



Dispatch No. 178 | 6 December 2017

In Tanzania, anti-corruption efforts seen as paying dividends, need citizen engagement

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 178 | Lulu Olan'g and Jamal Msami

Summary

The government of the United Republic of Tanzania has stepped up its game against corruption, with greater publicization of anti-corruption efforts, shored-up law enforcement, increased judiciary budgets, and expedited adjudication of corruption cases (John, 2016; Daily News, 2017; Citizen, 2016; Guardian, 2017).

Since 2014, high-profile arrests and charges have targeted members of the ruling elite and top public officials, including the successful 2015 prosecution of two former senior cabinet ministers on corruption-related abuse-of-office charges (Tanzanian Affairs, 2017; Citizen, 2015).

Such noises are not new in Tanzania, which has seen too many false dawns in the past (Gray, 2015; Machira, 2013). Yet the current drive shows no signs of abating. In 2016 came the indictments of key actors in the infamous Tegeta Escrow scandal, as well as of the head of the Tanzania Revenue Authority (Tanzanian Affairs, 2017). The drive has also focused on petty corruption, with the suspension or dismissal of public officials and changes in key personnel in most law enforcement agencies. In addition to launching Phase III (2017-2022) of its National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (United Republic of Tanzania, 2017), the government has established the Economic, Corruption and Organised Crime Division of the High Court (John, 2016). and the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) recently reported recovering some US\$ 26.9 million in public monies during the past two financial years (Xinhua, 2017).

These intensified efforts against corruption in Tanzania have begun to pay dividends in public opinion, a recent Afrobarometer/Transparency International survey suggests. Improvements in the government's handling of corruption in public office appear to have reduced citizens' perceptions of institutional corruption in key public agencies. Still, fighting public corruption remains a challenge in Tanzania, in part due to fear of retaliation against people who report it.

The survey results suggest that government efforts against corruption have produced notable gains, but more needs to be done to promote the participation of the public in the fight against corruption.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2016, and Round 7 surveys are being conducted in 2016/2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed 2,400 adult Tanzanians in May 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 at a 95% confidence level. The survey module on corruption was supported by Transparency International.

Previous surveys were conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, and 2014.

Key findings

- More than seven in 10 respondents (72%) say the level of corruption in Tanzania has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot” over the past year. This is a sharp reversal from 2014, when only 13% reported a decrease.
- Similarly, seven in 10 Tanzanians (71%) say the government is fighting corruption “fairly well” or “very well” – almost twice the level of approval in 2014 (37%). Among respondents who have heard of the PCCB, 83% describe its work as “somewhat effective” (59%) or “very effective” (24%).
- Popular perceptions of corruption in key public institutions have declined across the board. While 37% of respondents considered “most” or “all” Tanzania Revenue Authority officials corrupt in 2014, the proportion dropped to 14% in 2017. PCCB officials, local and national government officials, the police, judges, members of Parliament, and Presidency officials also enjoyed double-digit improvements in public perceptions of corruption.
- Despite these gains, substantial proportions of Tanzanians still see corruption in their public institutions. More than one-third (36%) say most/all police officials are corrupt, while one-fifth (21%) say the same about judges and magistrates.
- Seven in 10 Tanzanians (71%) say people fear adverse consequences if they report corruption incidents to the authorities, and only half (50%) think that ordinary citizens can make a difference in the fight against corruption.

