

# Angolans see growing corruption, government failure to contain it

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 631 | Carlos Pacatolo and David Boio**

## Summary

Between 2018 and 2022, Angola improved from 165th to 116th on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, largely on the strength of anti-corruption reforms introduced after the inauguration of President João Lourenço in September 2017 (Transparency International, 2023; Ropes & Gray, 2021).

In February and March 2023, headlines exploded with public accusations of drug trafficking against senior national police officers and of involvement in embezzlement, extortion, and corruption against Supreme Court Chief Justice Joel Leonardo, whose offices were closed and searched by the Attorney General's Office, and against Court of Auditors Chief Justice Exalgina Gamboa, who resigned (Maka Angola, 2023a, b; Club-K, 2023; Angola24Horas, 2023; Novo Jornal, 2023a, b; Jornal de Angola, 2023a, b).

These events have reignited public debate on the seriousness of corruption problems in the country, especially considering that it may affect the institutions charged with administering justice on behalf of the people. President Lourenço refused to deliver the opening speech of the 2023 judicial year, citing reports that the corruption crisis had reached the superior bodies of justice (Jornal de Angola, 2023b).

At the same time, critics charge that corruption complaints involving presidential and government personnel are not investigated, as in recent allegations against the director of the President's Office and the minister of energy and water (Novo Jornal, 2022; Kesongo, 2023).

How do citizens perceive efforts to fight corruption?

Findings from the latest Afrobarometer survey in Angola show that a considerable proportion of citizens see corruption as being on the rise in the country, particularly in public institutions such as the national police and the Presidency, and a majority rate the government's performance in the fight against corruption as poor. Many Angolans report having to pay bribes to obtain government services, and most say ordinary people risk retaliation if they report corruption.

## Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys are to be completed in early 2023. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Angola, led by Ovilongwa – Estudos de Opinião Pública, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Angolans between 9 February and 8 March 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. A previous survey was conducted in Angola in 2019.

