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## News release

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### **In Nigeria, majority of police encounters marked by bribery, difficulty getting assistance, survey shows**

Most Nigerians who encountered the police last year say they had to pay bribes and found it difficult to get help, Afrobarometer survey findings show.

Based on citizens' assessments, Nigeria's police are widely seen as corrupt, unhelpful, and untrustworthy – a strongly negative perception that forms the background for recent protests against police abuses. While protests initially focused on the controversial Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the government's decision to abolish the unit has not ended protesters' calls for police reform.

The Afrobarometer survey, conducted in early 2020, shows that while only one in 10 Nigerians sought police assistance last year, about five times as many encountered the police at checkpoints and traffic stops or during investigations. Whether for assistance or to avoid problems, large majorities – more than in most other African countries that have been surveyed – say they had to pay bribes.

A majority of citizens who sought police assistance also say they found it difficult to get the help they needed.

Compared to other key leaders and officials, the police are more widely perceived to be corrupt and less trusted by citizens. Large majorities of Nigerians say the government is doing a poor job of fighting corruption and reducing crime – a stark reversal from positive assessments three years ago.

#### **Key findings**

- Only one in 10 Nigerians (11%) say they requested assistance from the police during the previous year, while half (49%) report police encounters at checkpoints, traffic stops, during identity checks, or during investigations (Figure 1).
- Among citizens who had contact with the police, large majorities say they paid bribes to get police assistance (77%) or avoid problems with the police (68%) (Figure 2).
- Out of 18 countries surveyed in 2019/2020, Nigeria records the highest level of bribery for police assistance and the second-highest level of bribery to avoid problems with the police – twice the 18-country average on both indicators (Figure 3).
- Nigeria is also among the countries with the highest proportions of citizens who say they found it “difficult” or “very difficult” to get police assistance (65% of those who sought police assistance during the previous year).
- Among key leaders and officials, the police are most widely perceived as corrupt: Six in 10 respondents (61%) say “most” or “all” police officials are corrupt (Figure 4).
- Only a quarter (24%) of Nigerian say they trust the police “somewhat” or “a lot,” one of the lowest levels of popular trust in officials.
- Only about three in 10 citizens say the government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” in fighting corruption (28%) and reducing crime (33%). Both assessments reflect steep declines since 2017 (59% and 53%) (Figure 5).

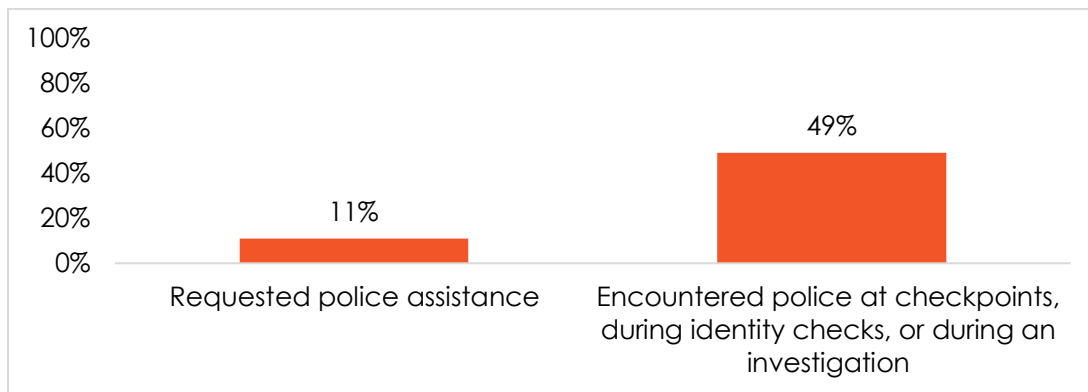
## Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2020 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Nigeria, led by NOIPolls, interviewed 1,599 adult citizens of Nigeria in January-February 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Nigeria in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

