



Zimbabweans see corruption on the increase but fear consequences of reporting

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 25 | Stephen Ndoma

Summary

Transparency International consistently ranks Zimbabwe among the most corrupt countries in the world (156th out of 175 countries in its 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index). In the latest Afrobarometer survey, a majority of adult Zimbabweans say that the level of corruption in the country has increased over the past year and that the government is performing badly in its fight against the scourge. Incidents of corruption are under-reported for a variety of reasons, including fear of adverse consequences, and many Zimbabweans appear to feel helpless to combat corruption.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Zimbabwe, led by the Mass Public Opinion Institute, interviewed 2,400 adult Zimbabweans in November 2014. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Zimbabwe in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, and 2012.

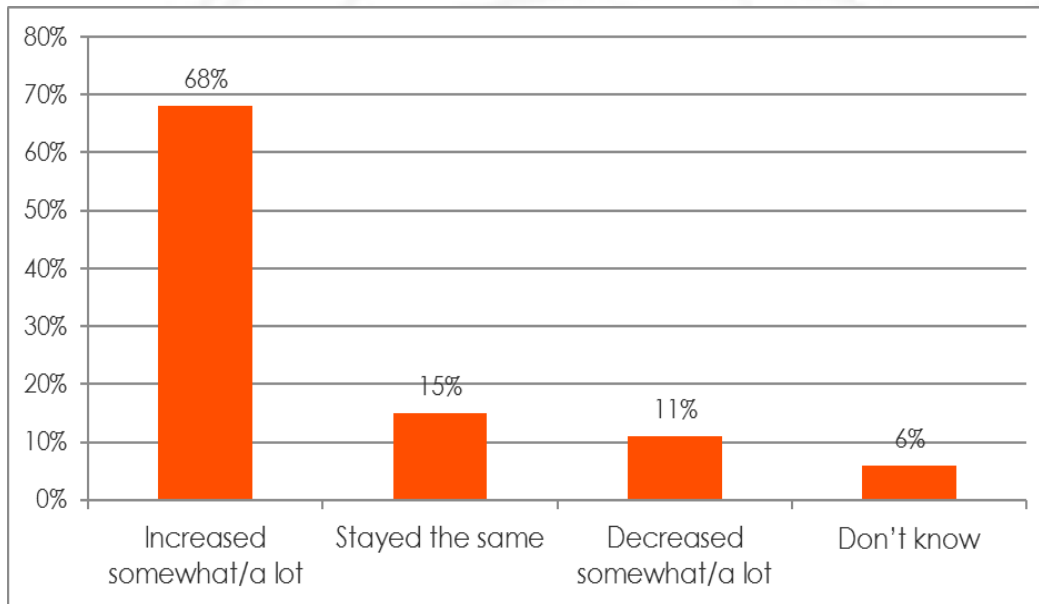
Key findings

- More than two-thirds of adult Zimbabweans (68%) believe the level of corruption has increased over the past year, including 48% who say it has increased "a lot."
- The government gets poor marks for its handling of the corruption scourge; 80% say the government is doing "badly" or "very badly" in fighting corruption. Nevertheless, the ruling party is seen as better able to address corruption problems than the opposition.
- A general sense of resignation about fighting corruption is reflected in the most common perceptions of steps that citizens can take ("Ordinary people cannot do anything") and reasons that corruption incidents are not reported to authorities (fear of negative consequences and "nothing will be done").

