Fig. 5)

Among the general public, more respondents think that corruption has decreased in 2006 than a year ago, while fewer say it has increased. (Fig. 5)

Fig. 4 How widespread is corruption among public officials?

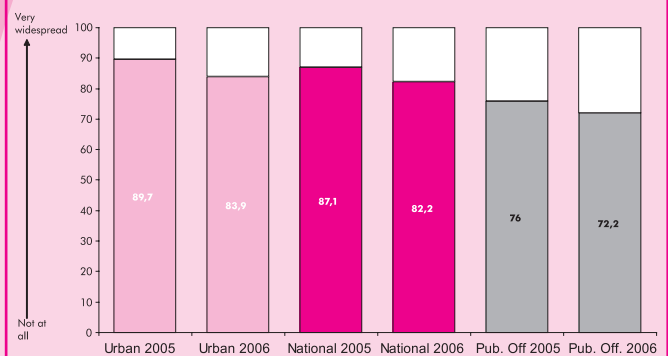
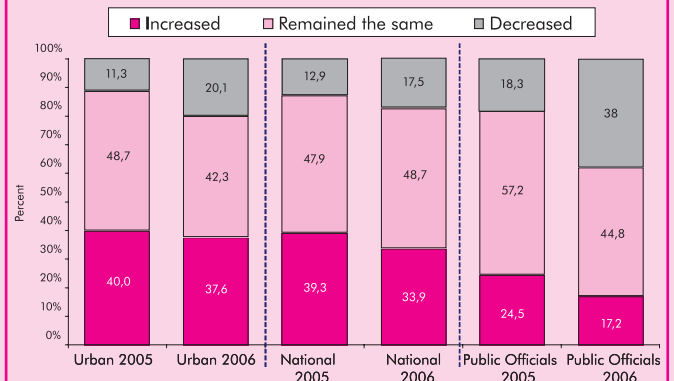


Fig. 5 Corruption among public officials, during last year



5. Corruption victimization

Corruption victimization is a count index measuring the number of ways that each respondent has been personally victimized by corruption. There are ten such experience questions in the questionnaire. The score is based on the average number of ways in which respondents claim to have been victimized.

Reported victimization from corruption declined from 2004 to 2006. Out of 10 ways in which an individual could be victimized, the average number of ways in 2006 for the urban sample was 1.53, down from 1.80 in 2005. (Fig. 6)

Reported victimization in Tirana was higher than in other urban areas (1.74 mean ways in Tirana vs. 1.38 in other cities).

The decline in reported corruption victimization is corroborated by findings from the national sample. From 1.7 in 2005, the victimization index was down to 1.39 in 2006. The index was lower in rural areas (1.25) than in urban areas (1.50), confirming the hypothesis that citizens in urban areas, compared to rural residents, fall prey to corruption more often due to greater interaction with public officials. (Fig. 6)

In the general population, the percentage of those who say they have given a bribe to doctors/nurses was still much higher than in other scenarios of bribery. Almost 39% nationally and in cities report having given a bribe to a doctor/nurse in the last 12 months. (Fig. 7, Fig. 8)

In comparison to the general population, fewer public officials reported that they had bribed a doctor or nurse (around 29%). Respondents in this sample group included health care system employees, whose reported bribery by doctors and nurses was systematically lower than that reported by other categories of officials. (Fig. 7)

Fig. 6 Corruption Victimization, by sample

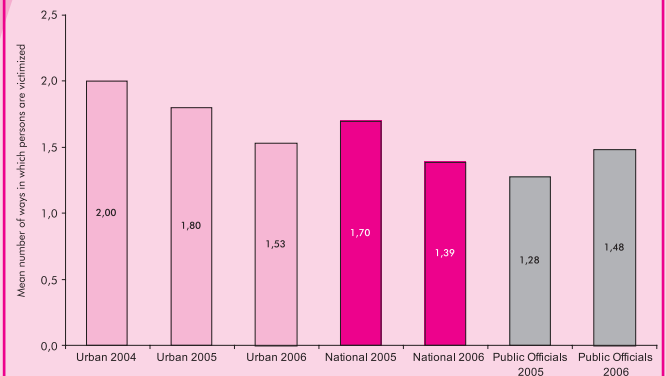
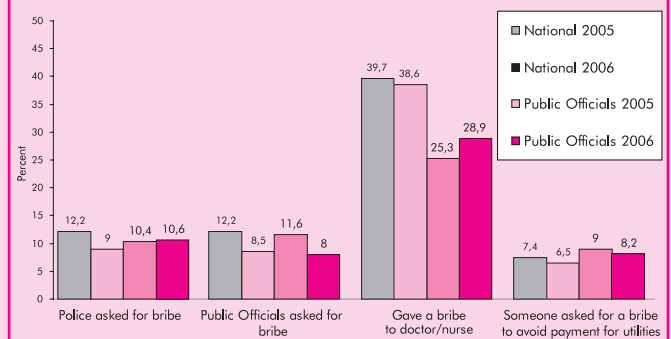


