



Dispatch No. 263 | 6 December 2018

## In fight against corruption, Gambians say citizens can make a difference, report without fear, and get official action

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 263 | Ensa Kujabie**

### Summary

The Gambia ranks 130th out of 180 countries and territories in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2017), an improvement from 145th in 2016. High-profile corruption convictions in the past have included those of a former permanent secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, inspector general of the police, justice minister, and president of the Gambia Court of Appeal (U.S. Department of State, 2014).

But while the country has signed and ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences as well as the United Nations Anticorruption Convention, its anti-corruption laws are regarded as a work in progress. The U.S. Department of State (2018) describes them as "largely ineffective because the committees which are commissioned to enforce them are yet to be fully established," while the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2017) says it is working to support "Gambian efforts to draft and adopt anti-corruption ... legislation in line with international standards and best practices."

In 2017, President Adama Barrow established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the financial dealings of his predecessor, Yahya Jammeh, and his family and associates (Jobe, 2017). And in his State of the Nation address in September 2018, Barrow told Gambians that his government is committed to fighting corruption and would soon submit a bill creating an Anti-Corruption Commission and providing for measures to stamp out graft (APA News, 2018).

However, recent allegations of corruption involving the first lady's foundation have raised questions about whether the administration is serious about tackling corrupt practices (Fatu Network, 2018; Freedom Newspaper, 2018).

Afrobarometer's maiden national survey in the Gambia shows that more citizens see corruption decreasing than increasing, and a majority think the government is performing well in the fight against corruption. A majority of Gambians believe that ordinary citizens can make a difference and can report corruption without fear of retaliation, and that officials are likely to take action when incidents of corruption are reported.

### 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 released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in the Gambia, led by Center for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies (CepRass), interviewed 1200 adult Gambians in July and August 2018. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

