

PUBLIC OPINION STUDY – DECEMBER 2012

SERBIAN CITIZENS OPINIONS ON CORRUPTION

UNDP SERBIA

Opinions expressed in this report represent those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Development Programme.

** All terms used in this report in masculine gender comprise similar terms in feminine gender.*

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1. Methodology

Research realised by	Public opinion research agency CeSID and UNDP Serbia
Field work	Period between December 14 and 21, 2012
Type and sample size	Random, representative sample of 597 citizens of Serbia aged over 18
Sample frame	Polling station territory, as the most reliable unit of registry
Household selection	Random sampling with no changes – from the starting point, one in two house addresses within the polling station
Selection of interviewees within households	Random sampling with no changes – selection of interviewees with the method of first birthday in relation to the survey day
Research technique	Face to face, within the household
Research instrument	Questionnaire

The public opinion study realised by CeSID and UNDP Serbia was carried out between December 14 and 21, 2012, on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija.

The study was carried out using a representative sample of 597 citizens of Serbia.

The primary research instrument was a 112 question survey, designed in cooperation with the client.

Interviews were conducted in direct contact, using the “face to face” technique. Interviewers were trained to use and respect two important rules, which would ensure that the sample is representative of the general population: respect of steps and the first birthday rule. Respect of steps ensures complete coverage of the area designated to each interviewer, while the first birthday rule eliminates the possibility of the questionnaire being answered by individuals who were first to open the door. Interviewers made sure that in each household, a person over the age of fifteen and the first to have their birthday following the visit was surveyed. Using this method, we provided for gender, education and age representativeness of interviewees.

2. Sample description

The sample was comprised of the following interviewee categories:

Gender structure: 50% women, 50% men;

Average age: 47;

Educational background: elementary school or less – 13% of interviewees; two or three-years vocational training school – 10% of interviewees; four-year secondary school 44%; higher school or faculty – 27% of interviewees; pupils, students – 6% of interviewees;

Average income per member of household: 21.850 dinars;

Nationality: Serbian 90%, Hungarian 3%, Bosniak 2%, Roma 1%, others 4%.

3. Introduction

The study before you represents part of a joint research project by UNDP Serbia and public opinion research agency CeSID DOO.

This is the sixth research cycle through which UNDP has been studying corruption in Serbia and citizens' attitudes towards this phenomenon.

Like in any other study, the circumstances at the time of the survey shaped the outcome. The sixth study was conducted after a change in the power structure of Serbia, while previous studies were carried out during the rule of a different party coalition. The recent change in power fostered strong hopes and expectations of improvement among Serbian citizens, which were further encouraged by the new coalition as it placed a strong emphasis on combating corruption and organized crime.

Serbian citizens have long believed corruption to be a major problem. Previous CeSID studies singled out corruption as part of the three most pressing problems, and it remains a priority in improving the quality of life in Serbia. Other problems in the top three most pressing issues are poverty and unemployment (economic issues).

The main obstacle facing opponents of corruption has been a lack of trust in the institutions of government responsible for combating corruption and a certain “notoriety” of politicians, who are often seen as being the most corrupt.

The period of time in which the study was conducted had some specific outlines: a) there was a change of power, and some in the former regime were directly linked to corruption; b) electoral promises of ending corruption scandals are still fresh in the memory of impoverished citizens; c) preparations are under way for preliminary trials against some politicians, ex-ministers, representatives of big capital in Serbia, and they are directly linked to the issue of corruption and crime in business; d) it appears that media reports on the issue of corruption have never been more intense, etc.

These are just some of the issues that an average citizen of Serbia encounters. Awareness of corruption and its potential damage to the state remains very high; on the other hand, the change in power and the initiative shown in combating corruption offers hope that these efforts will be advanced.

4. Summary

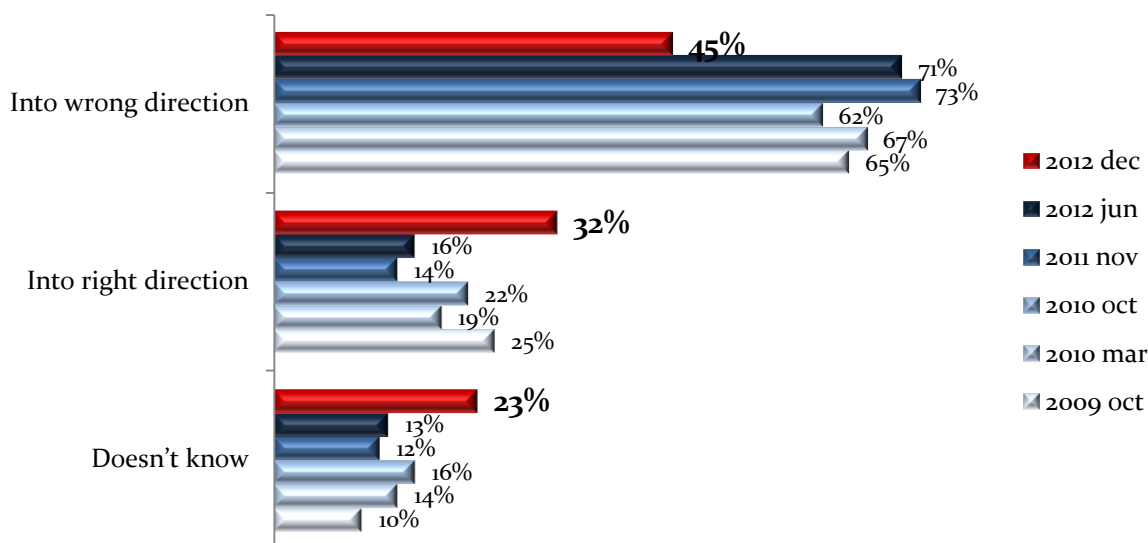
- ✓ In December 2012, we registered the most favourable findings related to the frequency of corruption over the last three years;
- ✓ Currently, as much as 15% of those questioned believe corruption to be the biggest problem in Serbia. This is the only non-economic problem which saw an increase in awareness over the last six months;
- ✓ Along with an increase of those who regard the problem as significant, there is an increased percentage of those who believe the State to be taking the issue seriously;
- ✓ The citizens of Serbia garner high hopes that the government will deal with the problem of corruption. An astounding 41% of interviewees believe that corruption levels will decrease in the coming year. This is the most optimistic finding since studies began;
- ✓ The new coalition regards the battle against corruption as its top priority, raising awareness of the issue to a new high. The increase in awareness is backed up by a decline in frequency over the past three months;
- ✓ Over the past three months, 8% of those questioned experienced direct contact with corruption, while one in five (20%) experienced it indirectly (through family, friends or neighbours). The percentage of those directly experiencing corruption fell by 6%, while those experiencing it indirectly fell by an entire 15%, compared to previous survey results;
- ✓ Doctors and policemen were singled out as being most prone to corruption by participants who gave bribes over the last three months. While doctors continue to top the charts among corrupt professions, it is important to note that the percentage of those who have directly experienced corruption in the healthcare system has decreased considerably in comparison to the previous study;
- ✓ Citizens openly admit that most of the time, they are the ones offering bribes in order to solve problems or accomplish goals. Cases in which bribes were directly demanded of citizens can be regarded as an exemption to the rule, since they occurred rarely over the past three months;

- ✓ Among those who decided or were forced to give a bribe, the average reported amount was **168 €**. This is somewhat higher than the average reported in the previous six months, but similar to the levels seen in March 2010;
- ✓ Interviewees have shown a certain degree of understanding when issuing small gifts to administrative or technical staff (above all, nurses and technicians). They do not think that these practices should be prevented, forbidden or branded as a form of corruption;
- ✓ There is a mild decrease in observed levels of corruption in all institutions covered by this study, with the exception of local government. In contrast with previous studies, the greatest improvement is the growing opinion that legislative and executive powers are capable of addressing the problem (President, Parliament and Government);
- ✓ Political parties continue to be seen as most corrupt in Serbian society. This has been a reoccurring finding in previous studies;
- ✓ The Anti-Corruption Agency is increasingly recognisable with each passing cycle. An entire 77% of Serbian citizens are currently familiar with its work. This is the best registered result since the Agency's creation;
- ✓ Along with increased awareness of the Agency, there are a growing number of respondents who believe in its ability to fight corruption and hope that it will continue doing so;

5. Socio-economic situation – expectations of Serbian citizens

Accounting for the last five cycles, recent changes in the power structure have added to improving the disposition of Serbian citizens. Pessimism among interviewees peaked at the end of 2011, leading to record numbers of those (73%) who believed that Serbia is going in the wrong direction – Chart 1.

Chart 1: – Generally speaking, do you think things in Serbia are going in the right or wrong direction?



The newest study saw an end to pessimism and a sudden rise of optimism, which could be interpreted as a result of the change in power and high expectations placed on the new coalition.