Fig. 7 During the last year, did any of the following happen? Those that answered "Yes." (Comparison between samples).



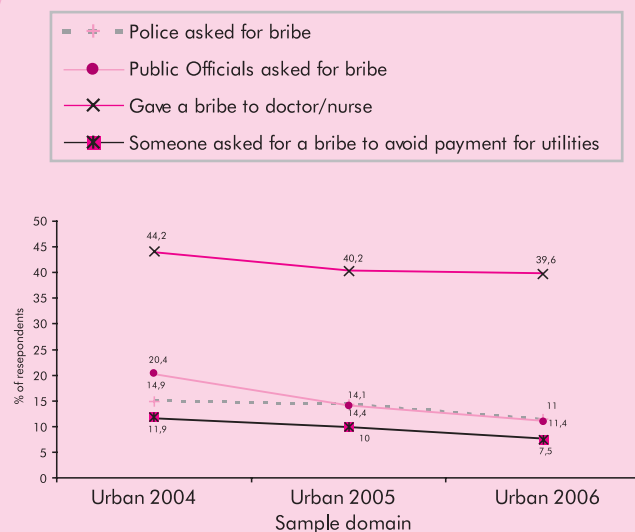
Summary of findings

Consistent with the improved image of police from 2005-2006, fewer people report having been asked by a policeman to pay a bribe.

Reported solicitations of bribes by police dropped by almost 4% from 2004 to 2006, both nationally and in cities. (Fig. 7, Fig. 8)

Reported instances of public officials asking for a bribe also declined between 2004 and 2006. In cities, respondents who said they had been asked by a public official to pay a bribe decreased, from 20% to 11%, a 9-point drop. (Fig. 8)

Fig. 8 During the last year did any of the following happen? Those that answered "Yes"



6. Contribution to the fight against corruption

National samples

Public perceptions, about which institutions contribute to the fight against corruption, and to what extent, have not changed much from 2005 to 2006.

The media continues to be seen as the biggest “fighter” against corruption, with civil society in a distant second place.

Among different institutions/groups, the media stands alone as the only institution that is perceived as helpful on balance, receiving more than 50 points on a 0-100 scale, with 100 representing very helpful; 0 not at all helpful. (Fig. 9)

All other institutions/groups fall below the mid-point of the scale; they are seen as contributing little to the fight against corruption. (Fig. 9)

Although nationally there were no significant changes in perceptions of institutions’ contribution in the fight against corruption, there are noticeable changes in cities.

2. In figure 9, HIDAA is the acronym for the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audits of Assets.

Summary of findings

Fig. 9 Extent to which the following institutions help to fight corruption (National 2006)²