Zimbabweans see corruption on the increase

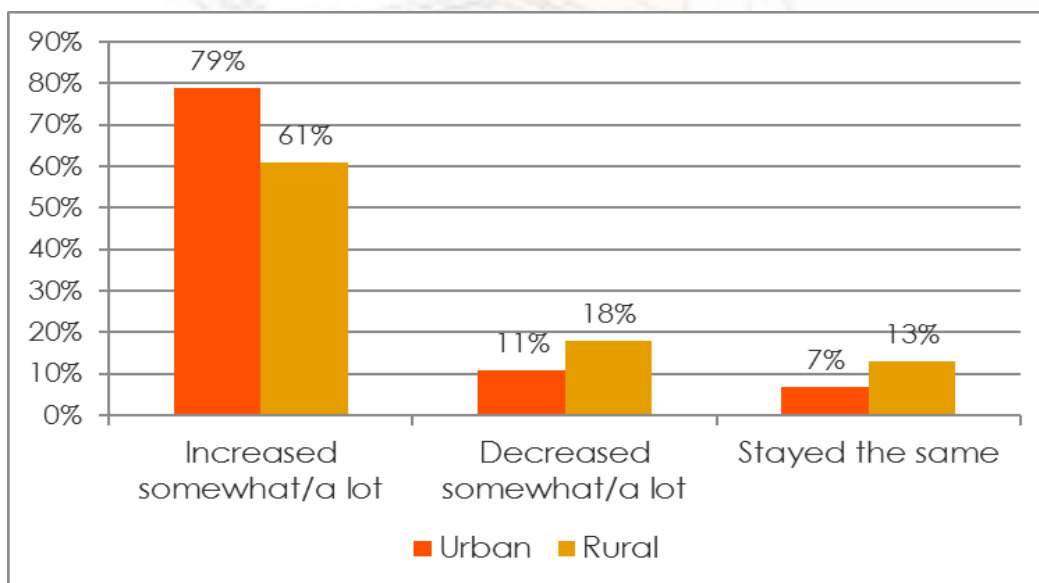
Nearly seven in 10 Zimbabweans (68%) believe the level of corruption has increased over the past year, including nearly half (48%) who say it has increased "a lot" (Figure 1). More urban than rural residents say corruption has increased, 79% vs. 61% (Figure 2). Men are slightly more likely than women to share this view (70% vs. 66%).

Figure 1: Perceptions of increased corruption | 2014



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?*

Figure 2: Perceptions of increased corruption | by respondent location | 2014

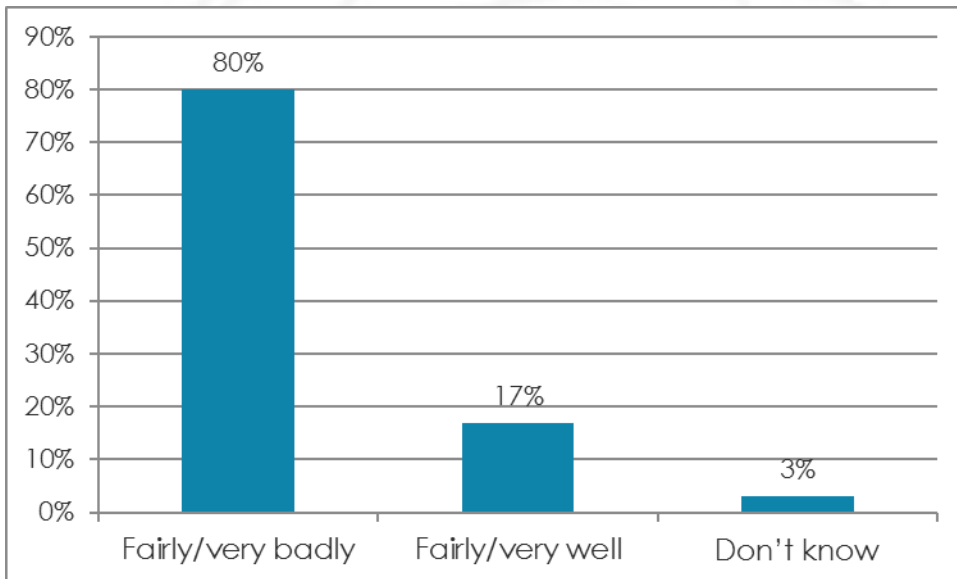


Government rates poorly in fight against corruption

Fully eight in 10 Zimbabweans (80%) say the government is faring badly in fighting corruption in government (Figure 3), including more than half (54%) who say it is doing “very badly.” Less than one-fifth (17%) say the government is doing a good job of fighting the corruption scourge.