Steep decline in levels of perceived corruption

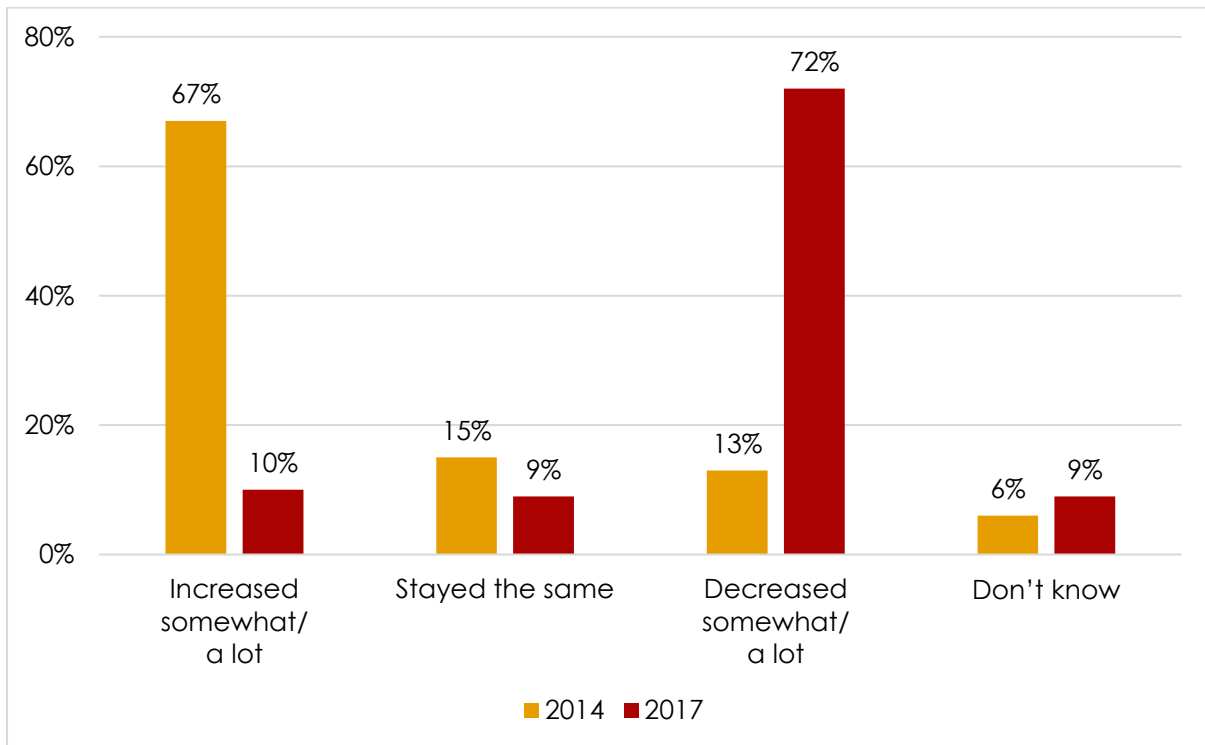
Seven in 10 Tanzanians (72%) say the level of corruption in the country has decreased over the past year, including 21% who say it has decreased “a lot” (Figure 1). This is a remarkable turnaround from 2014, when more than two-thirds (67%) of respondents reported that corruption had increased during the previous year.

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Notably, the decline in perceived corruption is accompanied by a doubling of the level of satisfaction with the government’s handling of corruption. Seven in 10 Tanzanians (71%) say their government is performing “fairly well” or “very well” in fighting corruption in government, compared to 37% in 2014 (Figure 2).