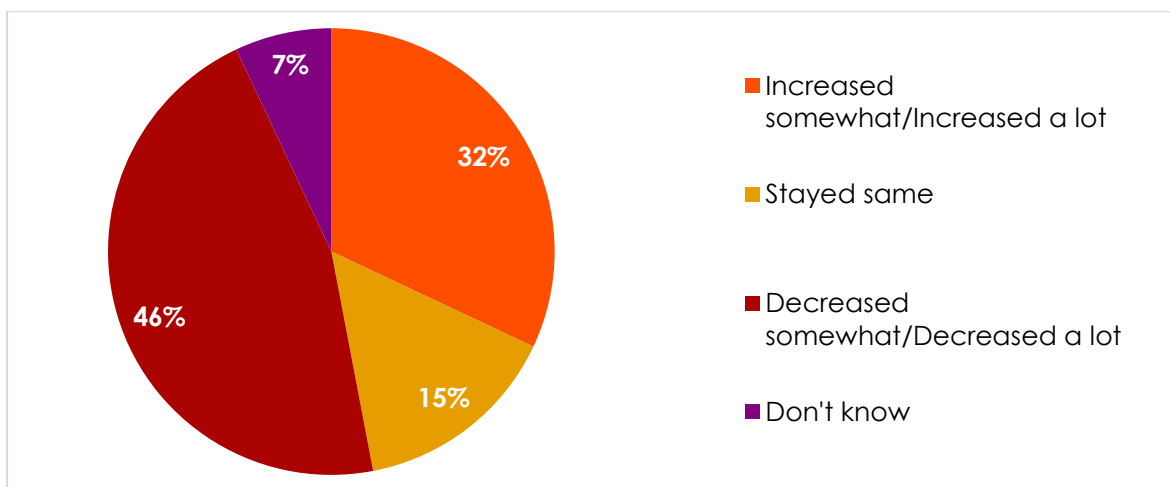
## Key findings

- Almost half of Gambians (46%) perceive a decrease in corruption over the past year, but one-third (32%) say the level of corruption in the country has increased.
- More than half (54%) of Gambians say the government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” in fighting corruption.
- Two-thirds (66%) think ordinary citizens can make a difference in fighting corruption, and six in 10 (58%) say they can report corruption incidents without fear of retaliation.
- A majority (55%) say it is “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that authorities will take action when incidents of corruption are reported.
- Large majorities of Gambians say the rich are more likely than ordinary persons to get away with paying a bribe or using personal connections to avoid taxes (71%), avoid going to court (75%), and register land that’s not theirs (74%).
- Police and business executives are perceived to be the most corrupt officials; 38% and 31% of respondents, respectively, say “all” or “most” of them are corrupt. Officials perceived to be least corrupt are religious leaders (11%), members of Parliament (15%), and traditional leaders (15%).
- Religious leaders, traditional leaders, and the president are the most trusted leaders. They are trusted “somewhat” or “a lot” by 85%, 71%, and 67% of respondents, respectively.

## Level of corruption in the country

Almost half (46%) of Gambians say that the level of corruption has decreased “somewhat” or “a lot” over the past year (Figure 1). One-third (32%) believe corruption has increased “somewhat” or “a lot,” and one in seven (15%) say it has stayed the same.

**Figure 1: Level of corruption | The Gambia | 2018**

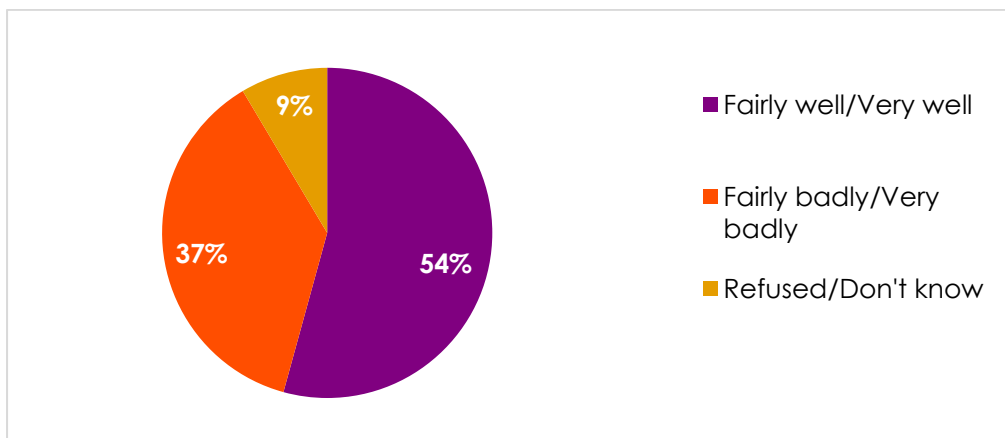


**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Citizens give the government good marks for its performance in fighting corruption. More than half (54%) of Gambians say the government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” on this score, while 37% describe it as performing “fairly badly” or “very badly” (Figure 2).

