**OPINION POLL, JULY 2014**

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION IN SERBIA**

*Ninth Research Cycle*

**UNDPSERBIA**

***The opinions presented in this Report are those of its Authors and do not necessarily reflect
positions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).***

***All words/terms used in this report in the masculine gender are to be understood as including persons of both male and female gender they refer to.***

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# 1. Methodological notes

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| **Survey carried out by** | **CeSIDOpinion Polling Agency and UNDP Serbia** |
| **Fieldwork** | **Between 30 June and 7 July 2014** |
| **Sample type and size** | **Random, representative sample of 600 adult citizens of Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohia)**  |
| **Sample frame** | **Polling station catchment areas as the most reliable registry units** |
| **Selection of households** | **Random sampling without replacement – each second street address from starting point for each polling station catchment area** |
| **Selection of respondents by household** | **Random sampling without replacement – respondents selected by date of first birthday in relation to survey date** |
| **Survey method** | **Face-to-face at home** |
| **Survey instrument** | **Questionnaire** |

This public opinion survey was carried out by CeSID and UNDP Serbia between 30 June and 7 July 2014 and covered the territory of Serbia excluding Kosovo and Metohia.

The survey involved a representative sample of 600 citizens of Serbia.

The survey instrument used was a 112-item questionnaire developed in collaboration with the client.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face, in direct contact with respondents. During interviewer training, instructors insisted on adherence to two important rules that, in addition to the sample, together have a major impact on the representativeness of the survey – order of steps and the first birthday rule. Adherence to the order of steps ensures that an interviewer can comprehensively cover each survey point, whilst the first birthday rule prevents responses only from members of the public who first answer the door when an interviewer visits. Interviewers were required to interview the member of each household aged 18 or above whose birthday came soonest after the date of the interviewer’s visit. This also ensured the representativeness of respondents by gender, education and age.

# 2. Description of the sample

The following categories of respondents were covered based on the methodology established for the survey:

*Structure of respondents by gender:* 55 percent women, 45 percent men.

*Average respondent age:* 48.

*Structure of respondents by education*: primary school or lower, 13 percent; two- or three-year secondary school, 11 percent; four-year secondary school, 48 percent; college/university, 23 percent; school/university student, five percent.

*Average monthly income per household member* (for households covered by the survey): RSD 18.413.

*Respondent ethnicity:* Serbian, 88 percent; Hungarian, three percent; Bosniak, three percent; Roma, 1 percent; other, five percent.

# 3. Introduction

*This poll is part of a joint research project pursued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and CeSID Opinion Polling Agency.* ***This is the ninth research cycle under this project, which began in October 2009.***

*Up to the arrest of Miroslav Mišković, which took place in December 2012, respondents had exhibited mistrust in most institutions (particularly political ones), and were pessimistic when it came to corruption, efforts to tackle this practice, and its various forms.*

*The arrest of Mišković and the election of the new Government that preceded it (following the May 2014 general election) pushed corruption to the forefront of public opinion.* ***Confidence in institutions rose; efforts to tackle corruptionwere seen as the principal achievement of the Government of the day, and in particular the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and Aleksandar Vučić.***

***However,*** *the preceding research cycle (December 2013) showed that respondents still felt corruption was a major issue, but also that their attention was increasingly turning towards matters of living standards, unemployment, and poverty.* ***Trust in institutions has been stagnating; respondents are increasingly losing patience with efforts to tackle corruption that have to date failed to yield the expected results, at least in the economic sphere.***

*A snap general election was held in the interval between the eighth and ninth research cycles, as were elections for the City of Belgrade authority. These elections greatly changed Serbia’s political landscape. In part because of the perceived success of the efforts to tackle corruption, SNS won absolute power in Serbia. Although the Government was formed very quickly, it had no time to deal with matters outlined in the Prime Minister’s address at the opening of parliament: floods struck Serbia, causing great distress, destruction, and loss of life.*

***Therefore****, when interpreting the findings of this cycle, one should* ***primarily bear in mind these two events:*** *the election and the campaign that preceded it and the flooding and the relief effort underway to tackle the extensive damage left in its wake.*