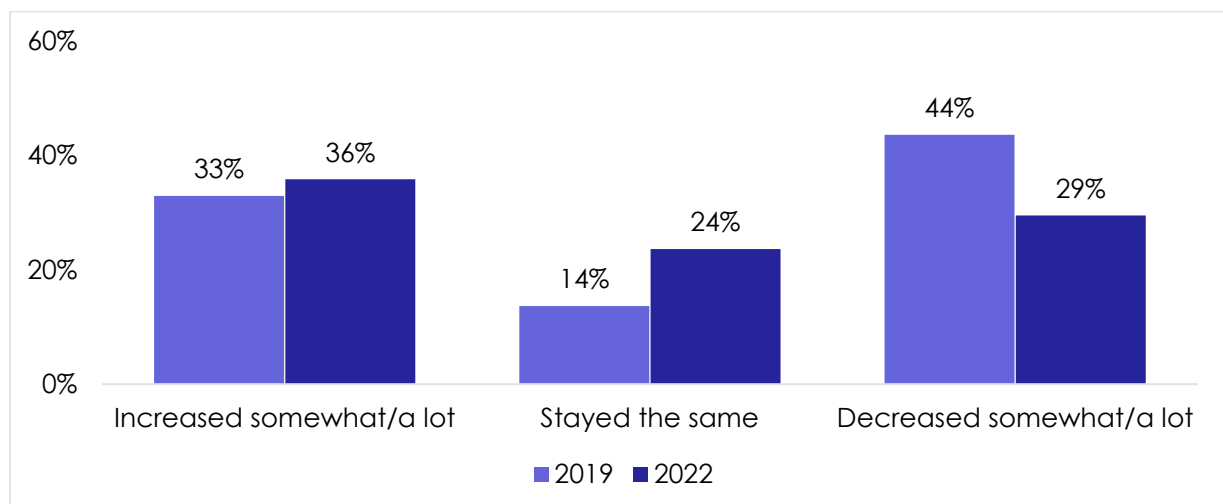
## Key findings

- More than one in three Angolans (36%) say the level of corruption in the country increased “somewhat” or “a lot” over the past year.
  - The share of citizens who say corruption decreased dropped by 15 percentage points, from 44% in 2019 to 29% in 2022.
- Six in 10 Angolans (59%) say the government is doing a poor job of fighting corruption, up from 54% in 2019.
- More than six in 10 citizens (62%) believe that people who report acts of corruption to the authorities risk retaliation or other negative consequences.
  - A majority (54%) of respondents think the authorities are “not very likely” or “not at all likely” to take action when an act of corruption is reported.
- Among Angolans who had contact with key public services during the previous year, about four in 10 say they paid a bribe to avoid problems with the police (37%), obtain assistance from the police (42%), obtain public school services (39%), or obtain a government document (43%).
- More than four in 10 citizens (45%) say “most” or “all” police officials are corrupt, the worst rating among 12 institutions and leaders the survey asked about.
  - The proportion of respondents who perceive widespread corruption in the Presidency has risen by 16 percentage points since 2019, from 22% to 38%.

## Corruption levels and government performance

More than one-third (36%) of Angolans say the overall level of corruption in the country increased during the year preceding the survey, a slight increase from the 2019 survey (33%). Only 29% of citizens believe that corruption decreased, down from 44% in 2019, while the proportion who see no change in corruption levels increased by 10 percentage points, to 24% (Figure 1).

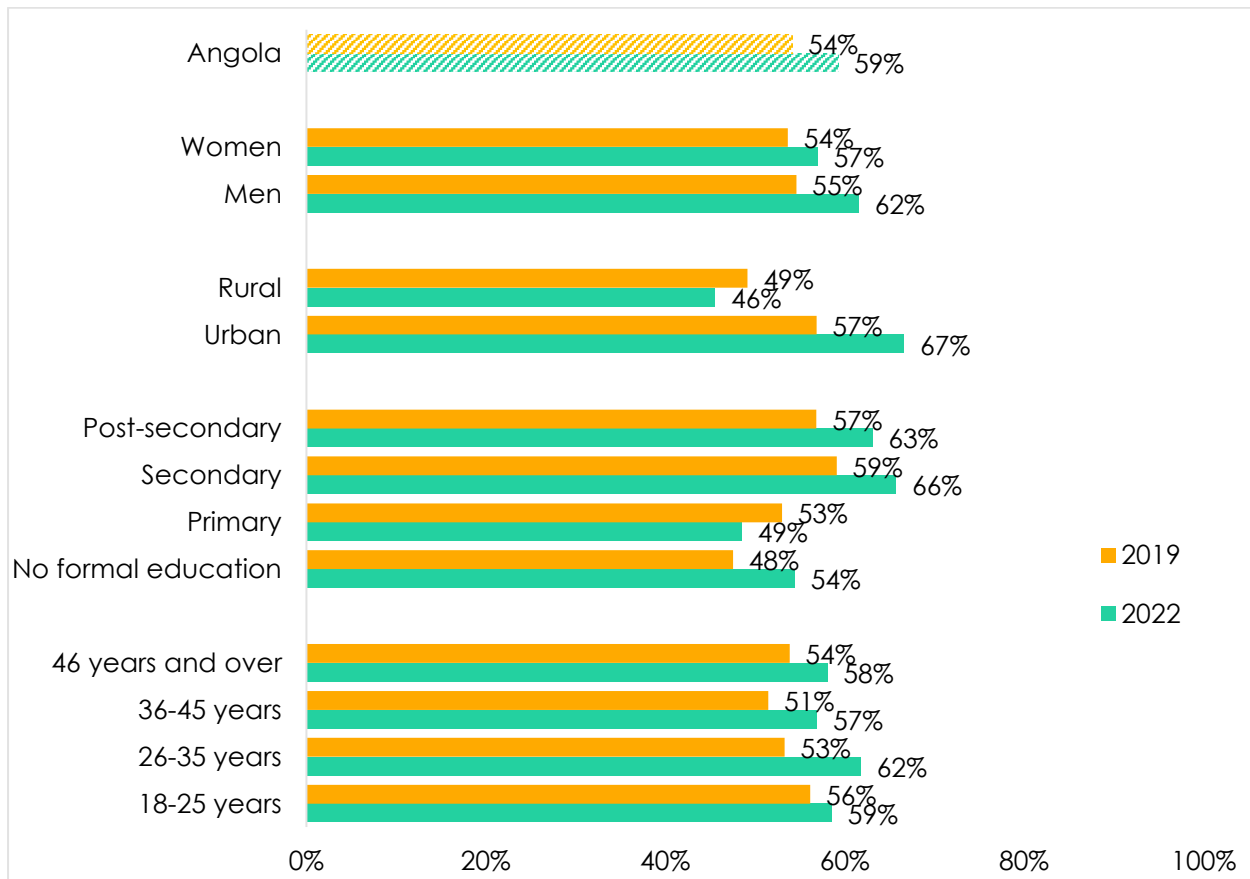
**Figure 1: Level of corruption** | Angola | 2019-2022