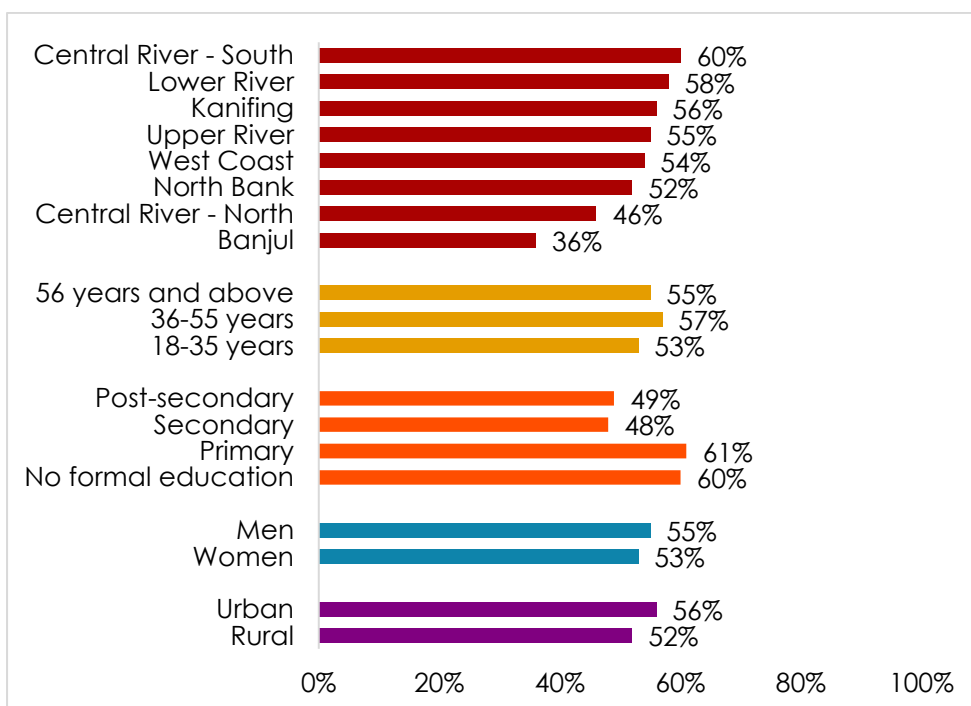
The government's performance in fighting corruption is rated most favourably in Central River South (60% fairly/very well) and Lower River (58%), two strongholds of the party in power (Figure 3). But fewer than half of citizens agree in Banjul (36%) and Central River-North (46%). The approval rate is higher among citizens with no education (60%) or primary education (61%) than among those with secondary (48%) or post-secondary