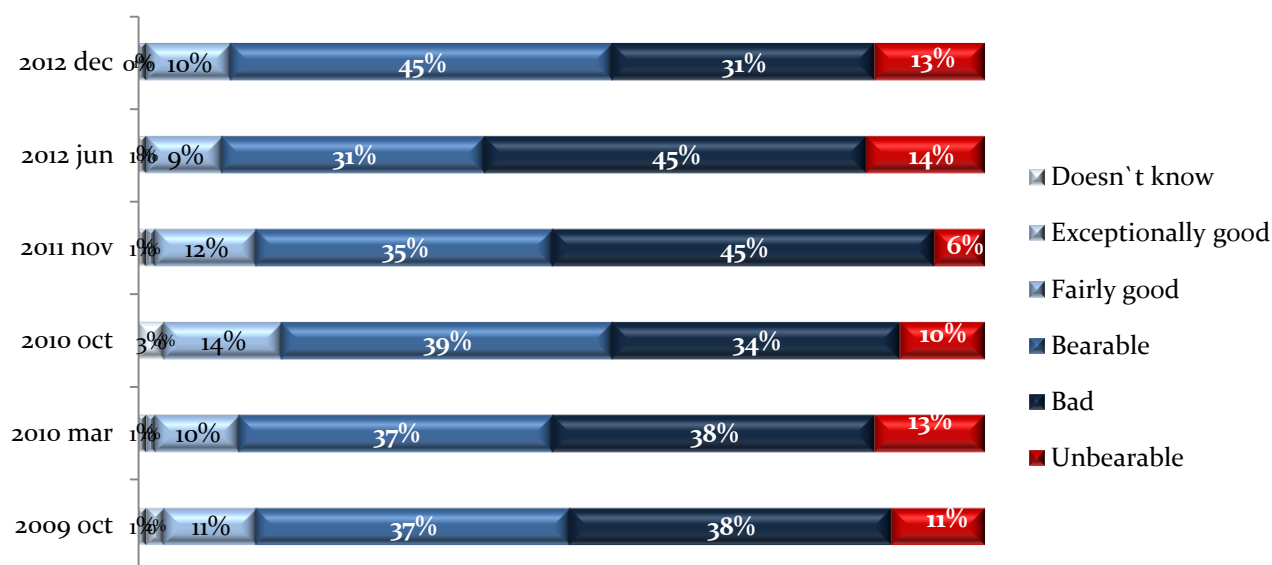
Those who believe the future of Serbia to be pessimistic has fallen to slightly less than half of interviewees (45%). There was also a rise in the number of optimists, now accounting for almost one in three interviewees.

A growing number of respondents remain cautious or indecisive, preferring to observe concrete results in the actions of the new coalition. This number rose from last year's 13% to a total of 23% in this study.

The growth of optimism is not directly linked to an improvement in the quality of life, considering the financial conditions in surveyed households.

Those who still say their living conditions are “unbearable” comprise 13%, while the only improvement was noted in those who believe their financial situation is bearable (from 31% to 45%) – Chart 2.

Chart 2: – How would you evaluate your current financial situation?



Interviewees who say they live badly have decreased in relation to those who believe they live at a bearable level. The number of citizens who believe their life is hinging on bearable or lower, remains extremely high and stands at around 90% of the interviewees.

The optimism of Serbian citizens is based exclusively on expectations for the future, while the real financial situation remains grim. Interviewees believe that 2012 brought yet another blow to their budget and **44% of them claimed that there was a deterioration of the financial situation in their households, while only one in 20 interviewees said their financial situation improved.**

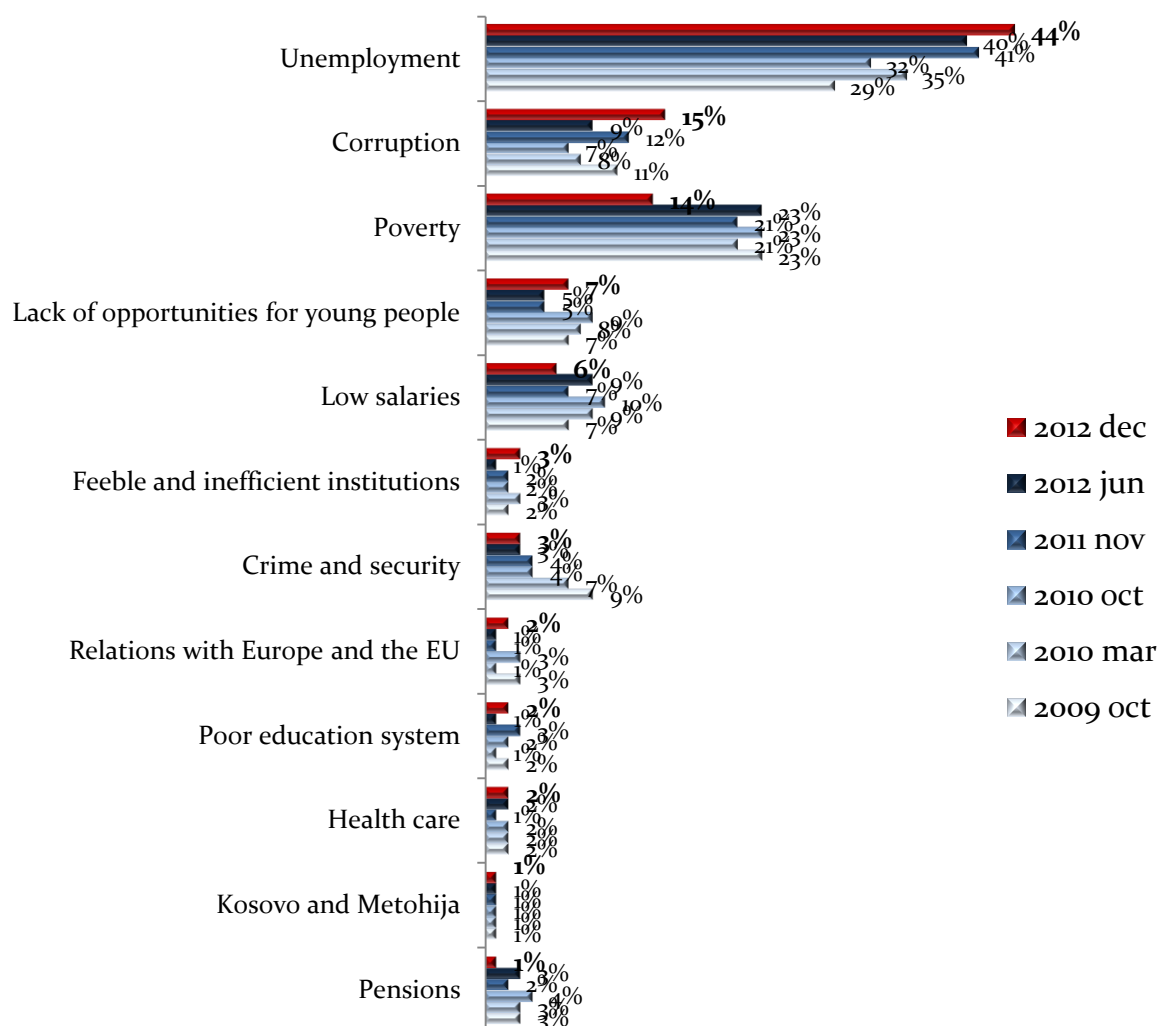
Twenty percent of interviewees expect 2013 to bring improvement to their financial situation, which is, at the same time, an important reason for increased optimism.

6. Major problems before Serbian citizens

The poor financial situation we analysed in the previous section has an influence on the ranking of problems faced by Serbian citizens – Chart 3.

Problems relating to private and state financial situations remain in the top three.

Chart 3: Key problems before the citizens of Serbia (comparative overview)



The biggest problem in Serbia, as reported by 44% of interviewees, continues to be unemployment. The amount of respondents who believe poverty to be the chief issue decreased significantly (from 23% to 14%). Those who believe low income to be a major problem also fell from 9% to 6%.

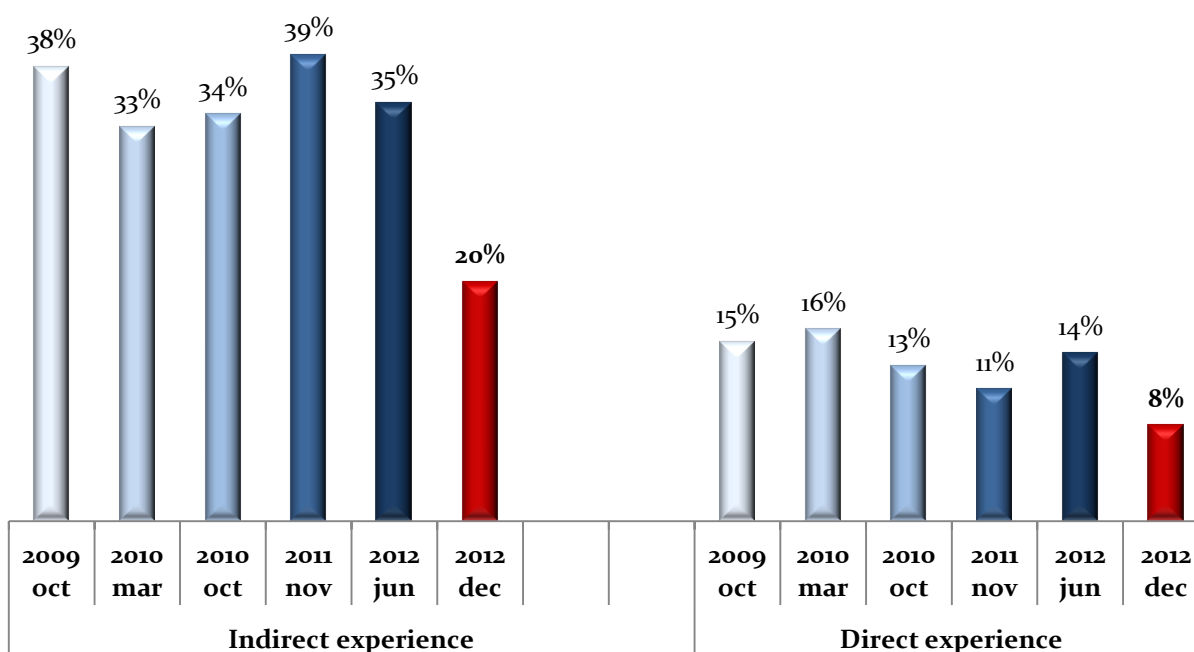
Corruption is the only issue not linked to the economy which saw an increase in importance. The percentage of citizens who recognize corruption as a major issue was never as high as it is now.