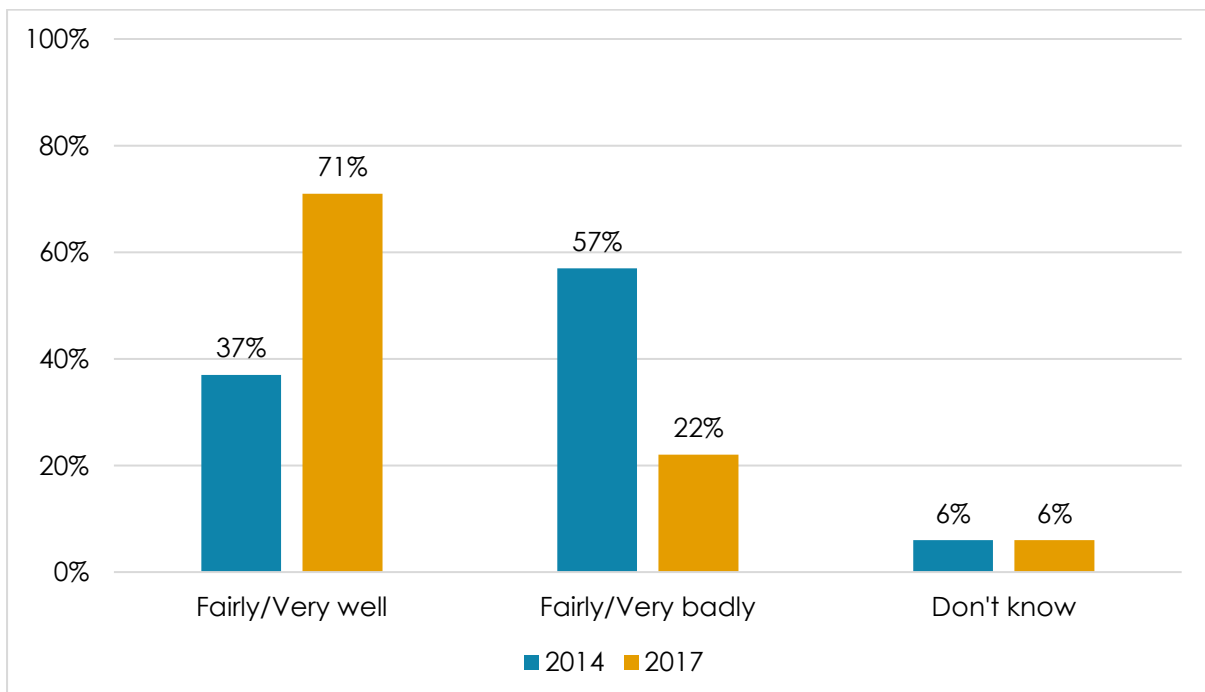
The public’s satisfaction with anti-corruption efforts may be driven in part by perceptions of the effectiveness of Tanzania’s anti-corruption agency, PCCB. Two-thirds of respondents say they have heard “a little bit” (15%), “some” (22%), or “a lot” (32%) about the PCCB and its responsibilities. Of those who know about the PCCB, fully 83% describe its work as “somewhat effective” (59%) or “very effective” (24%), while only 11% say it is ineffective (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Level of corruption in the country | Tanzania | 2014-2017



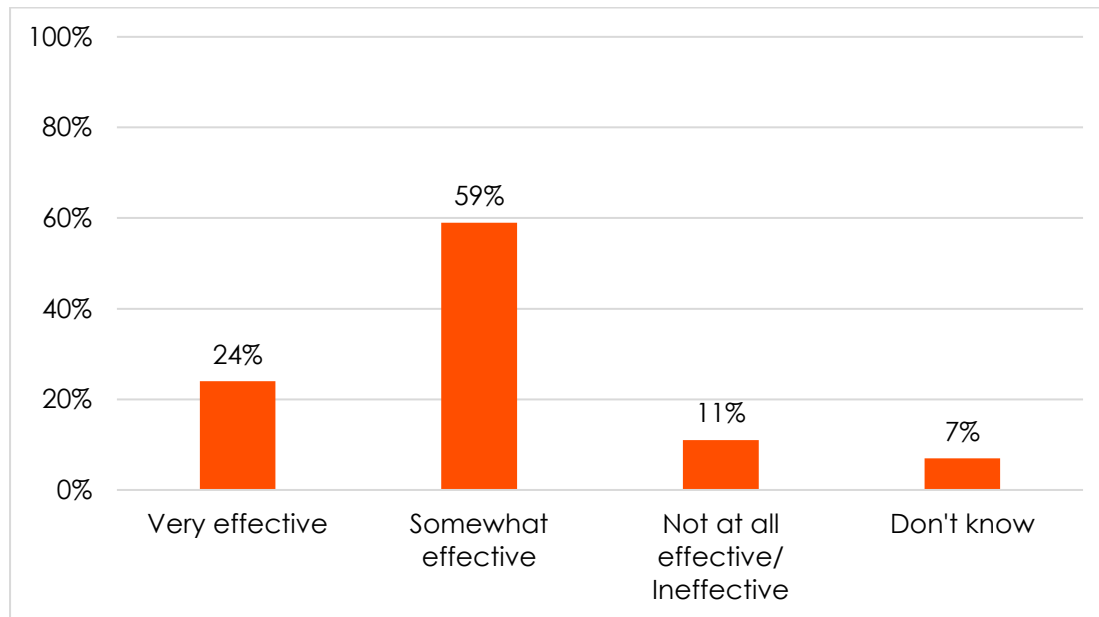
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Figure 2: Government performance in fighting corruption | Tanzania | 2014-2017