## Charts

**Figure 1: Contact with police | Nigeria | 2020**

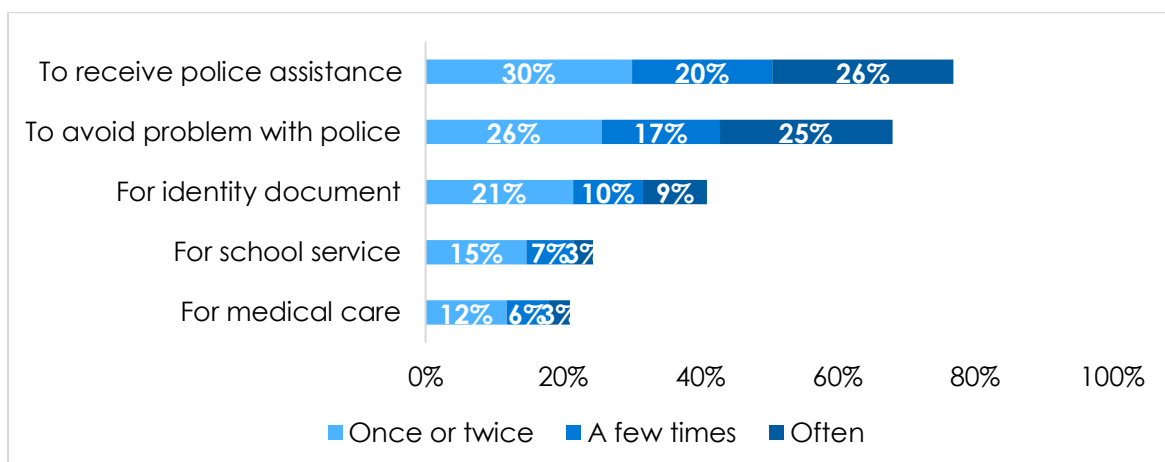


**Respondents were asked:**

*In the past 12 months, have you requested assistance from the police? (% who say "yes")*