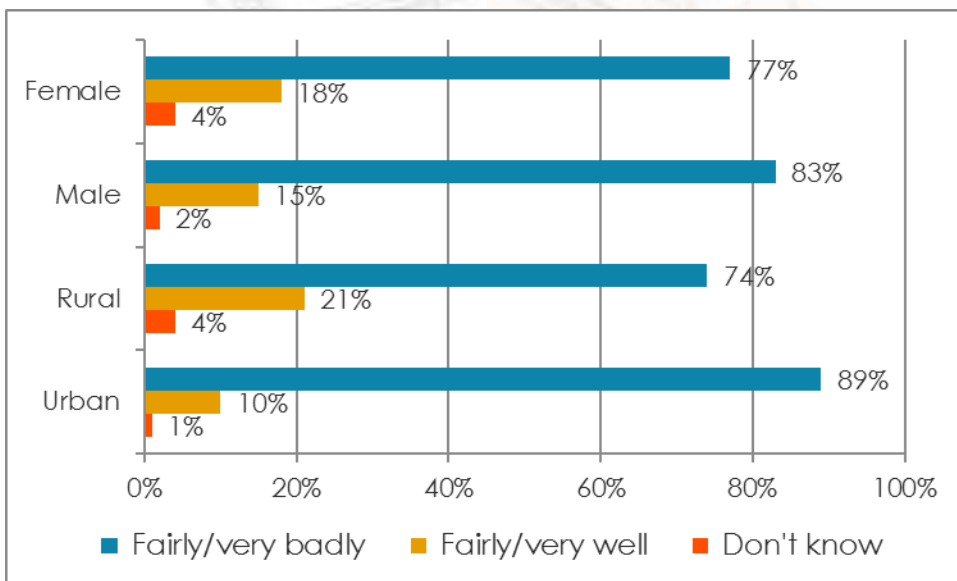
The view that the government has failed in this regard is more pronounced among urban (89%) than rural (74%) dwellers (Figure 4). It is also slightly stronger among men (83%) than among women (77%).

Figure 3: Assessment of government's fight against corruption | 2014



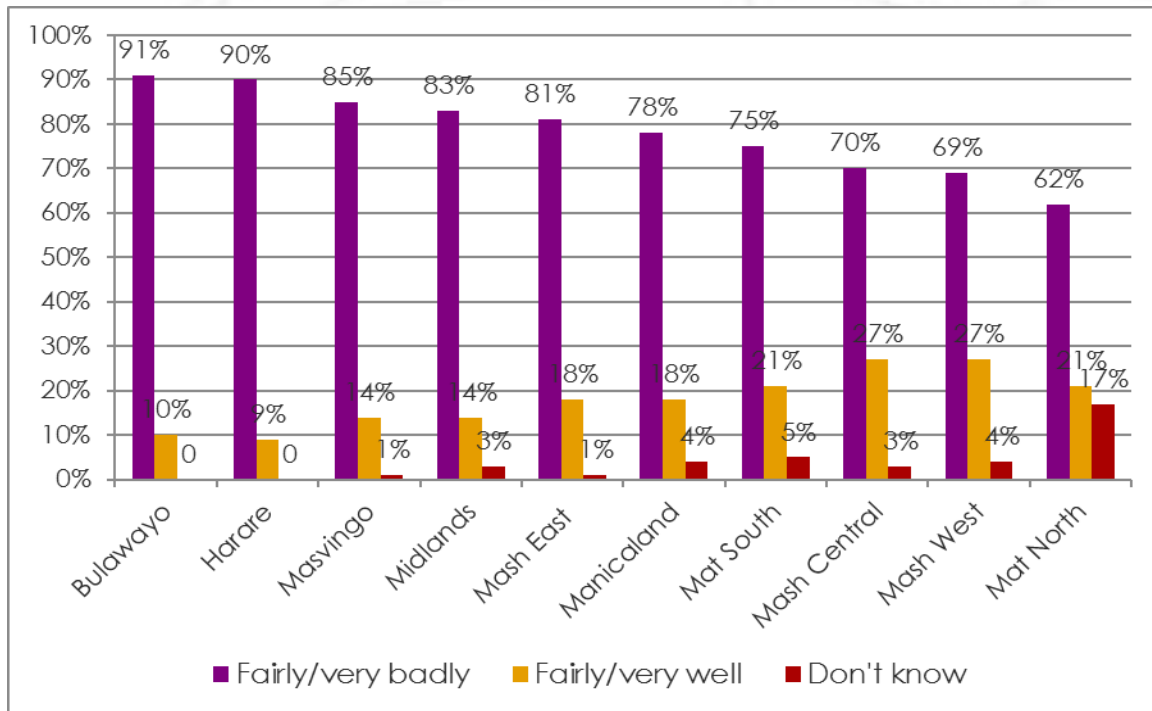
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: fighting corruption in government?