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 3: Effectiveness of anti-corruption agency | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents who say they've heard of the PCCB were asked: How effective do you think the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau or PCCB has been in reducing corruption in Tanzania, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Note: Figure shows only responses of those who say they have heard of the PCCB.)

Declining corruption in key public institutions

The government's efforts against corruption appear to be paying dividends in declining perceptions of corruption in government (Table 1). Across eight key public institutions, the proportion of respondents who say that "most" or "all" of these officials are corrupt declined by between 13 and 23 percentage points between 2014 and 2017.

Table 1: Changes in citizens' perceptions of corruption in government institutions | Tanzania | 2014-2017

	Most/All are corrupt		Change 2014-2017 (percentage points)
	2014	2017	
Tanzania Revenue Authority	37%	14%	-23
Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)	29%	11%	-18
Local government councillors	25%	10%	-15
Police	50%	36%	-14
Judges and magistrates	35%	21%	-14
Government officials	25%	12%	-13
Members of Parliament	21%	8%	-13
Office of the president	14%	4%	-10

Respondents were asked: How many of the following do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

The greatest improvement is in the proportion of Tanzanians linking the Tanzania Revenue Authority with corruption, which dropped from 37% to 14%. The second-greatest gain is for the PCCB, where perceptions of corruption declined by 18 points, to 11%, in 2017. Only 4% of respondents now say “most” or “all” officials in the Presidency are corrupt, a decline of 10 points.

Notably, the proportion of respondents who say they “don’t know” how many people are involved in corruption doubled or more across the board between 2014 and 2017, ranging up to 33% of all responses with regard to the PCCB.

Despite improvements, significant proportions of Tanzanians still see corruption in their public institutions. More than one in three (36%) say most/all police officials are corrupt, while one in five (21%) say the same about judges and magistrates. Moreover, a majority of respondents see at least “some” officials as corrupt in all of these institutions except the president’s office (where 37% see at least “some” corruption).

Trust in key public institutions

Despite a decline in perceptions of corruption, the 2017 survey found no corresponding increase in levels of popular trust in key public institutions (Table 2). Only members of Parliament enjoyed a slight increase (4 percentage points) in the proportion of citizens who say they trust them “somewhat” or “a lot” (Table 2).

Overall, Tanzanians express relatively high levels of trust in key public institutions, led by Parliament (76% say they trust representatives “somewhat” or “a lot”) and the president (73%). Curiously, the anti-corruption bureau and the revenue authority, which enjoyed strong reductions in perceived corruption, suffered 12-percentage-point declines in popular trust between 2014 and 2017.