It is estimated that the interviewees who determined corruption to be the biggest problem, did this as a result of the recent circumstances. High profile arrests related to corruption led to greater media attention and focused citizens' attention on the issue.

7. Incidence of corruption

In December 2012 we have recorded the most progressive results in the frequency of corruption over the last three years.

Chart 4: Direct and indirect experience with corruption (comparative overview)



The percentage of those who had direct experiences with corruption decreased by 6%, while the number of those who are indirectly familiar with cases of corruption fell by a total of 15%.

The decrease in the frequency of corruption was accompanied by a growth in its importance - Chart 4.

In the past three months, 8% of interviewees had direct contact with corruption, while only one in five (20%) was indirectly familiar with corruption cases (via relatives, close friends, neighbours).

It remains to be seen whether this is a sign of the successful implementation of anticorruption measures, or simply the mark of a transitional period and raised expectations in relevant institutions.

As much as 8% of Serbian citizens have had direct contact with corruption. Although this is significantly less than in previous cycles, it continues to represent a high amount of exposure. The current trend of reduced exposure to corruption noted in the last three months will have a real and lasting impact only if we can confirm that it is not just a temporary reflection of observed changes, i.e. an isolated case due to a change in power and without a real basis in society.

Should the trend continue into the next research cycle, the value of these results will be confirmed.

Who is most prone to corruption?

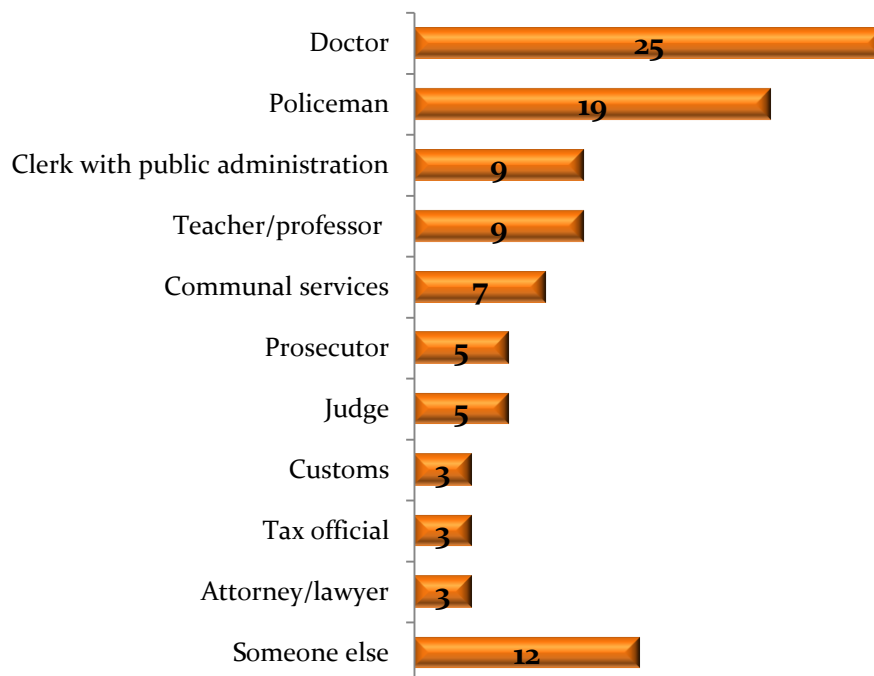
The findings on the incidence of corruption by sectors are very similar to those of previous years. Citizens believe that corruption occurs most often in health care, judiciary and police. Politicians and political parties are outside of all categories.

The results are similar when interviewees who said they had direct (or indirect) contact with corruption are asked the following question: *who are the people you gave a bribe to in the previous three months?*

Only 45 interviewees said they gave bribes in the previous three months, so the listed numbers can be misleading when determining the range of corruption in certain professions.

There is an obvious pattern that follows previous research cycles, showing that bribes are most often given to doctors (25%), police (19%), public administration and teachers/professors (9%).

Chart 5.1: In the previous three months we gave bribes to...
(*percentage of corruption cases in the past three months)

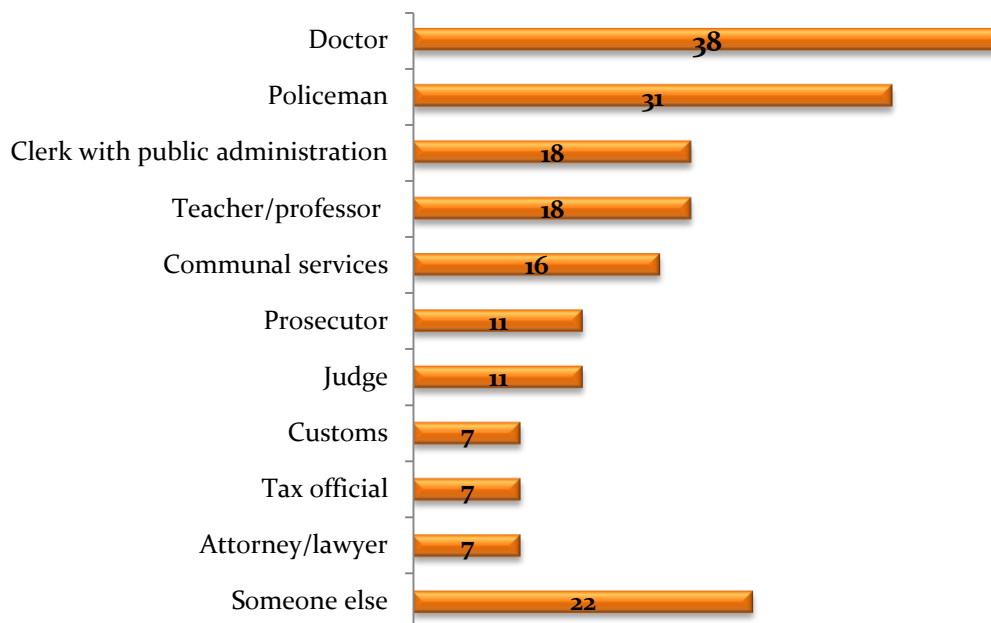


Other professions were mentioned as an exception to the rule and in very small numbers, 12% of the interviewees mentioned: nurses (in two cases), midwife, school headmaster and clerk with the cadastre (one case); one interviewee would not describe the person.

We can also analyze the results by the number of times respondents mentioned a certain profession, given multiple answers. The results are similar, although the percentages are slightly higher. - chart 5.2.¹

¹ Respondent could choose more than one answer in this question, which is why the sum is over 100%

Chart 5.2: In the previous three months we gave bribes to...
(* percentage of respondents who paid a bribe - the respondent could give more than one answer)



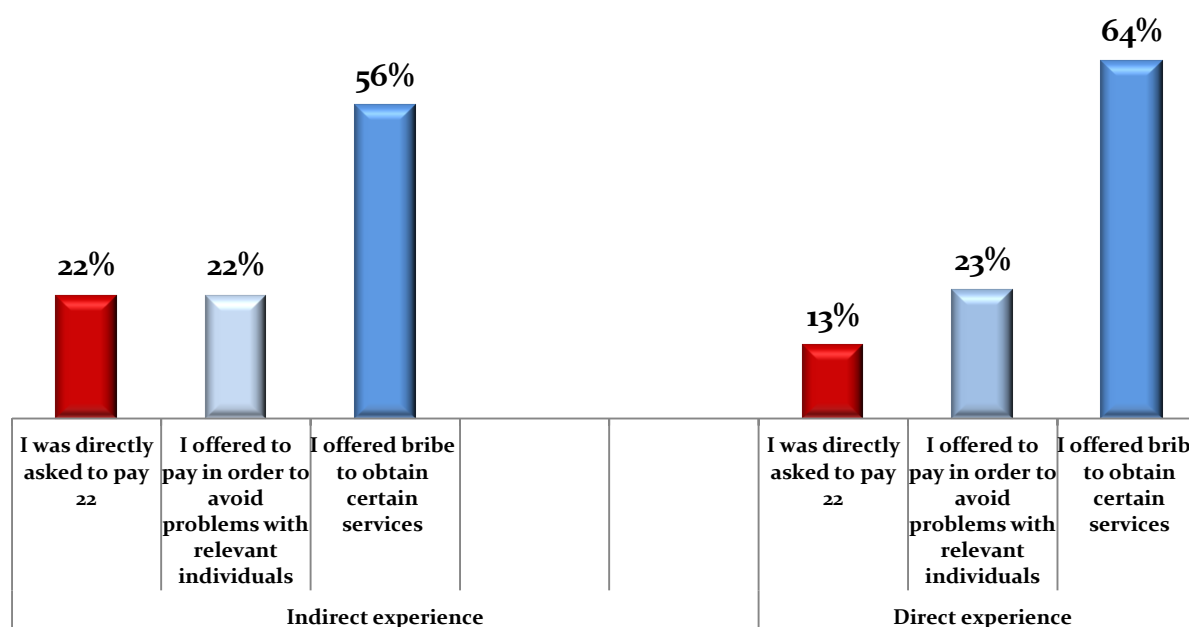
In cases of corruption it is important to identify the party which initiated the bribe.

It became clear that citizens (interviewees) most often initiate a bribe and that the cases where a bribe was directly or indirectly demanded were significantly less frequent – Chart 6.

Further questioning in reports of direct experiences with corruption revealed that 64% offered a bribe in exchange for a service; 23% to avoid a problem and 13% were solicited for a bribe.

The percentage of those who were solicited for bribes is somewhat higher in cases of indirect experience with corruption than with direct experience. However, one should note the objectivity of the indirectly obtained result, as well as the likelihood that someone really wants to tell the truth about the reason for becoming engaged in corruption.