*The first quarter of 2014 was marked by the election campaign that lasted for 45 days, the statutory minimum. Of greater importance for this survey is the fact that corruption and efforts to address it were a salient point in the campaign, in particular for SNS, the governing party.*

*Economic issues are a priority for the newly-elected Government; opinion polls show these are also at the top of the list for the Serbian public. However, May’s floods, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency, made other topics such as corruption lost in importance. The period during which the survey was carried out was marked by accusationslevelled by some academics against several high-ranking politicians, who were blamed for allegedly plagiarizing their doctoral dissertations; this led to a further decline in trust in the already poorly perceived Serbian education system.*

***This research cycle has shown that*** *confidence in institutions – with the exception of the education system – has remained the same or has increased. Corruption is still an important issue, but no longer tops the list of priorities; respondents still believe that the Government is the key player in efforts to address corruption, and expect that major progress will be made in addressing this matter over the next twelve months.*

# 4. Summary

Findings of this ninth research cycle demonstrate the fact that living standards in Serbia are in constant decline. On the other hand, notwithstanding this perception, the percentage of Serbian citizens who believe the country **is moving in a good direction** has remained the same as in preceding research cycles and stands at **30 percent.**

Poor standards of living greatly affect perceptions of the problems Serbia is facing; most issues on this list are economic in nature. **Unemployment (44 percent) and poverty (16 percent)** are two of Serbia’s key problems. Ranked third, with**11 percent** of all respondents seeing it as the chief problem, is **corruption**.

A slight decline in the perceived importance of corruption (*from 12 to 11 percent*) seen between the two cycles is also a consequence of the fact that respondents have, since 2012, had fewerdirect or indirect experiences with corruption. Over the past three months, **21 percent** of those polled were told about corruption **by their close friends or family members;** on the other hand, **nine percent took part in direct corruption** or were asked for bribes.

**Slightly fewer cases of respondent-initiated corruption** were recorded in this research cycle, a drop from *56 percent to50 percent for indirect experiences, and from 57 to 54 percent* for direct experiences. **On the other hand, the number of instances where citizens were asked for bribes has increased**. The number of respondents with indirect experiences of corruption who have been asked for bribes has increased by as much as **eight percentage points** (*reflecting an increase in the number of such cases from 24 to 32 percent*); amongst the group of respondents who experienced corruption directly, the increase amounts to **two percentage points**.

The ‘usual suspects’ for corruption are **doctors and police officers**. Whilst the number of corruption cases involving doctors has declined from *48 to 35 percent,* such instances involving police officers are now more numerous, having increased from *18 to22 percent*.

Yet another piece of good news is the finding that **the average bribe has nearly halved in relation to late 2013 and now stands at EUR 134;** this is the second lowest average amount recorded since the beginning of this research project.

The election campaign in which corruption, along with the economy, was presented as the key issue in Serbia has led slightly fewer than one-third of all respondents (**31 percent**) to believe that the extent of corruption has over the past 12 months fallen

either slightly (**29 percent**) or very much (**2 percent**). In addition, citizens of Serbia are now more optimistic about whether this problem will be addressed.

Relative to six months previously, **an additional eight percent of those polled believe that corruption will substantially decrease over the coming year if efforts to address it continue at this pace**.

The key means for addressing corruption are strict **legal measures and provisions** (*as reported by 78 percent of those polled*), whilst **inadequate oversight of government services** is seen as the main obstacle to tackling this issue (*as reported by 41 percent of those polled*).

Throughout the three latest cycles the Government of Serbia has consistently been viewed as the chief stakeholder in addressing corruption. Nearly one-half of those polled (**47 percent**) believe that **the Government should place itself at the forefront of efforts to tackle corruption**;this is its best ranking since this research project began.

It is interesting to examine respondents’ perceptions of the respective positionsof the judiciary and the Anti-Corruption Agency in their efforts to address corruption. Courts and the Agency share the same pool of support when it comes to choosing the leader in this process; if one gains ground, the other will suffer a nearly identical decrease in backing. At this time, both institutions each enjoy the support of **34 percent of those polled**.

