



**TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
ZIMBABWE**

the coalition against corruption



NATIONAL **BRIBE PAYERS INDEX (NBPI)**

2025

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ABOUT TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ZIMBABWE

Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Z) is a non-profit, non-partisan, systems-oriented local chapter of the international movement against corruption. Its broad mandate is to fight corruption and promote transparency, accountability, and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society. TI Z believes corruption can only be sufficiently tackled by all citizens, including people at the grassroots level.

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this report, including allegations. All information was believed to be correct as of 19 November 2025. Nevertheless, TI Z cannot guarantee the accuracy and completeness of the contents, nor can it accept responsibility for the consequences of its use for other purposes or in other contexts. Contributions to this report by authors external to TI Z do not necessarily reflect the views of Transparency International or its national chapter.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|-------|--|
| ACC | Anti-Corruption Commission | LAS | Local Authorities |
| BEAM | Basic Education Assistance Module | NGORA | NGO Regulatory Authority |
| DDC | District Development Coordinator | NPA | National Prosecuting Authority |
| BPI | Bribe-paid incident | PRP | Performance-Related Pay |
| BSI | Bribe-seeking incident | SSI | Service-seeking interaction |
| CBOs | Community Based Organisations | STIs | Sexually Transmitted Diseases |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation | TI Z | Transparency International Zimbabwe |
| eBRS | Electronic Birth Registration Systems | UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| FBOs | Faith Based Organisations | WHO | World Health Organisation |
| GBV | Gender-based violence | VID | Vehicle Inspection Department |
| GCB | Global Corruption Barometer | ZACC | Zimbabwe Anticorruption Commission |
| GoZ | Government of Zimbabwe | ZRP | Zimbabwe Republic Police |
| HTE | Higher and Tertiary Education | | |

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PREFACE

Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ) is pleased to present the National Bribe Payers Index (NBPI) Report, an important contribution to the body of evidence informing Zimbabwe's anti-corruption agenda. As part of our mandate to promote integrity, transparency and accountability across all sectors, TIZ conducts research that helps deepen understanding of corruption risks and strengthen national responses. Over the years, our evidence-based advocacy has informed improvements to Zimbabwe's legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks, while empowering citizens, communities, and oversight actors with knowledge to demand accountability.

Bribery remains one of the most pervasive and normalized forms of corruption in Zimbabwe. While often involving small amounts of money or favours, bribery has far-reaching consequences that undermine the foundations of governance and public service delivery. It creates a parallel system where access to essential services, such as healthcare, education, justice, and administrative processes, is determined not by need or merit but by the ability to pay extra, or by personal connections. This distorts equity, entrenches social injustice, and fuels public frustration.



TAFADZWA CHIKUMBU

Executive Director, Transparency International Zimbabwe

Nowhere is this more evident than in the criminal justice delivery system. For years, public surveys consistently indicate that the police are perceived as among the most corrupt entities in the country. These perceptions, whether based on direct experience or public discourse, shape how citizens engage with law-enforcement institutions. When people believe that justice can be bought, the legitimacy of policing collapses. Victims may hesitate to report crimes, offenders may exploit corrupt networks to avoid accountability, and the rule of law becomes compromised. Ultimately, bribery erodes public trust in state institutions, and without trust, public institutions struggle to function effectively.

The erosion of trust has broader societal implications. Public trust is a cornerstone of stable governance. It influences whether citizens comply with laws, participate in civic processes, or feel protected by the institutions meant to serve them. When bribery becomes commonplace, citizens conclude that corruption is part of the system, an expectation that becomes self-reinforcing. Thus, perceptions begin to shape reality. Changing those perceptions requires deliberate action: strengthening integrity systems, improving accountability, enforcing sanctions, and consistently demonstrating that no one is above the law. Rebuilding trust demands visible reforms and genuine political will.

Despite the small magnitude of many bribes recorded in this Index, the practice must be strongly condemned. No act of bribery is insignificant; every act contributes to a wider culture of impunity. Those who solicit or pay bribes must be held accountable. The Bribe Payers Index, alongside other research and corruption barometers conducted by TI Zimbabwe, is designed not to incriminate or shame institutions, but to provide credible evidence from citizens' experiences—evidence that can guide reforms and inform sector-specific anti-corruption strategies. Addressing bribery systematically requires a clear understanding of where it occurs, why it occurs, and how it can be prevented.

We anticipate that the findings of this report will meaningfully contribute to ongoing national efforts, including the development and implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy II. The insights contained in this Index should serve as a resource for policymakers, oversight institutions, anti-corruption agencies, the justice system, service-delivery institutions, and civil society. They highlight areas where integrity systems must be strengthened and where urgent interventions are needed to restore public confidence.

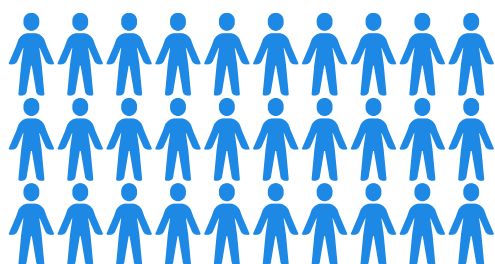
At its core, the fight against corruption is a collective responsibility. It begins with acknowledging the problem honestly and confronting it with determination. Just as a doctor cannot treat a persistent headache without first understanding its underlying cause, a society cannot eradicate corruption without acknowledging its existence and analysing its manifestations. Denial only prolongs the ailment. Confronting the reality, even when uncomfortable, is the first step toward meaningful and sustained reform. As another analogy, a leaking roof cannot be fixed by painting over the stain; it requires examining the damage, identifying the cracks, and repairing the structure. Likewise, addressing bribery requires structural solutions, not cosmetic responses.

TI Zimbabwe remains committed to supporting national stakeholders through research, community engagement, policy advocacy, and capacity building. Our mission is to empower citizens, strengthen institutions, and contribute to the creation of a Zimbabwe anchored in transparency, integrity, and accountability. We stand ready to collaborate with all actors who are committed to genuine reform.

We trust that this Bribe Payers Index will serve as a valuable tool in Zimbabwe's continuing journey to build a corruption-free society, one where public institutions act with integrity, citizens can access services fairly, and trust between the state and the public is restored.


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third edition of the NBPI study examines the current levels of bribes paid by Zimbabweans as they access basic services.



1,590
Total
respondents

10
provinces
(rural, peri-urban, urban)

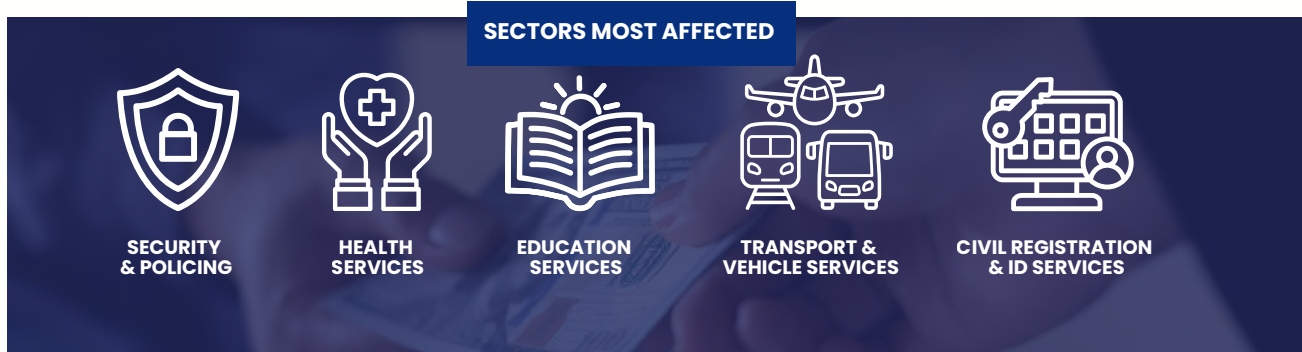
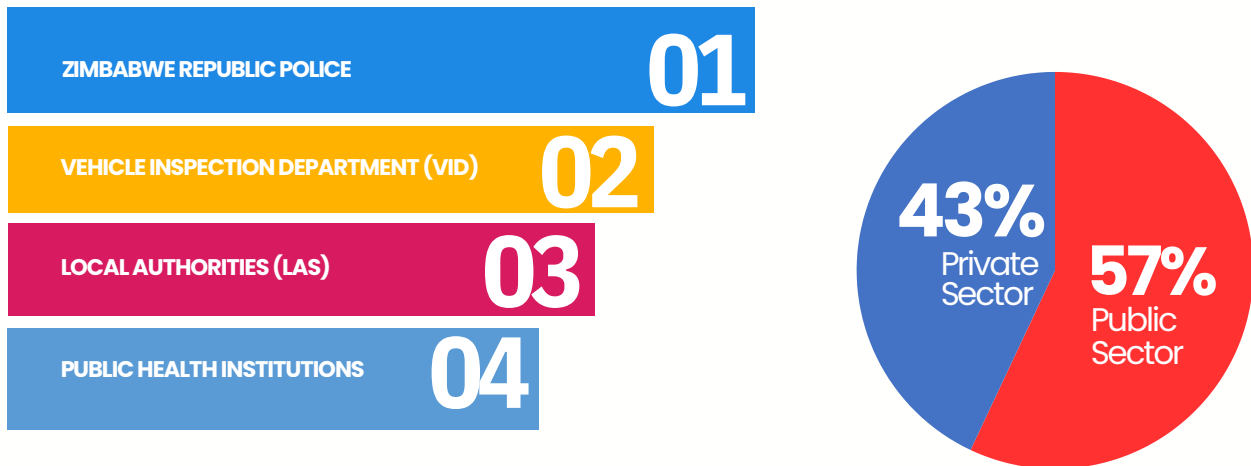


Measuring the levels of bribery in a country provides stakeholders with scientific explanations for the dynamics of corruption in a specified time frame. Transparency International (2009) defines corruption as “the misuse of entrusted authority for private gain.” This definition is intentionally broad so it can apply across different contexts—whether in government, business, or civil society.

This edition updates the analysis of bribery in Zimbabwe, following the 2021 edition which observed increased corruption during service delivery due to COVID-19 movement restrictions. It also fills in gaps in understanding the current use of sexual favours as a form of bribe payment, as well the prevalence of bribery in services outsourced by government to third parties. The research outreach accessed 1,590 individuals in total, across the ten provinces of the country, including rural, peri-urban and urban zones. This is large enough to provide meaningful insights and reduce sampling error. It also provides for disaggregation by demographics (age, gender, occupation) or geography. The findings show that 52% of the respondents in the public survey had been asked to pay a bribe or inducement in their service seeking interactions in the preceding 12 months. This is slightly lower than the 54,4% recorded in the preceding study from 2021, likely attributable to the end of COVID-19 restrictions. Twenty seven percent (27%) of the respondents admitted to proactively offering a bribe. The majority (56%) also said that corruption had strongly increased in Zimbabwe.

The value of most of the bribe payments ranging between US\$1–\$20, and US\$20–\$100 places most of the recorded experiences at the level of petty corruption. Whilst cash payments (or mobile money transfer) are the dominant forms of bribe payment there was a range of non-monetary forms described, and one of these involved the exchange of sexual favours (sexual corruption also known as sextortion). Asked about the prevalence of this practice, a significant portion of respondents (57%) said it was very common form of non-monetary bribe, with both the Public and Private sectors in Zimbabwe are affected. The activity most impacted by it in both sectors is the employment process, in particular recruitment and promotions. Political parties and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were cited by informants as being high risk environments for sextortion. In the private sector, companies in the mining and hospitality sectors, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were cited as risk areas in this regard.

Bribery Hotspots, Trends and Demography Patterns in Zimbabwe _ 2025 NBPI Update



The highest-ranked public institutions by respondents, in terms of high bribery levels were the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) followed by the Vehicle Inspection Department (VID), mirroring the 2021 NBPI. Other noteworthy institutions ranked were Local authorities (LAs) and public health institutions. Some prominent themes emerged from the qualitative data in terms of areas most concerning to FGD participants, and these were bribery in Security/Policing, Health Services, Education Services, Transport & Vehicle Services, and provision of Civil Registration/Identity Documents.

Most respondents showed a lack of awareness of outsourced public services; however, health services featured prominently in this category. The main forms of bribery witnessed by FGD participants included a system of kickbacks for health workers to refer patients to private facilities, as well as bribing health workers to receive priority or quality care. In local authorities, the staff of companies outsourced to collect parking fees on behalf of Councils were alleged to be taking bribes to allow illegal transport operators the freedom to operate in undesignated areas. There were also examples of kickbacks paid to facilitate deals in procurement.

The majority of survey respondents (57%) said that bribery is more prevalent in the public sector with bureaucratic red tape mostly blamed for this perception. Linked to this most respondents also said that officials justified their bribery demands with the prospect of processing or speeding up requests. The literature and some responses assert that rent-seeking officials put up institutional barriers and intimidating service environments to pressurize citizens to pay bribes to circumvent them. Citizens who paid bribes were driven by the need to speed up processes, as well as the need to avoid negative consequences (e.g. fines or prosecution).

It is concerning that bribery in society is currently perceived as a 'coping strategy' both by the bribe takers and payers, mainly due to prevailing economic challenges experienced by households. As much as many citizens feel the pressure to pay bribes, to access basic services, there is a segment of survey respondents (45%) who resist because they find it unacceptable. This is a good foundation for any future anticorruption strategies and initiatives.

Women experience bribe seeking behaviour slightly more than men, at 54% of bribe seeking experiences recorded in the survey. Linked to this, is the fact that more men than women are proactively offered bribes at the point of service delivery (totalling 57% of respondents offering). The youth constitute also the highest proportion of citizens experiencing bribe seeking behaviour at the point of service delivery, constituting 58% of respondents experiencing bribe seeking incidences. This points to the differentiated experiences of corruption based on demographic characteristics of the victims as well as the need to have targeted interventions to address differentiated experiences.

Participants in the study blame the current levels of bribery in the country partly on the current state of corporate governance in the public and private sectors. This is characterised by weak oversight of, and interference in the smooth running of public service institutions. They also believe that the legal and regulatory framework is not citizen-focused, instead serving vested interests in the delivery of services. There are also informal practices and hidden power structures which sustain bribery, and these include political patronage, favouritism networks, and a network of 'runners', and the culture of 'tips' - or expectation of informal payments for providing a service.

The findings also show that corruption is currently a collective problem involving both the demand and supply side of public services, rather than just being a challenge caused by individual behaviour of errant rent-seeking agents in service delivery. It is therefore concerning that citizens view corruption as normal, as well as expressing scepticism about anti-corruption efforts. Citizens also fear the consequences of reporting corruption. This is closely linked to the complications and sensitivities of reporting some types of bribery such as sextortion, including the lack of a tailored legal framework to address it. A key factor in this is the lack of whistleblower protection mechanisms.

Addressing corruption ingrained as a societal norm necessitates a comprehensive approach that tackles the collective nature of the issue, demanding significant interventions to dismantle the entrenched expectation of bribery. Policymakers in Zimbabwe should reduce information asymmetries on service delivery, foster transparency, launch national trust building and culture change interventions, reform laws and strengthen institutional controls.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

01

The phenomenon of bribery is captured in the legal framework under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] Act 23/2004. The law states that bribery takes place where an agent "obtains or agrees to obtain or solicits or agrees to accept for himself or herself or any other person any gift or consideration as an inducement or reward," – in return for acts or omissions, or favours or disfavours knowing that such gifts or considerations are not due to him/her (Government of Zimbabwe – GoZ, 2004, p95). The Act also includes as bribery, situations where a "person who, for himself or herself or any other person, gives or agrees to give or offers to an agent any gift or consideration as an inducement or reward, in return for acts or omissions, or favours or disfavours knowing that such gifts or considerations are not due to him/her," (GoZ, 2004, p95). The key issue to highlight is that the law in Zimbabwe prosecutes both the principal and agent in the act of bribery. In other words, soliciting or accepting a bribe has the same weight in criminal law. This closely aligns with Transparency International's focus on both the giver and taker of a bribe in its definition above

This report is a national-level assessment that seeks to understand and uncover patterns of bribery within the public sector. Such an assessment helps uncover the true scale and nature of the problem by capturing citizens' real experience such as paying bribes for social services. Understanding bribery in the public sector is essential because bribery is often hidden, undocumented, and experienced directly by citizens in their everyday interactions with public services. This evidence makes visible the institutional vulnerabilities and high-risk processes that are often overlooked in official reporting and broader policy scale planning and analysis. Unlike studies that focus on high-level or political corruption, the NBPI examines petty corruption – the bribes paid by individuals (in various forms and scale) to access basic services such as health care, education, identity documents, police services, and utilities to name a few. Viewed from a rights-based standpoint, bribery undermines citizens' rights to equal access to public services (UNODC, 2019; Transparency International, 2021). Evidently, bribery deepens inequality by forcing the most vulnerable to pay for services that should be free or affordable.



Transparency International (2009, p5) defines bribery as

"the offering, promising, giving, accepting or soliciting of an advantage as an inducement for an action which is illegal, unethical or a breach of trust. Inducements can take the form of gifts, loans, fees, rewards or other advantages (taxes, services, donations, etc.)."

Corruption has a bearing on the country's failure in realising the target for its well-meaning commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs and the Agenda 2030. Patterns of bribery in the public sector distort economic development, weakens democratic institutions, and widens inequalities by diverting resources away from essential public services. also erodes public trust in government, fuels perceptions of impunity, and reinforces the damaging belief that bribery is the only means through which citizens can access services or resolve challenges.