qualifications (49%). Other key demographic groups show only modest differences.

**Figure 2: Government performance in fighting corruption | The Gambia | 2018**



**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: Government performance in fighting corruption | by socio-demographic group | The Gambia | 2018**



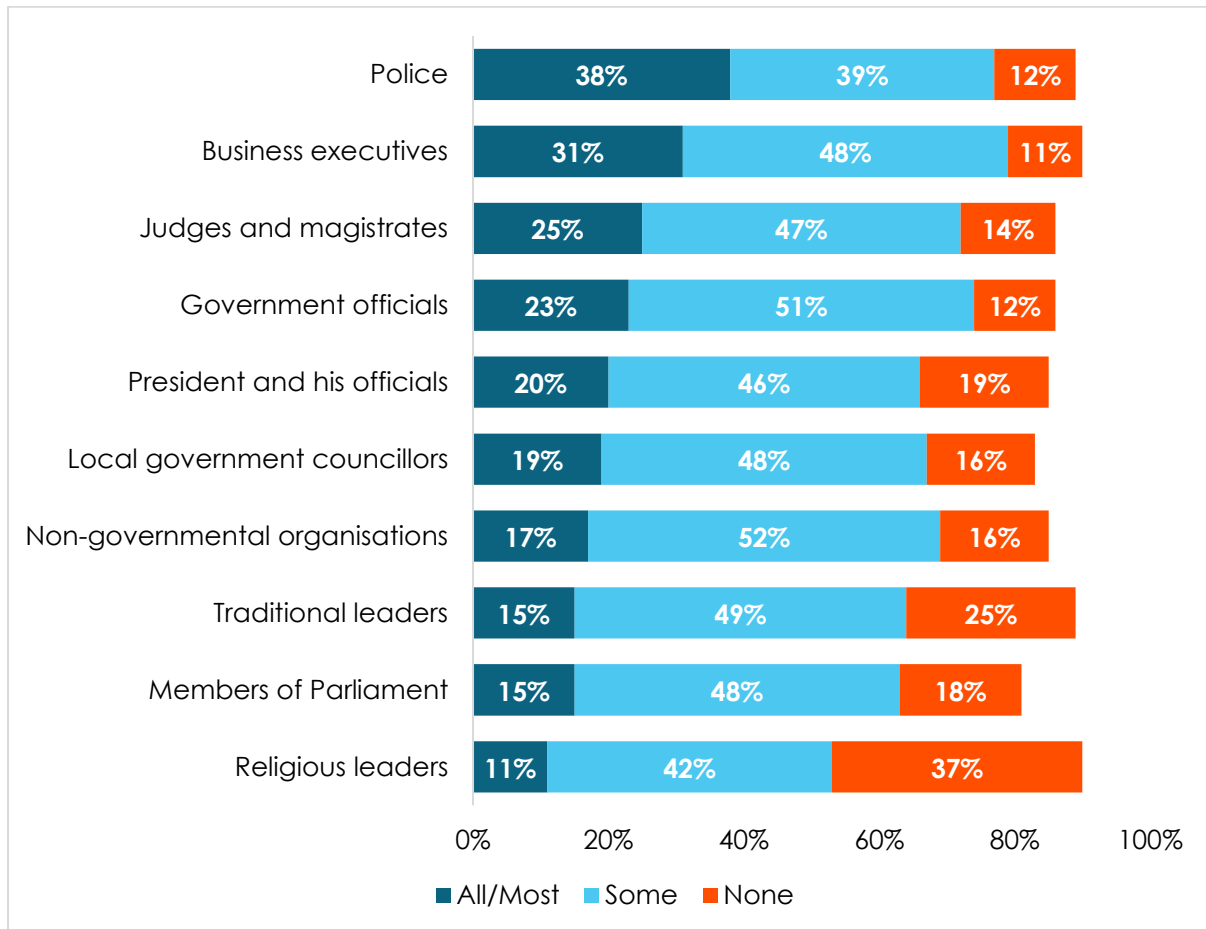
(% who say the government is handling the fight against corruption “fairly well” or “very well”)