The level of confidence in the central government is determined by belief held by **65 percent** of those polled that this institution is to some extent efficient in tackling corruption. Moreover, the percentage of citizens who feel the central government is corrupt has declined over the past six months from **57 to 45 percent, the best ranking for the Government since the beginning of this research project**.

Citizen satisfaction with the outcome of the March general election is also evidenced by the findings, which show that respondents believe all institutions have made progress in tackling corruption in relation to late 2013. Education provides the sole exception: it is now **suspected of corruption by an additional three percent of those polled,** a consequence of the allegations of doctoral thesis plagiarism that have contributed to a decline in confidence in Serbia’s schooling framework. Respondents firmly believe that **headmasters of primary and secondary schools, as well as deans of faculties and colleges, are the most corrupt part of the education system**. More than one-half of those polled (**53 percent**) claim that headmasters and deans are ‘very corrupt’.

Bribery in Serbia’s education system is chiefly used as a means of ‘purchasing’ jobs (**as reported by 35 percent of those polled**), as well as passing grades in examinations and diplomas (**27 percent**).

No major changes are in evidence when it comes to Serbia’s healthcare. **Citizens still consider doctors the most corrupt part of the system**. As many as **68 percent** of those polled believe doctors are partly or very corrupt. Moreover, in line with a trend that has been apparent for some time new, the larger a medical institution is, and the more complex the procedures it offers, the greater the perception of its being corrupt. The medical services seen as costing the most in bribes are hospitalization (EUR 163); operations (EUR 412); operations without the patient being placed on a waiting list (EUR 762); and extension of sick leave by medical panel (EUR 258).

# 5. Social and economic situation in Serbia – expectations of the public

Nearly one-half of all Serbian citizens (48 percent) now believe their living standards are now worse than just one year ago. The percentage of those polled who believe their standards are poorer now has increased by four percentage points relative to the surveys taken in June and December 2012, when it had stood at 44 percent. At the same time, the number of respondents who feel they are now better off than one year ago has risen by three percentage points, from five to eight percent.

If we take these findings into consideration and compare them with the fact that nearly one-third of all Serbian citizens polled believe the country is moving in the right direction, which is a clear indication that **members of the public still have a great deal of patience with and understanding for the situation the country and its authorities face.**

*Chart 1 – In general, do you think Serbia is moving in the right or the wrong direction?*

Chart 1 compares the findings of research carried out from 2011 to date. **Clearly apparent is the decline in both optimism and pessimism amongst citizens, with a simultaneous increase in the numbers of those with no defined opinion.**

At the same time, this year’s cycle has seen the percentage of pessimists remain stable at below 50 percent (i.e. at 47 percent); this finding is more favourable than that of December 2013.

The percentage of those unable to say where Serbia will move to in the future has increased, from 21 to 23 percent, at the expense of the pessimist group: a possible explanation for this is the increase in the number of citizens who have assumed a wait-and-see postureand will form opinions only after the authorities have taken their next steps.

*Chart 2 –How would you rate your current living standards?*

We have also noticed a fall in the numbers of respondents who believe their current living standards are poor or intolerable; see Chart 2. This year’s July research cycle is in many respects similar to that of December 2012 in terms of how living standards are perceived.[[1]](#footnote-1)Relative to December 2012, the percentage of respondents reporting intolerable standards of living has increased slightly (to 15 percent), but this figure is also slightly lower than that seen in the two preceding cycles. Nevertheless, a cause for concern is the finding whereby nearly one-half of all respondents (46 percent) claim their living standards are either poor or intolerable.

*Interestingly, downward trends in the numbers of respondents dissatisfied with their standards of living are as a rule seen in cycles following elections. This is a clear sign that the public’s views of their standards and the state of national finances are to a very great extent influenced by the results of elections and campaign promises.*

There has also been slight progress, relative to six months ago, in terms of the perceived monthly income per household member. This survey’s findings have revealed that this amount has increased from RSD 17,835 (as of late last year) to RSD 18,413.

A total of 19 percent of those polled expect their standards to improve over the coming year, (again) similar to findings recorded in December 2012 (when 20 percent of all respondents were optimistic in this regard).