Over and above the need to provide scientific explanation of the dynamics of bribery as a form of corruption, this edition was necessitated by various factors. Firstly, this edition was conducted after a gap of four years which is sufficient to gather evidence of any changes in the occurrence of bribery in the country. This edition follows-up the NBPI edition published in 2021 which was conducted in Zimbabwe in the year 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. TI Z's 2021 NBPI showed that the pandemic worsened the situation with corruption due to restrictive measures which inhibited citizen's access to goods and services. In this context, public officials directly or indirectly sought bribes from citizens seeking services. It is therefore plausible to assert that the factors influencing bribery in the 2021 edition have changed significantly since then. Also, noting that the tenure of the first NBPI had ended, it gives TI Z an opportunity to survey citizens on their expectations in the successor strategy.

Secondly, TI Z also has an opportunity to deepen its understanding of the dynamics of bribery in the context of emerging themes of Sexual Corruption (sometimes referred to as Sextortion), which **"occurs when a person abuses their entrusted authority to obtain a sexual favour in exchange for a service or benefit that is connected to the entrusted authority."** (Bjarnegård, Calvo, Eldén & Lundgren, 2024). The previous NBPI showed that some surveyed citizens included sexual favours in their non-monetary payments for bribes, but no information was given regarding the institutional context for these occurrences. TI Z has been conducting advocacy on a standalone law to address the forms of corruption involving the exchange of sexual favours for benefits linked to entrusted authority in Zimbabwe's jurisdiction. The inclusion of the current situation with the prevalence of Sexual Corruption in the report will therefore strengthen and keep up the momentum on this advocacy using up-to-date, research-based evidence. In this publication the terms **'Sexual Corruption'** and **'Sextortion'** are used interchangeably as TI Z discovered in the research outreach that it is still in general use amongst stakeholders.

Thirdly, the report also attempts to illuminate forms of bribery that might occur in instances where service delivery is provided to citizens with support from, or in partnership with private actors. Formal collaboration between the public and private sectors exists through mechanisms such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing contracts, and joint service delivery arrangements.



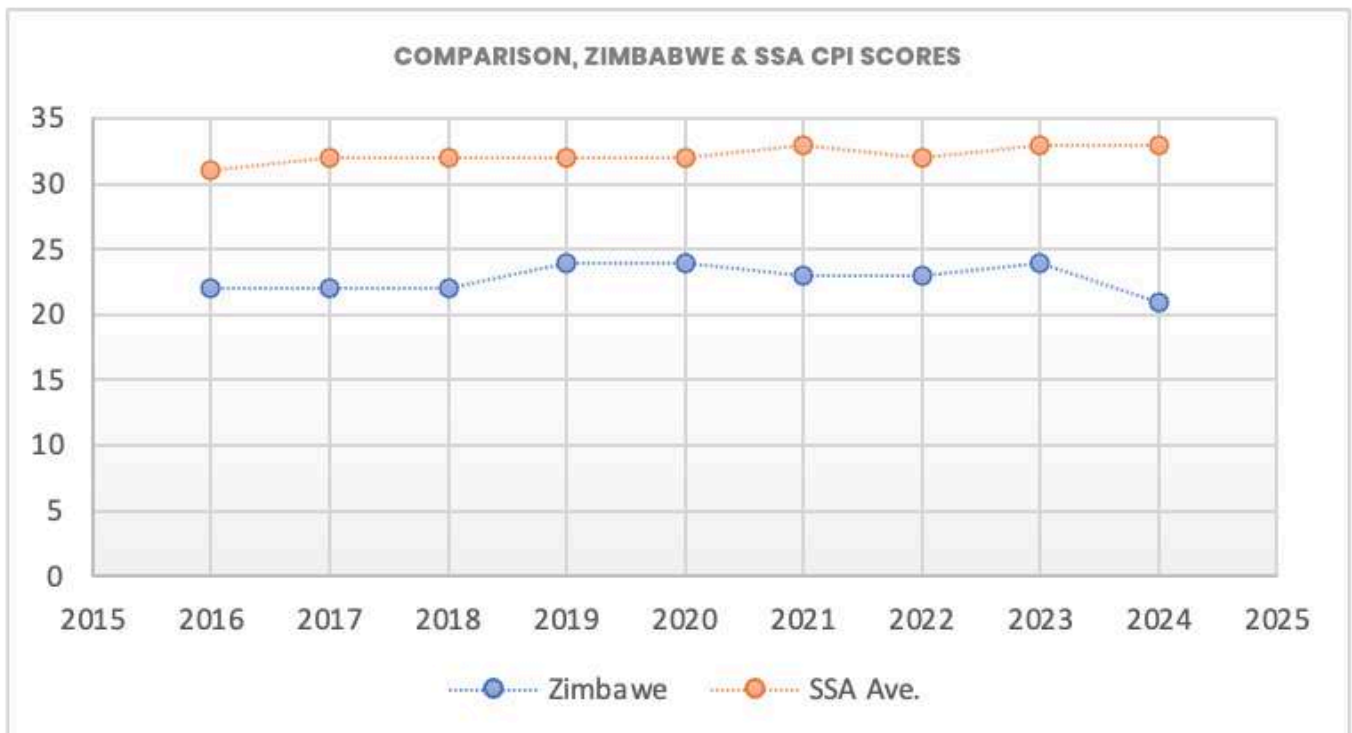
The inclusion of up-to-date evidence on the prevalence of Sexual Corruption strengthens TI Z's advocacy for a standalone law addressing abuses of entrusted authority in exchange for sexual favours.



While such arrangements aim to improve access, quality, and efficiency, they also blur lines of accountability and create fertile ground for informal payments and other corrupt exchanges. The 2021 edition of the NBPI conceptualised bribery as a phenomenon mainly occurring in the public sector, leaving out the fact that individuals or entities in the private sector providing public services are also capable of accepting or soliciting bribes. The inclusion of bribery occurring within the private sector in the 2025 NBP will therefore gather important baseline evidence which can be used to establish dialogue with engaged businesses and their representative associations, noting that Business and Human Rights is a major pillar of TI Z's 2024–2028 Strategy.

Lastly, trends in the globally accepted indicators for corruption show that Zimbabwe has worsened in the perceived levels of public sector corruption. As Figure 1 below will show, in 2024, Zimbabwe achieved a score of 21 out of 100 on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), a drop of 3 points on the previous year. The CPI measures the levels of perceived public sector corruption in a country, with a rating of 0 being the 'most corrupt' and 100 being 'the cleanest'. A major issue to highlight in terms of Zimbabwe's performance on the CPI is that the country perennially scores below the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average as highlighted in Figure 1 below, showing that the country struggles with systemic and endemic levels of corruption. Policymakers and other key stakeholders are keen to address the drop in Zimbabwe's CPI scores. This means that the contribution of bribery to the overall incidence of corruption needs to be urgently examined.

FIGURE 1 TRENDS IN ZIMBABWE'S PERFORMANCE ON THE CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX (CPI)



(Source: Transparency International, 2015-2025)

METHODOLOGY

2.1.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

02

Several concepts, models and theories were used to aid in analysing the phenomenon of bribery in contemporary Zimbabwe. Bribery has been traditionally analysed using the **Principal-Agent Model**, which postulates that public officials (agents) are expected to act on behalf of citizens (principals). Proponents of this model say that corruption can occur when the agent hides information from the principal for self-interest (Shetland Neurodiversity Project, 2025a). This occurs because of asymmetry of information whereby the agent uses their superior knowledge at the expense of the principal, resulting in a situation termed the agency problem (Groenendijk, 1997 in United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - UNODC, n/d). To address this problem there should be transparency (improved information provision to principals) and accountability (improved processes by agents) to reduce the incentives for the agent to work for their own benefit as opposed to the citizens' (Shetland Neurodiversity Project, 2025a). Transparency International (2009, p44.) defines Transparency as, **"the characteristic of governments, companies, organisations and individuals of being open in the clear disclosure of information, rules, plans, processes and actions."**

Accountability on the other hand is, "the concept that individuals, agencies and organisations (public, private and civil society) are held responsible for executing their powers properly" (National Endowment for Democracy 2009, in Transparency International, 2009).

The Collective Action Theory was formulated to deal with the weaknesses of the Principal-Agent Model, following the realisation that corruption persisted despite the existence of numerous anticorruption laws and initiatives, especially in developing countries such as those in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region. Ironically many of these countries were considered to have "very strong" anticorruption frameworks (Shetland Neurodiversity Project, 2025a; UNODC, n/d; Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013). Some of the "one-size-fits-all" strategies emerging from the Principal-Agent Model did not work—demonstrated by the inaction of principals when information flows to them had improved, suggesting that they either colluded with agents (Shetland Neurodiversity Project, 2025a) or were not willing to control corruption (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013).



Unlike the Principal-Agent approach, the Collective Action Theory emphasises the importance of factors such as trust, and how individuals perceive the behaviour of others. Its proponents regard systemic corruption as a collective problem, because people rationalise their own behaviour based on the perceptions of what others will do in the same situation (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013 in UNODC, n/d). The theory asserts that citizens start seeing corruption as the 'way to get things done' when corruption becomes a social norm, so they engage in corrupt actions fully aware of the negative consequences, because it no longer makes sense to be the only honest person in society. This is coupled with the awareness that blowing the whistle in a highly corrupt system has high risks and low returns (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013 in UNODC, n/d; Marquette and Peiffer, 2015 in UNODC, n/d). Societies in which corruption is the norm rather than the exception are said to be in 'high corruption equilibrium' (Shetland Neurodiversity Project, 2025b).

Another theory to deepen analysis of bribery in contemporary Zimbabwe is the Institutional Theory which looks at how corruption might get entrenched in organisations, institutions and society despite the existence of an anti-corruption framework (Luo, 2005, in UNODC, n/d).

To borrow a vivid metaphor from UNODC, the Principal-Agent Model focuses on the 'bad apples' (i.e. individual misbehaviour) whilst Institutional Theory looks at the whole 'barrel' (or distorting institutional practices and mechanisms) in which these bad apples operate. Indeed, weaknesses of an institutional and governance nature further shape bribery practices. An example is how complex bureaucratic processes, lack of transparency, and ineffective accountability mechanisms create opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour.

Bureaucracy or red tape/Red-tapeism is, "a derisive term for excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that is considered redundant or bureaucratic, and hinders or prevents action or decision making," (Martini, 2012, p2). Bureaucracy and red tape offer incentives for corrupt behaviour because institutional barriers (existing or created) provide an opportunity for rent-seeking by officials as some individuals and businesses may be willing to pay bribes to circumvent them (Martini, 2012).

Another important theory by which bribery can be analysed is the Game Theory of corruption. Briefly, this economic theory of corruption suggests that corruption is part of a rational calculus and an integral and often deeply rooted method by which people take decisions (Macrae, 1982 in UNODC, n/d).



Citizens start seeing corruption as the 'way to get things done' when corruption becomes a social norm, so they engage in corrupt actions fully aware of the negative consequences, because it no longer makes sense to be the only honest person in society."

The theory describes a situation whereby individuals experience a 'prisoner's dilemma' where they fear a disadvantage if they refuse to engage in corrupt practices, while other individuals do not refuse to do so in the same situation (Kuhn, 2019. In UNODC, n/d). The theory therefore views corruption as the strategic interaction between two players (the bribe payer and the bribe taker). Each actor chooses their behaviour based on expected benefits, risks, and what they believe the other player will do. This means bribery persists not simply because individuals are "bad", but because the system creates a rational incentive for both sides to participate.

When the foregoing perspectives are taken together, they show that bribery is not simply a moral failing of individuals but a systemic governance challenge. Addressing it requires reforms that strengthen institutions, reduce discretion and red tape, and shift social norms towards integrity and fairness. Each perspective also has different implications on solving the problem of corruption and its various forms (e.g. bribery). For example, proponents of the Principal-Agent theory propose that the principal can design incentives and schemes (e.g. monitoring, bonding and oversight) to curb the agent's potential abuse (UNODC, n/d).

This approach is therefore dependent on the existence of 'Principled Principals' in civil society and positions of authority, who are willing to hold the agent to account (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell (2013). The approach also proposes the introduction of control instruments to limit agents' discretion as well as reducing their monopoly (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell (2013).

Collective Action Theory on the other hand, promotes collective and coordinated approaches, such as reform coalitions or proactive alliances of like-minded organisations to name a few to address corruption when corruption has become a social norm (UNODC, n/d). Proponents of the Collective Action theory are also in favour of the 'big bang approach', which is described as a simultaneous shift in thinking where large numbers of participants on both sides of the bribery equation stop the exchange of favours (Golden, 2019, Shetland Neurodiversity Project 2025b). This stops the 'culture of expectations' between bribe takers and bribe givers i.e. breaking corruption equilibrium at scale. Game Theory on the other hand sees the success of anti-corruption depending on shifting the incentives of both bribe takers and bribe payers simultaneously, transforming corruption from a rational choice into an irrational and costly one.

It is also clear that these models individually or collectively have both strengths and weaknesses. For example, Principal-Agent and Collective Action have been critiqued for viewing corruption solely as a problem, ignoring the fact that in some contexts, and for some people, corruption provides a solution for problems which they face (Marquette and Peiffer (2015). This has serious implications for the crafting of any anti-corruption strategies. Notwithstanding the flaws of the first two perspectives, Marquette and Peiffer (2015) also call for the complimentary use of Principal-Agent and Collective Action, rather than viewing them as diametrically opposed. They also assert that the context should drive the anticorruption not the theory (Marquette and Peiffer, 2015). This is clearly shown by the Principal-Agent Model's failure to comprehensively address the issue of corruption in developing countries. This means that the foregoing concepts, theories and perspectives all require careful and objective consideration in analysing the findings herein, as well as crafting meaningful recommendations for Zimbabwe

In addition to assessing the utilities of various theories, this report adopted a set of concepts from other national bribery studies published within the global movement against corruption to enrich its analysis, in particular the Zambia Bribe Payers Index (ZBPI) Survey Report by Transparency International Zambia (TI-Zambia) and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Their report uses indicators of **Probability** and **Prevalence** to measure bribery in Zambia. In this regard, their reports codify the units of measurement in terms of **Service-seeking interaction (SSI)**, **Bribe-seeking incident (BSI)** and **Bribe-paid incident (BPI)**. Probability of a bribery experience means a percentage measure of **how likely it is that a bribe is solicited (BSI) during a Survey respondent's service-seeking interaction (SSI)**. The formula to calculate this is $BSI/SSI \times 100 = \text{Probability}$. On the other hand, the prevalence of a bribery experience means a percentage measure of the number of respondents who paid bribes (BPI) relative to the total number of observed Bribe-seeking Incidents (BSI). The formula to calculate this is $BPI/BSI \times 100 = \text{Prevalence}$. These indicators make it easier to measure trends in the occurrence of bribery, enabling trend analysis.

2.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employed a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data described in Bryman (2012). The value of the mixed methods approach is the use of triangulation or greater validity to mutually corroborate the findings from the two approaches Bryman (2012).

The quantitative data enables accurate reporting of levels of bribery which is a non-tangible unit of study requiring the use of proxy indicators; whilst the qualitative data adds political, social and other important context to the statistical data. The quantitative data was gleaned mostly from a survey of a representative sample of 1,317 respondents nationally, whilst the qualitative data came from a carefully selected sample of participants reached through physical and online focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with key informants who had experience, knowledge or analysis on the subject. The 20 FGDs included 239 participants whilst the KIIs included 34 informants giving the research a total outreach of 1,590 individuals. There was also ongoing examination of peer reviewed and grey literature on the subject of bribery as well as policy documents, media reports, speeches, websites, podcasts to name a few to complement the qualitative data.

2.3. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study employed a clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for sampling existing literature, in terms of its publication in a specific time frame (10 years), relevance on the topic, credibility, and comprehensiveness. The main target population of respondents in the study were adults spread across 10 provinces. The field researchers in the survey targeted respondents in rural, urban and peri-urban populations for geographic inclusivity, as well as giving each province an equal chance to be represented in the data. Previous studies have excluded the Zimbabwean Diaspora as a source of information.

However, for practical reasons one must assume that Zimbabweans domiciled outside the country may also experience bribe taking behaviour in their day-to-day engagements with locally based service institutions. This implies the inclusion of the Diaspora via online data gathering platforms promoted on TI Z's social media platforms, to constitute an eleventh geographical strata.

The survey segment of the study targeted a minimum of 1,200 respondents, noting that figure defines the minimum target population generally accepted as the threshold of a representative survey for the adult population in Zimbabwe. A sample of 1,200 gives a study a 95% confidence level, as well as a $\pm 3\%$ margin of error (small room for difference). The study also sought to reflect the gender proportions in the adult population as well as education and income levels. The FGDs and KIIs targeted a broad mix of country experts, business and informal traders, Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representatives, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), anticorruption experts, academia, think tanks, development partners, the media and policymakers to name a few. Annex 1 provides greater detail on the demographic characteristics of the individuals reached in the study.

2.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The questions which were targeted at the public versus those for key informants was different to avoid duplication, data overload, and unfocused findings. The public survey and FGD instruments aimed to capture lived experiences, perceptions, and the prevalence of bribery. The KIIs instrument on the other hand aimed to foster understanding of the systemic factors, policy gaps, enablers, and institutional dynamics that sustain bribery.