Chart 6: What was the reason for giving bribe?



These findings present a significant improvement over the previous cycle, in which one in three respondents said that a bribe was directly solicited.

Caution seems to be prevailing in professions prone to corruption, as demands for a bribe are becoming rare.

Corruption cannot occur without the participation of both sides and it is becoming increasingly clear that it occurs due to the behaviour of the citizens. With little danger of being adequately punished or processed, the citizens have become used to solving their problems outside of the legal norms.

*It is worth noting that the average amount of a bribe was **168 €** at the end of 2012, which is a lot more than in the previous, June 2012 cycle, when it stood at **103 €**.²*

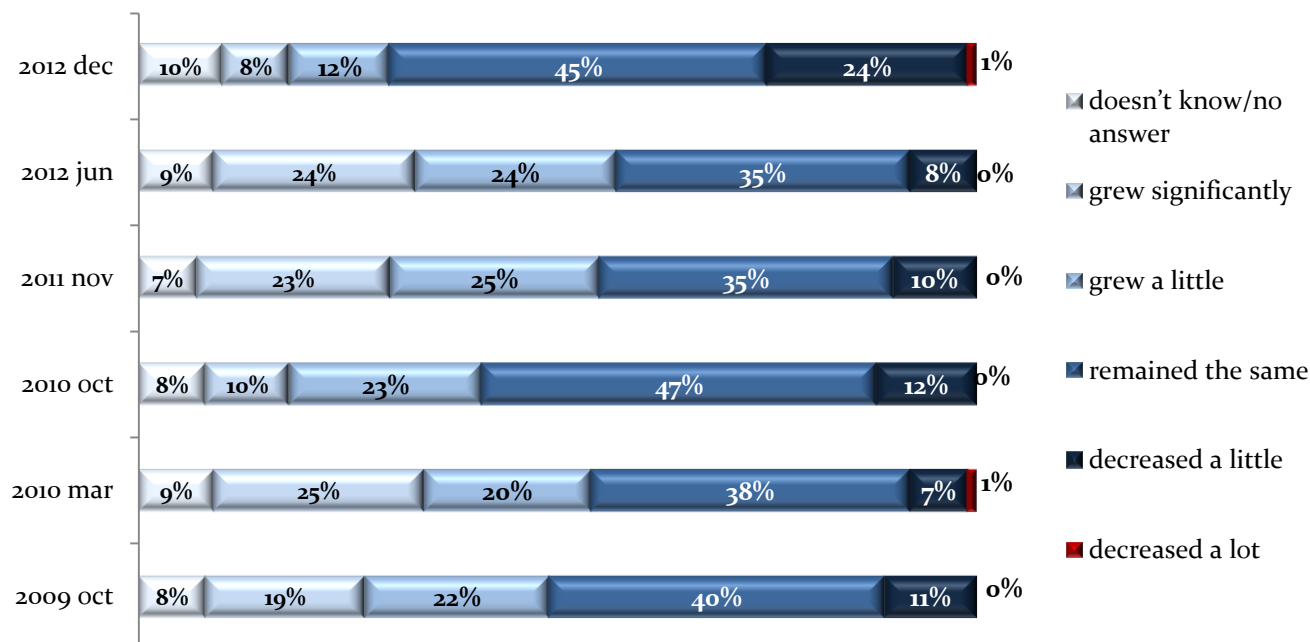
Bribes were most often given by those who could afford to do so without threatening their financial situation (60%); for one in five, the sum represented a significant loss of finances.

² The average bribe Serbian citizens were giving at the end of 2012 (168 EUR) is approximately equal to the amount from October 2009, and equal to the amount from March 2010, i.e. it returned to the level registered in first studies of corruption conducted by UNDP in Serbia.

8. Perception and understanding of corruption

The view of corruption as a serious problem is on the rise among Serbian citizens, equally, a growing number believe that the state is committed to solving this issue.

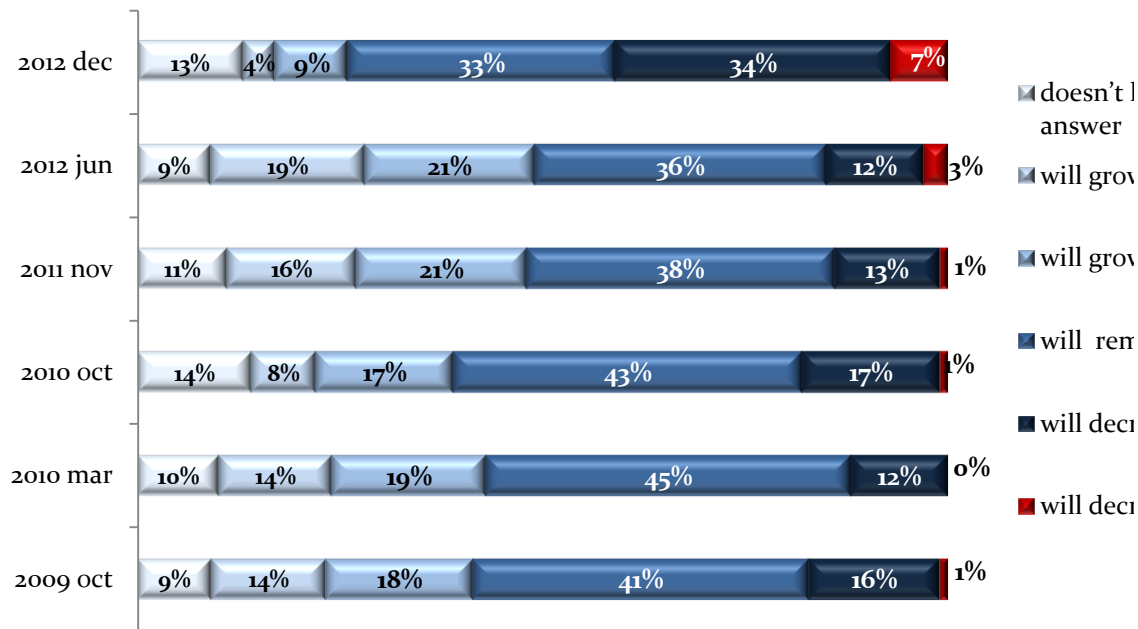
Chart 7: Level of corruption in the previous year



Interviewees see a certain improvement in levels of corruption over the past 12 months; one in four says that it declined – Chart 7.

This finding presents another example of the recent actions initiated by relevant ministries and the First Deputy Prime Minister, influencing the perception of corruption among the public.

Chart 8: Level of corruption in next 12 months – expectations



The number of interviewees who see decreasing levels of corruption is three times higher than six months ago, while a significantly smaller number say that corruption is on the rise.

Previous studies indicated that corruption became a deep rooted trend, bound to repeat itself from year to year. Once established, trends are very hard to reverse in a short amount of time, and this explains the growing number of interviewees who believe that there were no changes in the level of corruption. The growth of this group is linked to the drop in respondents who, until recently, believed corruption was rising. In order to make it possible to speak about decreased levels of corruption it is important for this reversal to continue in the coming studies. The results in Chart 8 show that this hopeful view is shared among the citizens of Serbia.

A total of 41% of citizens³ believe that the level of corruption will decrease in the following year. This is the first study to record such an optimistic finding and it indicates the high expectations of Serbian citizens in the efforts of the new coalition.

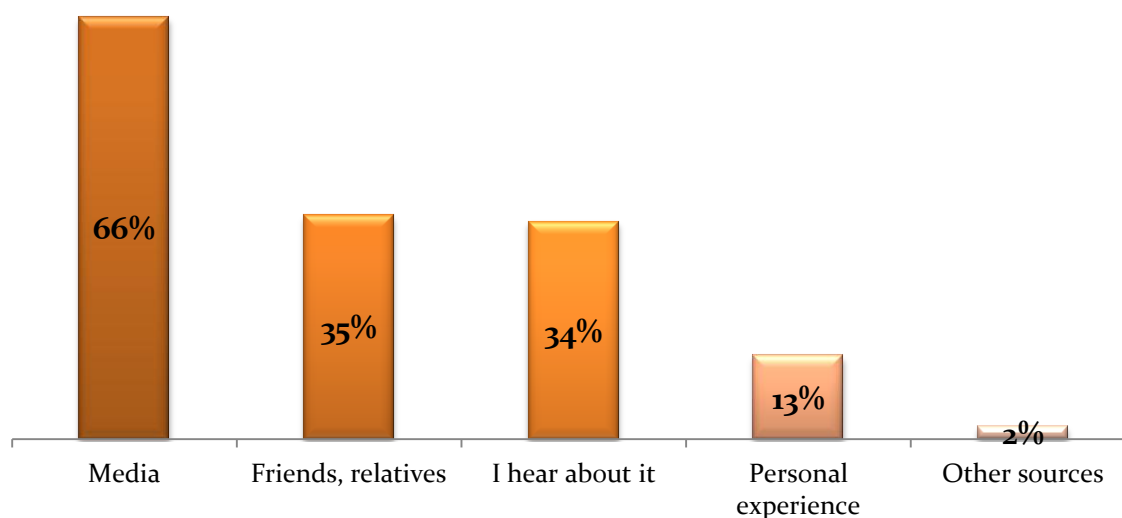
A large number of respondents believe corruption to have a noticeable effect on political circumstances in the country (86% of interviewees); effects on the business environment are believed to be high (79% of interviewees), while its effects on personal and private life is felt by 56% of interviewees.

³ The sum of those who believe that the level of corruption will decrease either a little or a lot

The effects of corruption on these fields have risen in comparison to last year, especially in the political and business environments. The subject of corruption saw a revival in the media, which sought to expose its consequences in as many details as possible to ordinary people.