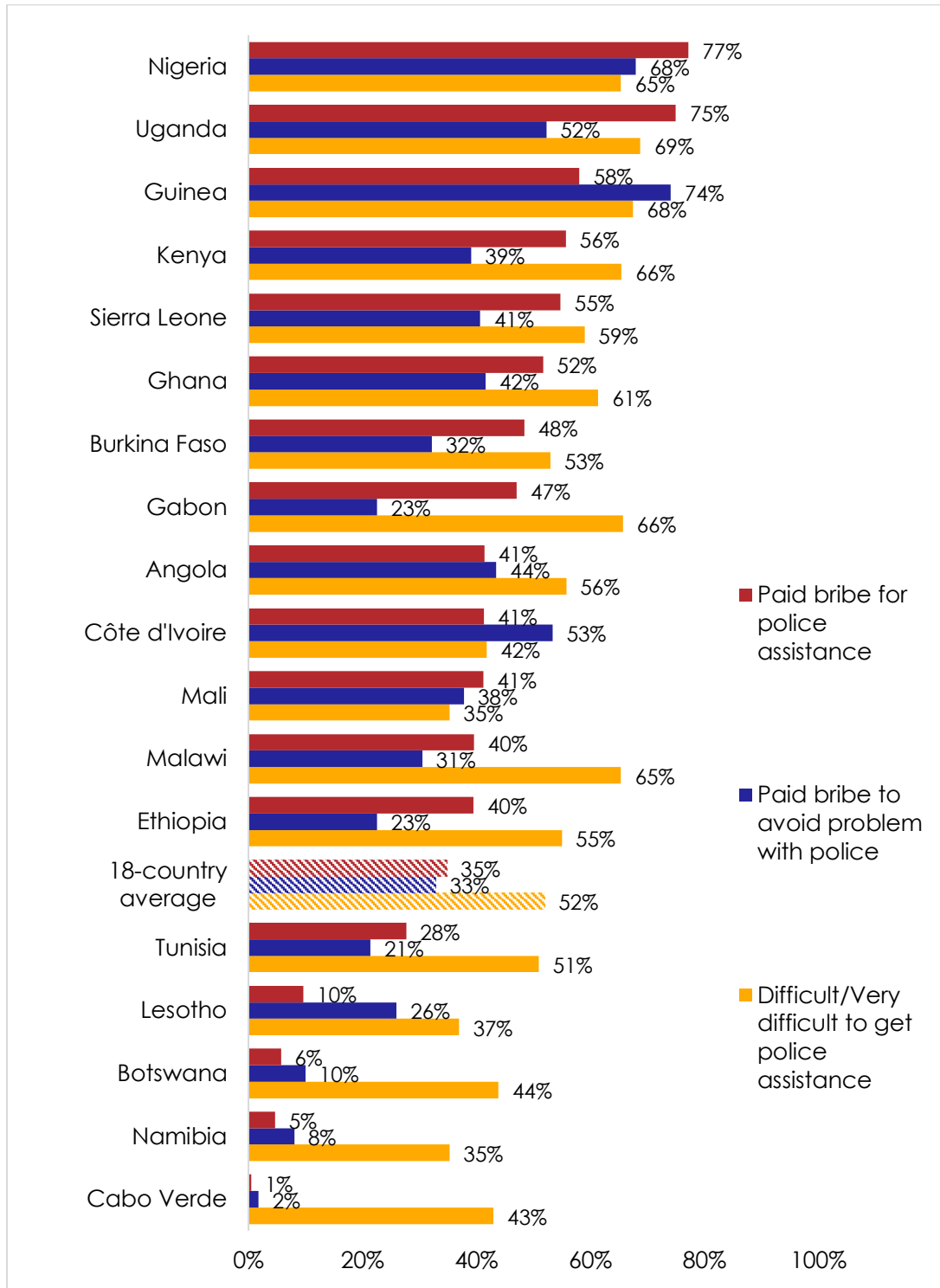
*In the past 12 months, how often have you encountered the police in other situations, like at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation? (% who say "often," "a few times," or "once or twice")*

**Figure 2: Paid bribes to access public services | Nigeria | 2020**



**Respondents who had contact with key 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 public official to obtain the needed assistance or avoid problems]? (Note: Figure excludes those who had no contact with these public services.)*