Figure 4: Assessment of government's fight against corruption | by gender and location | 2014



A majority of respondents in every administrative province give the government a poor rating for its anti-corruption efforts, ranging from 62% in Matabeleland North to 91% in Bulawayo province (Figure 5), traditionally an opposition stronghold. Matabeleland North, which has poorly developed information infrastructure, also has the highest proportion of respondents (17%) who say they "don't know" how the government is performing.

Figure 5: Assessment of government's fight against corruption | by province | 2014

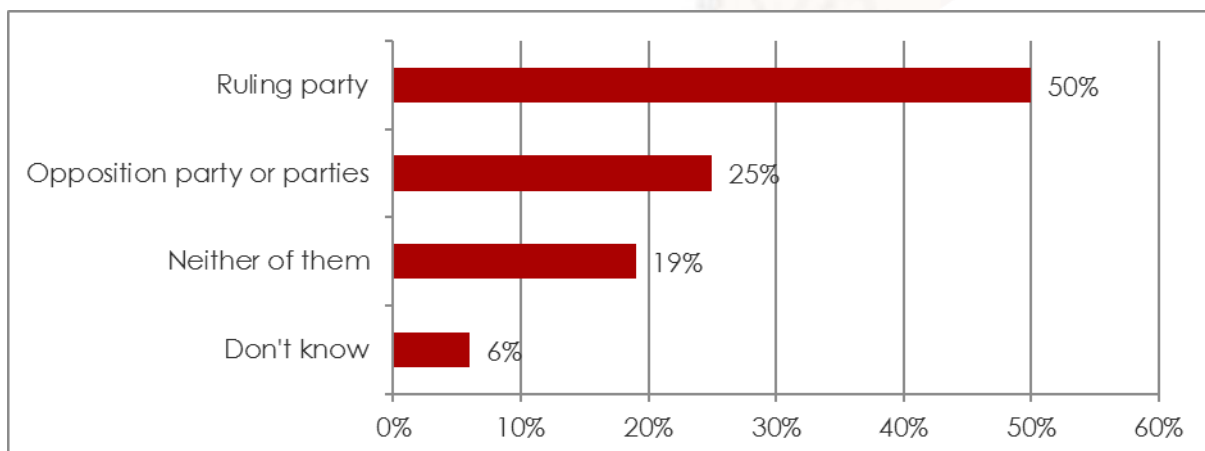


Perceptions of political party best able to fight corruption

Despite the strong feeling that the government has failed to fight corruption effectively, half (50%) of survey respondents say the ruling party, ZANU-PF, is better able to deal with corruption in government than the opposition (Figure 6). One-quarter (25%) believe that opposition parties are better placed to fight corruption in the country, while 19% say that neither the government nor opposition parties are most able to fight corruption.