Table 2: Changes in popular trust in government institutions | Tanzania | 2014-2017

	Trust somewhat/a lot		Change 2014-2017 (percentage points)
	2014	2017	
Parliament	72%	76%	+4
Police	61%	62%	+1
Courts of law	69%	66%	-3
Office of the president	80%	73%	-7
Local government council	72%	64%	-8
Tanzania Revenue Authority	60%	48%	-12
Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)	58%	46%	-12

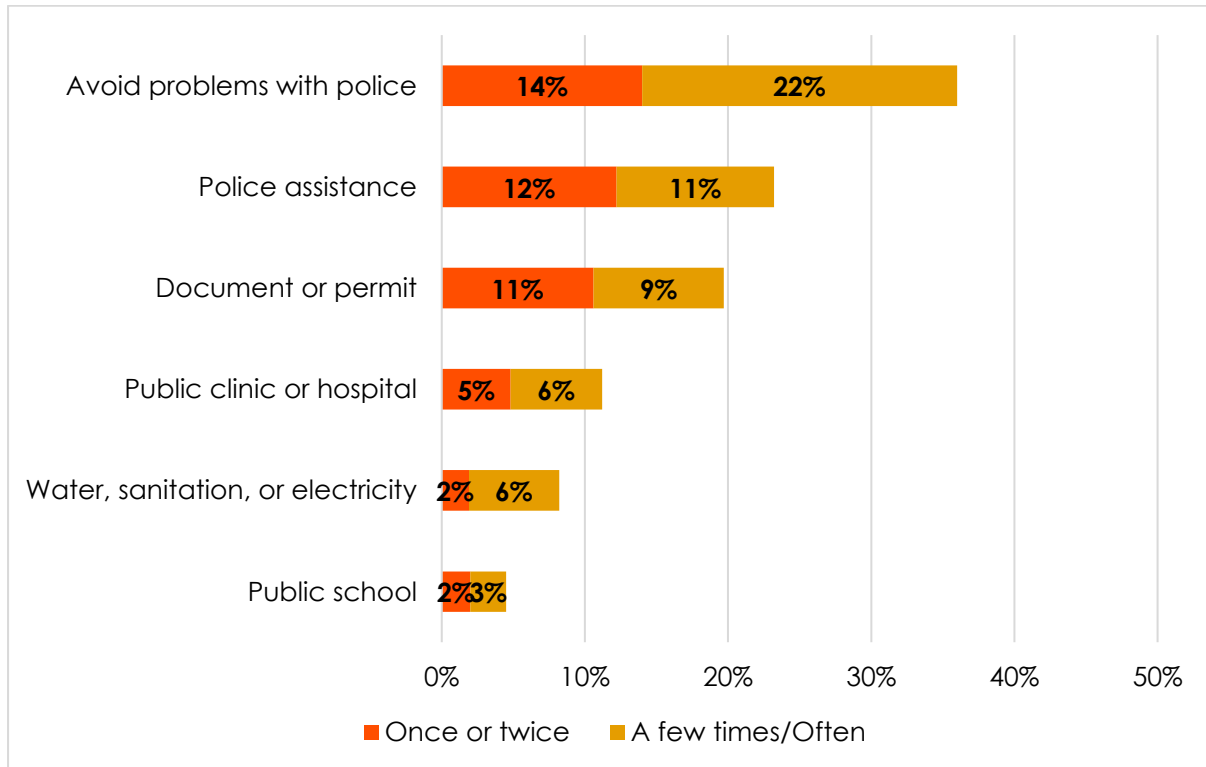
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say? (% who say “somewhat” or “a lot”)

But corruption persists among Tanzanians

Despite reported improvements in institutional corruption, Tanzanians continue to encounter corrupt practices in key facets of their lives. Among respondents who dealt with the police during the year preceding the survey, more than one in three (36%) say they had to pay a

bribe or offer a gift or favour to avoid problems at checkpoint or traffic stop or during an investigation. One in four (23%) say they paid a bribe to get help from the police, and one in five (20%) say they bribed a government official in order to obtain a needed document or permit. Smaller proportions acknowledge paying bribes to obtain care in a public clinic or hospital; to obtain water, sanitation, or electricity services; or to get help in a public school (Figure 4).

