



Lusaka, Zambia
19 August 2021

News release

Majority of Zambians see corruption increasing, fear retaliation if they speak up, Afrobarometer survey shows

A growing number of Zambians say corruption is on the rise and the government is doing a poor job of fighting it, a recent Afrobarometer study shows.

As in many African countries, the police are most widely perceived as corrupt, followed by officials in the Office of the Presidency, local government councillors, and members of Parliament.

An overwhelming majority of Zambians think that ordinary people risk retaliation if they report corruption to the authorities.

Key findings

- Seven in 10 Zambians (71%) say levels of corruption have increased over the past year, up from 55% in 2014 (Figure 1).
- Eight in 10 citizens (79%) say the government is handling the fight against corruption “fairly badly” or “very badly” – a significant increase from 66% recorded in 2014 (Figure 2).
- The police are most widely perceived as corrupt: 54% of Zambians say “most” or “all” police officials are corrupt. Substantial proportions of the population see widespread corruption in the Office of the Presidency (40%), among local government councillors (36%), and among members of Parliament (36%) (Figure 3).
 - The proportion of Zambians who say that “most” or “all” officials in the Presidency are corrupt has increased steadily from 27% in 2014 to 40% in 2020.
- More than three-fourths (79%) of Zambians think ordinary people risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they report corruption to the authorities (Figure 4).

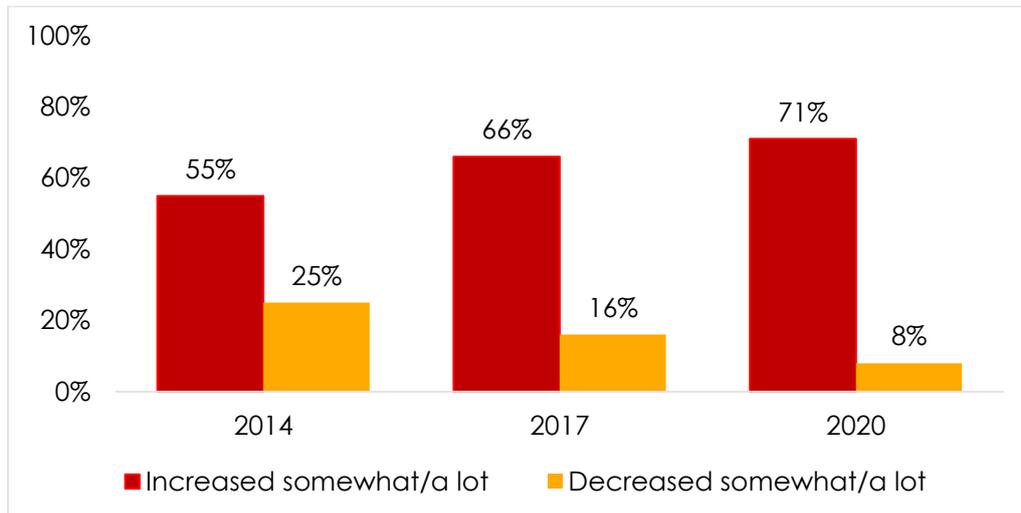
Afrobarometer surveys

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 (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Zambia, led by the Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), a research unit of the University of Zambia, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 Zambian adults in November-December 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Zambia in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, and 2017.