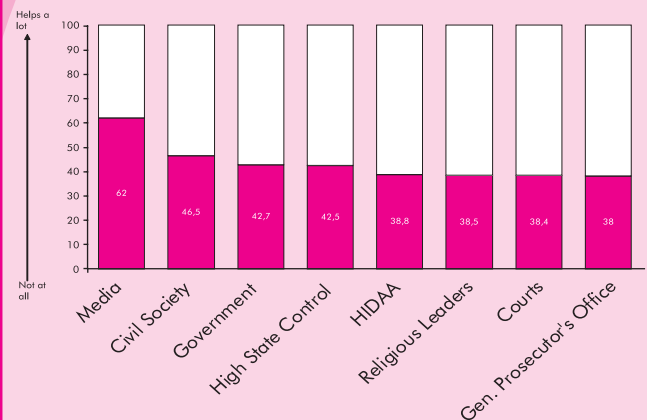
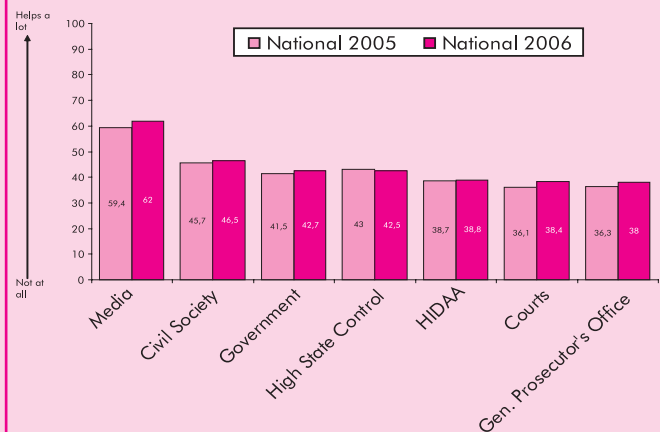


Fig. 10 Extent to which the following institutions help to fight corruption (Comparison between samples)



Urban Samples

In cities, public perceptions of institutions and their perceived helpfulness in fighting corruption are still quite unfavorable, but they did show modest improvement between 2004 and 2006.

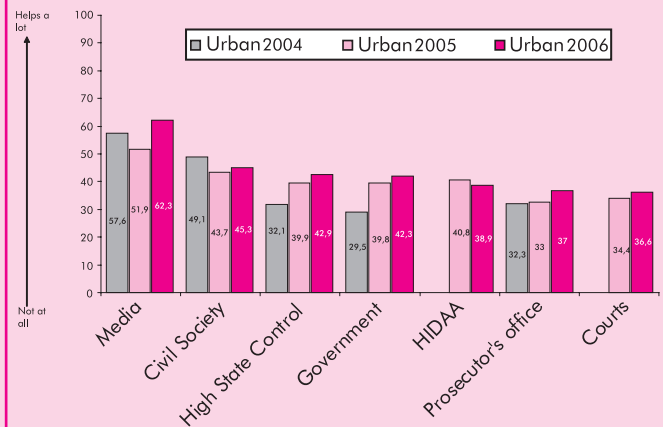
Perceptions of media as a contributor to the fight against corruption saw a large gain. The media scored 62.3 points in 2006, an increase of almost 11 points from 2005.

Perceptions of the High State Control as a contributor against corruption improved by 10 points, while perceptions of the Central Government contribution rose almost 13 points from 2004 in 2006. The General Prosecutor's Office scored 5 points higher in 2006 than in 2004.

All institutions/groups, with the exception of the Media, however, score under the important 50-point threshold, indicating there is still room for improvement in the eyes of the public.

There were no differences between urban and rural perceptions regarding the contribution by most groups to the fight against corruption. The only exception was Civil Society. Rural respondents, more so than urban respondents, tended to see Civil Society as helpful against corruption.

Fig 11. Extent to which institutions help fight corruption³ (Urban samples)



3. HIDAA and Courts were not included in the 2004 survey.

7. Transparency

National samples

Transparency remains a challenge for public institutions in 2006. With the exception of the armed forces, all institutions in 2006 scored below the mid-point of the 0-100 scale of transparency.

Perceived as the least transparent are the Courts and the General Prosecutor's Office.

Police scored the greatest improvement in perceptions of transparency from 2005 to 2006, with a 5-point gain in 2006 over the 2005 score.

Perceptions of the transparency of Parliament, meanwhile, dropped from 41.1 in 2005 to 37.6 in 2006.

Likewise, public perceptions of transparency of the High State Audit fell, from 42.9 in 2005 to 39.8 in 2006.