# 6. Main problems facing Serbian citizens

Respondents’ perceptions of living standards and the economic situation are an exceptionally important factor, and one that can, to a large extent, be used to interpret the answers given to questions posed in this survey. Adverse views of living standards greatly affect answers to subsequent questions. This causality becomes particularly apparent when one considers the key perceived problems faced by Serbian citizens; see Chart 3.

*Chart 3 – Main problems facing Serbian citizens (by research cycle)*

*Ever since the UNDP research project began, these unpopularity rankings have been dominated by economic issues or other problems directly caused by the state of the Serbian economy.*

Issues such as **unemployment**, **poverty**, **low wages**, **pensions**, even the **lack of opportunities of young people**, are all direct consequences of the poor economic situation in Serbia.

Small wonder, therefore, that **unemployment** has, cycle after cycle, been identified as the primary problem that citizens face; in second place is **poverty**, a direct consequence of unemployment. More than two-fifths of all Serbian citizens (44 percent) believe unemployment is their primary problem, whilst poverty is the chief concern for another 16 percent.

**The significance of corruption as an issue for Serbian citizens is best underscored by the fact that this is a a rare problem not related to the economy that appears high on this list.** The significance of efforts to tackle corruption is from time to time given a boost by individual anti-corruption drives and campaigns, as well as by arrests of those suspected of giving or taking bribes. This is exactly why corruption was ranked second on the list of main issues faced by the public in Serbia in the December 2012 survey, when the previous central government was in the midst of one such anti-corruption campaign.

Nevertheless, **we have over the past two research cycles seen the perceived importance of corruption stagnate and even suffer a slight decline.** A total of12 percent of those polled used to perceive corruption as the most important issue, whilst this figure now stands at 11 percent.

# 7. Experiences with corruption

In December 2012 we recorded a major drop in both direct and indirect experiences of Serbian citizens with corruption. The number of respondents who had indirectly learned about corruption (such as from friends or family members) fell by as much as 15 percent, whilst personal contacts with corruption decreased by six percent.

*Chart 4 – Direct and indirect experiences with corruption (comparison)*

Ever since that time there have been no significant changes to the number of direct or indirect instances of corruption reported by citizens. A total of 21 percent of those polled in this cycle claim someone close to them, a friend or family member, has had experiences with corruption. As few as one in eleven of all respondents (nine percent) admit to have either offered or been asked for a bribe over the three months prior to the survey.

*The percentage of respondents who came into contact with corruption over the preceding three months has not changed substantially relative to the last research cycle; the figures are similar to those seen in December 2012. The findings show that the extent of corruption, as perceived by respondents, has declined between the June 2013 and July 2014 cycles.*

*Which professions are the most prone to corruption?*

No major changes are in evidence when it comes to the professions perceived by the public as the most prone to corruption; see Chart 5. **As in most cycles to date, the first two spots on the list are reserved for doctors and police officers.**

These are professions that come into contact with the public more often than others covered by the survey, and where opportunities for corruption are consequently greater. However, relative to the last two research cycles, there has been a major drop in the perceived extent of corruption amongst doctors.

*Chart 5 – Who have you bribed over the past three months?*

*(\* Percentage of total number of instances where respondent has given bribes over past three months)*

The trends apparent from these findings show that respondents clearly perceive these two professions as potentially the most open to corruption of all those listed in the question.

***A piece of good news, however, is the fact that unlike the previous, December 2013 cycle, where nearly one in two cases of corruption involved doctors, there has now been a major decline in the extent of corruption in this profession (from 48 to 35 percent).***

On the other hand, **over the past three months there has been a rise in corruption cases involving police officers (from 18 to 22 percent).** This is a cause for concern, as this figure is the greatest recorded for the police force in two years.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**The extent of corruption amongst civil servants has nearly halved in relation to the preceding cycle (and now stands at ten percent).** This can be linked to the recent general election and the greater risk of being caught taking or giving bribes.

Contrary to these examples of good practice, corruption has increased amongst lawyers, employees of public utilities, and, to a lesser extent, customs officers. Seven percent of all respondents who admitted to having given bribes over the past three months did so to lawyers and staff of public utility services; five percent of those polled bribed customs officers.