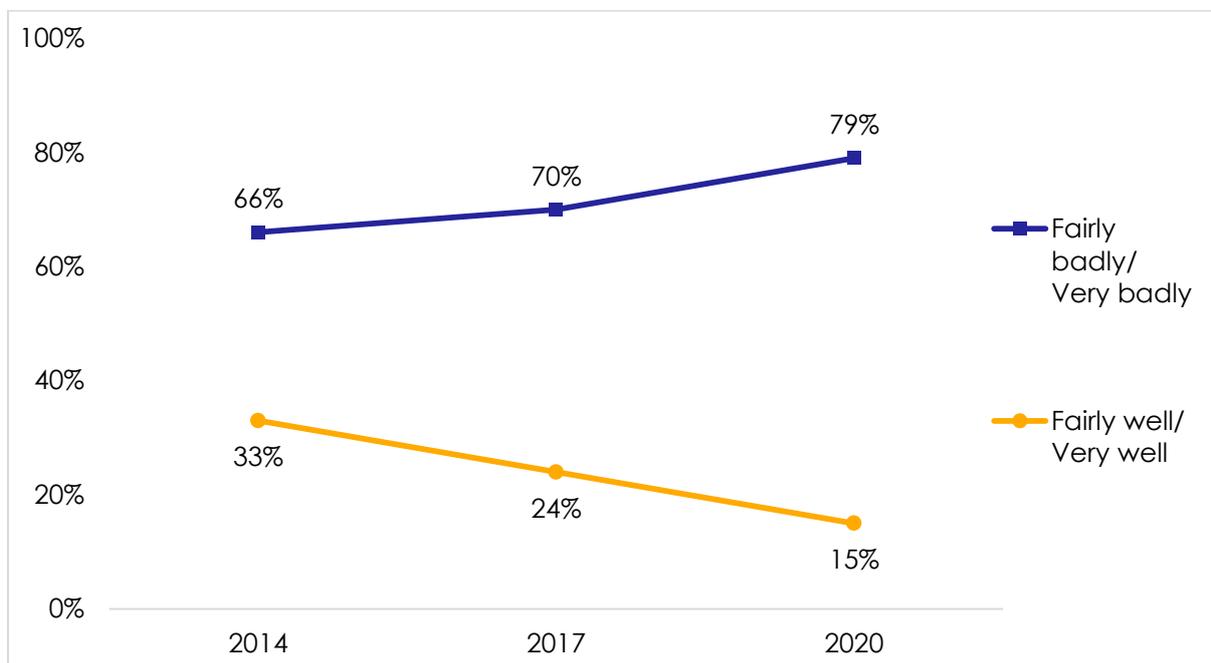
Charts

Figure 1: Level of corruption | Zambia | 2014-2020



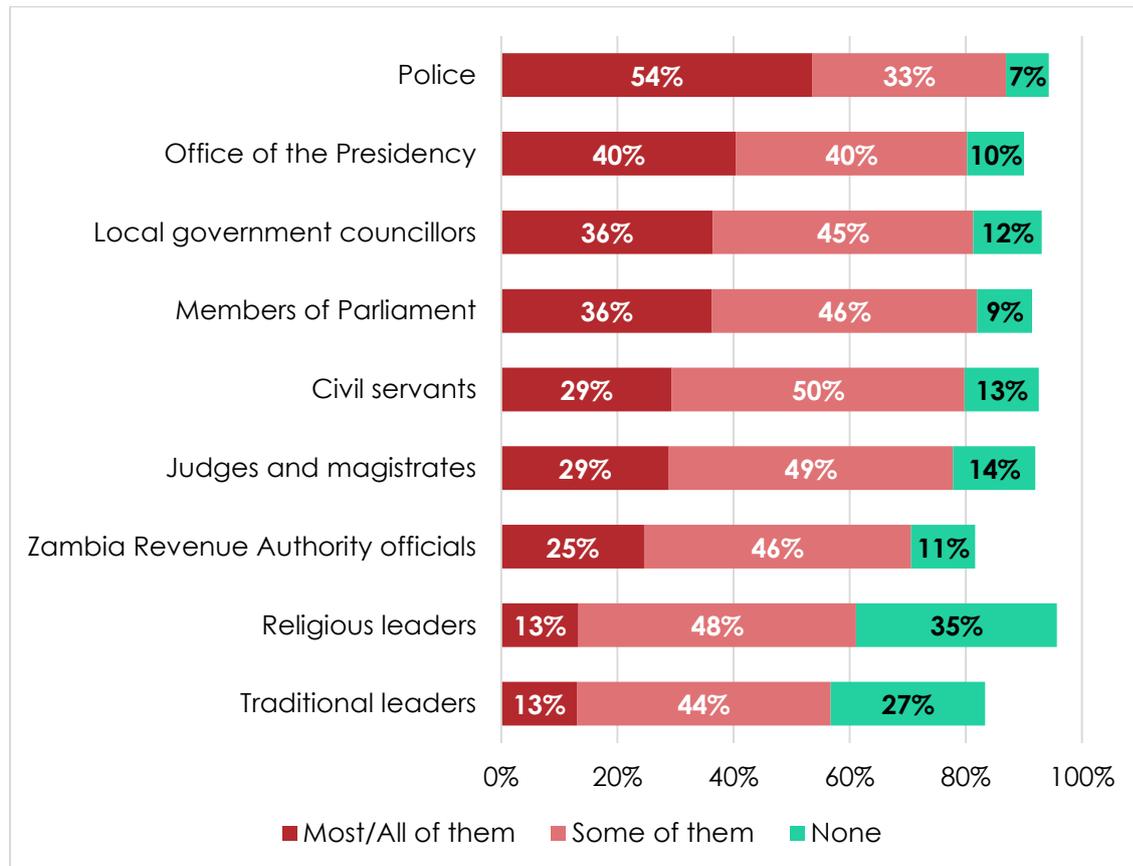
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Figure 2: Government handling of the fight against corruption | Zambia | 2014-2020



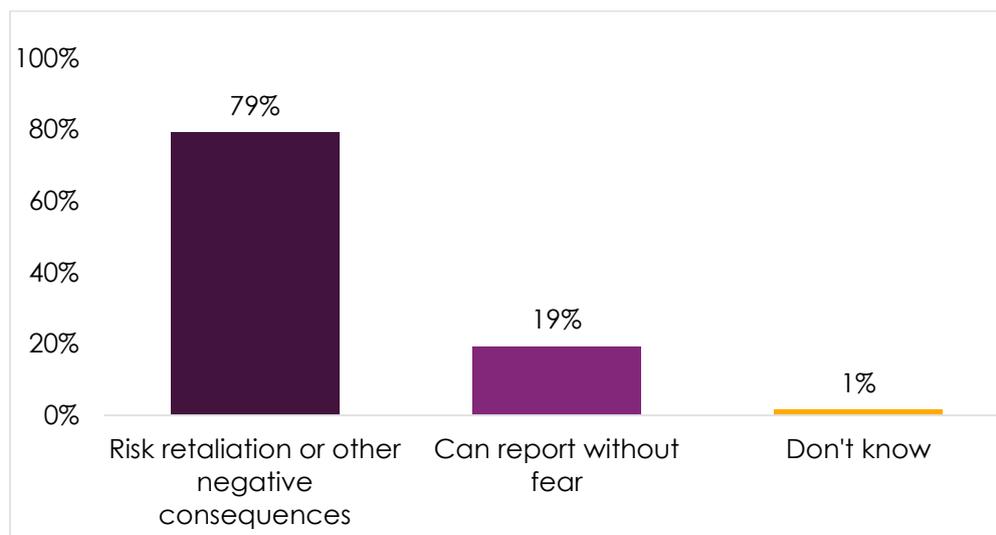
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government?

Figure 3: Perceived perpetrators of corruption | Zambia | 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?

Figure 4: Do people risk retaliation if they report corruption? | Zambia | 2020



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?

For more information, please contact:

Edward Chibwili
Institute of Economic and Social Research, University of Zambia
Email: edward.chibwili@unza.zm

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