The link to the online survey instrument was distributed in several social media platforms, whilst the one for key informants was also handed out in policy dialogue platforms for optimal reach. Survey respondents and key informants who preferred to contribute remotely were given access to the respective instruments via Kobo Toolbox. Some of the questions were greatly influenced by Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) studies. The instruments were shared with anti-corruption experts within and outside Zimbabwe, with the survey instrument specifically piloted on 26 individuals in Manicaland Province on 26 June 2025. The insights from this engagement was used to refine it.

2.5. DATA ANALYSIS AND VALIDATION

The data from the field researchers was entered into Kobo Toolbox to form a single data set for ease of analysis of statistical data. Microsoft Power BI was used to turn statistical data into graphic visualisations. Transcripts of Qualitative data from each KII and FGD was prepared after the meeting. Thematic analysis, which focuses on discerning recurrent patterns across the data gathered was employed. A blend of framework and emergent analysis was used for this purpose. The thematic analysis was complemented by generation of graphic visualisations of qualitative data using www.wordclouds.com. The final analysis triangulated data from Kobo Toolbox data set and coding frame for validity of the findings. An online validation meeting was conducted with key stakeholders on 1 December 2025.

2.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Every field researcher was trained on the following principles in line with the TI draft Code of Research Ethics which was used in this study:



Informed Consent (participants demonstrating a full understanding of the purpose of the research, agreeing to participate, giving the research team access to their data and agreeing to be cited/or not in the final report)



Confidentiality (ensuring that participants' identities are not disclosed, either directly or indirectly, without their explicit consent.)



Transparency (disclosure by TI Z of its methods, findings, and conclusions with both participants and the wider academic community.)



Accountability (TI Z ensuring that its research is conducted ethically and following relevant laws and regulations.)



Safeguarding and protection of vulnerable groups No children were interviewed for the research, with responses only sought from adults.

2.7. LIMITATIONS

Despite reaching out to selected representative groups of Diasporans, the planned online FGD did not eventually take place as scheduled. The report aimed to provide a national overview of bribery prevalence by presenting statistical trends of bribery cases taken to court for prosecution, cases convicted, and cases withdrawn. However, this data was not accessible by the time of completing the study. Field researchers involved in face-to-face interviews for the survey indicated that people generally cooperated with the study once given assurances.

However most of them showed discomfort in divulging their level of income, their level of education and whether they had previously offered a bribe. They expressed fear and reservations in sharing their experiences due to the sensitive nature of the topic and fear of repercussions if identified. The topic of payment of bribes with sexual favours was also particularly sensitive.

Findings

03

This section assessed the prevalence of bribery within public sector institutions in Zimbabwe. The lived experiences and perceptions of citizens were captured as they seek and interact with public officials. Most of the surveyed respondents (85%) affirmed that they had a Service-seeking interaction (SSI) in the preceding 12 months, giving the study credible access to lived experiences of citizens in public service delivery.

SERVICE USERS' EXPERIENCES WITH BRIBE SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Respondents in the survey were asked whether they thought the level of bribery as a form of corruption in Zimbabwe had increased in the preceding three years. As shown in Figure 2 below, the majority (56%) said that corruption had strongly increased, compared to 29.7% who believed that corruption had merely increased. Only 8.2% perceived that the levels of bribery had remained the same. The idea that corruption had increased significantly was echoed in the FGDs where it was one of the salient themes (See Table 1 below).

FIGURE 2 EXPERIENCES OR PERCEPTIONS OF THE INCREASE OF BRIBERY IN ZIMBABWE IN THE LAST 3 YEARS

Table 1 Insights from FGDs on the State of Bribery

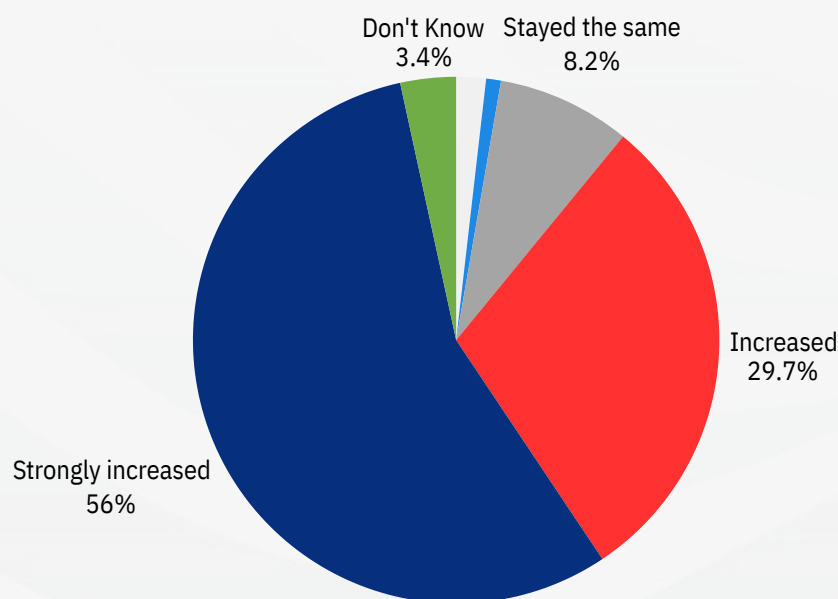
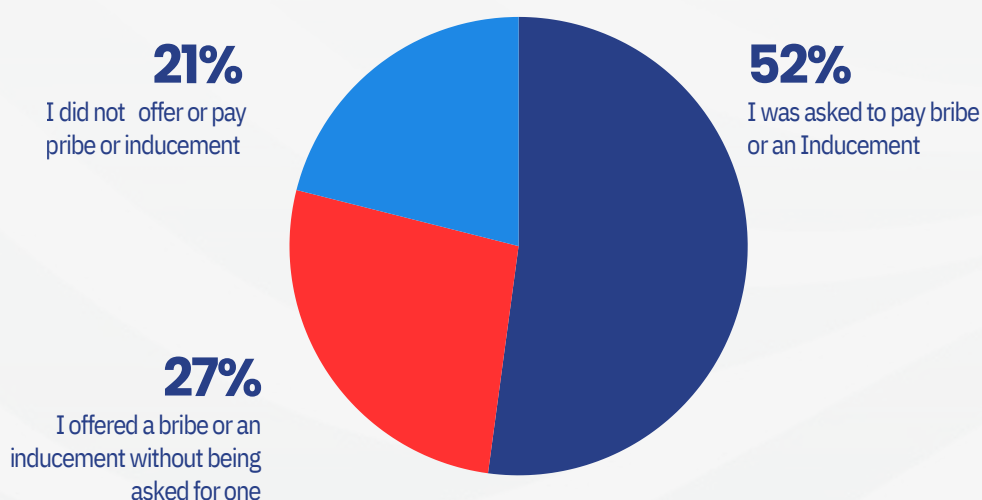


TABLE 1 INSIGHTS FROM FGDS ON THE STATE OF BRIBERY

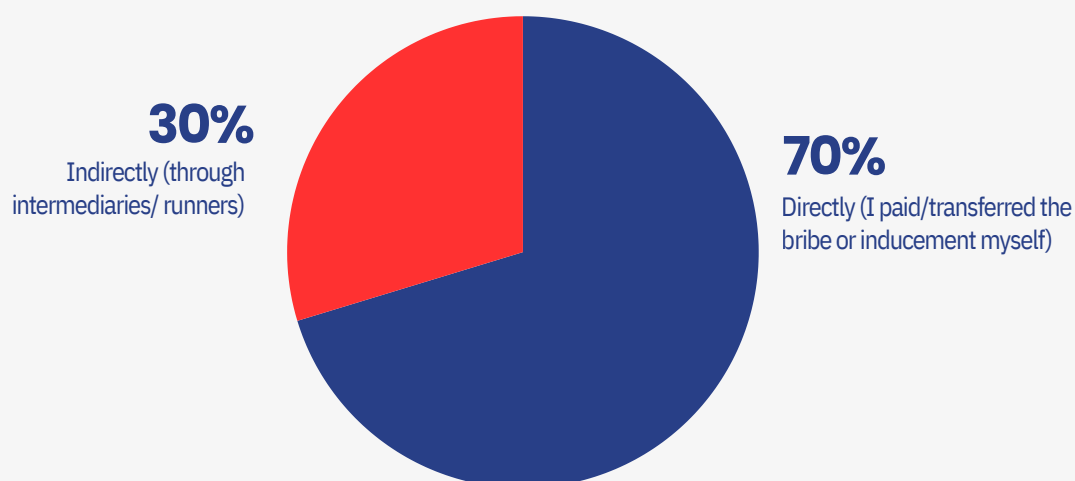
| Theme | Data Source | Frequency |
|------------------------|--|-----------|
| Increased | FGD #1, FGD #2, FGD #3, FGD #4, FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #8, FGD #9, FGD #10, FGD #11, FGD #12, FGD #13, FGD #15, FGD #16, FGD #17, FGD #18, FGD #19, FGD #20 | 18 |
| Normalised | FGD #1, FGD #2, FGD #3, FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #8, FGD #16, FGD #17, FGD #18, FGD #20 | 10 |
| Impunity | FGD #2, | 2 |
| Corruption has Evolved | FGD #7 | 1 |

Survey respondents were also asked whether they had experienced bribe seeking incidences (BSI) as they sought public services (SSI). As shown in Figure 3 below the vast majority (79%) had been involved in bribery, because 27% admitted to offering a bribe (BP-I), whilst 52% had been asked to pay a bribe or inducement (BSI). Using the formula explained above, the probability of paying a bribe during service delivery in Zimbabwe in 2025 is 53% or 599 of 1,120 SSIs. In 2021, the probability was 53% or 1,323 of 2,507 SSIs so it has remained the same. The Prevalence for 2025 on the other and is 51% or 308 of 599 BSIs. This is less than the prevalence in 2021 which was 61% or 809 of 1,323 BSIs which marks a significant reduction. This reduction can be attributed to the end of COVID-19 restrictions which prevailed at the time of writing the previous NBPI, which partly increased the levels of bribery as people sought various goods and services.

FIGURE 3 BRIBE-SEEKING INCIDENCES (BSI)

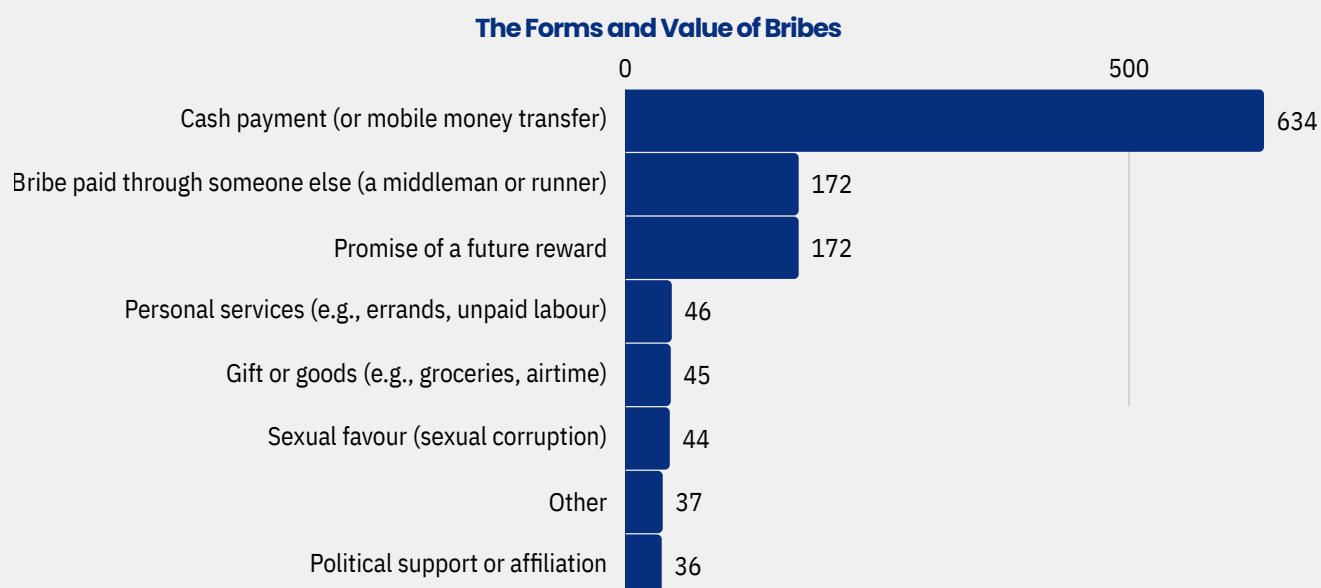
Asked which channel respondents used to exchange the bribe or inducement, the majority of respondents (70%) paid directly to the bribe-seeker, compared to 30% paying indirectly through intermediaries or runners as shown in Figure 4 below.

FIGURE 4 CHANNEL FOR BRIBE OR INDUCEMENT EXCHANGE



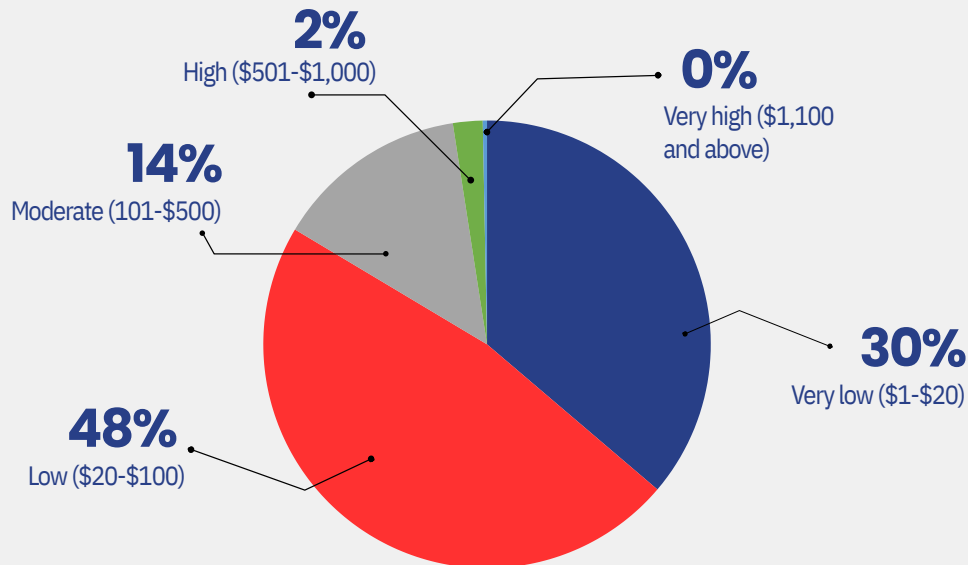
Cash payments (or mobile money transfer) dominate the forms of bribe payment in the public survey as shown in Figure 5 below. Payment of bribes through cash payments also dominated responses by Key Informants. Payments in kind are also included in terms of giving a token of appreciation or 'tip'.

FIGURE 5 THE FORM OF BRIBES/INDUCEMENTS



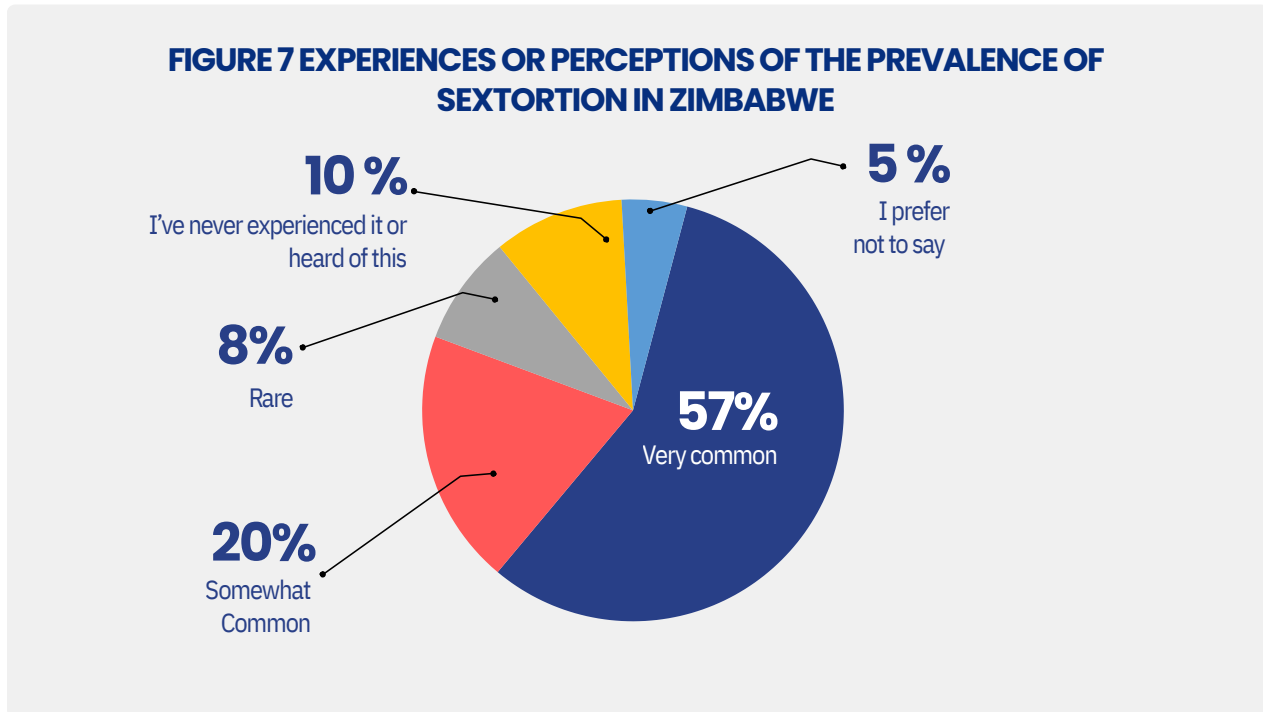
As shown in Figure 6 below, the majority of respondents (48%) who paid bribes valued them at between US\$2–\$100, followed by 36% paying bribes of US\$1–US\$20. This places most of the recorded experiences at the level of petty corruption. Fewer respondents in the survey paid higher bribes of US\$101–US\$500 (14%), and US\$501–US\$1,000).