Fig.12 How transparent are the following institutions? (National sample 2006)

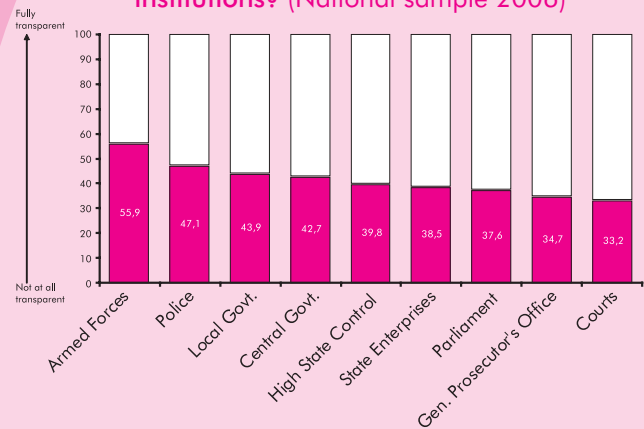


Fig. 13 How transparent are the following institutions? (National samples 2005-2006)



In cities, public perceptions of transparency showed a slight improvement in all categories from 2004 to 2006. The trend in perceptions of the transparency of police and local government from 2004 in 2006 is clearer in cities than nationally.

Urban areas differed from the nation as a whole in terms of perceptions of transparency. People in cities, compared with the nation, perceived somewhat more transparency in the General Prosecutor's Office.

Perceptions of prosecutorial transparency rose from 30.5 points in 2005 to 34.7 points in 2006. Perceptions of Courts also improved slightly. (Fig. 14)

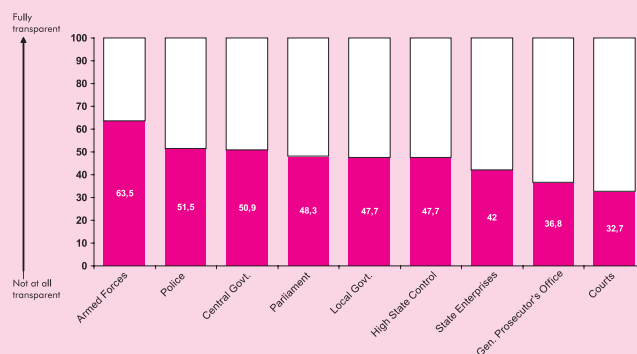
However, both courts and prosecutors still are seen as among the least transparent of the institutions/groups evaluated. All institutions, with the exception of the Armed Forces, still fall below 50 points and, therefore, are still seen as opaque. (Fig 14)

Perceptions of the public show there is still considerable room for improvement in terms of transparency.

Fig. 14 How transparent are the following institutions? (Urban samples)



Fig. 15 How transparent are the following institutions? (Public sector 2006)



8. Trust in Institutions

Nationally, armed forces, religious leaders and the police retain the highest level of trust among different institutions/groups. Political parties, trade unions and Parliament have the lowest level of trust. (Fig.16)

In cities, the armed forces, local mayors and police are the most trusted institutions/officials, while the institutions/officials that fall at the bottom of the trust scale do not change from 2005 to 2006. Generally, the level of trust in institutions is lower in urban areas than in rural areas.

If we compare 2006 findings with those of 2005, there are significant differences in citizens' trust of institutions:

- 1) Trust in police rose from 2005 to 2006, passing the 50 point threshold of the scale. In 2006, police score 52.4 points, an increase of 8 points from the 2005 survey. (Fig.17)
- 2) Trust in local authorities - municipal councils, local mayors and local government - also rose from 2005 to 2006. Respondents rated trust in these authorities as higher than trust in Parliament, which is near the bottom of the ranking. (Fig.17)
- 3) Trust in the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) however, dropped in 2006 by 7 points from 2005 (41.9 in 2006, 48.9 in 2005). As noted previously, that finding might reflect that the survey coincided with the political crisis over electoral reforms; the CEC was part of the debate. (Fig.17)

Fig. 16 Trust in Institutions (National sample 2006)