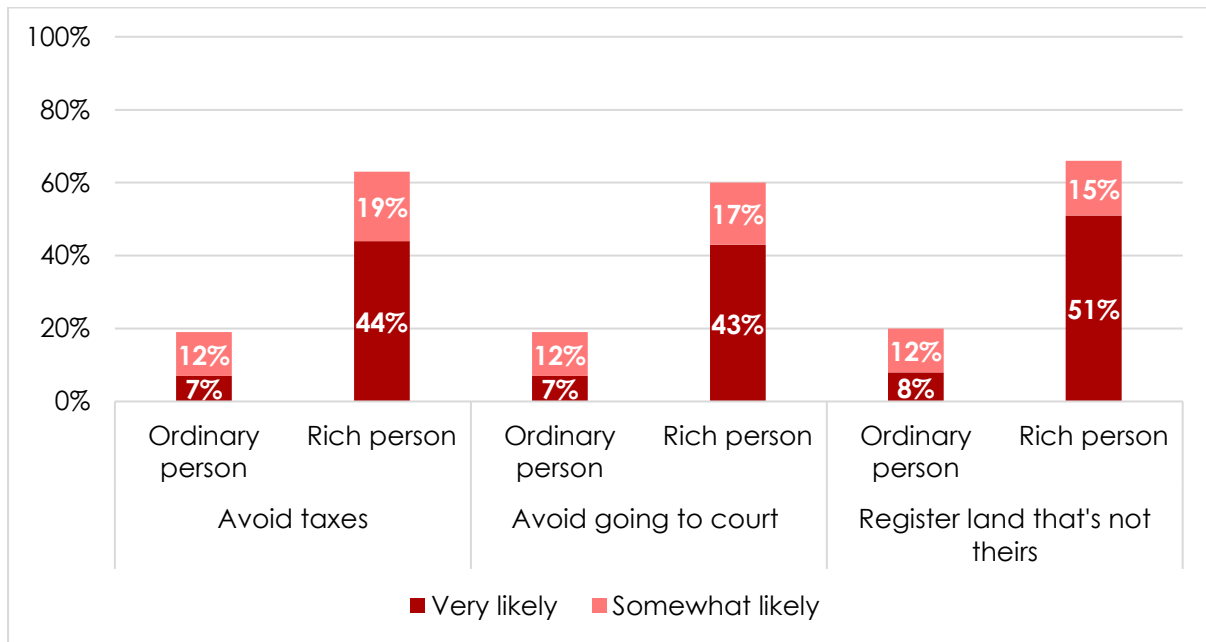
Figure 4: Frequency of paying bribes to obtain public services | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents who had dealt with certain state agencies during the previous year were asked: And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for: A teacher or school official in order to get the services you needed from the schools? A health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed? A government official in order to get the document you needed? A government official in order to get the (water, sanitation, or electricity) services you needed? A police officer to get the assistance you needed? A police officer in order to avoid a problem [like at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation]?

Wealthy people are far more likely than ordinary citizens to use corruption to achieve certain ends, according to survey respondents. At least six in 10 respondents think rich people are “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to be able to pay a bribe or use personal connections to avoid paying taxes (63%), avoid going to court (60%), or register land that doesn’t belong to them (66%). By contrast, only two in 10 think ordinary people could do the same (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Likelihood of using corruption to avoid taxes or court or to register land
 | rich vs. ordinary people | Tanzania | 2017