Other professions have seen no major changes relative to the preceding research cycle.

*Chart 6 – What was the reason for giving the bribe?*

Most bribes are still initially offered by members of the public; see Chart 6. **More than one-half of those polled (54 percent) who had direct experiences with giving bribes offered them first.** One-half of respondents aware of corruption amongst people close to them claim that these individuals would offer bribes themselves in return for a service or to achieve a benefit. Activities must be aimed at impressing upon citizens the harmful consequences of offering bribes.

Although members of the public will still initiate corruption, this practice is less widespread now than six months ago. The percentage of respondents who personally offered bribes has declined by three percent, whilst the percentage of those whose friends or acquaintances offered bribes has gone down six percent relative to December 2013.

The group of respondents who were asked for bribes has increased at the expense of the group who offered to bribe public officials. The number of respondents with indirect experiences of corruption who were asked for bribes has increased by as much as eight percentage points (from 24 to 32 percent); the figure has increased by two percentage points amongst those with direct experiences of corruption.

*Chart 7 – Average bribe (comparison)*

**It must be underlined that the average bribe has declined significantly over the past three months.**

*The average bribe has nearly halved in relation to December 2013, and now stands at* ***EUR 134.*** *This is the second lowest bribe amount recorded since the beginning of this research project.*

The lower average bribe is certainly less of a burden for the person offering the bribe. A total of 22 percent of those polled felt that the bribe they gave over the past three months was a major personal outlay; in June and December 2013, the average bribe (which amounted to more than EUR 200) was a major burden for one-third of those polled.

# 8. Perception and views of corruption

During the election campaign, anti-corruption measures were, alongside the economy, a central issue for most political parties. The fact that corruption was positioned as a key problem to be tackled after the election, and several high-profile arrests that ensued after the Government took office, significantly improved citizens’ perceptions of progress in addressing corruption; see Chart 8.

*Chart 8 – Extent of corruption over the past year*

*This research cycle has seen the most favourable findings in one year in terms of how citizens perceive corruption trends. Slightly less than one-third of all respondents (31 percent) believe that the extent of corruption has gone down over the past 12 months, either slightly (as reported by 29 percent) or very much (two percent).*

*Chart 9 – Extent of corruption over the coming 12 months - expectations*

The belief held by respondents that measures had been put in place to tackle corruption over the year preceding the survey has certainly contributed to their greater optimism in terms of future anti-corruption actions; see Chart 9.

**The percentage of respondents who believe corruption will decrease slightly or very much has risen by as much as eight percentage points relative to the previous research cycle.** This is the second-best finding since the UNDP research project commenced, and is comparable to the data gathered in December 2012, when as many as 41 percent of all citizens were optimistic about corruption.

*In relation to six months ago, there has been an eight-percentage-point increase in the numbers of respondents who believe corruption will decrease substantially in one year if anti-corruption measures continue at this pace.*

Citizens are becoming increasingly more aware of the negative impact that taking and giving bribes may have on all aspects of life.

Nearly one-half of those polled (48 percent) claim that corruption has a moderate or very great impact on their personal lives. A total of 72 percent of all respondents believe corruption adversely affects Serbia’s business environment, whilst as many as 81 percent are convinced that corruption has a moderately negative or very negative impact on the political situation in Serbia.

Fewer and fewer respondents are tolerant of the various types of corruption; see Chart 10. The previous survey revealed that more than 80 percent of citizens believed the practices listed in Chart 10 constituted moderate or serious corruption. The percentage of those polled who consider these practices corruption is now slightly lower, but remains very high. Respondents show somewhat more tolerance for the practice of *distributing gifts during an election campaign (as reported by 75 percent)* and *using a public position to assist friends and family members (78 percent)*.

*It is particularly interesting to note that 87 percent of those polled – the same number as in December 2013 – believe giving teachers and doctors gifts is a form of corruption. This is an indication of the low level of respondent tolerance to the entrenched practice of rewarding actions that are part of a public employee’s regular job description.*

In addition to being strongly against the giving of gifts to teachers and doctors, citizens are extremely intolerant of potentially corrupt practices in politics.