FIGURE 6 THE VALUE OF BRIBES/INDUCEMENTS



3.1. SEXUAL FAVOURS AS A FORM OF BRIBE PAYMENT

As highlighted above, this study sought to gather more detailed insights on this phenomenon of sexual corruption. Asked about their experience or perceptions of the prevalence of sextortion in Zimbabwe, a significant majority (57%) of survey respondents said it was **'very common'** as highlighted in Figure 7 below. Another segment (20%) said it was somewhat common, whilst 8% said it was rare. The combined responses affirming its existence shows that the exchange of sexual favours as a form of bribe payment is prevalent in the country. Key informants were engaged to foster understanding of the systemic factors, policy gaps, enablers, and institutional dynamics that sustain the practice of sexual corruption. Half of them said that payment of bribes through sexual favours was 'Somewhat Common' whilst 44% said it was **'Very Common'**.



Responses from all Survey respondents, Key Informants and FGD participants were analysed to gain an understanding of the contexts in which sexual corruption was perpetrated (i.e. specifying the sector – whether public or private) and the institutional environments or activities where it occurs.). Briefly, both the Public and Private sectors in Zimbabwe are afflicted by this type of corruption. The activity most impacted by it in both sectors is the employment process, in particular recruitment and promotions. Over and above government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), political parties were specifically cited for not giving female candidates appointments without the risk of demands for sexual favours from their male counterparts (FGD #1).

The Education sector (both Public and Private institutions) is also impacted by sexual corruption mainly in the Higher and Tertiary Education (HTE) sector where students (mostly female) pay with sex for marks in order to graduate. Said one FGD participant, “... **learners give sexual favours to pass modules. The minute you inbox the lecturer for assistance, it is assumed you are agreeing to it [sextortion]**” (FGD #3). This finding echoes findings of a 2023 research by TI Z on the forms of corruption occurring in the HTE sector, where it was found that the relationship between learners and teaching staff was compromised (Malinga, Chivheya and Matanga, 2024).

As regards the private sector, respondents alleged that companies in the mining and hospitality sectors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the ones most plagued by incidences of sexual corruption. Student learners try to access opportunities for learning attachment are, likely to be asked for sexual favours by recruiters (FGD #10, FGD #11, FGD #12). In the area of small-scale miners and allied services, **“women in business have to pay with sexual favours to succeed in business, for prospecting licenses and processing their ore”** (FGD #18). One FGD highlighted that the Hospitality Sector, in particular fast-food outlets, have created the perception that salespersons should be females with good looks (FGD #2). This has the risk of making women’s physical appearance an unofficial qualification to specific posts, where gatekeepers (managers, supervisors, recruiters) gain discretionary power to exploit that perception. Subsequent employment decisions become more transactional, and less merit-based, sometimes involving demands for sex.



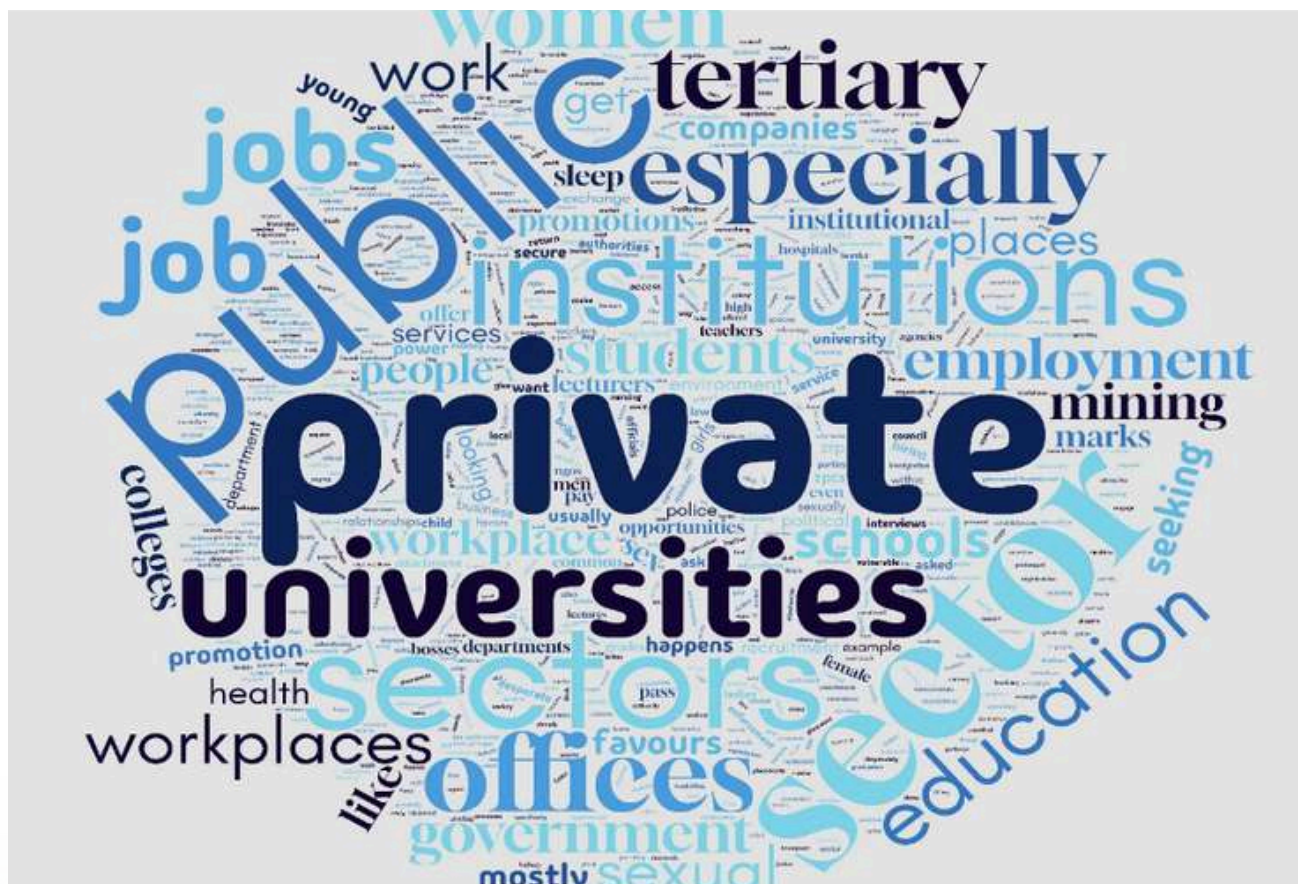
Where NGOs and Civic Organisations are concerned, respondents asserted that the non-profit sector has become 'increasingly transactional' in that NGO officials demand sexual favours for job opportunities, per diems and aid ((FGD #1, FGD #4). They said the demand for sexual favours for aid or social welfare sometimes happens in collusion with traditional leaders who have detailed knowledge of beneficiaries of aid living in their jurisdiction (FGD #4).



Source: Canva

Whilst the majority of sextortion victims are female, the findings show that males are also involved. Respondents mentioned the term 'bootlicking' to describe a situation where a female employee is perpetrating sextortion on a male subordinate (FGD #3). Other respondents attributed the occurrence of sextortion to power dynamics between decision makers and their subordinates or beneficiaries, others gave the alternate view that those in lower positions can also harass those above them by proactively offering sexual favours, for example where victims provide sexual favours for marks/grades in universities (FGD #1, (FGD #9). The word cloud in Figure 9 below summarises all the responses to illustrate the salient points from the qualitative data on this question.

FIGURE 8 A SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE DATA ON SEXTORTION



PUBLIC SERVICES MOST PRONE TO BRIBERY

Respondents were asked to specify which public service they considered to have the highest levels of bribery in their interactions. The highest-ranking institutions picked as illustrated in Figure 10 below were the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) followed by the Vehicle Inspection Department (VID), a situation that mirrors the 2021 NBPI. Other noteworthy institutions, albeit to a lesser extent are Local Authorities (Urban/Rural Municipalities or Local Boards) and Government Health Institution (Hospitals or Clinics). A word cloud generated from responses by Key Informants (Figure 10 below) also confirms that the ZRP is perceived as the one impacted most by bribery.

FIGURE 9 PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS PERCEIVED AS HAVING THE HIGHEST BRIBERY LEVELS

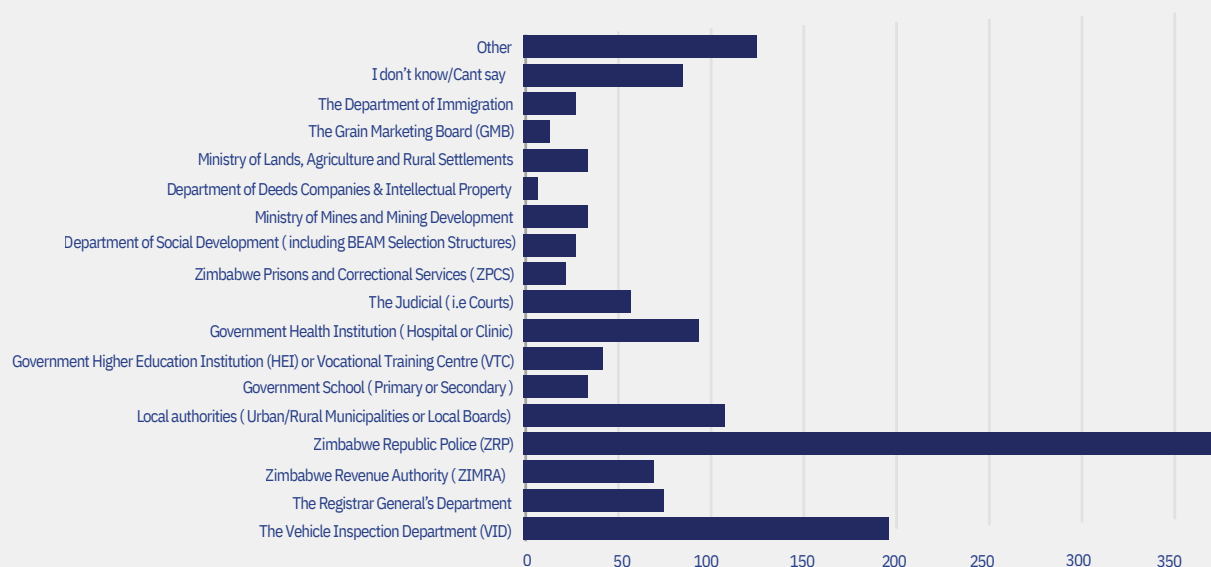


FIGURE 10 KII PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTIONS WITH HIGHEST BRIBERY LEVELS



The study also sought to ascertain if any outsourced public services also involved incidences of bribery. This is important because citizens may not know who is accountable for service delivery, creating accountability gaps. Furthermore, they are likely to still perceive the outsourced services as government functions. This means any bribe seeking behaviour by contractors may be seen as public sector corruption. Ultimately, public funds are still used when a service is outsourced, so bribery must be addressed since it distorts access or quality, thereby undermining both value for money and citizen trust in government. The majority (52%) of surveyed respondents said they had not experienced service delivery from government contractors, whilst 31% expressed ignorance on whether the service was outsourced as shown in Figure 11 below. This indicates lack of public knowledge of service delivery is provided to citizens with support from, or in partnership with private actors through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing contracts, and joint service delivery arrangements.

Notwithstanding this lack of awareness, the majority of those who clearly understood the question highlighted that they received health services through third parties, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive health rights. This includes family planning, maternal and newborn care, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and access to medication and specialist services e.g. laboratory work, physical therapy, and diagnostic imaging. As regards maternal health services, several respondents from Harare gave the example of vouchers provided by development partners for them to receive free maternal health care from public hospitals. Other examples included payment for utility bills, [motor vehicle] insurance and company registration through third parties.

More detailed knowledge emerged from the FGDs where individuals had greater levels of knowledge on the subject with clear examples of bribery given. For example, on the issue of health services, one FGD participant said, **"I was referred to an external service provider where the senior nurse charged a lower amount for a set of blood samples (intercepting institutional payments)"** (FGD #1). **"To get an immunization certificate you are told to go to a private facility who write the reports without even looking at the child, for a fee. The same is done to get a Food Handlers Certificate)"** said another FGD respondent (FGD #2). Another concern raised in 13 out of the 20 FGDs was with coercive referrals to private facilities where public health workers had a pecuniary interest where health workers received referral kickbacks from the private facilities. **"You get an automatic transfer from a public health facility to a private facility. Upon arrival you are given the first preference,"** said one participant (FGD #5) **"There is conflict of interest in prescribing and providing scanning services. You are forced to use particular service providers. There are results which are rejected if you don't use them,"** said another." (FGD #7). In another example given that the level of referral kickbacks was so entrenched, there was a shuttle service stationed permanently at the hospital to ferry patients to a specific private surgery and back (FGD #10).

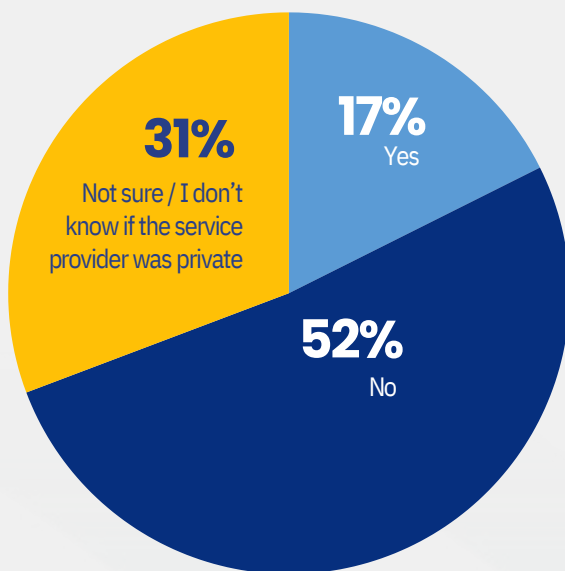


Referral kickbacks scandal rocks public hospitals

Some health workers in public facilities allegedly receive kick-backs to coerce patients to private facilities.

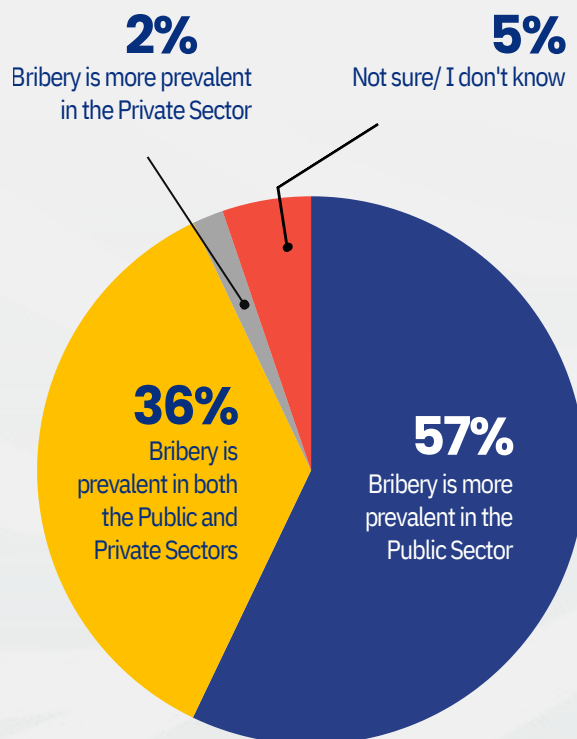
Another example of outsourced services where bribery is prevalent is that of municipal parking services. One FGD participant revealed that officials from a company outsourced to collect parking fees on behalf of the Council tend to charge private drivers for overstaying, whilst leaving illegal transport operators because they pay bribes (FGD #14). Some respondents implicated Municipal officers contracting a staff member's car to undertake patrols/raids (FGD #6). Another FGD described a situation in the education sector, where parents buy school uniforms only from certain suppliers because the companies involved pay a 'referral incentive' to the headmasters (FGD #12).