Two thirds of all Serbian citizens rely on the media as their primary source of information on corruption. Other sources of information on corruption are a bit less present; personal experience accounts for 13% of interviewees, while 35% get information from people close to them⁴.

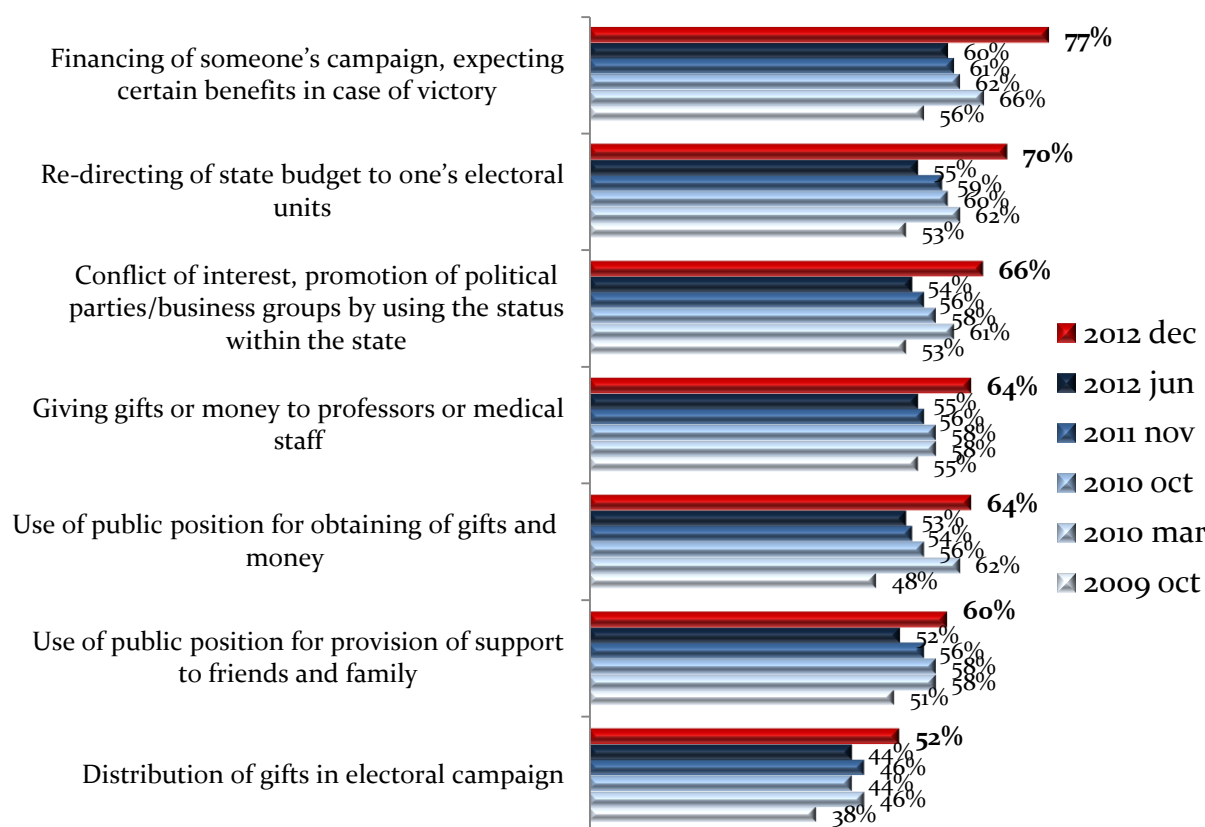
Chart 9: Sources of information on corruption



Over the past several years, Serbian citizens have become well informed about corruption, as well as its mechanisms and consequences. It should not come as a surprise that a growing number of interviewees report activities from Chart 10 as extremely corrupt.

⁴ It was possible to reply to this question in several ways, which is why the total is over 100%

Chart 10: Are the following activities, and to what extent, examples of corruption?



Over half of all interviewees describe each and every activity on the list as an example of medium or high level corruption.

Citizens are becoming increasingly aware of corruption in these forms, even in the previously acceptable distribution of gifts during an electoral campaign.

The new importance of the fight against corruption is further evidenced by the statements offered in Table 1.

Currently, 60% of citizens believe that there is no will for real and efficient uprooting of corruption; the reason for this, according to them, is the lack of cooperation and coordination between specific responsible institutions (66% of interviewees).

Institutions that should lead the battle against corruption are the Agency, judiciary and police (86%), and the strategic element in the battle should be harsh sanctions for perpetrators (again, 86% of interviewees).

Table 1: How much do you agree with the following statements?

Corruption in general	Doesn't know/no answer	I agree	I partially agree	I partially disagree	I disagree
There's no will in Serbia for real and efficient uprooting of corruption	6%	40%	20%	15%	19%
Corruption can be uprooted only by severe punishment of perpetrators	3%	71%	15%	5%	6%
Corruption can be uprooted only by removal of its causes	3%	66%	18%	8%	5%
Every institution should equally be responsible for prevention of and battle against corruption among its ranks	4%	71%	16%	6%	3%
Specialised institutions (police, judiciary, Agency) should be the leaders in battle against corruption	4%	68%	18%	6%	4%
There is no cooperation and coordination between specific institutions in the battle against corruption	17%	46%	22%	9%	6%

Most citizens believe that corruption should be prevented by addressing the causes (84% of interviewees), and that each institution which can potentially become corrupt should be responsible for developing anti-corruption mechanisms and efforts (87% of interviewees).

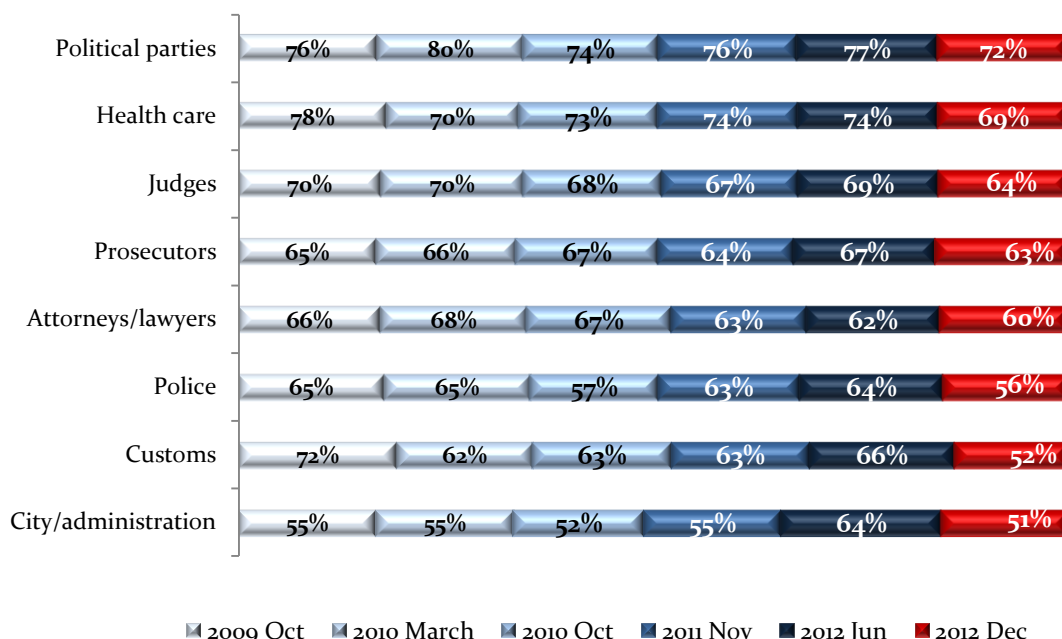
9. Perception of corruption in different sectors

The attitude of citizens toward corrupt professions/fields does not easily change. Political parties represent the highest percentage of observed corruption – Chart 11.

Political parties take a clear lead in perceived levels of corruption; a total of 72% believe these institutions are either corrupt or very corrupt.

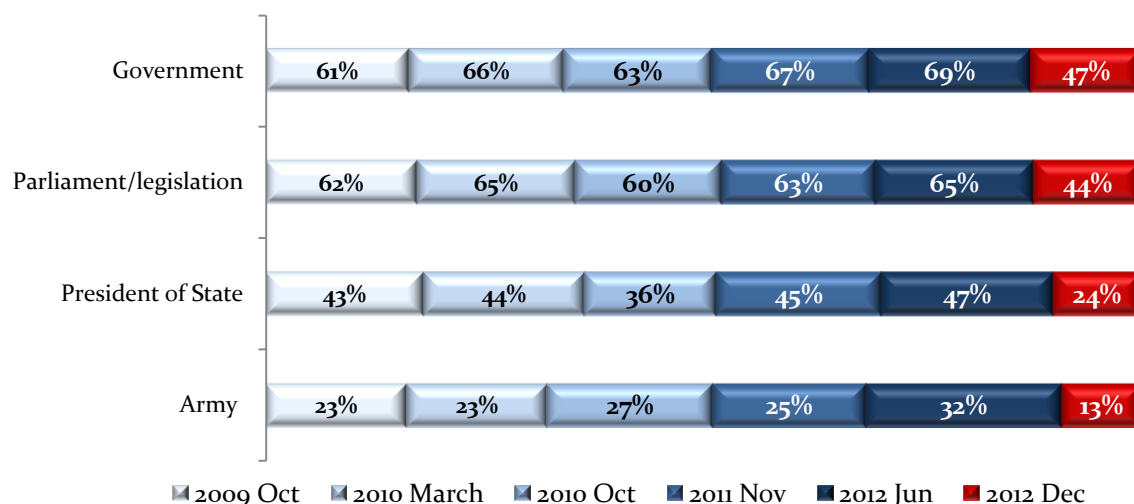
Apart from political parties, four more institutions are described by over 60% as being corrupt: *judiciary 64%*, *prosecutors 62%*, *lawyers 60%* and *health care with 69%*.