*Chart 10 – Are the following actions examples of corruption, and, if so,
to what extent?[[3]](#footnote-3)*

*Financing political parties during an election campaign and expecting preferential treatment in case those parties come to power* isseen as a corrupt practice by 86 percent of those polled. *Promotion of political parties or business interests using one’s government position* constitutes corruption in the view of 84 percent of those polled.

The media have the greatest role to play in raising the public’s awareness of the detrimental effects of corruption and educating citizens as to which patterns of behaviour constitute corruption. See Chart 11.

The last two research cycles show how the media are becoming increasingly important in providing information to the public. In 2013, 60 percent of those polled said the media were their key source of corruption-related information; this figure has now risen by as much as 16 percentage points.

More than three-quarters of those polled (76 percent) get their information about corruption through the media. Two-fifths rely on friends and family members to provide insight, whilst dependence on rumours is shrinking.

*Trends show that a decrease in the number of cases of corruption in practice leads to the media being considered more desirable sources of information about this topic.*

*Chart 11 – Sources of information about corruption*

Table 1 shows statements related to corruption and measures that may be used to address it alongside citizens’ views. The respondents were instructed to respond to each statement on a scale from 1 (‘Agree’) to 5 (‘Disagree’).

*Findings show that respondents believe strict penalties for perpetrators of corrupt practices are needed (as reported by 88 percent) and that doing so will lead to the eradication of its root causes (85 percent).*

Moreover, those polled doubt in the government’s willingness to appropriately and efficiently tackle corruption. Sixty-five percent of those polled agree with this statement in whole or in part.

Most citizens (84 percent) feel that the appropriate authorities, police, and judiciary must play leading roles in efforts to tackle corruption. At the same time, another 88 percent of those polled feel all institutions must be responsible for addressing potential corruption among their own ranks. Of course, to appropriately resolve the issue of corruption, better co-ordination must be ensured between the various services and institutions dealing with these matters: 70 percent of those polled believe the lack of such co-ordination is a major shortcoming in efforts to tackle corruption.

*Table 1 – To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Corruption in general** | Cycle | DNK / No response | Agree | Partially agree | Partially disagree | Disagree |
| There is no willingness to truly and efficiently eradicate corruption in Serbia | Dec. 2012 | 6 | 40 | 20 | 15 | 19 |
| June 2013 | 6 | 50 | 19 | 13 | 12 |
| Dec. 2013 | 6 | 39 | 22 | 16 | 16 |
| **July 2014** | **6** | **43** | **22** | **15** | **14** |
| Corruption can be eradicated only by strictly penalising perpetrators | Dec. 2012 | 3 | 71 | 15 | 5 | 6 |
| June 2013 | 3 | 73 | 15 | 5 | 4 |
| Dec. 2013 | 3 | 72 | 15 | 7 | 4 |
| **July 2014** | **2** | **72** | **16** | **6** | **4** |
| Corruption can be eradicated only by removing its root causes | Dec. 2012 | 3 | 66 | 18 | 8 | 5 |
| June 2013 | 5 | 64 | 18 | 8 | 6 |
| Dec. 2013 | 4 | 68 | 18 | 6 | 5 |
| **July 2014** | **4** | **66** | **19** | **6** | **5** |
| Each institution should be equally responsible for preventing and addressing corruption within its ranks | Dec. 2012 | 4 | 71 | 16 | 6 | 3 |
| June 2013 | 5 | 73 | 14 | 6 | 2 |
| Dec. 2013 | 3 | 73 | 14 | 5 | 5 |
| **July 2014** | **3** | **71** | **17** | **4** | **5** |
| Specialised institutions (police, judiciary, the Agency) should have lead roles in tackling corruption | Dec. 2012 | 4 | 68 | 18 | 6 | 4 |
| June 2013 | 4 | 58 | 25 | 8 | 5 |
| Dec. 2013 | 4 | 64 | 19 | 10 | 4 |
| **July 2014** | **4** | **64** | **20** | **8** | **4** |
| There is no co-operation or co-ordination between the various institutions active in tackling corruption | Dec. 2012 | 17 | 46 | 22 | 9 | 6 |
| June 2013 | 14 | 50 | 19 | 10 | 7 |
| Dec. 2013 | 14 | 48 | 20 | 11 | 8 |
| **July 2014** | **13** | **50** | **20** | **11** | **6** |