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

In line with this trend, negative assessments of the government's performance in the fight against corruption grew by 5 percentage points, from 54% in 2019 to 59% in 2022 (Figure 2). The perception that corruption levels increased is highest among men (62%), urban residents (67%), and citizens with secondary or post-secondary education (63%-66%).

**Figure 2: Government performing badly in fight against corruption | by demographic group | Angola | 2019-2022**



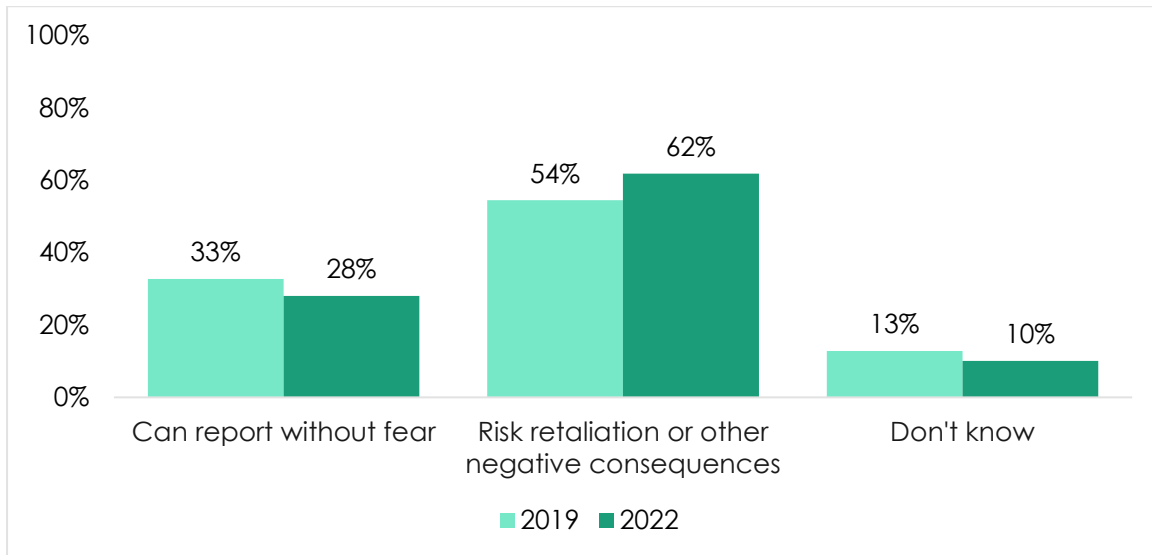
**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government? (% who say "fairly badly" or "very badly")

### Can people report corruption without fear?

The ability of citizens to report corruption cases to the appropriate authorities is essential to anti-corruption work, yet more than six in 10 Angolans (62%) say ordinary people risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they do so. This proportion increased by 8 percentage points compared to 2019 (54%) (Figure 3). Only 28% of citizens say people can report corruption without fear, down from 33% in 2019.