Chart 11.1: Institutions which are seen as corrupt by over 50%



The number of direct and indirect contact with corruption has dropped, contributing to a decrease of corruption in the aforementioned sectors. There was even a small drop of perceived corruption in the five outlined sectors/institutions.

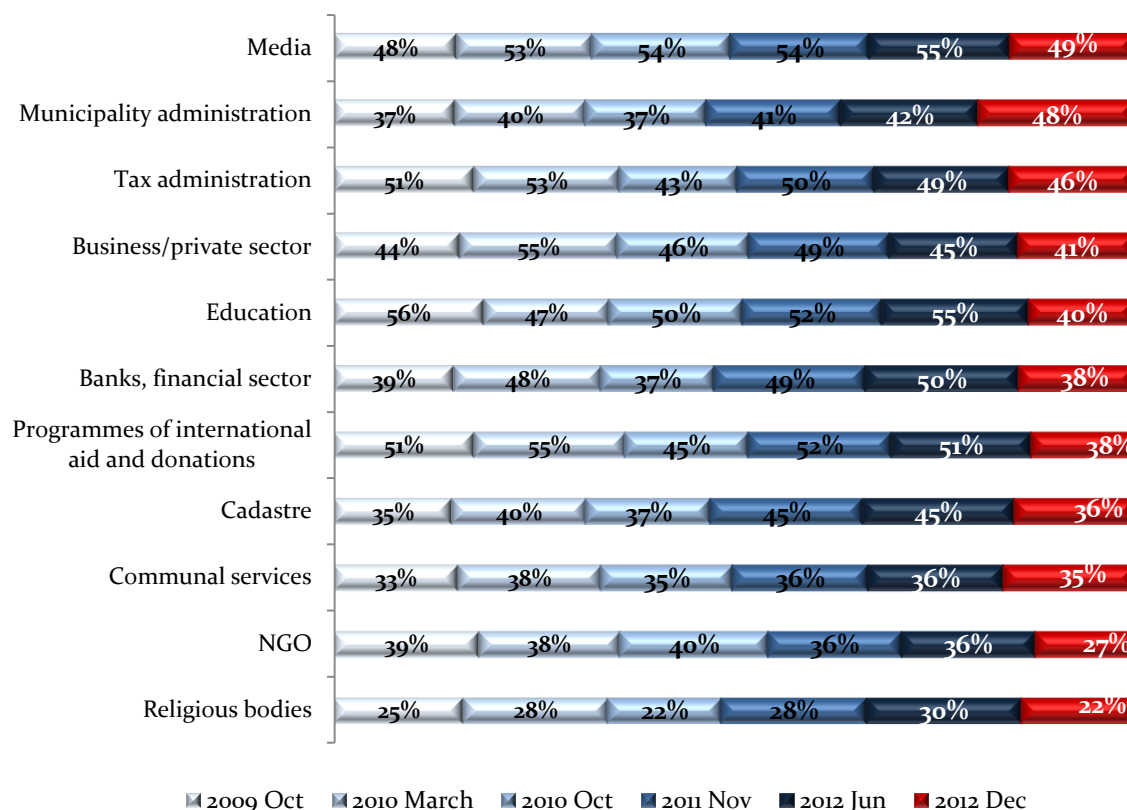
Chart 11.2: Institutions with significantly reduced levels of perceived corruption



Institutions experiencing the highest drop in perceived levels of corruption are the President, Government and Parliament; 23% (for the President), 13% (for the Government) and 21% (for the Parliament). It should be noted that these institutions, apart from high levels of perceived corruption, have been losing trust with the citizens over the past several years.

This finding, as well as findings from other studies conducted by CeSID, show that there is a gradual revival of trust in the legislative and executive powers in Serbia.

Chart 11.3: Perception of corruption – other institutions



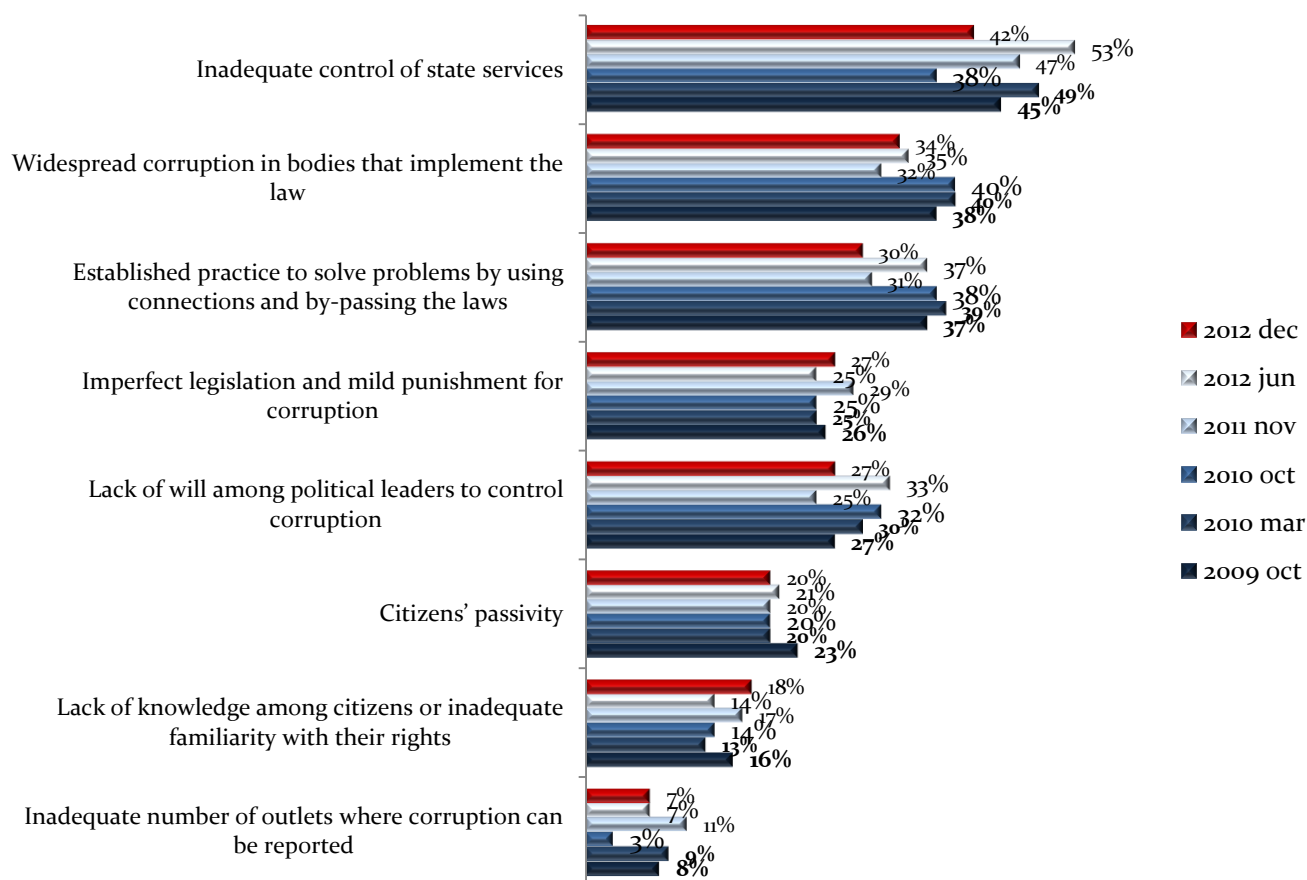
A decrease in perceived levels of corruption was noted in all sectors, with the exception of local government, (municipal authorities) who rose to being thought of as corrupt by almost half of all interviewees.

10. Fight against corruption

Citizens link the growth of corruption most frequently to inadequate control of state activities and services, as well as widespread corruption in enforcement bodies– Chart 12.