**Perceived corruption and trust in leaders**

Police and business executives are perceived to be the most corrupt officials; 38% and 31% of respondents, respectively, say “all” or “most” of them are corrupt, and only one in 10 respondents see “none” of them as involved in graft (Figure 4). They are followed by judges and magistrates (25%), government officials (23%), and the president and officials in his office (20%).

Officials perceived to be least corrupt are religious leaders (11%), members of Parliament (15%), and traditional leaders (15%).

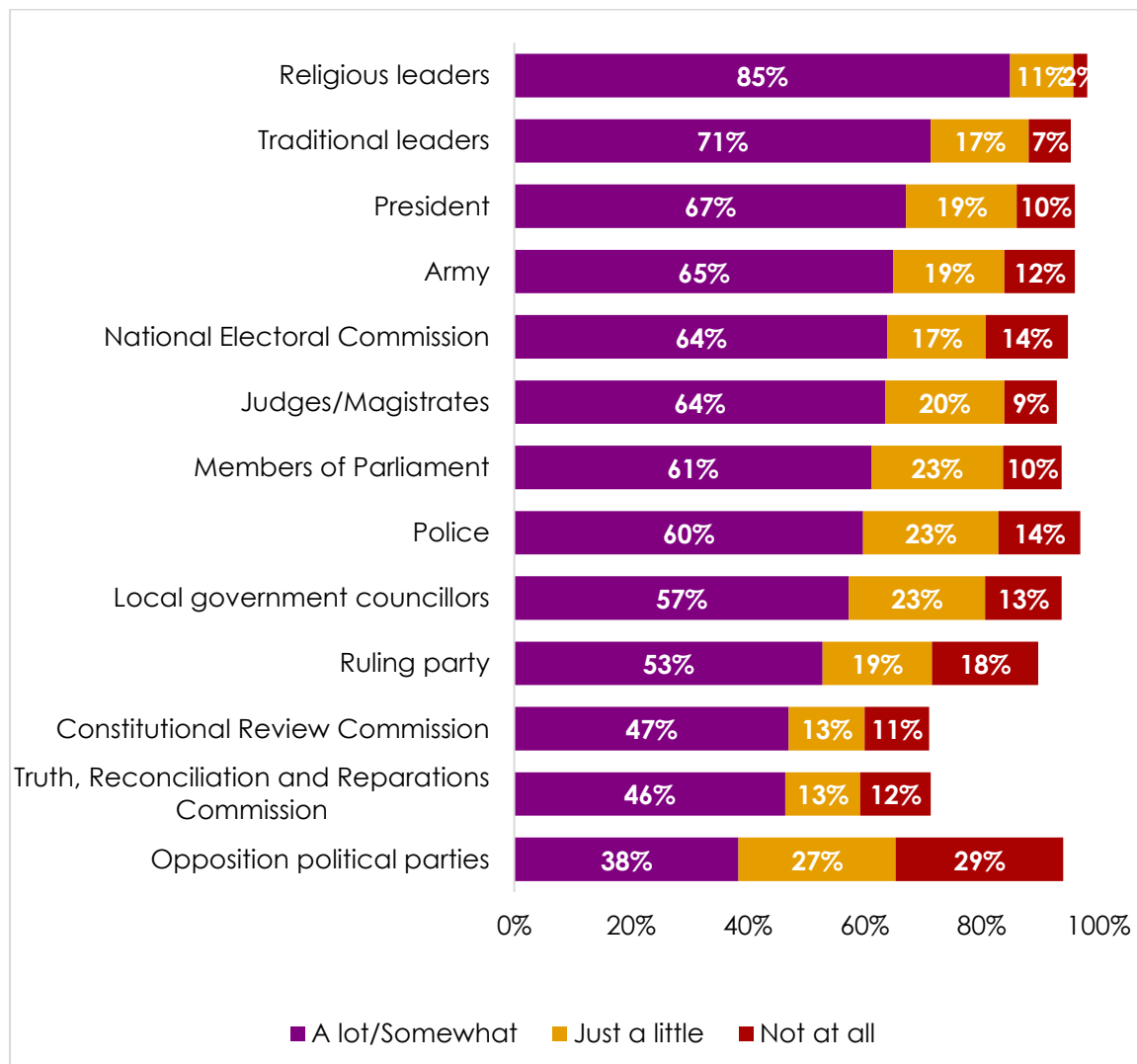
**Figure 4: Perceived corruption among leaders | The Gambia | 2018**



**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Perhaps reflecting in part the relatively low popular perception of corruption among them, religious and traditional leaders are the most trusted leaders in the country: 85% and 71% of respondents, respectively, say they trust them “somewhat” or “a lot.” Among elected officials, the president enjoys the highest popular trust (67%). Opposition political parties are the least trusted (38%) among institutions the survey asked about (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Trust in leaders** | The Gambia | 2018



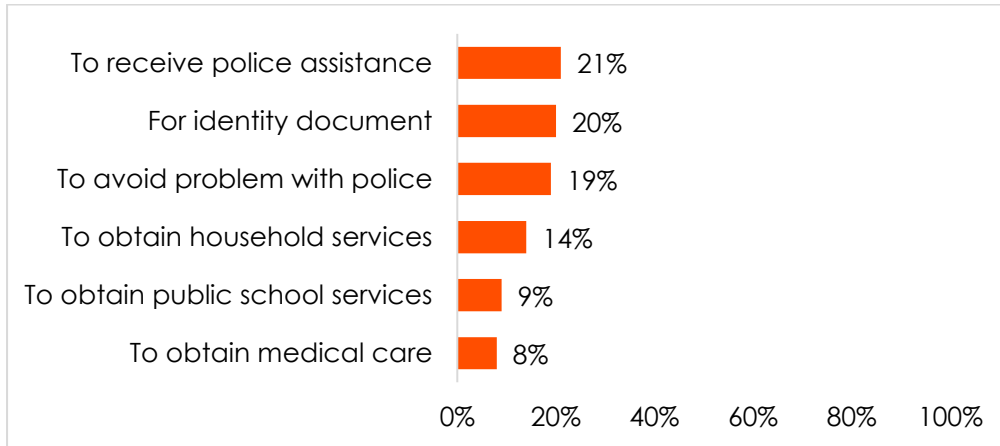
**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

### Gambians' experience with corruption

While many Gambians perceive corruption among officials, some citizens also acknowledge their participation in corrupt practices. Afrobarometer asked respondents whether they had contact with selected public services (schools, health facilities, government agencies responsible for identity documents, household utilities, police) during the previous 12 months, and if yes, whether they had been required to pay a bribe or do a favour in order to obtain the services or assistance they needed.