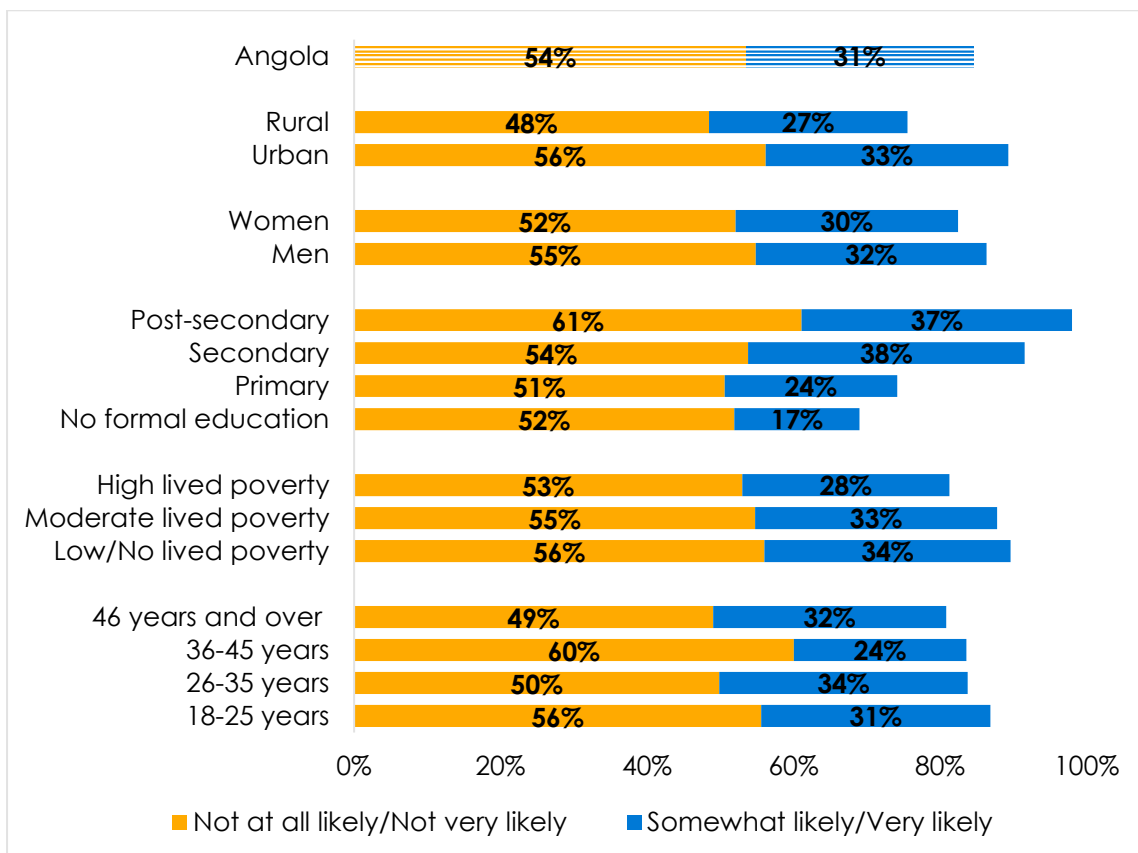
Moreover, more than half (54%) of Angolans consider it "not very likely" or "not at all likely" that the authorities will take action in response to a reported case of corruption. This perception is particularly widespread among urban residents (56%) and those with post-secondary education (61%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 3: Can people report cases of corruption without fear? | Angola | 2019-2022**



**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?

**Figure 4: Likelihood that authorities will take action on report of corruption | by demographic group | Angola | 2022**