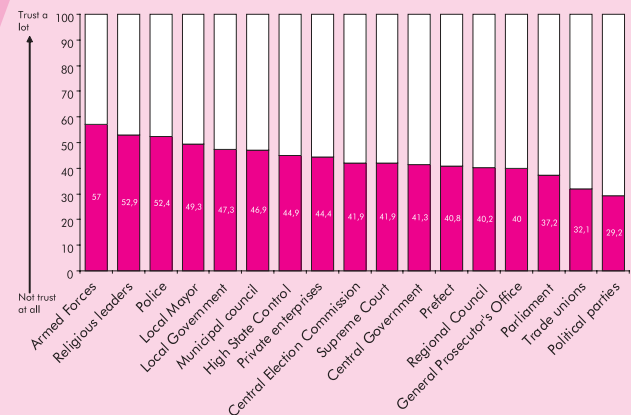
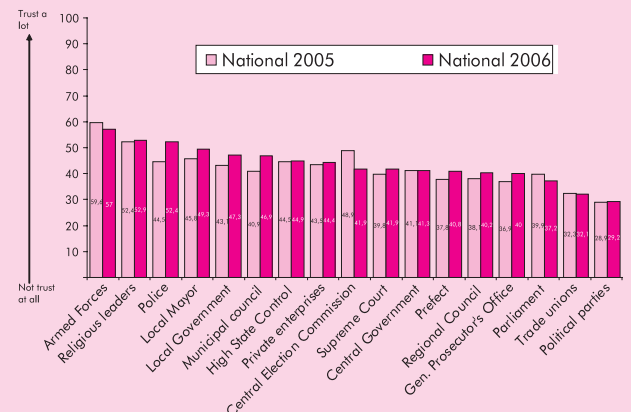


Fig. 17 Trust in Institutions (Comparison 2005-2006)



9. Political system support

System support is a composite indicator⁴ that measures the extent to which citizens think they should be governed by the existing political system. It gives a general sense of the legitimacy of the political system.

In general, political system support did not change from 2005 to 2006 either in cities or in the nation as a whole. It still suggests low political system legitimacy. (Fig. 18)

Public officials understandably show more support than the general public for the political system.

In 2006, rural areas, more than urban areas, expressed support for the political system (47.8 points in cities compared to 51.1 points in rural areas). (Fig. 19)

In general, there is an inverse relationship between system support and corruption victimization, a finding also confirmed by the 2006 survey. The higher the degree of corruption victimization, the lower the support for the political system.

The results show no significant differences in political system support along age, education or gender lines. The views on system support are similar for all sub-groups.

Fig. 18 System support by sample

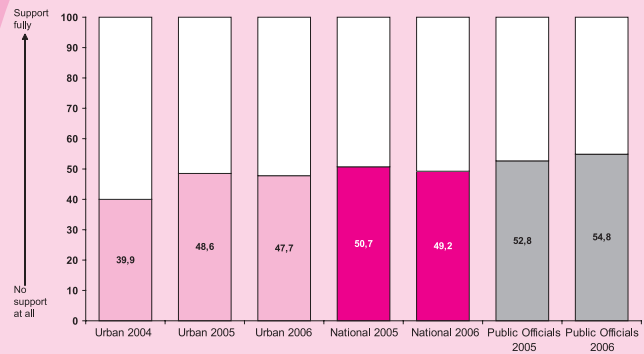
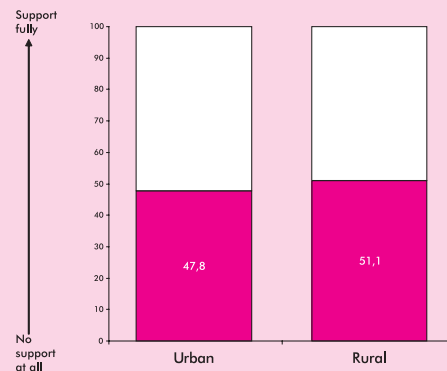


Fig. 19 System Support – Urban vs. Rural (National sample 2006)



4. Developed by the Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University, USA. The index is composed by the answers to five questions, (which ask how much respondents respect state institutions, do Albanian courts guarantee fair trial, are the civil rights protected by the political system etc.).

10. Attitudes towards corruption

The 2006 survey, like the survey in 2005, measures the citizens' attitudes about the two actors in "corrupt transactions" – those who offer the bribe and those who take the bribe. The same scenarios were used as in last year's survey.

In all scenarios, there was no major change in the attitudes of Albanians from 2005 to 2006.