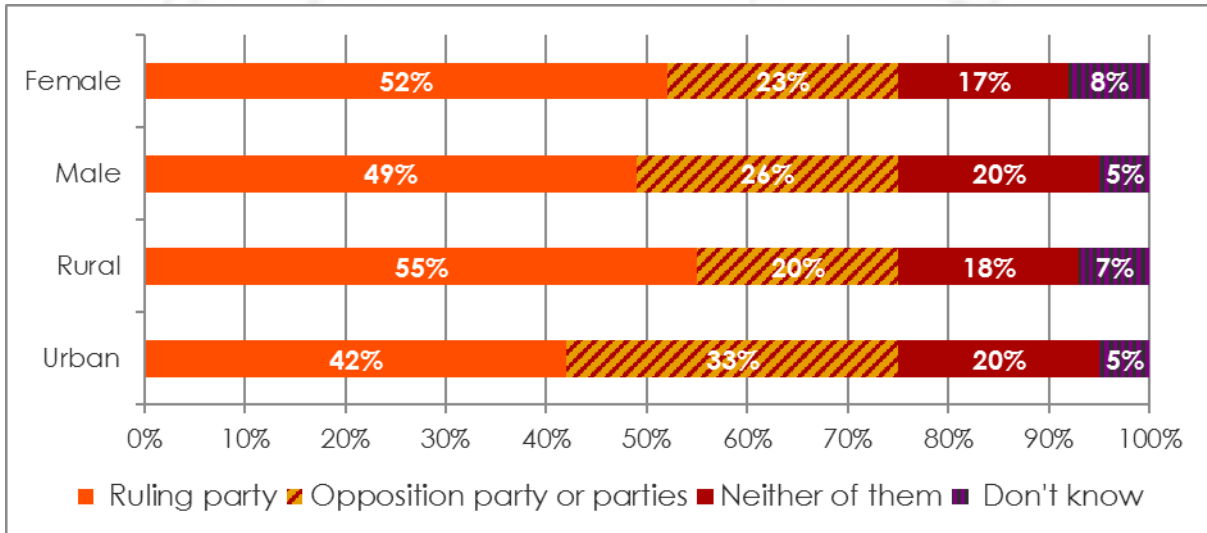
More rural respondents (55%) than urbanites (42%) see the ruling party as the organisation most able to fight corruption in government (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Political parties best able to fight corruption | 2014



Respondents were asked: Looking at the ruling and opposition political parties in this country, which would you say is most able to address each of the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government?

Figure 7: Political parties best able to fight corruption | by gender and location | 2014



Reasons that incidents of corruption are not reported

When asked what they think is the main reason why many people do not report corruption when it occurs, the most commonly cited reasons are fear of adverse consequences (mentioned by 25% of respondents) and the expectation that nothing will be done about it (20%) (Figure 8). Other reasons include that corruption is a normal part of life (14%) and that the officials to report it to are themselves corrupt (9%).