The police is the institutions that citizens most frequently acknowledge bribing. Among those who interacted with the police during the previous year, two in 10 (21%) say they paid a bribe to receive assistance from the police, and a similar proportion (19%) say they did so to avoid problems during an encounter with the police, such as at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation (Figure 6). Among respondents who had contact with other key public services during the previous year, one in five (20%) confirm paying a bribe to receive identity documents, while one in 10 say they paid a bribe to obtain medical care (9%) or public school services (8%).

**Figure 6: Paying bribes to obtain public services | The Gambia | 2018**



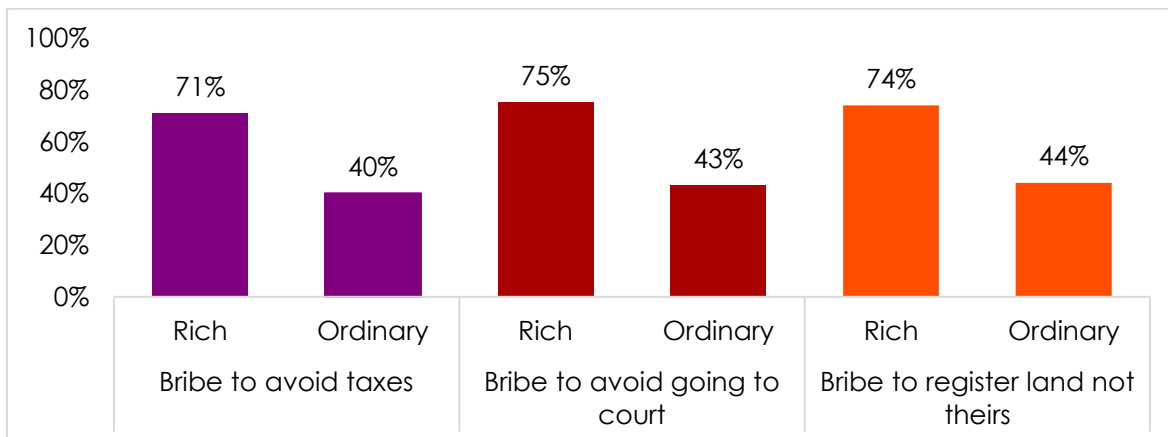
**Respondents who said they had contacted with selected public services during the previous year were asked:** And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour:

- For a teacher or school official in order to get the services you needed from the schools?
- For a health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed?
- For a government official in order to get the document you needed?
- For a government official in order to get the [water, sanitation, or electricity] services you needed?
- For a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed?
- For a police officer in order to avoid a problem?

(% who say "once or twice," "a few times," or "often") (Note: Respondents who said they had no contact with these services during the previous year are excluded.)

Gambians say rich people are more likely than ordinary citizens to bribe or use personal connections to achieve illegal advantage. A large majority say the rich are "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to bribe authorities to avoid paying taxes (71%), avoid going to court (75%), or register land that not theirs (74%) (Figure 7). Only about four in 10 Gambians say the same about ordinary citizens.

**Figure 7: Bribery by the rich vs. ordinary people | The Gambia | 2018**



**Respondents were asked:** In this country, how likely do you think it is that an ordinary person/a rich 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?