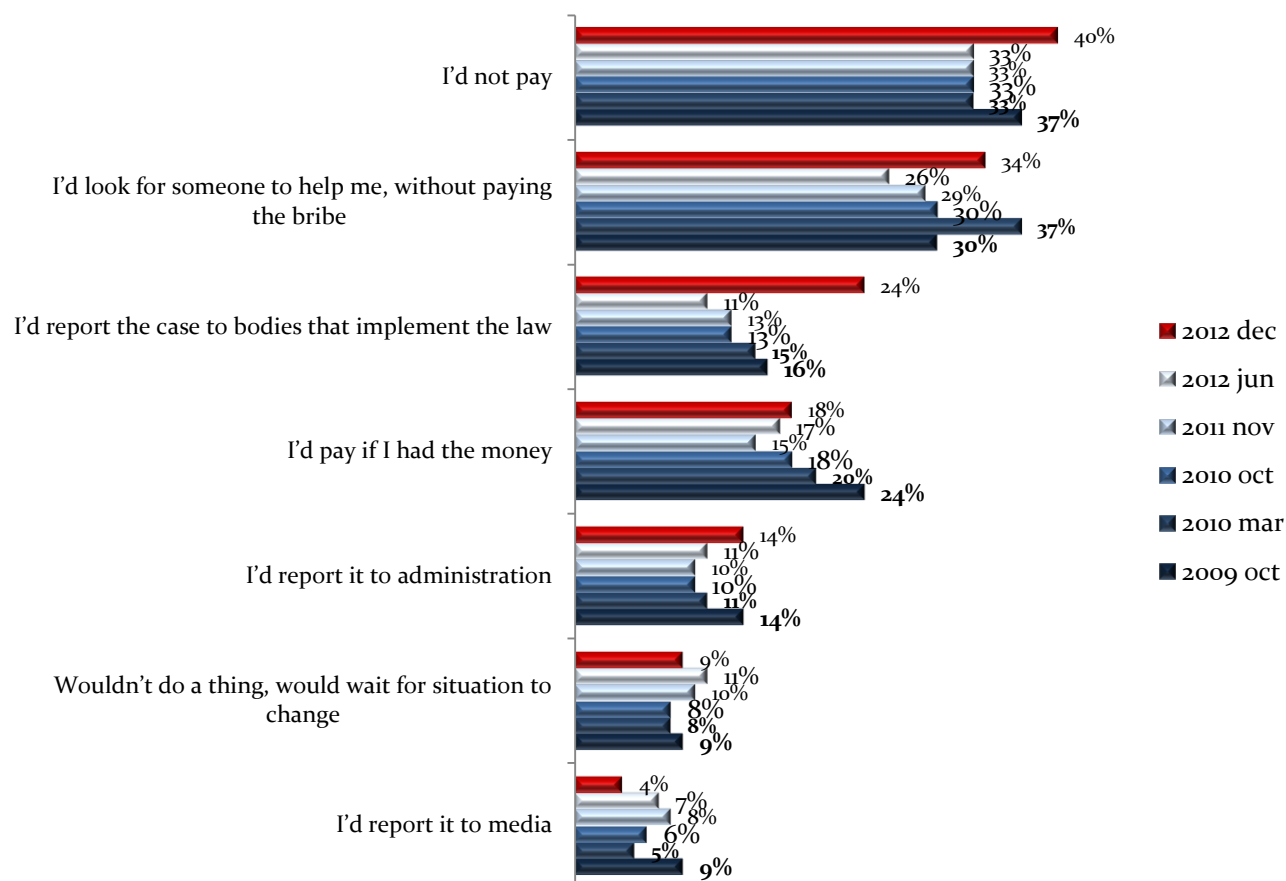
An additional problem is the allure of corruption to overcome obstacles or solve problems; 30% report the established practice as a problem. In general, a large number of factors that prevent a more qualitative and efficient battle against corruption remain linked to the citizens and their behaviour. This means that citizens are either passive observers of the corruption that goes on around them, or they are simply not familiar with their rights; the fact remains that part of the accountability in the battle against corruption is their responsibility.

Chart 12: Factors that impede battle against corruption in Serbia



In efforts to involve citizens more actively in the battle against corruption, we find that the results presented in Chart 13 are encouraging. Although there are still a large number of interviewees who are willing to comply with demands for a bribe by a state or private clerk (18%), there are also two fifths who would not do so. One in four interviewees would turn to law enforcement for help, and another 14% of them expressed a desire to report corrupt clerks to the administration, i.e. his/her employer.

Chart 13: If you were directly asked by a state/private employee for a bribe, what would you do?

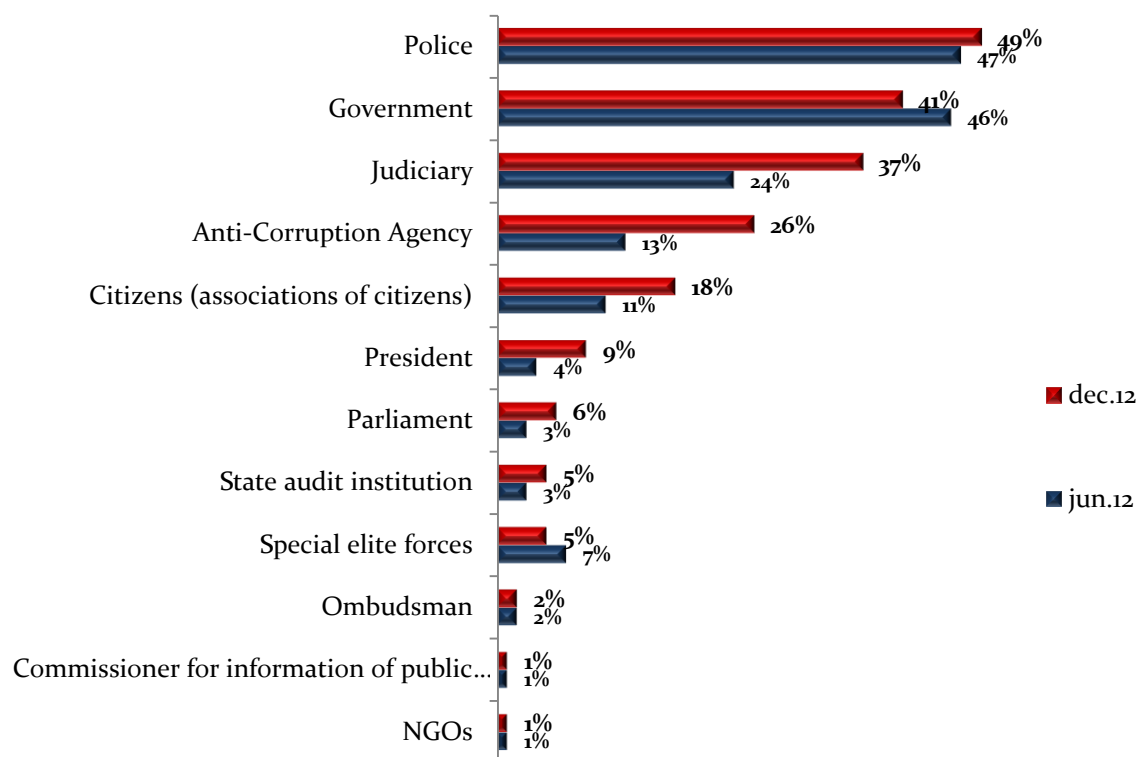


Awareness of citizens who are used to solving their problems through bribing (which is additionally confirmed by previous examples of corruption in all social spheres) remains difficult to change; this is why even the small growth of those that are ready to report corruption represents a positive development.

This is also an indicator that trust in those responsible for the fight against corruption is on the rise, as well as trust in their ability to oppose corruption.

What are the institutions that citizens see as opposing and fighting corruption?

Chart 14: Stakeholders in the anticorruption efforts



The fight against corruption should be headed by the police and executive power, i.e. Government of the Republic of Serbia. The two institutions have been defined in the previous cycle as key anticorruption stakeholders, but the role of Government in this task is smaller than in the previous six month period.

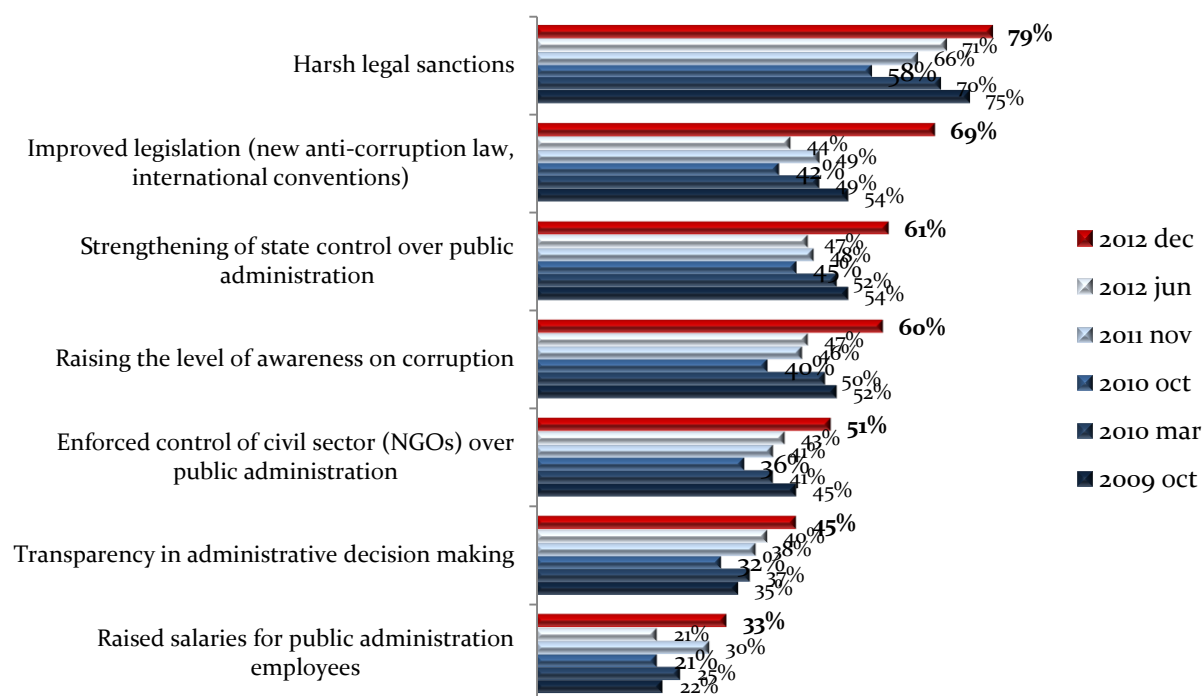
There are two institutions that obtained significantly higher levels of trust from citizens, in comparison to the last research cycle, as leading the fight against corruption – the Anti-Corruption Agency (rise from 13% to 26%) and the judiciary (from 24% to 37%).

There were a growing number of those who believe that citizens should increasingly engage in the fight against corruption, as well as those who believe that the President (although without concrete authority in the area) is quite adequate for the role.

Relevant institutions should focus on improvement of legislation (69%) and harsher legal sanctions (79%) – Chart 15.

60% of interviewees singled out the growth of citizens' awareness as a useful method in fighting corruption; the same number believe that improved control of public administration can be of use in decreasing the levels of corruption.