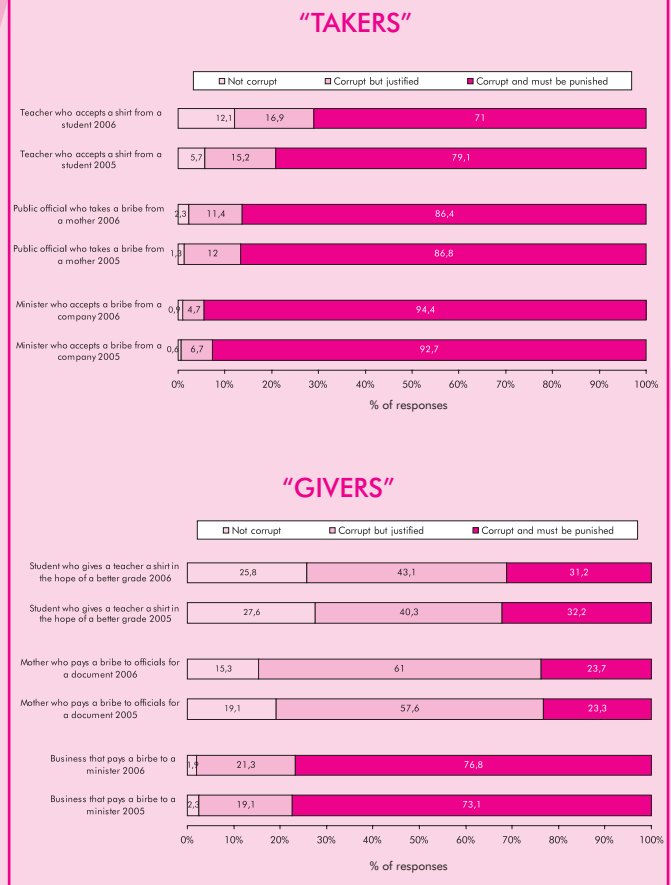
There is still a big difference in the way Albanians see those "who take" the bribe and those "who offer" it. People overwhelmingly view those who offer the bribe as doing so under pressure, with no alternative. The one who takes the bribe is seen as the guilty party.

Almost 69% of respondents said that a student who gives a teacher a gift with the hope of a better grade is either not corrupt or is justified. The attitude toward a mother who pays a bribe for a birth certificate for her child is even more benevolent: about 76% of respondents said she is either not corrupt or is justified in her actions. (Fig. 20)

However, 71% of respondents said that the teacher who accepts a gift from a student is corrupt. Similarly, 86% of respondents viewed the official who took a bribe from the mother as corrupt and said the official should be punished. (Fig. 20)

There is a difference of attitude in the "classical" case of corruption—a corrupt transaction between a business and a minister. In this scenario, citizens said that both parties are corrupt and should be punished. Respondents presented with this scenario took a harsher view of the minister who accepted the bribe, than of the business that offered it.

Fig. 20 Some attitudes toward corruption (National sample 2006)



Perceptions of a flower store owner who raises flower prices on holidays are similar to those expressed in the 2005 survey.

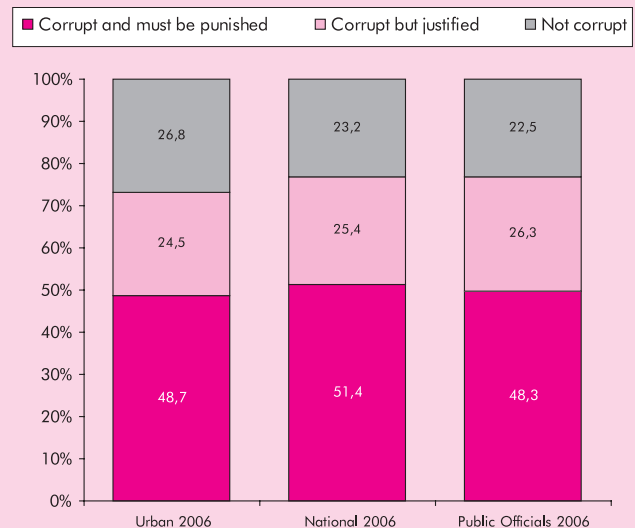
A large percentage of respondents across three samples said the store owner is corrupt and must be punished.

This finding illustrates a tendency to confuse a perceived “abuse” by the store owner (i.e., charging prices seen as too high) with corruption. (Fig. 21)

There is a difference in attitude according to the education of respondents. While almost 59% of respondents with an elementary school education said that the flower seller is corrupt and must be punished, only 43.6% of university educated respondents offered that opinion. Additionally, most young respondents said that the flower seller is not corrupt; while older people expressed the opposite view (59.2% of respondents older than 54 years said the seller is corrupt, while 45% of people between the ages of 18 and 24 expressed that opinion).