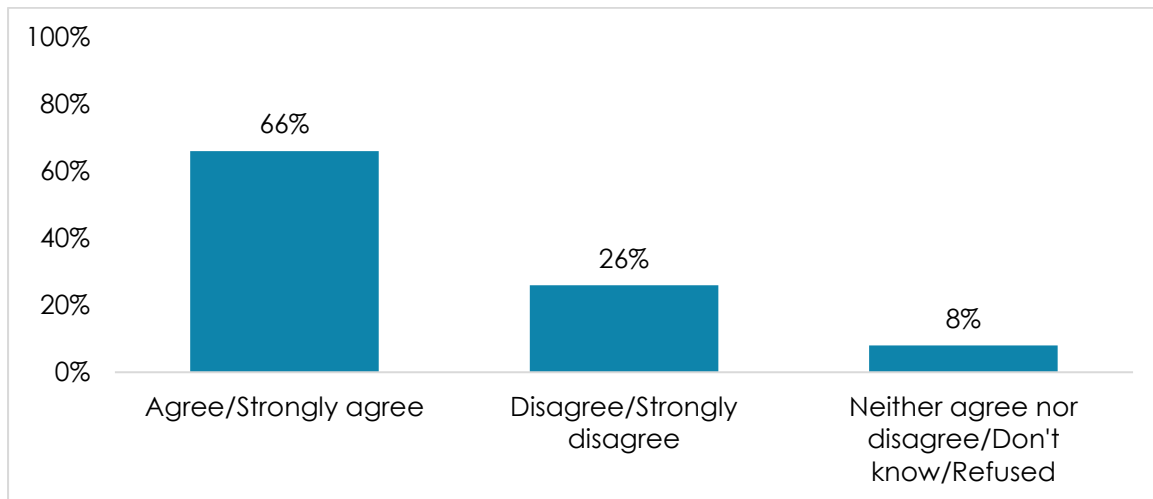
(% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

### Citizens' role in fighting corruption

But most Gambians also believe that citizens have a role in fighting corruption. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that ordinary people can make a difference in this effort. Only a quarter (26%) disagree (Figure 8).

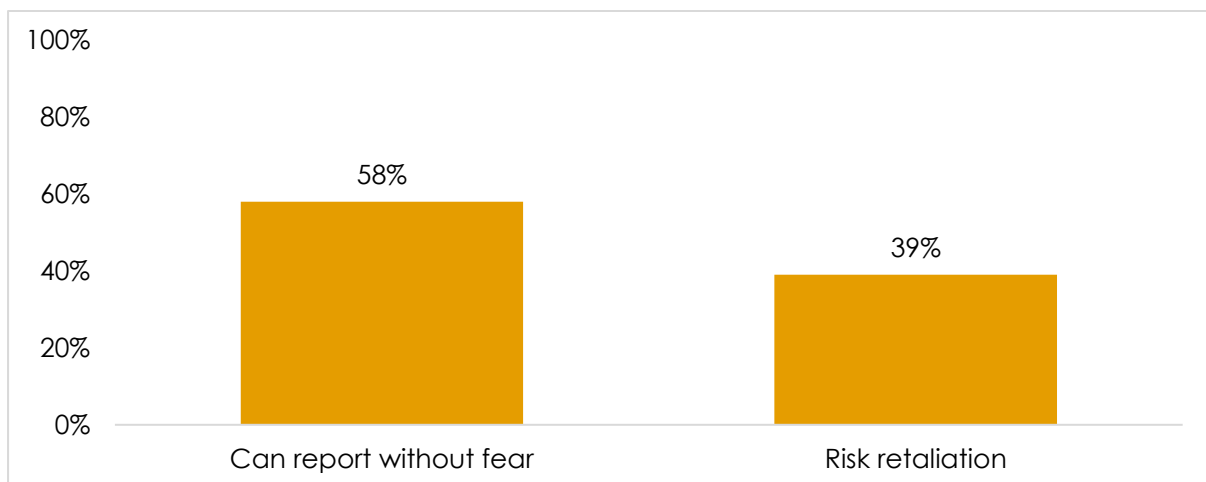
Six in 10 (58%) Gambians say they can report corruption incidents to the authorities without fear of retaliation or other negative consequences (Figure 9). However, a significant proportion (39%) say they risk retaliation should they make such reports. A case in point is the 2017 arrest of Bubacarr Badjie, a legal adviser to the State Intelligence Services (SIS), who was accused of violating the country's security secrets and code of conduct for intelligence officers by leaking a memo on "high-level corruption" at SIS to the media and the Gambia Bar Association (Jollof Media Network, 2017; Peninsula Qatar's Daily Newspaper, 2017).