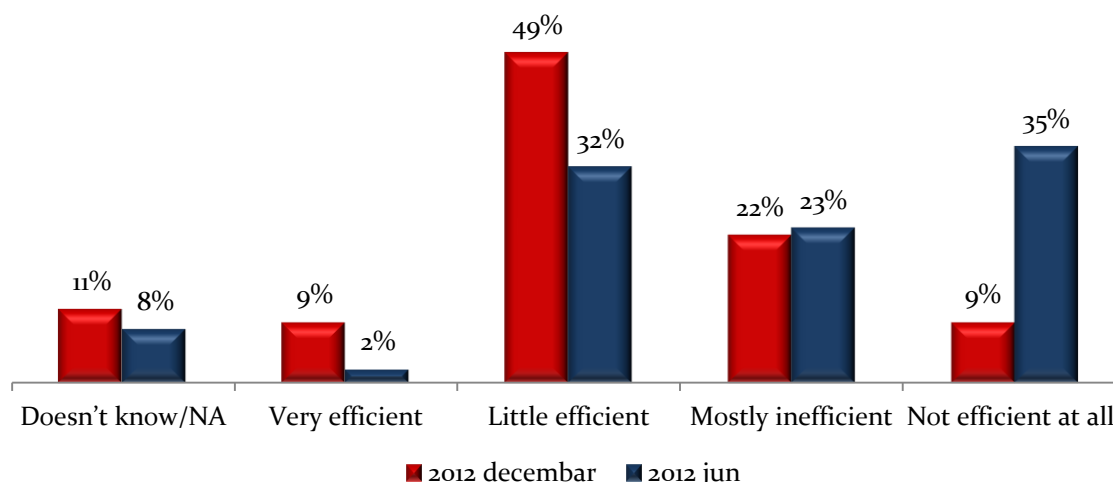
Chart 15: Measures for fighting corruption



Less popular measures are: *raised salaries for public administration employees* (33%, although this measure is growing in comparison to the previous cycle) and *improved transparency in administrative decision-making* (45% of interviewees).

The fact that more than half of the citizens believe the role of the non-governmental sector should be enhanced deserves praise; citizens are also of the belief that the civil sector should be given a broader role in oversight of the public administration (51% of interviewees).

Chart 16: Efficiency of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in fighting corruption



The new political coalition is integral in the changes perceived in the fight against corruption – Chart 16.

The results show that the percentage of citizens who see improvements in efficiency by the current government, in relation to previous ones, is significantly higher. At this moment, 58% of interviewees believe that the government is (slightly or significantly) efficient in the battle against corruption, which is 25% more than in the previous cycle!

The number of those who believe that the government is not efficient at all fell from 35% to 9% of interviewees, in comparison to June 2012.

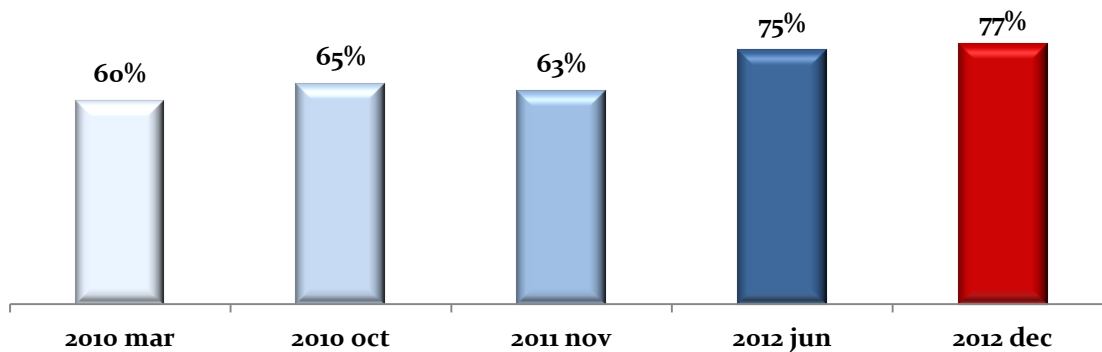
In order to keep or improve positive trends, the Government must show even stronger decisiveness in opposing corruption (34% of interviewees), as well as to enable safe reporting of corruption cases (10% of interviewees).

11. Awareness of the Anti-Corruption Agency and its work

Some 26% of citizens expect the Agency to lead anti-corruption efforts in Serbia. The Agency was created three years ago and it has yet to fully meet the expectations of an expert public. At this moment, citizens and the expert public expect much from the results of the control of financing of political parties, which has been regarded as one of the driving forces of corruption in Serbian society for quite a while.

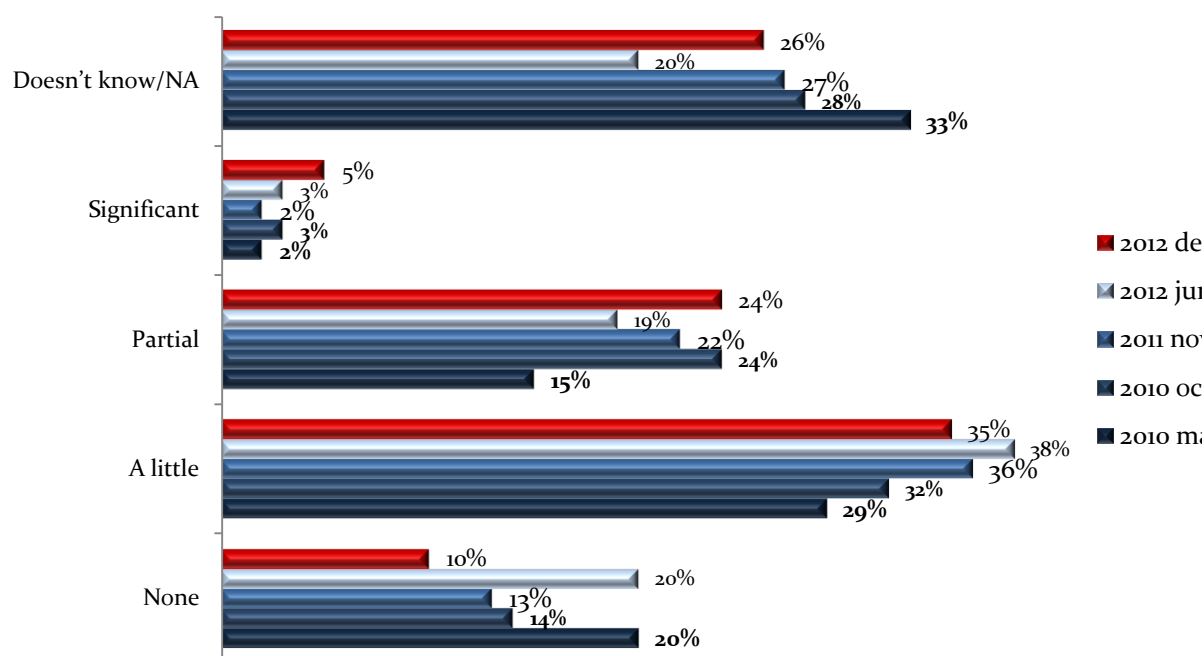
Recognisability of the Anti-Corruption Agency is growing on an annual basis (Chart 17) currently a total of 77% of interviewees say they are familiar with its work.

Chart 17: Recognisability of Anti-Corruption Agency



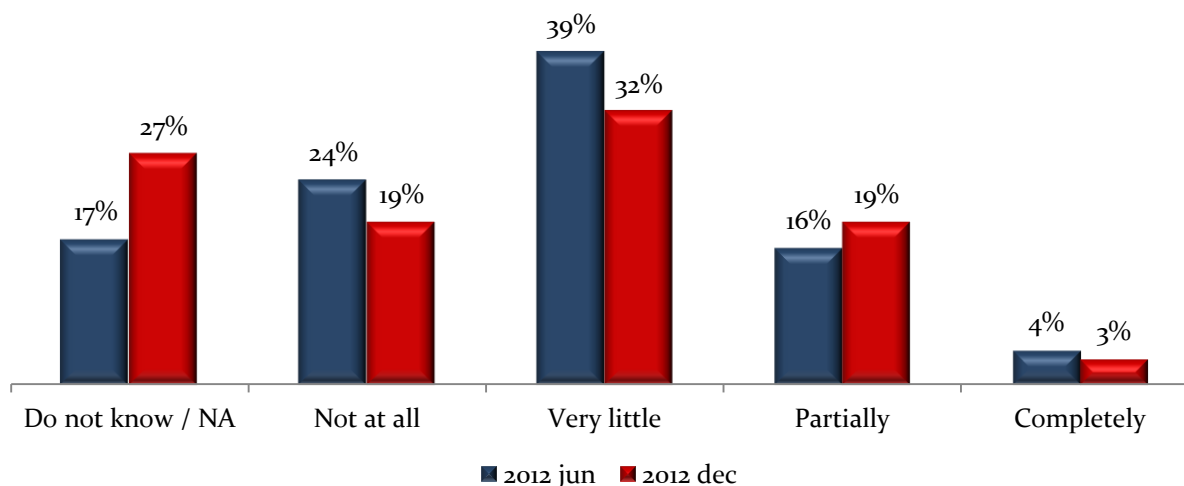
In the period from its establishment until today, there were a growing number of citizens who believed that the Agency leads anti-corruption efforts in Serbia – Chart 18.

Chart 18: Agency's contribution to the fight against corruption



By the end of 2012, only one in 10 interviewees believe that the Agency does not contribute to anticorruption efforts at all, which is the best result since its establishment. There was also a slight growth in the categories of those who see the contribution of the Agency as partial or significant.

Chart 19: Is the Agency able to control financing of political parties?



There are still no concrete results in the Agency's efforts to control political party financing, so we don't see any major changes in relation to June 2012 – Chart 19.

The Serbian public continues to delay their evaluation on this issue, which is indicated by the fact that 27% of interviewees did not know, or would not answer this question. This category saw the largest growth in comparison to the June 2012 study.