# 9. Perceptions of corruption by sector

The March 2014 elections and the inauguration of the new Serbian Government have led to somewhat lower perceptions of institutional corruption amongst the public. **Interestingly, respondents believe that the extent of corruption is more limited now than six months ago across all institutions covered by the survey, excepting only the education system.** Corruption in the education sector has, in the opinion of those polled, grown by three percentage points relative to December 2013: a total of 53 percent of all respondents at this time feel education in Serbia is prone to corruption. See Chart 14.

*Chart 12 – Institutions with corruption perception levels exceeding 50 percent*

Regardless of this increase, issues with corruption are still apparent, particularly when it comes to institutions that citizens see as traditionally disposed to taking bribes; see Chart 12. Even with the apparently reduced extent of corruption at these institutions, the incidence of corrupt practices that reportedly take place there remains exceptionally high.

*According to nearly three-quarters of those polled (74 percent), political parties remain corrupt, whilst 70 percent of all respondents feel the same about the healthcare system.*

It is interesting to note that corruption amongst the police is now perceived to be lower by as much as ten percentage points, although the number of those polled who claim to have bribed a police officer has, over the past three months, increased by three percentage points. In addition to the police, local authorities are also perceived to be less corrupt than before, with the number of respondents holding this view dropping from 59 to 49 percent of the total.

The new post-election political landscape has contributed to greater trust in key state institutions. See Chart 13.

*Chart 13 – Perceived extent of corruption in key state institutions*

Whilst the perceived extent of corruption in central government spiked suddenly late in 2013, the latest poll shows a decline of as much as 12 percentage points amongst those who feel that Serbia’s executive branch is corrupt.

*Findings of this cycle show 45 percent of those polled believe the central government is corrupt. Although this is still a fairly large number, this result is the best achieved by the Government since the commencement of this research project.*

Besides the central government, the Parliament has also seen its perception improve in relation to views held in late 2013. The percentage of respondents convinced there is no corruption in Parliament now stands at 49 percent, the second-best result since this research effort began.

Slightly less than one-third of those polled believe the President is corrupt.

*Citizens place their trust in the armed forces: these are seen as corrupt by 16 percent of those polled, the highest score for any institution at this time.*

Corruption remains very much present in the public eye when it comes to the media, which are seen as prone to these practices by more than one-half of those polled (53 percent). Two-fifths of all respondents feel the same about international assistance programmes and donations, which may be particularly significant given the international relief effort underway to help areas affected by the recent flooding. See Chart 14.

*Chart 14 – Perceived extent of corruption in other institutions*

# 10. Efforts to address corruption

Efforts to address corruption are hampered by inadequate oversight of public authorities (as reported by 41 percent of those polled) and the lack of willingness on the part of political leaders to tackle this issue (32 percent).

*Chart 15 – Issues hampering efforts to address corruption in Serbia*

*As many as 27 percent of those polled believe corruption is widespread in the very bodies whose mandate it is to enforce the law and combat this issue.*

The pervasive practice of solving problems by using personal connections to avoid legislations seen by 29 percent of all respondents as the primary factor adversely affecting efforts to tackle corruption. At the same time, this is why citizens are passive and fail to show personal initiative in standing up to corrupt practices.

One-fifth of those polled emphasize that passivity is an issue, whilst 17 percent claim lack of awareness of one’s personal rights and statutory provisions is an issue.

Yet, regardless of the widespread practice of taking bribes and respondents’ reactions when one is sought, this research cycle has seen an increase in the number of respondents who would refuse to pay a bribe if asked for one; see Chart 16. This is the second-best result on record since the beginning of this research project.