FIGURE 11 SERVICE SEEKING INTERACTIONS WITH OUTSOURCED/CONTRACTED ENTITIES IN THE PRECEDING 12 MONTHS



Closely linked to the issue of outsourced services, survey respondents were asked which sector, between the Public and Private, had the highest prevalence of bribery in Zimbabwe for accessing basic services. The majority (57%) shown in Figure 12 below said that bribery is more prevalent in the public sector, compared to 36% saying it is prevalent in both the public and private sectors. In explaining why citizens perceive the public sector to be more corrupt, one FGD participant said **“The public sector looks like it is more corrupt because of red tape. Perpetrators of corruption in that sector take time to remove from their positions due to long processes. This is unlike the private sector where action is instant.”** (FGD #9). The idea that the public sector dominates bribery seems to echo findings of the first NBPI in 2013, which highlighted the transferability of corruption from public and political institutions to the private sector (TI Z & Deloitte, 2013)

FIGURE 12 EXPERIENCES OR PERCEPTIONS OF SECTOR WITH HIGHEST PREVALENCE OF BRIBERY IN ZIMBABWE FOR ACCESSING BASIC SERVICES



THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF KEY FINDINGS

04

This section summarises the salient themes emerging from the qualitative data gleaned from the FGDs on peoples' experiences and perceptions of demands for bribes when interacting with government departments. As Table 3 below shows, some themes emerged more prominently than others. The section will only analyse the most concerning issues across multiple FGDs for economy of space.

TABLE 2 INSIGHTS FROM FGDs ON THE STATE OF BRIBERY

| Salient Themes from FGDs on Experiences/Perceptions with Bribery | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| Theme | Data Source | Frequency |
| Security/Policing | FGD #1, FGD #2, FGD #3, FGD #4, FGD #5, FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #8, FGD #9, FGD #10, FGD #11, FGD #12, FGD #13, FGD #14, FGD #16, FGD #17, FGD #18, FGD #20 | 18 |
| Health Services | FGD #2, FGD #3, FGD #4, FGD #5, FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #8, FGD #9, FGD #10, FGD #11, FGD #12, FGD #14, FGD #16, FGD #20 | 14 |
| Education Services | FGD #3, FGD #4, FGD #5, FGD #7, FGD #9, FGD #10, FGD #11, FGD #12, FGD #13, FGD #17, FGD #18, FGD #19, FGD #20 | 13 |
| Transport & Vehicle Services | FGD #1, FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #8, FGD #12, FGD #14, FGD #18, FGD #19, FGD #20 | 9 |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Civil Registration / Identity Documents | FGD #1, FGD #2, FGD #4, FGD #5, FGD #6, FGD #8, FGD #16, FGD #17 | 8 |
| Social Welfare & Grants | FGD #4, FGD #6, FGD #10, FGD #13, FGD #18, FGD #20 | 6 |
| Local Government Services | FGD #3, FGD #5, FGD #7, FGD #12, FGD #17 | 5 |
| Utilities and Infrastructure | FGD #1, FGD #2, FGD #10, FGD #16, FGD #20 | 5 |
| Immigration & Border Services | FGD #1, FGD #4, FGD #5, FGD #12 | 5 |
| Recruitment and Employment Bribes | FGD #4, FGD #6, FGD #8, FGD #10, FGD #16, | 5 |
| Tax/Revenue Services | FGD #2, FGD #10, FGD #11, FGD #15, FGD #16 | 5 |
| NGO Regulation & Oversight | FGD #5, FGD #6, FGD #10, FGD #20 | 4 |
| Local Government Services | FGD #4, FGD #8, FGD #20 | 3 |
| Mining & Extractives | FGD #5, FGD #11 | 2 |
| Unofficial intermediary. | FGD #1, FGD #11 | 2 |
| Courts/Justice Sector | FGD #9, FGD #18 | 2 |
| Election Supervision & Management | FGD #5 | 1 |
| Public Procurement | FGD #2, | 1 |
| Environmental Management | FGD #4 | 1 |
| Utilities & Infrastructure | FGD #8 | 1 |
| Agriculture & Land Services | FGD #13 | 1 |

4.1. SECURITY/POLICING

Security/Policing was the most prominent theme emerging from 15 out of the 20 the FGDs conducted across the country. Briefly, this relates to bribe taking behaviour by members of the police force as they conduct their duties on a day-to-day basis to either allow/facilitate some illegal activities to take place or to enable the bribe giver to escape punishment. As a recap, it was highlighted above that the promise to withdraw a negative consequence (e.g. fine or other related punishment) is one of the prominent justifications given by public officials for bribes. The prominence of the theme of Security/Policing adds credence to the survey responses on the highest-ranking public service which respondents considered to have the highest levels of bribery in their interactions above.



Some Police officers allegedly receive bribes to allow illegal activities to take place.

As regards bribe taking to enable illegal activities, respondents alleged that police officers can accept bribes to enable activities such as drug manufacturing and trafficking, or cell phone theft. Examples of instances where an officer can accept a bribe for someone who accepts punishment but want to get dockets amended, escape the charge for public drinking, or to let traffic offences go. The Traffic Division was the one cited in most examples, with respondents citing examples of alleged bribery to allow vehicles with damaged third license plates, and unroadworthy vehicles on the road. They also allegedly take bribes for trucks with material from mine dumps to pass roadblocks illegally. They were also accused of abusing the "Stop" sign rule and other road markings by creating ambiguities which create opportunities to demand bribes. Some participants expressed the fear that errant officers are merely transferred to new areas, allowing corruption to continue. Figure 14 below shows some of the sentiments expressed in the FGDs across the country.

FIGURE 13 SELECTED FGD SENTIMENTS ON SECURITY AND POLICING

"The Police and the VID charge \$3 or ZAR50 daily so that transport operators can move outside their designated areas"

"Mushikashika's park right in front of Police Patrols suggesting that members of the force own the vehicles."

"Some members of the ZRP follow-up touts to get a bribe daily so that they operate."

"Well known drug dens prevail. Police tip-off the Drug Lords and there is a sophisticated system of collecting bribes to ensure their crimes die a natural death."

"I know a lady who sells drugs at some village, but she never gets arrested but would be exchanging sexual favours with the officials, to avoid arrests."

"The Police in our area take bribes to facilitate the movement of drugs which are grown in one area to be distributed to other parts of the country."

"The Police allegedly collude with personnel in mobile phone companies to block cases of cell phone theft."

"The police will never be short of accusations against citizens, so people are forced to part with their money."

"Police can change a charge for a bribe. A docket was changed from attempted murder to assault"

"The police can trump up charges on an individual to reap benefits, one pays bribes to escape punishment."

"At the ZRP when trying to get a Police Clearance you need to pay a bribe."

"The police charge us for guarding community property."

"The police collude with criminal networks who steal or extort tobacco from farmers"

4.2. HEALTH SERVICES

The second highest theme emerging from the FGDs was bribery at public health facilities. Participants alleged that bribes are demanded throughout the delivery of public health, from bribes for enrolment into training programmes to booking procedures and receiving priority or quality care. Health workers reportedly create opportunities for bribes, to attend to patients faster or guarantee them the best treatment whilst they are hospitalised (FGD #6, FGD #11). The issue of referral kickbacks from private facilities also re-emerged. FGD participants also raised incidences of related practices such as the sale of diverted/stolen medicines which are outside the focus of this study on bribery (FGD #9, FGD #12, FGD #14, FGD #16). However, these behaviours though technically categorised differently from bribery have a similar effect on citizens to bribery by compelling them to make unauthorised payments for public services. Figure 14 below shows some of the sentiments expressed in the FGDs on Health Services

'Lives have been lost': Pregnant women in Zimbabwe forced to pay bribes when giving birth

Two women took Harare authorities to court to force them to reopen 42 maternity clinics



Some health workers in public facilities allegedly demand bribes to prioritise patients or guarantee them quality assistance.

[1] Also referred to as Tsviriyo's by respondents, Mushikashikas are illegal pirate taxis

FIGURE 14 SELECTED FGD SENTIMENTS ON HEALTH SERVICES

"At the medical health centres, they had to pay a bribe, having been told that the implements for surgery were not locally available. Unfortunately, even after paying the child cannot walk properly."

"It is now systemic starting from training and recruitment of health care workers to the point of service delivery where shortages impact on recipients of care."

"In the hospital, for maternal health you need to pay your way to get a booking."

"Especially if you have complications in the health care system you are vulnerable to bribe taking behaviour."

"In council clinic they take 20 people per day to register pregnancies with women queuing as early as 3am."

"To get a CT scan there was a fake waiting list/long queue presented to force them to pay a bribe."

"In the health sector, patients are being abused (emotionally etc.) particularly, expectant mothers who cannot pay tips/bribes 'huku yaAmbuya'²"

"In Health at the general hospital you are not attended to unless you pay a tip to the doctor or health workers."

"At the hospital there is always someone who comes to negotiate the final hospital bill with you." [for a bribe]

"The doctor demanded a bribe to allow a patient to be discharged from the Maternity wards. He wanted a bribe of more than \$10."

"In the local hospital those who pay more get operated on faster than those who pay less."

"Health workers create inconveniences and medical emergencies."

4.3. EDUCATION SERVICES

The education sector in Zimbabwe is extensive, covering primary & secondary as well as the higher technical education [HTE] levels, each with its own policy and institutional arrangements. As the sentiments in Figure 15 below show, each sub sector has its own unique challenges with bribery. The typical bribes in the primary & secondary Education level involved bribes paid for deployment or teachers or transferring them from one area to the next (FGD #3, FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #9, FGD #11, FGD #13, FGD #17). Learning institutions also had bribery for enrolment (7 out of the 20 FGDs) as well as supplementary charges for extra tuition (10 out of the 18 FGDs). The HTE level also had its own challenges, such as bribes for employment, and awarding passes and attachments in the learning process.



Source: Canva

[2] Huku yaAmbuya which traditionally refers to a chicken given to a midwife as a token of appreciation, can be roughly translated in this discussion to mean a bribe given to a health worker by expecting mothers to guarantee prioritisation or quality care.

FIGURE 15 SELECTED FGD SENTIMENTS ON EDUCATION SERVICES

"I have been asked to pay money for extra lessons for my grade 1 son. Other parents who paid are still behind notwithstanding the payments."

"When applying for an ECD place one needs to pay a bribe/tip of \$20 to school administrators."

"A school head requested a beer to enrol my child."

"Parents are forced to pay \$1 per week every Saturday to go for extra lessons. Children are intimidated not to say they are going for extra lessons. Some lessons and learning materials are withheld from learners."

"We were asked to pay 'mari ye Danda' (a bribe) amounting to \$250, to move my wife (a lady teacher) from one district to another. The transfer never got through. On another attempt \$350 was charged."

"The parents pay teaching staff for their children to be included in some opportunities without merit."

"The local university has caused broken marriages through bribery for extending contracts for female staff."

"A girl in our university got a learning attachment assessment without even getting an attachment posting."

"Student nurses are vulnerable to their supervisors."

"At our university, an official takes bribes to change results in the database."

"Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are now corrupt because people are getting undeserved qualifications."

"Lecturers pressure male students to fix relationships/romantic liaisons with female learners for them in return to get good grades/passes."

4.4. TRANSPORT & VEHICLE SERVICES

FGD participants also shared their thoughts around bribery in the Transport and Vehicle Services sector (11 out of the 20 FGDs). They mentioned that people could part with amounts ranging between \$300–\$500 to get drivers licenses without going for the required tests. According to them, female prospective drivers are charged less than their male counterparts. For those going for driving tests, the VID inspectors accepted bribes ranging between \$100 and \$150 to award a young driver with a license. Candidates pay the money through their driving instructors acting as middlemen or placed in the ashtray of the vehicle during the test. Some respondents asserted that the prevalence of corruption proved that the computerised examination system for licenses has not been effective, since inspectors have found loopholes.



Some VID officials allegedly demand bribes to allow unroadworthy commercial vehicles to continue operating.

They also said the long process of licensing a vehicle at the Vehicle Inspection Department (VID) licensing is characterised by bribery for accelerating the application. Owners of commercial vehicles such as buses openly bribe traffic police through their conductors/touts whilst officers of the VID were said to be openly taking bribes from truck drivers.

4.5. CIVIL REGISTRATION / IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

The issue of Civil Registration/Identity Documents was also a salient theme in 8 out of the 20 FGDs. The births and registration process has been monetised in a well-coordinated system involving security guards and registry officials. Illustrating the idea presented above, that rent-seeking agents can introduce unnecessary red tape to attract bribes, respondents said that one is tossed from one office to another when applying for new identity documents, especially birth certificates. As a result, applicants were said to be parting with amounts of up to \$300 to get all documents (birth certificate, National Identity Card and a Passport) in a matter of hours.

Individuals also paid bribes to replace lost documents such as birth certificates needed for new passports. This puts pressure on individuals to short-circuit the long process of queueing twice for two related documents. It was revealed that those who don't pay bribes get waiting passes instead of new plastic IDs instead. One participant related an experience where she was intimidated to pay a bribe in order to obtain birth and identity documents for the children of her sister who had passed away in South Africa.

In remote areas, people are told that the Registry Department has no fuel so one has to pay a facilitation fee. This suggests that under-resourcing service departments creates opportunities for corruption. However, when applicants proactively offer bribes to jump the queue they exacerbate the problem with their complicity.

4.6. SOCIAL WELFARE & GRANTS

Another key theme emerging from the FGDs is the topic of bribery linked to the distribution of Social Welfare and Grants. One area which was highlighted is the selection of beneficiaries for the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) (FGD #2, FGD #26, FGD #10, FGD #17, FGD #19). Giving testimony on this issue, a participant in one FGD said, "The BEAM forms are paid for (\$15 - \$40 per child). This money is spread amongst the selection committee members" (FGD #10). As testimony of the scale of this challenge, the GoZ recently announced the suspension of disbursements under BEAM, amid concerns over abuse of the system, as it moves to introduce a new beneficiary selection template aimed at improving transparency and targeting (The Herald, 31 October 2025; <https://www.heraldonline.co.zw/government-pulls-plug-on-beam-payments-over-system-abuse-concerns/>).

Government pulls plug on Beam payments over system abuse concerns



Sikhumbeni Nkomo, Zimbabwean Writer

THE Government has suspended disbursements under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) amid concerns over abuse of the system, as it moves to introduce a new beneficiary selection template aimed at improving transparency and targeting.

Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare Minister Edmore Mafema said the Government remains committed to clearing the legacy BEAM debt — currently standing at

Research by TI Z has revealed allegations of bribery for parents to get their children admitted onto the BEAM programme.

Respondents also raised concern with the allocation of assistive devices for persons with disability (PWDs) at the Department of Social Development (DSD). One respondent said, “Duty bearers demand bribes to give citizens access to social safety nets (e.g. loans, scholarships or empowerment schemes, disability grants etc.)”. (FGD #2). Food distribution to Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) was also said to be compromised with bribery in the selection of beneficiaries (FGD #4). The distribution of presidential inputs and related social welfare grants is fraught with bribery at local levels. The categories of deserving people such as poor or vulnerable or PWDs never get the benefits. There is corruption in the selection of beneficiaries where traditional leaders ask for tokens. One FGD raised concerns with the selection of beneficiaries of the Presidential Scholarships, saying locals lose out in the selection process (FGD #4, FGD #7). Distribution of agricultural inputs from the Presidential Scheme were also said not to be going to deserving people (FGD #4, FGD #7).

4.7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The theme of provision of Local Government Services also emerged from the FGDs. In one meeting it emerged that tampering with the Council’s billing system was facilitates corruption particularly in water provision. Participants were not sure why the local authority continued to use estimates when there was no water in the system. In this context they found it odd that municipal water meter readers were soliciting bribes from resident to mis-record the usage readings.

Another prominent area for bribe taking expressed is the allocation of land to developers in areas not designated for construction such as wetlands (FGD #2). There was also the challenge of paying bribes then experiencing double allocations (FGD #2, FGD #20). One respondent said, “You have to pay a bribe of \$3,000 at the Local Board for land allocation



There have also been allegations of bribery linked to the allocation of vacant land in Zimbabwe.

They are not giving out serviced stands. Land barons are also in the mix. Council employees allocate each other land.” (FGD #3). Another said, “You are asked to bribe officers at the Local Board to get a stand. Otherwise ,you will be forever on the housing list” (FGD #5). Echoing this another said “I attempted to get land but lost out because I did not pay a bribe. I was made to ‘disappear’ from the list (FGD #8). Stands were also said to be repossessed without notification creating more pressure to pay bribes (FGD #4).

Municipal Police in some localities were also accused of taking bribes to return vendors confiscated goods or stealing them outright (FGD #4, (FGD #13). One respondent said “Council by-laws restrict haphazard selling of goods. However, the local authority officials collect \$3 daily outside the regulations [to allow this to continue] (FGD #5). Furthermore, Municipal police are also alleged to demand bribes from Kombi operators to operate freely against Council by-laws (FGD #12). “Council officials take bribes when inspecting businesses for shop licenses (\$15). They return systematically in cahoots with the Police (ZRP). There is ambiguity in terms of who is supposed to inspect businesses for shop licenses,” said another (FGD #17). There was the startling revelation that Local Authority Building Inspectors don’t even show up and approve without physically assessing a site after taking bribes (FGD #1, FGD #7). Linked to this, another FGD said that Council Building Inspectors forced people to buy products at their hardware stores in order to pass their building projects. (FGD #3).

Additionally, “Council Fire inspectors take bribes to enforce regulations on fire extinguishers. They threaten to close the office (FGD #7). Local administrative officials such as District Development Coordinators, (DDCs) extort donations and other materials from NGOs to operate in their jurisdiction (FGD #7). Churches and other religious entities were also reported to be paying bribes to operate from undesignated areas (FGD #20).