The store owner’s actions do not fit conventional definitions of corruption, so the survey findings reveal much more about popular understandings of corruption in Albanian society than about real corruption in the private sector.

Fig. 21 Perception of a flower store owner who raises flower prices on holidays (Comparison between samples 2006)



11. Civil Society involvement in combating corruption

Public awareness of civil society anti-corruption initiatives increased by almost 8% in cities from 2005 to 2006.

However, in 2006, awareness nationally was lower than that of urban areas. Only 28% of the national sample respondents said that they are aware of civil society anti-corruption initiatives; that compares with 38% of respondents in urban areas. (Fig. 22)

Among public sector employees, the awareness of civil society anti-corruption efforts is the highest of the categories surveyed (47.4% of respondents). This figure has not changed much compared with the 2005 sample for public sector employees. (Fig. 22)

Awareness of the Albanian Coalition Against Corruption (ACAC) has not changed much compared with 2005. Awareness of ACAC is 5% higher in cities than in the nation as a whole. Awareness of ACAC among public sector employees is higher than the nation as a whole.

Since awareness of civil society anti-corruption initiatives has increased, while ACAC awareness has remained the same, it appears that other civil society groups active in anti-corruption initiatives are responsible for raising public awareness. (Fig. 23)

Fig. 22 Awareness of civil society anti-corruption initiatives, by sample

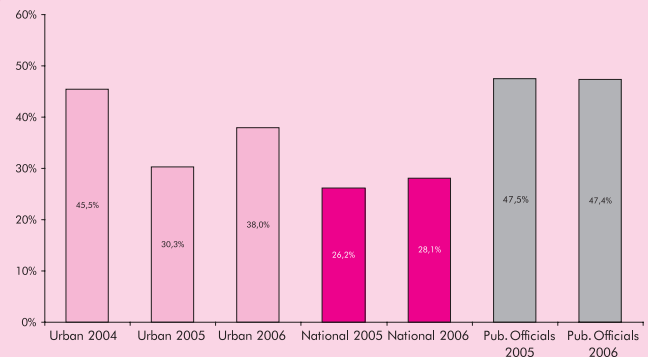
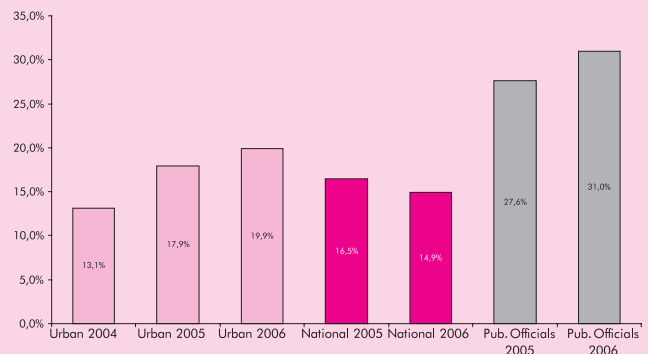


Fig. 23 Awareness of the work of the ACAC, by sample



12. Crime and administration of justice

Reported crime victimization in 2006 is similar to levels found in 2005. In 2006, 3.7% of respondents reported they had been the victim of a crime, compared to 5.2% in 2005, but the difference is within the margin of error. (Fig. 24)

Citizens' evaluation of neighborhood safety in urban areas shows an improvement from 2004 to 2006, of almost 9 points. On a scale of 0-100 (where 0=very unsafe and 100=completely safe) people rated their neighborhood safety at 60.9 points in the national sample and at 59.9 points in the urban sample.

Trust in the judicial system is still low. Citizens show little faith that the justice system will punish criminals. (Fig. 25)

Trust in the judicial system among city residents rose from 2005 to 2006, by more than 4 points, but the score is still low in absolute terms, with only 36,7 points out of 100 points on the trust scale. (Fig. 25)

Nationally, trust in the judiciary shows no significant change from 2005 to 2006. (Fig. 25)