*Chart 16 – If someone were to ask you personally for a bribe, what would you do?*

*Citizens’ reluctance to engage in corruptionincreases with their perceptions of how serious efforts to tackle corruption are. The greater their confidence in the Government’s intentions, the more reluctant they will be to pay bribes.*

This finding is also borne out by the three-percentage-point drop in the number of respondents prepared to pay. At the same time, the numbers of respondents ready to report corruption to the authorities has increased by two percentage points.

**Serbian citizens expect the Government to place itself at the forefront of efforts to tackle corruption;** see Chart 17. The Government and the police are perceived by respondents as the key bodies in these activities; the Government has however over the past two cycles consolidated its position as the leader of this effort.

*Nearly one-half of those polled (47 percent) believe that the Government should place itself at the forefront of efforts to tackle corruption; this is the best result seen in this regard since the beginning of this research project.*

A total of 44 percent of those polled view the police as the natural leader in efforts to address corruption; the judiciary and the Anti-Corruption Agency are in joint third place, with support from one-third of those polled each.

Probably due to the general election, the Agency has garnered a five-percentage-point increase in support relative to the preceding cycle.

*Chart 17 – Main stakeholders in efforts to tackle corruption*

*The judiciary and the Agency share the same pool of supporters when it comes to choosing the perceived leader of anti-corruption efforts. Any increase in support for one of these bodies will result in a nearly identical decrease in backing for the other.*

*Chart 18 – Tactics to address corruption*

Whichever institution ends up heading the anti-corruption effort, it will have to develop tactics it will utilise; see Chart 18.

A total of 78 percent of those polled believe corruption can be eliminated only through the use of *strict statutory measures and provisions;* 61 percent claim that current *penalties must be enhanced and fine-tuned* before they are able to yield appropriate results.

Relative to the preceding research cycle, the tactic of *raising public awareness of corruption* has seen a drop in support of as much as 11 percentage points, whilst on the other hand citizens are more willing to see *greater civil-sector oversight of public administration* (backing for which has risen from 54 percent to 56 percent).

*Chart 19 – Serbian Government’s efficiency in addressing corruption*

The combined percentages of respondents who feel the central government is very or somewhat efficient are only slightly (by one percentage point) greater than in late 2013. Regardless, this still means there is a fairly large number (65 percent) of those who claim that the Government has achieved results in tackling corruption.

*Most of those polled (57 percent) believe that the Government’s current efficiency is low, particularly given that residents expect the Government to be the key anti-corruption body.*

# 11. Perceptions of the Anti-Corruption Agency

As many as 78 percent of Serbian citizens are familiar with what the Anti-Corruption Agency does; see Chart 20. The upward trend in the Agency’s visibility has been in evidence ever since December 2012 and has not changed much, but most citizens undoubtedly know what this institution does. Elections and the entire election process contribute greatly to the Agency’s profile, as it is at these times that its activities are most often in the public eye.

*Chart 20 – Visibility of the Anti-Corruption Agency*

The Agency’s high visibility is not accompanied by any corresponding increase in citizens’ perceptions of its contribution to efforts to tackle corruption; see Chart 21. One-third of those polled believe the Agency has contributed to these efforts only slightly; as few as one in twenty respondents feel its contribution has been significant.

*Chart 21 – The Agency’s contribution to efforts to address corruption*

Citizens expect more of the Agency, as evidenced by the findings presented in Chart 22. More than one-half of those polled (55 percent) doubt this institution’s ability to control how political parties are funded.

*Chart 22 – Is the Agency able to control political party funding arrangements?*

*Citizens have doubted in the Agency’s ability to exercise this function ever since it was first set up. Its best result was recorded in December 2012, when 22 percent of those polled believed the Agency had the capacity to either partly or fully control political party funding.*

1. In this report we will compare and contrast the findings of multiple survey cycles, but have here opted for a comparison with December 2012 as this is the watershed period after which confidence in institutions grew and corruption became recognised as a priority by members of the public. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The greatest percentage of direct corruption cases involving the police were recorded in October 2010 and November 2011 – 26 percent; the lowest percentage of respondents admitting to having bribed a police officer was 15 percent, reported in June 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The percentages shown in Chart 10 were obtained by adding together responses claiming the practices offered could be considered corruption to a moderate or great extent. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)