4.8. UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The theme of Utilities and Infrastructure also emerged as an issue. In one FGD it was said “There is now a system to write off utility arrears. They track those who pay regularly and transfer the amounts to those people (administrative corruption). However, one needs to pay a bribe for this. You can also pay a bribe to get arrears written down as errors.” (FGD #1). Another source said bribes are now demanded for water reconnections (FGD #2, FGD #8, FGD #16). The same was alsoprevalent for getting electricity reconnections or faults attended to FGD #1, FGD #10). Said one respondent, “At household level it has increased. We had one month without electricity without assistance. They expect you to pay something for assistance. It was only fixed when we demanded to speak to management” (FGD #1). Municipal workers are also reported to be using the incapacitation of Council to request bribes. “you are told there is no vehicle) so you pay for the convenience of getting served” (FGD #8).

In a copycat behaviour, it was said that local community leaders charge citizens money to access water at communal boreholes. “At public boreholes there are marshals/guards who take bribes for access [a reference to water point committees who administer these water points]” (FGD #20)

4.9. IMMIGRATION & BORDER SERVICES

Respondents also referred to the issue of Immigration & Border Services. At the border post individuals who have overstayed reportedly **pay a bribe to get a different date on the passport stamp** (FGD #1). In another instance it was reported, “Immigration took bribes to let a family go into [the next country]. The Emergency Travel Document (ETD) pass costing \$40 each was deemed to be more costly. The family of four eventually paid \$30 to go through (FGD #12). In a different but related issue, individuals at the boarder pay for drug trafficking, “Bribes of up to \$55 paid to facilitate free passage for illicit drugs and skin lightening creams... The code for this transaction is the question “ulaani?” (what do you have?)” (FGD #1).

4.10. RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT BRIBES

The issue of bribery for recruitment into the ministry of education was prominent. It was reported that trained teachers stay for decades without getting employed whilst newly trained teachers get employment through bribery. Individuals were said to be parting with amounts of up to \$400 to get employed and deployed. Even when one gets deployed, they have to contend with working in another role, e.g. a Primary level teacher deployed to a Secondary School (FGD #9).

Over and above cash payments made, recruitment and employment is also closely linked to Sexual Corruption which will be revealed further below. Figure 16 below shows some of the sentiments expressed in the FGDs on recruitment and employment.

FIGURE 16 SELECTED FGD SENTIMENTS ON RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT BRIBES

“Qualified teachers have to pay a bribe of \$150 for employment at the district level.”

“For a nursing application you need to pay \$200 to get enrolled/employed.” It costs about \$600 for one to get an opportunity to train in nursing

Although nursing intake has an e-intake platform for fairness. However, there are officials who take \$250 to digitally interfere with the process. Without paying a bribe, one may never get a chance to be enrolled. A perception was expressed that the digital platform has worsened the situation.

Nursing intake (one needs to pay \$1,500) to get in. The bribe is shared among officials in the chain

“To get into the nursing profession nowadays without contacts is extremely difficult, particularly in a challenging economic environment. In numerous cases, Sex offers are made to get employment into a health facility.”

4.11 TAX/REVENUE SERVICES

The issue of Tax/Revenue Services emerged as a salient theme in four of the FGDs. The main issues raised related to taking bribes to facilitate smuggling, as well as unnecessary red tape and delays in processing specific rebates. One participant raised concern with the time it takes for the revenue authorities to process disability rebates. Nonetheless, if one pays the middlemen outside the revenue offices, the processing is accelerated. Others alleged that Customs officials delay in processing civil servants' papers when they apply for their tax rebates. They said the slow pace of processing the rebate increases an individual's storage charges, so they have to pay customs officials a bribe to accelerate the process. As regards smuggling, customs officials allegedly took bribes to enable the smuggling of unregistered medicines from Zambia and Mozambique. They were also alleged to be accepting bribes from transporters carrying smuggled goods. Another participant said, ***"At ports of entry it is difficult to get donations into the country because customs officials want to ask for bribes, as well as for imports like smuggled used clothing bales."***

4.12 NGO REGULATION & OVERSIGHT

At least five of the FGDs raised concern over bribery in the area of NGO Regulation and Oversight. They said the process of regulating organisations was increasingly transactional in an era where civic space is shrinking. There are also demands for bribery linked to operating a Private and Voluntary Organisation (PVO) in specific districts/geographical areas.

They gave examples of the PCs Office (ZRP public order office) in some areas, where some individuals pressure organisation to pay a bribe to implement a project in an area under their jurisdiction. Some respondents said that some local level officials threaten to falsify reports of a CSO's activity as a means of putting pressure on them to release payments. Furthermore, where a DDC official needs to be present at an organisation's meeting, more people than are necessary attend such meetings in the hope of getting transport allowances and other handouts at the expense of benefiting participants.

There are 'no-go areas' in Zimbabwe where CSOs cannot operate without being asked for a bribe by local officials. This put CSOs under pressure of bribe demands to operate in those areas. Linked to this, there was also negotiations to sign MOUs with some MDAs which also created corruption risks. The transforming of trusts to PVOs had therefore created a new opportunity for corruption. The challenges of bribery in regulating organisations explains why new organisations sometimes got licensed at the expense of older organisations who cannot pay bribes.

Cross-Cutting Insights

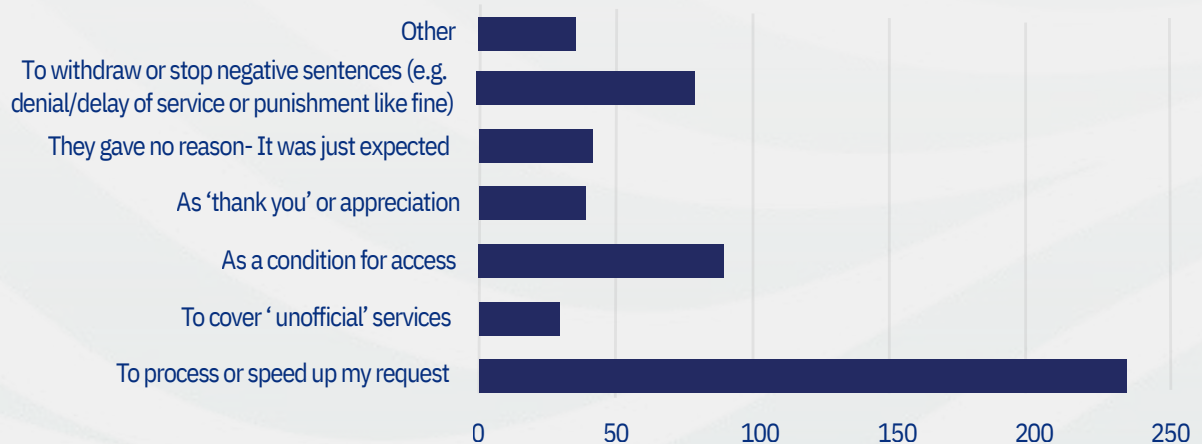
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5.1. Factors Fuelling Bribe Demands and Payment

It's important to analyse the drivers behind bribe demands and bribe payments. The Principal-Agent Theory above shines the spotlight on the interests of the actors involved in a corrupt relationship. In this regard, it was important to find out the interests of bribe payers and bribe seekers. Firstly, survey respondents were asked the reasons given by officials or intermediaries to justify bribes requested. The majority of survey respondents said that the officials justified their demands with the prospect of processing or speeding up a request at the point of service delivery as shown in Figure 17 below. It is also clear that officials may also create situations that put extra pressure on citizens to bribe for quicker service delivery. An example given is the excuse made by officials, that digital payment platforms and Point of Sale (POS) machines are out of order, forcing individuals to part with cash payments, some of which are captured (FGD #1). As highlighted above, some rent-seeking by officials may set up institutional barriers such as bureaucracy/red tapeism in the hope that some principals may be willing to pay bribes to circumvent them. Other significant reasons given was the promise to withdraw a negative consequence (e.g. fine or other related punishment), as well as guaranteeing access to a specific benefit at the point of service delivery.

An interesting input from the FGDs related to the intimidating service environments which forced citizens to pay bribes to get served quickly. Examples given were health care institutions in most aspects of care, including after death and stillbirths in dealing with morticians demanding bribes for the required paperwork (FGD #2). When the institutional theory of corruption is considered in this context, the intimidating service environments or poor customer orientation may be deliberately created by agents to put pressure on the public to pay bribes.

FIGURE 17 REASONS GIVEN BY OFFICIALS FOR BRIBES



Secondly survey respondents who paid a bribe were asked to state the reasons why they felt the need to do so. As shown in figure 18 below, the majority aimed to speed up the process of service delivery, which corresponds to the demands given by officials above. The need to speed up the process was also echoed by a large segment of respondents in the KIIs, with one saying citizens pay bribes to “To quicken processes. Generally, the turnover time for simple processes is too long” (Key Informant, Masvingo). Another said,



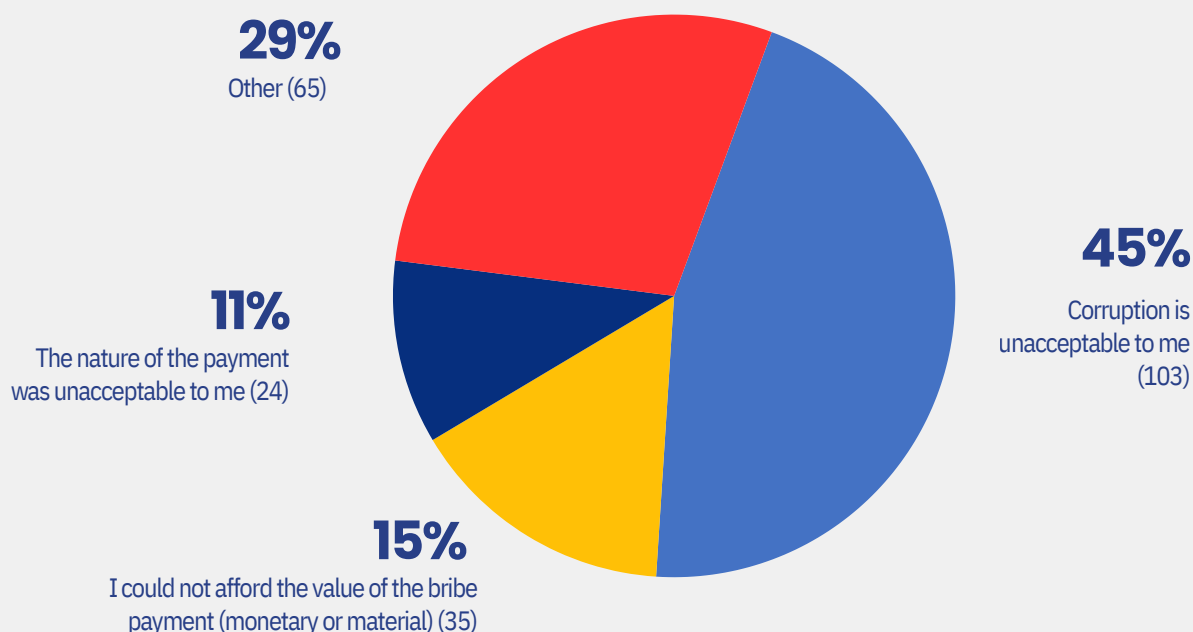
"Citizens believe paying bribes will shorten waiting time in rectifying or accessing service delivery. In most instances there is also that sense of feeling powerless when faced with officials that actually demand bribes and to them bribes have become a norm, an unwritten rule if you want to achieve the desired result." (Key Informant, Harare)

Another significant segment aimed to avoid negative consequences. Others paid bribes to secure a favourable outcome. It's concerning that a segment felt the need to pay a bribe because they believed it's the only way to get a service.

FIGURE 18 THE REASONS WHY CITIZENS PAY BRIBES



As much as many citizens feel the need to pay a bribe to access basic services, there is a segment which resists bribe seeking behaviour. As shown in Figure 19 below, a significant segment of survey respondents (45%) who did not pay bribes when requested found that corruption was unacceptable to them indicating in theory, the existence of ‘Principled Principals’ amongst Zimbabwe’s citizenry. This means there is an opportunity for citizen-led accountability in Zimbabwe, and that the demand for transparent, predictable services is still high. The 45% was followed by 15% who could not afford the bribe, as well as 11% who felt that the nature of payment requested was unacceptable to them.

FIGURE 19 REASONS FOR RESISTING BRIBE DEMANDS

5.2. ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE STANDARDS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION LAWS

An examination of the dynamics of bribery as a form of corruption in contemporary Zimbabwe must assess the state of corporate governance and existing anti-corruption laws to assess if they contribute in any way to its current levels. In this regard, Key Informants were asked to comment on the state of corporate governance in Zimbabwe, both in the public and private sectors in relation to the current levels of bribery in the country.

Informants referred to recurrent cases of mismanagement of public resources appearing in the reports by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) as testimony of the state of corporate governance in the country (FGD #15). The same reports perennially reveal a repetition of malpractices, with the recommendations not being implemented rigorously (FGD #11). Linked to this, independent oversight institutions were said to be compromised limiting the extent to which they can bring governing boards to account for their actions. Citing Parliament as an example, MPs were said to be no longer holding duty bearers to account and effectively following up on OAG reports (FGD #15).

Respondents referred to the prevailing style of governance as unjust and autocratic, giving individuals and vested interests unbridled and unchecked powers (FGD #1, FGD #3). This enabled the Executive arm of government to impose decisions on lower tiers of government, such as procurement imposed on local authorities, impacting human rights (FGD #11). The influence of politically exposed persons (PEPs) and informal power structures; and the politicisation and polarization of institutions also added on the pressure on institutions to cater for vested interests (FGD #4, FGD #10). "The biggest incubator for corruption in Zimbabwe is central government. At local level people are learning from central government. It's like a crab telling its children to walk straight" said one respondent, commenting on this issue FGD #11).

Corruption was also described as becoming ingrained in various institutions, because some individuals in authority owe their positions to corruption (no meritocracy) (FGD #1, FGD #2, FGD #5). "Corporate governance is lost in key public institutions because they don't account to the people but to those who appoint them" said one respondent (FGD #16). When the public and private sectors were compared on corporate governance, the latter was perceived as better because company executives are answerable to the board (FGD #20).

Furthering the idea in Martini (2021) above, that red-tapeism opens opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour, other respondents said "The legal framework and regulations are only changed to suit the needs of political and economic elites in society. This creates bottlenecks for the grassroots and impacts on availability and cost of services" (FGD #2, FGD #4). Respondents therefore view those in entrusted authority using various socio-economic crises in the country as rent-seeking opportunities, (FGD #7) for example the running of health institutions (FGD #10). Public service institutions were characterised as having porous monitoring frameworks and accountability systems, enabling agents to demand bribes for basic services (FGD #3). Said one Key Informant, "... many institutional heads appear not to pay close monitoring checks and balances on their subordinates, an issue designed to fleece members of the public" (Key Informant, Harare). Policy inconsistencies such as the misalignment of laws to the constitution was also said to be creating loopholes that facilitate corruption (FGD #6). To close the discussion on the framework for service delivery, it was also asserted that current policies make it difficult for citizens to understand their rights and entitlements. This creates a grey area which is prone to manipulation (FGD #1). One Key Informant, said, the lack of digitalisation of services is a breeding ground for corruption. Also when information is not shared with citizens.

Key Informants were also asked to assess the current laws and existing anti-corruption tools in addressing new forms of bribery. Several gaps in the legal framework were raised, in particular the lack of whistleblower and witness protection legislation (FGD #1, FGD #15) and a standalone law on sextortion (FGD #3). Respondents attributed the lack of effective, standalone legislation on sextortion on the technicality where the victim can face a counteraccusation of consent (FGD #7).

"There is a duality in the exercise of bribery. The perpetrator and the victim have equal complicity. The law tries to protect the victim but there is a challenge of implementation" said one FGD (FGD #14). Other obstacles raised were patriarchy and elite interests pushing back on a law to protect victims of sextortion (FGD #6, FGD #7, FGD #20) were accused of slowing down progress on the introduction of a law on sextortion. Many participants also view anticorruption laws as primed to prosecute the weak/poor not economic and political elites (FGD #16). Others see the main challenge as the lack of prosecutorial powers of the Zimbabwe Ant-corruption Commission (ZACC) (FGD #16).

Seen together, all the foregoing Institutional or policy-related loopholes can be said to be creating an ecosystem in which bribery as a form of corruption thrives.

5.3. INFORMAL PRACTICES AND HIDDEN POWER STRUCTURES THAT SUSTAIN BRIBERY

There is a complex interplay between formal and informal influences, sometimes creating an intersection of issues. These need to be examined closely for a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing corrupt practices such as bribery. Key informants were asked to specify informal practices or hidden power structures that sustain bribery in service delivery. Three main themes emerge from their contributions. The first one is the issue of political patronage which have tended to favouritism networks and normalise bribery as appreciation. Examples were given of individuals acting with impunity by buying the protection from the powers that be (key Informant, Harare). The second issue raised is the phenomenon of 'political party marshals' or 'runners' who illegally collect fees from traders in urban markets especially those of SMEs (Key Informant, Harare). The third aspect raised was the phenomenon of 'tips or the widespread expectation in society of informal payments. This falls in line with payments such as 'hukuYaambuya' paid to midwives by expecting mothers, or 'Mari YeDanda' for one a teacher to be reunited with his spouse , by moving her/him from one district to another. It is likely these concepts were perfectly acceptable in the traditional sense but have now joined the nomenclature to describe bribery in its various forms. Fewer key informants mentioned the over-centralisation of decision making to explain additional power structures that influence bribery, as well as the acceptance of 'spot fines' which give officers on the ground discretionary powers which lead to bribe-taking behaviour. Figure 19 below summarises these sentiments.