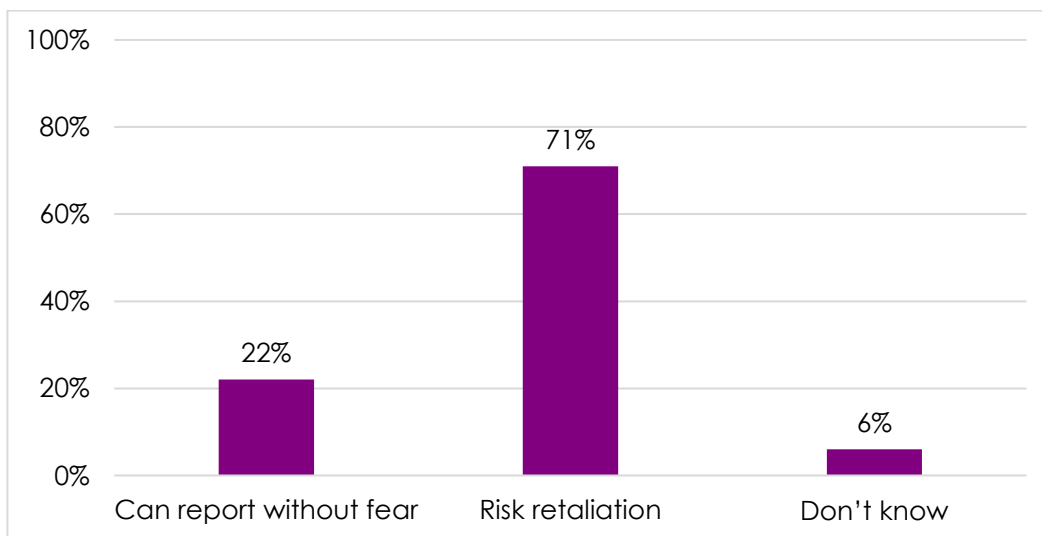


Respondents were asked: In this country, how likely do you think it is that [a rich person/an ordinary person] could pay a bribe or use personal connections to get away with: Avoiding paying taxes they owe to government? Avoiding going to court? Registering land that does not belong to them? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

Fear undermines citizens' role in fighting corruption

The fight against corruption is undermined by fear that reporting a bribery incident will lead to retaliation. More than seven in 10 respondents (72%) think that ordinary people face negative consequences if they report corruption to the authorities (Figure 6). Only one in five (22%) say people can feel safe when reporting corruption.

Figure 6: Can citizens report corruption without fear? | Tanzania | 2017



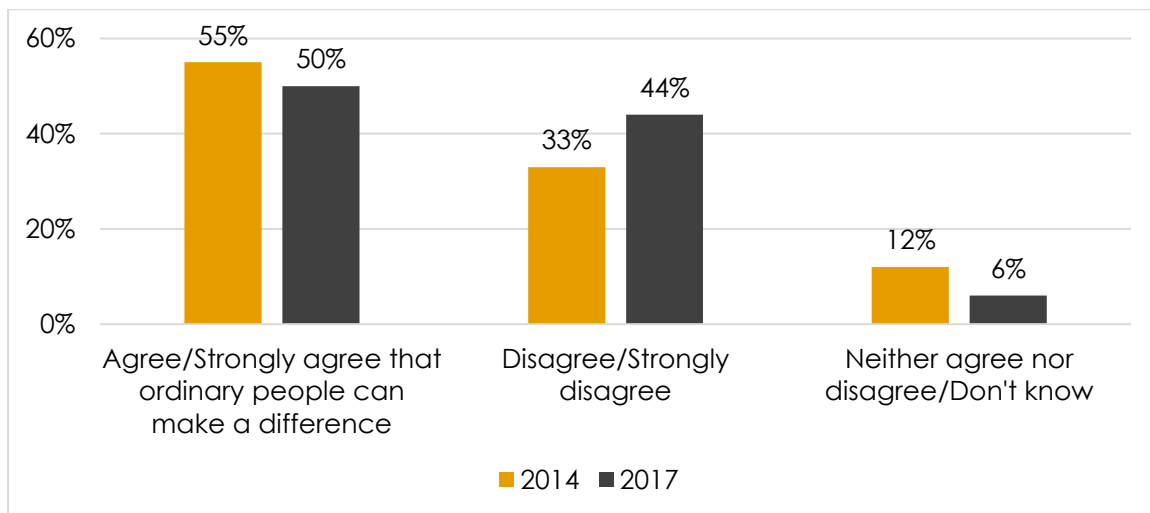
Respondents were asked: In this country, can ordinary people report incidents of corruption without fear, or do they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they speak out?