**Figure 3: Encounters with the police | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



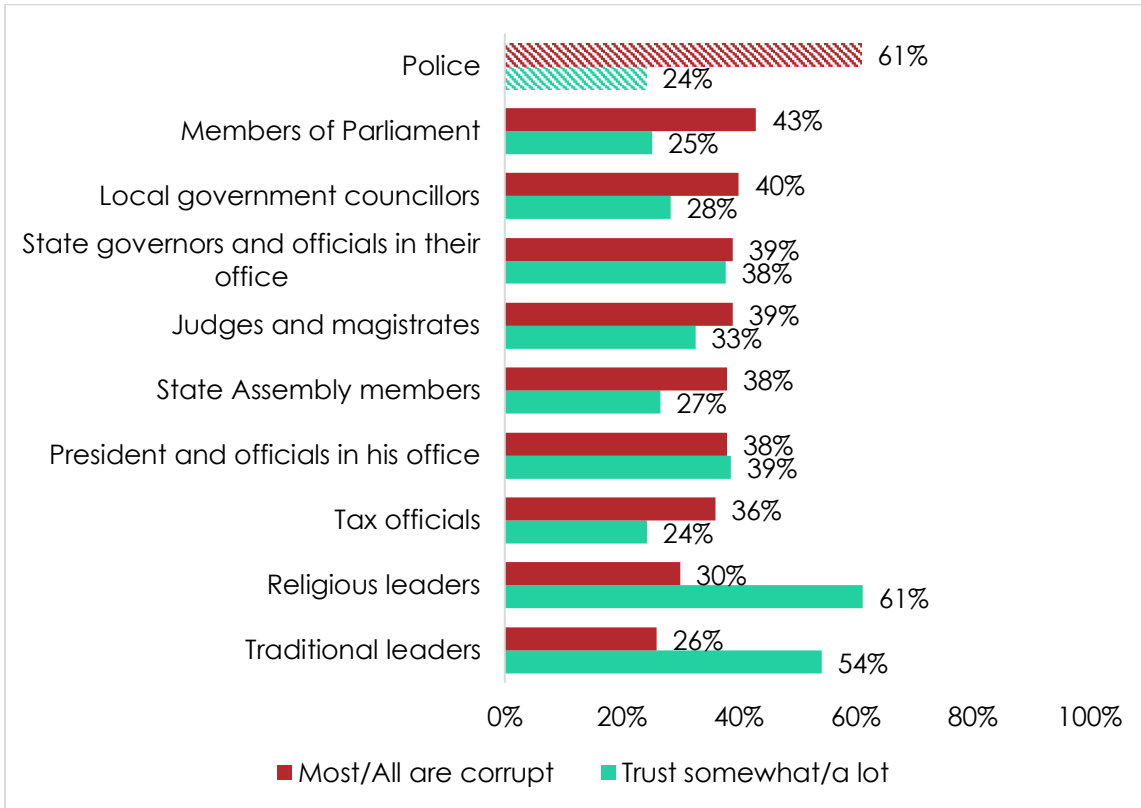
**Respondents who tried to get police assistance or encountered the police in other situations were asked:**

*How easy or difficult was it to obtain the assistance you needed?*

*And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour [in order to get the needed assistance or avoid problems]?* (% who say "often," "a few times," or "once or twice")

*(Note: Figure excludes those who had no contact with the police.)*

**Figure 4: Trust in and perceived corruption among officials | Nigeria | 2020**

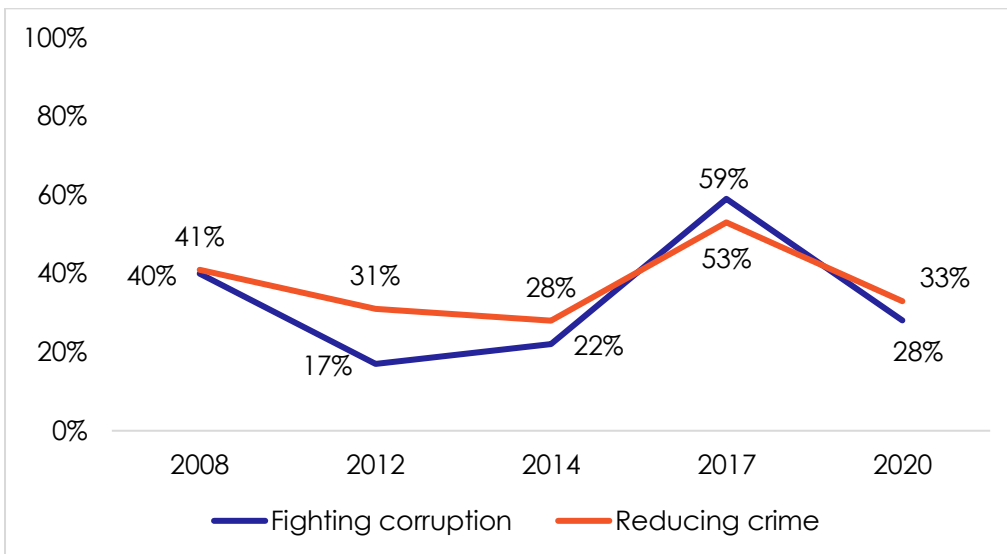


**Respondents were asked:**

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

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

**Figure 5: Positive assessment of government performance in fighting corruption and reducing crime | Nigeria | 2008-2020**



**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? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

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