Figure 8: Reasons that incidents of corruption are not reported | 2014

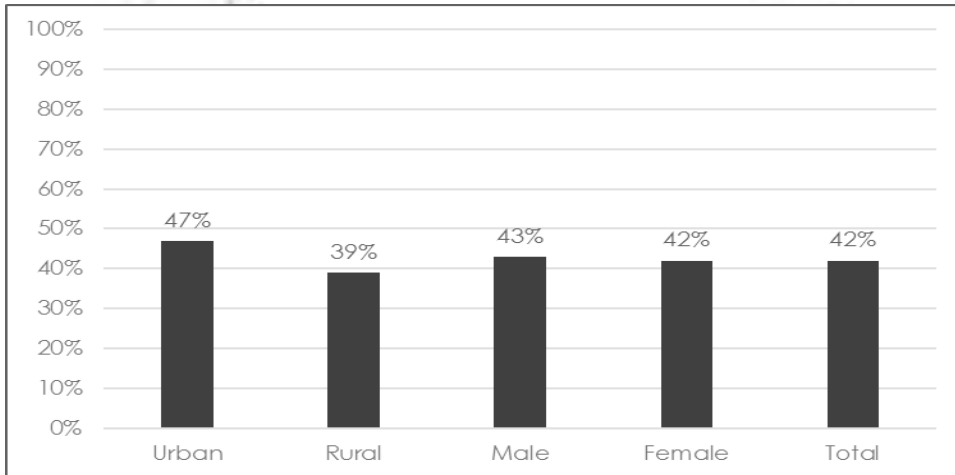


Respondents were asked: Some people say that many incidents of corruption are never reported. Based on your experience, what do you think is the main reason why many people do not report corruption when it occurs?

General sense of helplessness in the fight against corruption

There is a palpable sense of helplessness about corruption in Zimbabwe. Only 42% of respondents agree that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption (Figure 9), while 50% disagree, including 36% who “strongly disagree.” Urban residents are somewhat more likely than rural dwellers to believe they can make a difference, 47% vs. 39%. Men and women are about equal in their assessments.

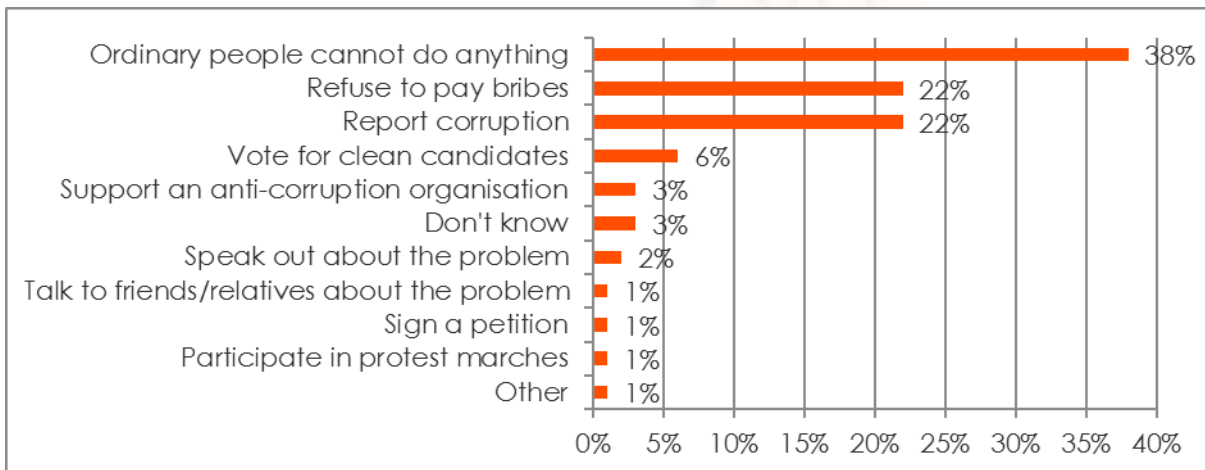
Figure 9: Can citizens make a difference in the fight against corruption? | 2014



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption? (% who “agree” or “agree strongly”)

This sense of resignation is confirmed by responses to the question of what is the most effective thing that an ordinary person can do to help combat corruption: The most common response (by 38% of respondents) is that there is nothing that ordinary people can do (Figure 10). Rural respondents (40%) are somewhat more likely to share this sense of resignation than their urban counterparts (35%). Among those who don't share this sense of helplessness, the most common suggestions are to refuse to pay bribes and to report corruption when one sees or experiences it (22% each).

Figure 10: Most effective thing that ordinary citizens can do to fight corruption | 2014



Respondents were asked: What is the most effective thing that an ordinary person like you can do to help combat corruption in this country?

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Core support for Afrobarometer Rounds 5 and 6 has been provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank.

For more information, please visit www.afrobarometer.org.

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 25 | 5 May 2015