**Figure 8: Can ordinary people make a difference in the fight against corruption?**  
 | The Gambia | 2018



**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?

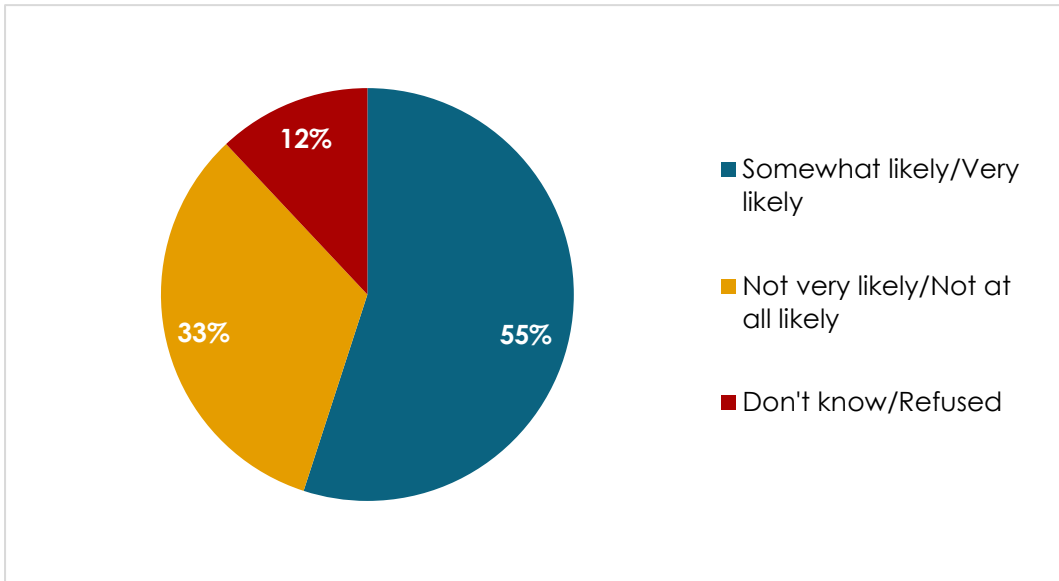
**Figure 9: Can ordinary people report corruption without fear?** | The Gambia | 2018



**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?

A majority (55%) of Gambians also believe it is “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that authorities will take action when incidents of corruption are reported (Figure 10). The promised establishment of an Anti-Corruption Commission and the erection of billboards by the police advising citizens not to bribe the police may contribute to building such confidence in institutions charged with fighting corruption.

**Figure 10: Will the authorities take action when corruption is reported?**  
 | The Gambia | 2018



**Respondents were asked:** How likely is it that you could get someone to take action if you went to your local government council to report corrupt behaviour like misuse of funds or requests for bribes by government officers, police, or school or clinic staff?

### Conclusion

Despite reports of corruption in post-Jammeh Gambia, more Gambians see corruption in the country as decreasing than increasing. A majority of citizens are confident that ordinary people can make a difference in ending corruption, that they can report corruption without fear of retaliation, and that the government is likely to take action when incidents of corruption are reported. Nonetheless, high levels of perceived corruption among the police, the courts, government officials, and other public- and private-sector leaders need to be addressed by a well-functioning Anti-Corruption Commission that will crack the whip on corrupt officials.

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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.

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