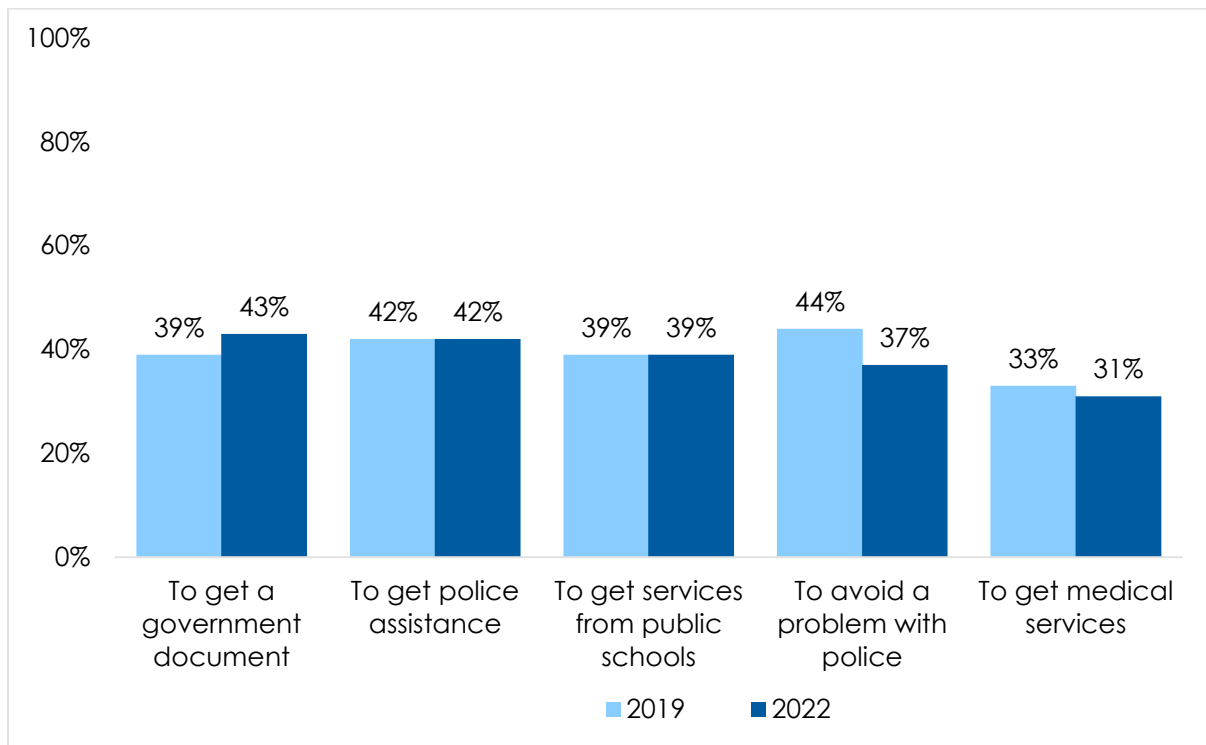
**Respondents were asked:** How likely is it that you could get someone to take action if you went to a municipal government office or anti-corruption authority to report corrupt behaviour like misuse of funds or requests for bribes?

## Personal experience with corruption

Reported levels of personal experience with corruption in accessing free public goods and services suggest a systemic and institutionalised practice in the daily lives of Angolan citizens. Among respondents who had contact with selected key public services during the 12 months prior to the survey, about four in 10 say they had to pay a bribe at least once in order to obtain a government document (such as a birth certificate, driver's license, passport, voter's card, or permit) (43%), to get assistance from the police (42%), to get services from a public school (39%), or to avoid a problem with the police (37%). Slightly fewer (31%) report having to pay a bribe to obtain medical services (Figure 5).

Compared to findings in Afrobarometer's 2019 survey, bribe paying to obtain police assistance and school services has held steady, to avoid problems with police officers has seen a 7-percentage-point drop, and to obtain government documents has increased by 4 percentage points.