FIGURE 20 THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMAL PRACTICES AND POWER STRUCTURES ON BRIBERY



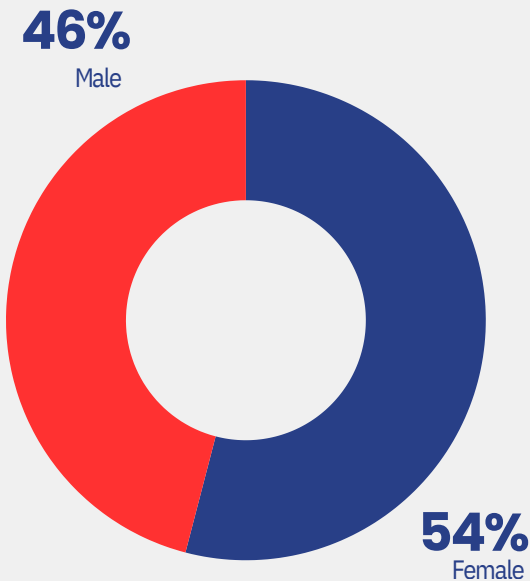
It is also worth noting that **bribery was described widely as a coping strategy both by citizens seeking speedy assistance, and officials with low salaries delivering essential services**. Five out of the 20 FGDs raised this issue. "It's called 'greasing the gates' so that you get assistance. Some gatekeepers demand this facilitation" said one FGD participant, explaining the coping strategy from the demand perspective (FGD #1). Another said, "For you to achieve something you have to participate in corruption. Post- COVID the only currency we have come to know is corruption. The pandemic re-aligned everything." (FGD #5). To explain the other side of the equation another said, "The salaries in the country are mitigating against the fight against corruption, so service providers depend on bribes" The idea that bribery is a coping mechanism demonstrates the situation where corruption has become the norm in society as explained above. Figure 20 below illustrates the sentiments around bribery as a coping mechanism.

**FIGURE 21 SUMMARY OF PERSPECTIVES ON
BRIBERY AS A COPING MECHANISM**

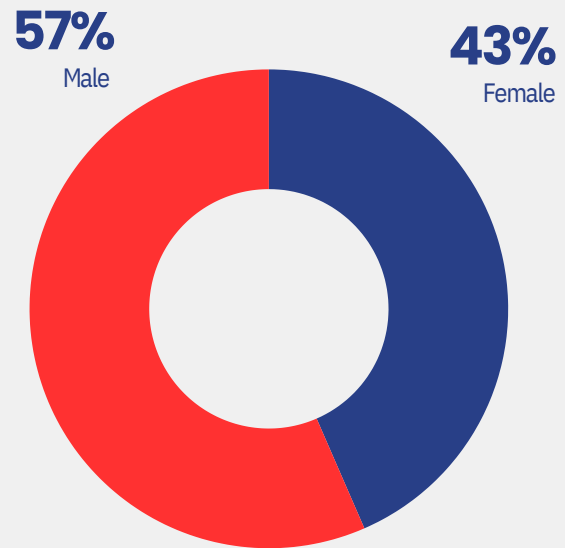


5.4. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC DIMENSIONS OF BRIBERY

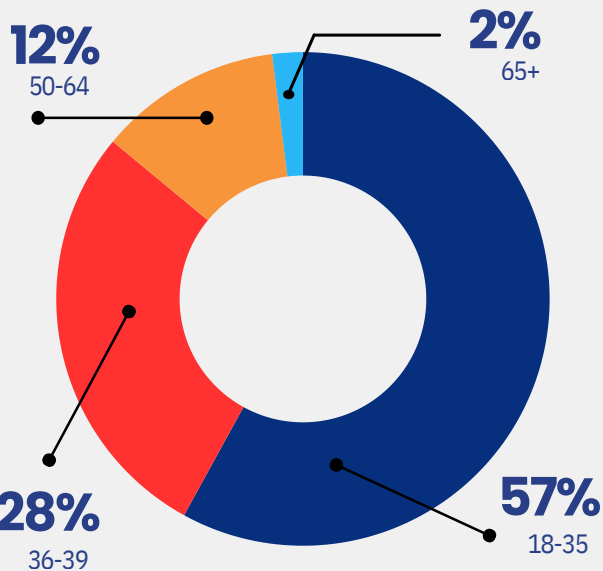
The study also took into consideration the gendered impact of corruption at the point of service delivery. In this regard, an analysis of the findings shows that women experience bribe seeking behaviour slightly more than men, at 54% of BSIs experienced as illustrated in Figure 22 below. A number of factors can explain this. Firstly, women are more dependent on public service provision such as education and healthcare, being primary caretakers of their families. This makes them more vulnerable to extortion at the point of service delivery (Hossain et al., 2009 in Rheinbay and Chêne, 2016). Secondly, women experience corruption in different ways than men due to diverse factors such as power imbalances in public life as well as fewer resources available to them (Rheinbay and Chêne, 2016).

FIGURE 22 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING BSI

The study findings also revealed that more men than women proactively offered bribes at the point of service delivery (totalling 57% of those offering) as indicated in Figure 23 below. It is therefore plausible looking at these findings that attitudes towards bribe offering currently differ according to gender. To support this finding, Rheinbay and Chêne, (2016) cite several country studies and experiments, which show that men and women differ in their attitudes towards corruption. For example, men tend to see corruption in a more positive light than women, providing the opportunity to supplement one's income and to potentially become rich (Rheinbay and Chêne, 2016).

FIGURE 23 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS PROACTIVELY OFFERING BRIBES

Finally, the findings demonstrate that the youth constitute the highest proportion of citizens experiencing bribe seeking behaviour at the point of service delivery, at 58% of respondents experiencing BSI. The second highest proportion of respondents (28%) are those aged between 34–49 years, as shown in Figure 24 below. This can be explained by several factors, such as the young population structure in Zimbabwe where they constitute a demographic majority. It has also been observed that the youth also face several challenges in the context of corruption, namely participation of the youth in decision-making processes (Masuku and Macheke, 202, in Matanga, 2024); disempowerment due to a lack of access to information and resources (Moyo, 2024, in Matanga, 2024); policy gaps in the fight against corruption in particular the lack of whistleblower protection (Mundopa, 2022), and peer pressure, coupled with the normalisation of corrupt practices in contemporary Zimbabwe (Mbofana, 2023; Madenyika, 2024 in Matanga, 2024). These factors can combine to contribute to them being the highest segment of the population paying bribes.

FIGURE 24 AGE OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING BSI

5.5. THE IMPACTS OF BRIBERY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

A study on bribery would not be complete without analysing the impacts on the country and its citizens. Respondents were unanimous in that bribery causes widespread socio-economic inequalities in society whereby services are enjoyed mostly by the affluent at the expense of the poor or marginalised. Said one respondent, **“Causes a dysfunctional society where what is abnormal becomes normal. Now it’s normal that for every citizen you have to leave zino^[3] which means a bribery fee. It also leads to inequalities and a burden to the less privileged people in rural areas who struggles even to get a dollar per day”** (Survey Respondent Masvingo, 2025)

Another prominent theme was that of loss of trust by citizens in public institutions as they no longer believe these institutions are acting honestly, fairly, competently, or reliably to serve the public good.

They also saw the potential of economic harm whereby investors can lose trust in systems that are supposed to protect their capital or resources (Survey Respondents, 2025). Respondents also referred to the contribution of bribery to injustice in society. **“We have lost trust in our courts as perpetrators are the ones getting the justice instead of us victims... this is giving us sleepless nights, there is no fairness in distribution of services in this country because of corruption”** said one respondent, explaining this issue (Survey Respondent Harare, 2025).

There was also the issue of poor or negative public health outcomes as a result of widespread bribery in the county. This impact said respondents, comes through the deterioration of health services, and damage to physical and mental health experienced by victims of corruption. **“Health wise, the victim would experience anxiety and panic disorders whenever they are in contact with the person who bribed them with sexual favours”** said one respondent (Survey Respondent Bulawayo, 2025). Women were said to be particularly susceptible where the issue of sextortion is involved, resulting in loss of dignity when the issues come out publicly. In the area of gender-based violence (GBV), divorces, mental illness and even suicides were cited as potential outcomes. The issue of contracting STI’s and HIV/AIDS was also raised in relation to the problem of sextortion. Linked to poor health outcomes the loss of life itself, particularly in the area of transport and vehicle services, where fake licenses were causing traffic accidents. The issue of fake licenses had therefore influenced the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in United Kingdom (UK) to demand Certificates of Competency upon request for conversion of the Zimbabwean Licence to a British Licence (FGD #20, Mangwana, 2023).

[3] Zino literally means ‘tooth’ but in colloquial language it’s used as a term for ‘facilitation fee’

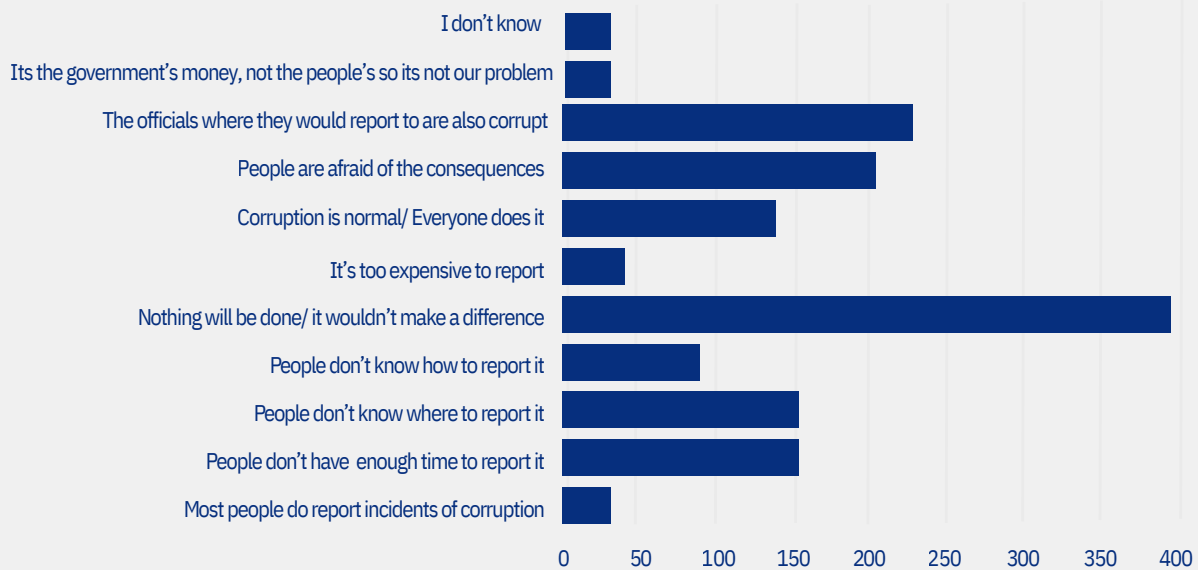
5.6. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REDRESS MECHANISMS

The study sought to assess the Policy, Institutional, and Individual mechanisms for dealing with and reporting bribery. Survey respondents were asked to provide the main reason why many people do not report corruption when it occurs. As shown in Figure 25 below, the vast majority said the reason why corruption is not reported is that citizens believe that nothing will be done about the reports or that it won't make a difference. Other segments perceive that officials they report to are also corrupt, and that people are afraid of the consequences of reporting. A smaller segment said people don't know where to report acts of corruption. It was starting to find a smaller segment that said corruption is now normal and that everybody does it.

In addition, the FGDs revealed the prevalence of some socio-cultural and technical challenges with reporting bribery to the authorities. For example, where sextortion is concerned, there is a stigma against victims who may face a counter charge of consenting to sex with their perpetrators (FGD #5). The stigma attached to sextortion means that victims don't come out with reports (FGD #7). Sometimes, victims are afraid to report to protect their marriages (FGD #7). The crime of sextortion is difficult to speak openly about it because it reduces trust at household level, and most female victims are quiet because it is similar to rape.

An individual's background can also militate against reporting bribery. It's difficult for sex workers to report some crimes particularly sexual abuse. This issue is best understood in the context of stigmatization against Key Populations (KPs)^[4] which was revealed in TI Z's 2024 study on the discriminatory impacts of corruption entitled **'Access Denied'**. This makes them vulnerable to forms of corruption such as bribery. This forces KPs to seek treatment privately the challenge is also felt by males who also get demands for sexual favours, but they can resist more. It was also felt that there is little/scant protection of female victims of corruption where sextortion is concerned because organisations which stand up for women are silent in the face of sextortion (FGD #17). In the investigation of the cases, the perceived victims are also sometimes perceived as trapping those in entrusted authority (FGD #9). There is also a technical challenge whereby victims do not know how evidence should be presented, and yet the courts are evidence-based in dealing with sexual crimes (FGD #12). To sum up this point, one FGD said "We have lost faith and respect in the system. Ultimately, we (the victims) are perceived as the problem in the end" (FGD #10).

[4] Global health organisations such as UNAIDS define these key populations as sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs, and people in prisons or other closed settings

FIGURE 25 REASON WHY CITIZENS DO NOT REPORT CORRUPTION

Linked to the issue of accountability and redress mechanisms, respondents in the public survey, FGDs and KIs were asked what they expected from the upcoming National Anticorruption Strategy (NACS-II) as well as a new policy to protect Whistleblowers and Witnesses. Briefly, as regards the NACS-II, most respondents mentioned the issue of effective whistleblower protection, and secure reporting mechanisms as a priority in the successor strategy. They also highlighted their expectations of tougher, deterrent sentences for corruption crimes. They also view the issue of public education and widespread campaigns against corruption as useful in fostering attitude change. Some respondents highlighted the importance of a formal, structured role for young people in the fight against corruption. The need to address low remuneration of civil servants was also brought up, as well as the need to keep institutions of accountability independent and free from political corruption. They also expected to see regular, rigorous audits of service delivery institutions, protection of the media as they play a complementary role through investigative journalism.

Conclusions

06

Marquette and Peiffer (2015) advocate for the complimentary use of various theories to explain corruption. More importantly they advocate for any solutions to be context-specific for effectiveness. This approach is useful in analysing the state of bribery in Zimbabwe as well as proffering solutions to the problem.

It is plausible to assert that bribery in contemporary Zimbabwe can be explained by combining aspects of the Principal-Agent, Collective Action, Institutional and Game Theories. Consistent with Principal-agent theory reveals that existing policies make it difficult for citizens to understand their rights and entitlements, creating a grey area which is prone to manipulation. Zimbabwe also shows characteristics of corruption equilibrium in line with the Collective Action theory, when the views of respondents are carefully considered. Citizens believe that nothing will be done when corruption is reported, and that it won't make a difference. They also perceive huge personal consequences of reporting. This is not surprising given the lack of mechanisms to protect whistleblowers and complicated forms of bribery such as sextortion reported in the findings. Additionally, the probability of paying a bribe in service delivery is pretty high at 53%, including the measurement of 51% for prevalence.

There are elements of the Institutional Theory, when one considers findings pointing to the widespread belief in the use of red tape as a rent seeking mechanism, reported above. Indeed, the agents offering services on behalf of the government justify their demands for bribery with the offer of processing or speeding up a request at the point of service delivery. There is also a strong belief amongst recipients of public services that the legal framework and regulations are designed to suit the interests of rent-seeking agents and elites in society. This, according to informants, leads agents to view the needs of society and socio-economic crises as rent-seeking opportunities. The Game Theory is illustrated in the calculus by both bribe takers and bribe payers, that paying bribes facilitates speedier response or processing of requests. The law punishes both parties, but the penalties are not deterrent enough. Noting the utility of various theories in explaining the occurrence of bribery in the country, it is prudent to apply a blend of their recommendations for a context-specific scenario. When all inputs are considered, it is clear that bribery presents a barriers to Zimbabweans enjoying their basic services and social and economic rights.

Recommendations 07

Proponents of the Collective Action theory advocate for a ‘big bang’ approach or a nationwide, simultaneous shift in thinking to stop the culture of expectations around bribery. This can be achieved by investing in and launching the following initiatives simultaneously;

7.1. REDUCE INFORMATION ASYMMETRIES, AND INCREASE TRANSPARENCY

(a) To reduce information asymmetries, GoZ should launch detailed and sustained publicity campaigns on multiple platforms, to explain the rights and entitlements of citizens, as well as procedures/steps and the level of any fees to be paid. An example is the Huduma Kenya campaign, launched in Kenya with the goal of streamlining and improving access to public services (CyberMfukoni, 2024, Huduma Kenya, 2025). Linked to this, marginalised groups are most affected by hidden rules or unclear processes so there must be a deliberate community outreach tailored for them so that they are better informed about processes involved in obtaining services (e.g. issuance of National Registration Cards – NRCs) without barriers.

(b) To address the problem of confusion, hidden rules, and inconsistent procedures which are core drivers of bribery, GoZ should establish one-stop shops, standardisation and data sharing (Martini, 2012). One-stop shops are integrated service portals for single entry by citizens or businesses to the authorities, to reduce red tape (Martini, 2012). Standardisation on the other hand stops citizens from submitting the same information to different government agencies in different formats. It enables one agency to collect information for sharing with others (Martini, 2012). Data sharing involves sharing data between two agencies using advanced ICT solutions (Martini, 2012). In the context of the topic, the office issuing birth certificates can share data digitally with the Passport Office, thereby enabling a new passport to be issued immediately without going from office to office replacing it with a physical one first.