Fig. 24 Crime victimization, by sample

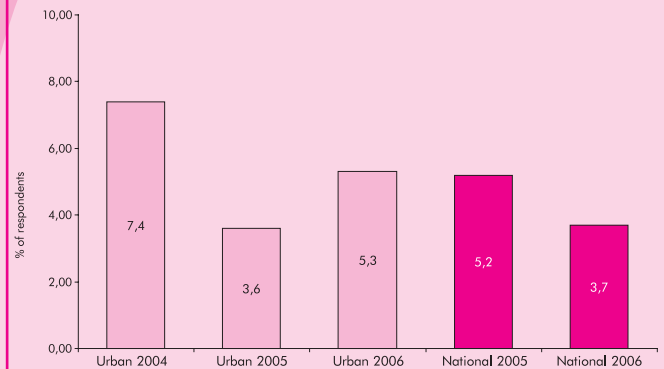
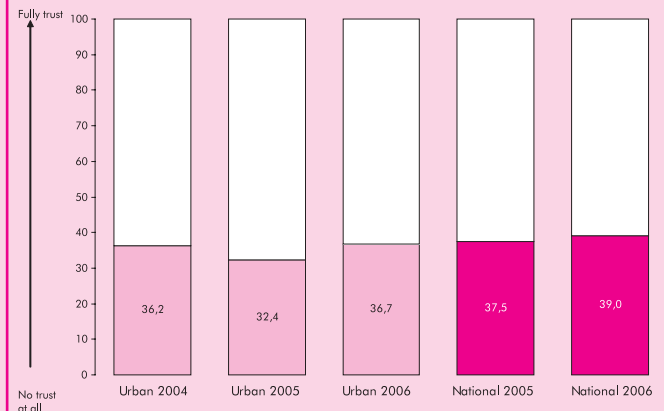


Fig. 25 Trust that judicial system will punish criminals, by sample



13. "Political dimension" of the corruption perception

Sorting the 2006 data by groups of respondents reveals that where one places oneself on a left-right political spectrum, affects one's views of corruption, trust in institutions, perceptions of transparency, etc.

Figures presented illustrate some of these differences⁵.

When we compare attitudes in 2004, under a Socialist Party (SP) government with those in 2006, under a Democratic Party (DP) government, a stark difference emerges. Right-leaning citizens tend to view the current DP government as more helpful in the fight against corruption while left-leaning citizens see the current government as helping very little to fight corruption. The opposite is true when looking at the 2004 situation. Left leaning viewed "their" government as more helpful than the right leaning. (Figs. 26, 27)

Right-leaning respondents think that the President is less honest than do the left-leaning respondents (Fig. 29). The left-leaning do not trust CEC, while the right-leaning trust it (Fig. 28).

The fight against corruption is made more difficult when corruption is politicized.

Fig. 26 Extent to which Government helps to fight corruption, by political orientation (Current government - Urban 2006)

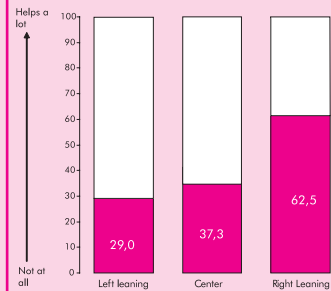


Fig. 27 Extent to which Government helps to fight corruption, by political orientation (Previous government - Urban 2004)

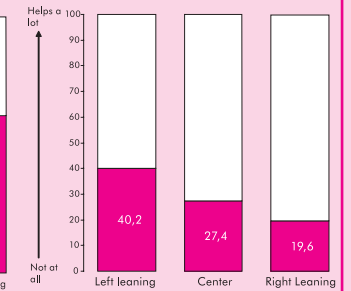


Fig. 28 Trust in the Central Election Commission by political orientation (National 2006)

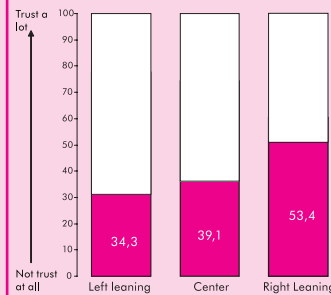
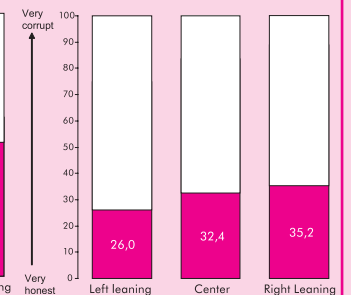


Fig. 29 Perception of corruption for the President, by political orientation (National 2006)



5. Respondents were asked to place their own political orientation on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is far left and 10 is far right. Left leaning is defined as having the values 1-4; center, 5-6; right leaning, 7-10.