In line with high levels of fear of repercussions, Tanzanians have relatively little faith in their own ability to influence the fight against corruption and to get local authorities to act against corruption.

Only half (50%) of all respondents think that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption in Tanzania, a decrease of 5 percentage points from 2014 (Figure 7).

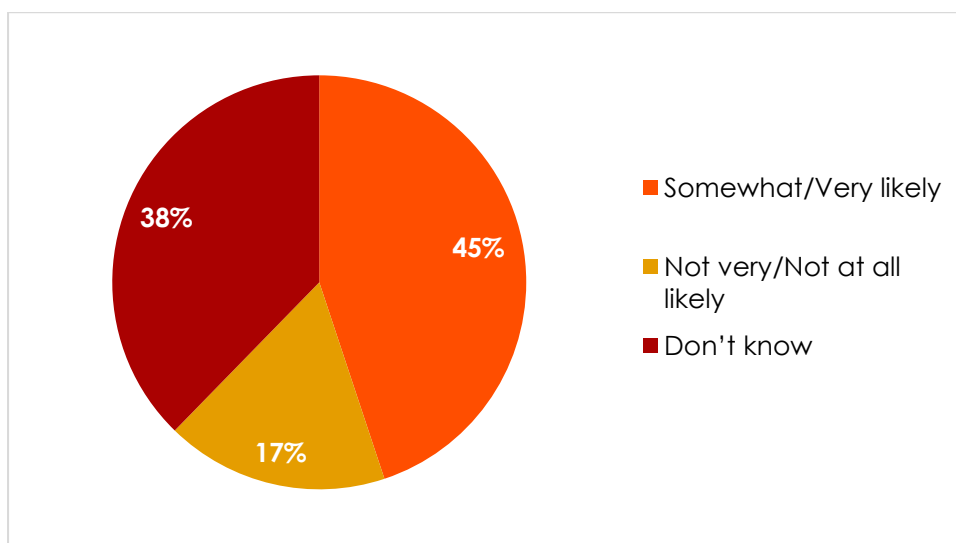
And fewer than half (45%) say local authorities are likely to take action if citizens report corrupt behaviour, such as misuse of funds or requests for bribes by government officials, police, or school or clinic staff (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Can ordinary citizens make a difference in the fight against corruption?
 | Tanzania | 2014-2017



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?

Figure 8: Likelihood of getting local authorities to act against corruption | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents were asked: How likely is it that you could get someone to take action if you went to the local government council to report corrupt behaviour like misuse of funds or requests for bribes by government officers, police, or school or clinic staff, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Conclusion

Intensified anti-corruption efforts in Tanzania have led to a remarkable turnaround in the public's view of the conduct of key institutions. In general, citizens report less corruption in their lives and within key public institutions than just three years ago, and there is widespread approval of the government's fight against corruption.

Yet corruption is still seen as pervasive, especially among the police and judiciary, pointing to a need to review the effectiveness and sustainability of current anti-corruption strategies and measures. Survey results suggest that concerted efforts are needed to enhance public participation in the fight against corruption and overcome widespread apprehension about reprisals. The literature suggests that one way this could be done is by creating public spaces for citizen involvement in anti-corruption efforts (Bauhr, 2017; Sundell, 2016). Building on the annual gathering of stakeholders known as the National Anti-Corruption Forum (United Republic of Tanzania, 2017) and national opinion surveys such as Afrobarometer, Twaweza's monthly *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile-phone polls, and the PCCB's Governance and Corruption Survey, the authorities could identify platforms for developing and publicizing confidence-building measures such as awareness campaigns about the negative consequences of corruption, demonstrations of official impartiality in corruption cases, and guarantees of anonymity for whistle-blowers. The review of anti-corruption efforts also needs to focus on how to restore public faith in the very institutions tasked with waging the war against corruption.

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Financial support for Afrobarometer Round 7 has been provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the U.S. State Department, the National Endowment for Democracy, and Transparency International.

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