(c) To improve vertical and horizontal accountability which is necessary to hold duty bearers to account;

1. Oversight bodies such as Parliament, and the OAG should be further empowered to hold MDAs to account, whilst administrative penalties are introduced for non-compliance with their recommendations.
2. Actively promote citizen oversight through transparency and public participation. For example, Parliament should establish and maintain strong working relations with non-state actors for technical cooperation, and promote opportunities for them (and citizens at large) to participate in its oversight activities (Matanga, 2024)

(d) To tackle the agency problem (rent seeking behaviour) introduce incentive schemes i.e. Performance-Related Pay (PRP) or bonuses linked to service output (based on measurable quantity and quality). The literature cautions that such incentive schemes fail in highly corrupt settings because they can be captured by corrupt supervisors and colluding subordinates (Sundstrom, 2017). To avoid this failure, it is suggested that PRP will work in contexts where that external agents that have little/no incentive to collude with the bureaucrats whose performance is being evaluated are given the responsibility for monitoring performance (Sundstrom, 2017). Noting that many respondents considered bribery to be a coping mechanism for bureaucrats in a challenging economic environment, it is worthwhile introducing PRP as long as the caveat above is addressed in the design of the scheme.

7.2. LAUNCH TRUST BUILDING AND CULTURE CHANGE INTERVENTIONS

(a) To address the perception of high personal consequences for reporting corruption, GoZ must promulgate legislation to protect whistleblowers and witnesses. In addition to promulgating this legislation, GoZ must ensure that the mechanisms to breathe life into whistleblower protection are availed in terms of financial and technical resources.

(b) To turnaround the prevailing perception that corruption is now the norm, GoZ must introduce ethics and anticorruption lessons in the education curriculum at all levels. This curriculum will be targeted at the youth who are the demographic segment most significantly affected by bribery, as well as build the confidence of the 'Principled Principals' who resist demands for bribes. An example is the idea of HEIs "collaborating on implementing common principles aimed at mainstreaming ethics and anti-corruption in HTE" (Malinga, Chivheya and Matanga, 2024, pVIII). This contributes to the realisation of Article 13 (1) (c) of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) encouraging "public information activities that contribute to nontolerance of corruption, as well as public education programmes, including school and university curricula" (UNODC, 2004, p15). Introducing ethics training for citizens through the education sector must be accompanied by continued rollout of integrity commitments/pledges and related structures in the public sector.

(c) To facilitate collective action against corruption, GoZ should spearhead the implementation of collective and coordinated approaches, and the formation of reform coalitions or alliances in different sectors. These can follow the mould of the National Anticorruption Strategy Steering Committee (NACSSC) which drove the implementation of Zimbabwe's first NACS. These collective initiatives can be launched at sub-sector level where participants collectively pledge and contribute to shared anticorruption initiatives.

(d) To change the incentive structures for both sides demonstrated by Game Theory above (i.e. bribe payers and bribe takers), policymakers must increase risk and reducing payoffs by legislating harsher, deterrent penalties against those found guilty.

7.3, REFORM LAWS AND STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CONTROLS

(a) To speed up the processing of requests at the point of service delivery whilst reducing human interference in the process, GoZ should spread the digitisation to all its public-facing services. This will also reduce discretion and limit human interference in the process. Some examples of digitisation are the Electronic Birth Registration Systems – eBRS introduced in Uganda, where births are automatically recorded at health facilities and linked to the civil registry. Digital submission reduces opportunities for bribery by removing manual processes (Plan International n/d in Komtenza, Gatsi and Matanga, 2025) or the myNGO online platform run by the NGO Regulatory Authority – NGORA, in Malawi (NGORA, 2025).

(b) To strengthen monitoring at the point of service delivery, MDAs should adopt digital service-delivery tools that create an auditable digital trail and install CCTV systems to track the activities of individual officers.

To narrow down policy inconsistencies which create loopholes that facilitate corruption, Parliament should urgently align existing statutes with the constitution

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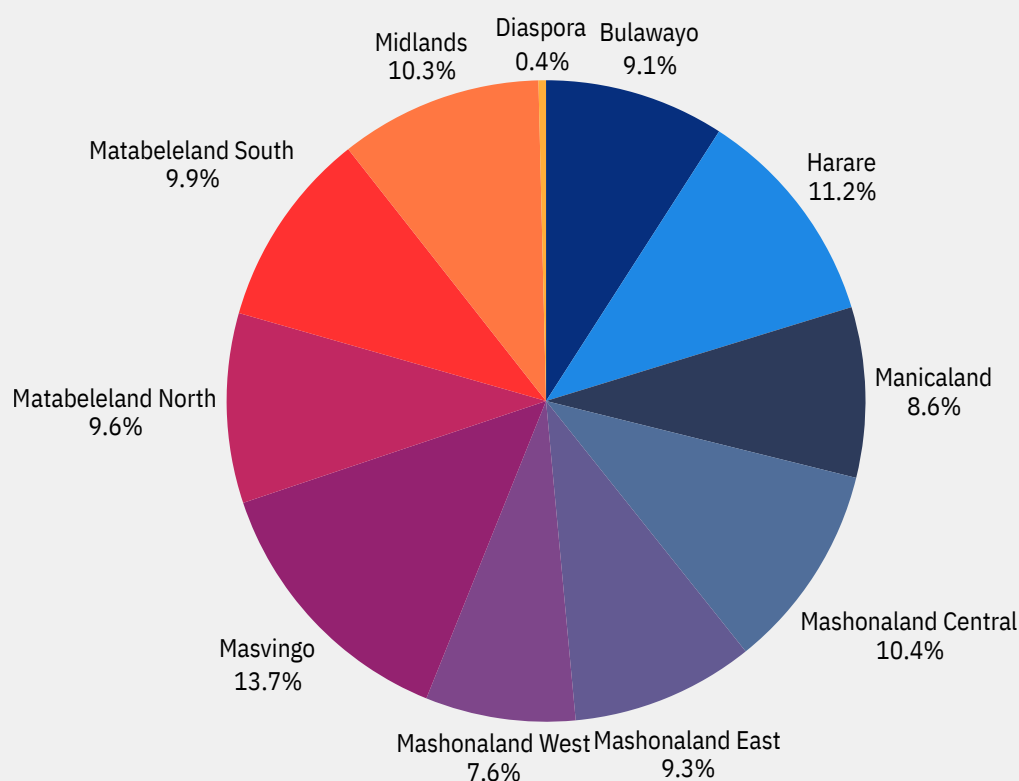
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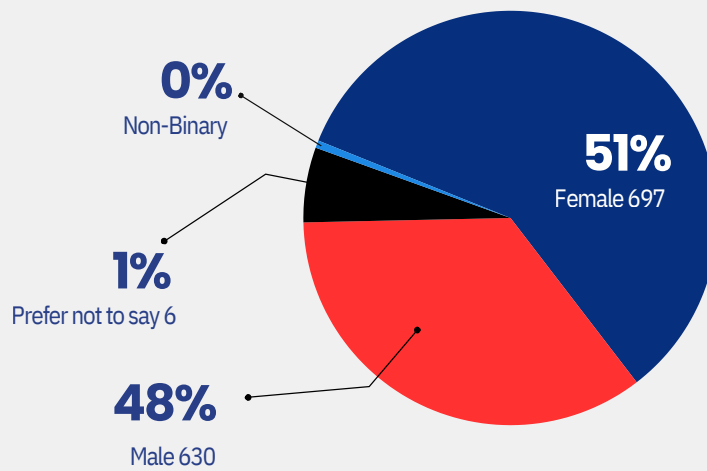
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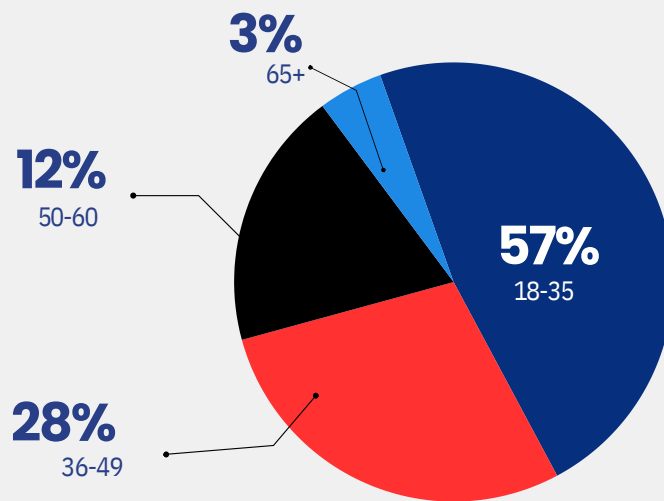
9.0. APPENDICES



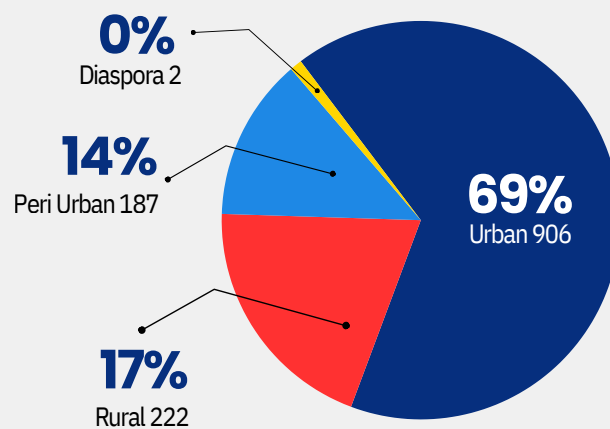
RESPONDENT'S AGE



RESPONDENT'S AGE



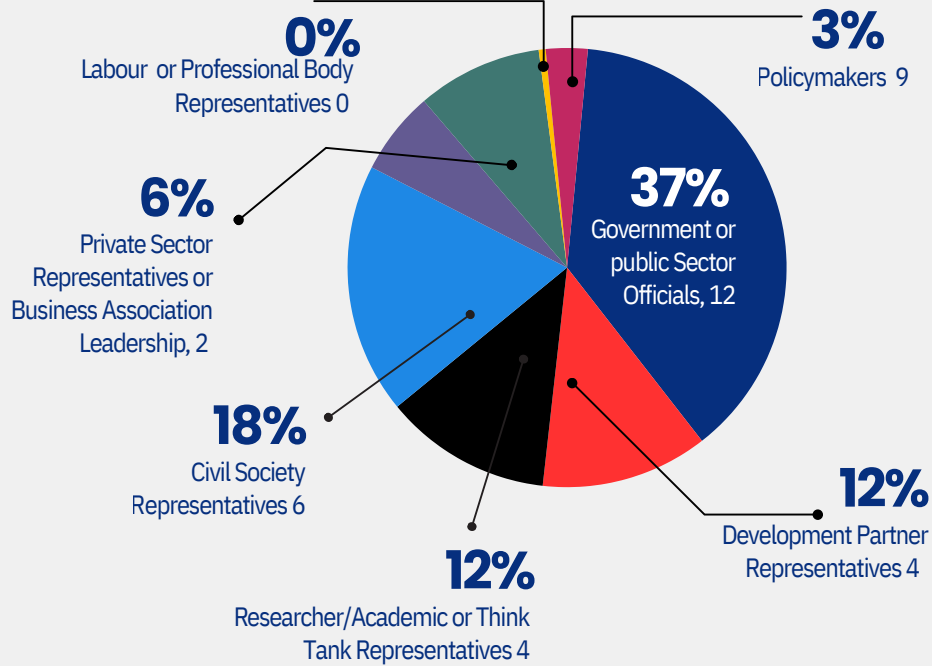
TOTAL SURVEY RESPONDENTS



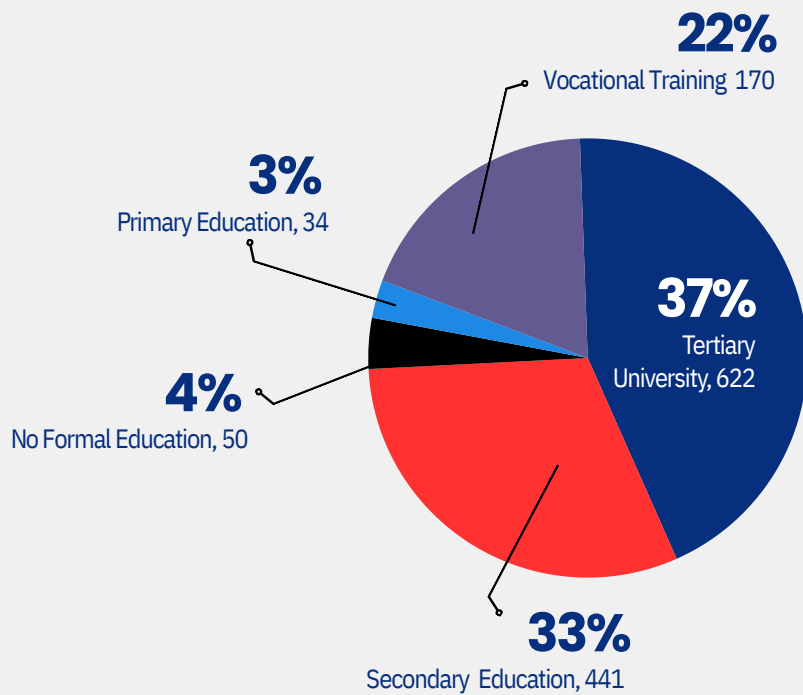
TOTAL FDG PARTICIPANTS

| | | Total Male | Total Female |
|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | Total | | |
| Bulawayo | 35 | 22 | 13 |
| Harare | 22 | 9 | 13 |
| Mutare | 22 | 11 | 11 |
| Bindura | 25 | 12 | 13 |
| Marondera | 23 | 9 | 14 |
| Chinhoyi | 24 | 11 | 13 |
| Masvingo | 23 | 8 | 15 |
| Lupane | 20 | 7 | 13 |
| Gwanda | 22 | 8 | 14 |
| Gweru | 23 | 13 | 10 |
| Diaspora | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <u>239</u> | <u>110</u> | <u>129</u> |

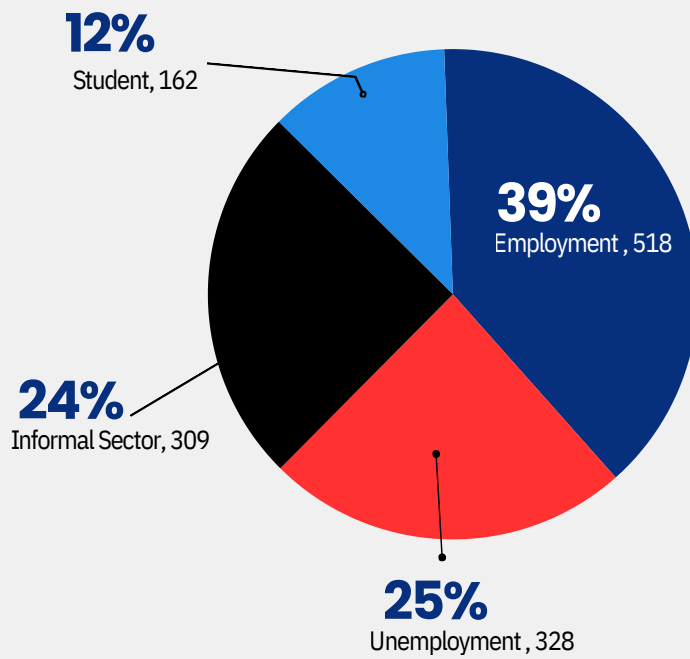
PROFILE KII RESPONDENTS



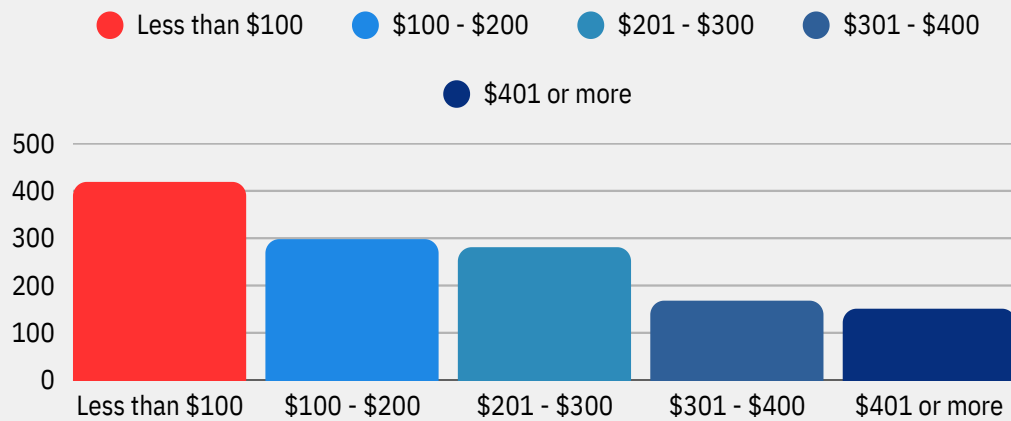
HIGHER LEVEL OF EDUCATION



EMPLOYMENT STATUS



AVERAGE MONTHLY DISPOSABLE INCOME (USD)





**TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
ZIMBABWE**

the coalition against corruption

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