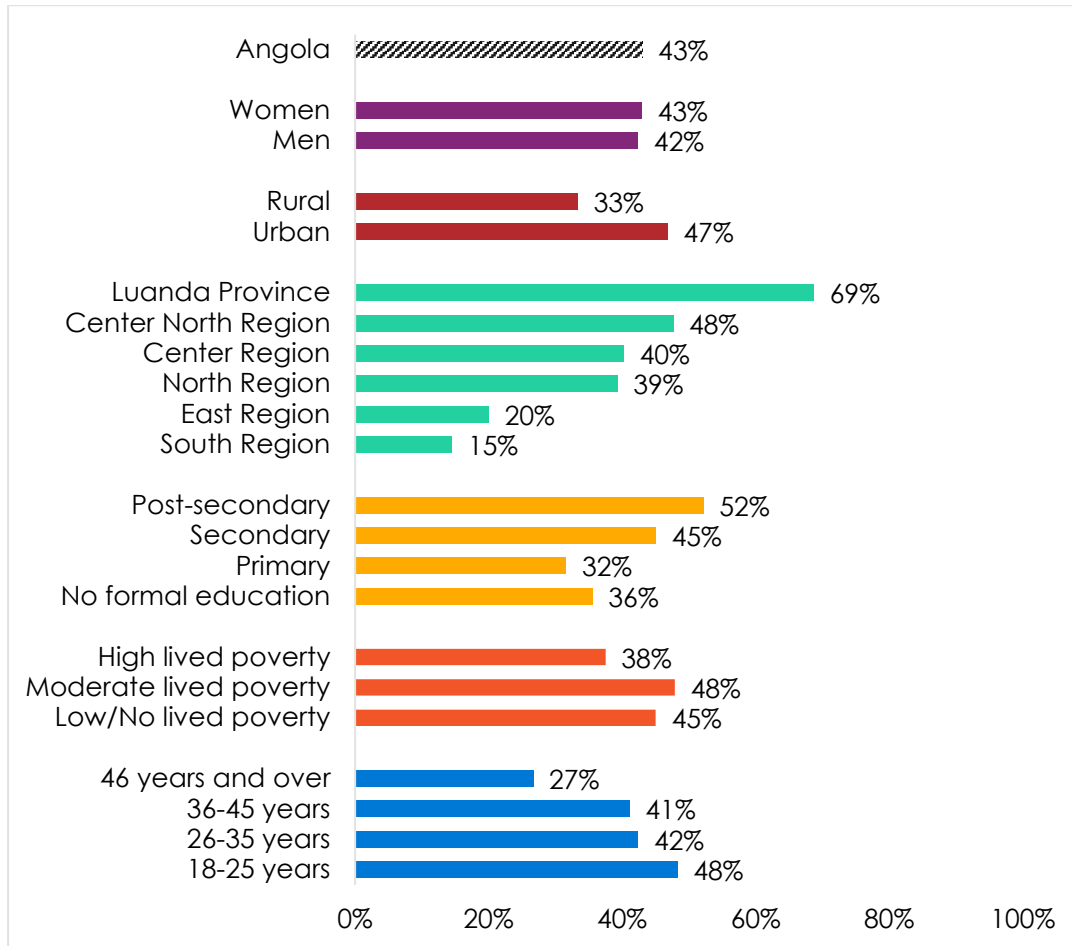
**Figure 5: Paid bribe to obtain public services | Angola | 2019-2022**



**Respondents who had contact with selected public services during the previous year were asked:** How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour [in order to obtain the needed services]? (% who say they paid a bribe "once or twice," "a few times," or "often") (Respondents who had no contact with these services are excluded.)

Among those who paid bribes to obtain government documents, residents of Luanda Province stand out (69%, compared to 15% and 20% in the South and East regions). Urban residents are more likely than rural residents to report paying a bribe (47% vs. 33%), as are citizens with post-secondary education (52%) and young people (48% of those aged 18-25 years) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Paid bribe to obtain a government document** | by demographic group  
 | Angola | 2022



**Respondents were asked:**

*In the past 12 months, have you tried to get an identity document like a birth certificate, driver's license, passport or voter's card, or permit from government?  
 [If yes:] How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a government official in order to get the document you needed? (% who say they paid a bribe "once or twice," "a few times," or "often") (Respondents who didn't try to get an identity document are excluded.)*

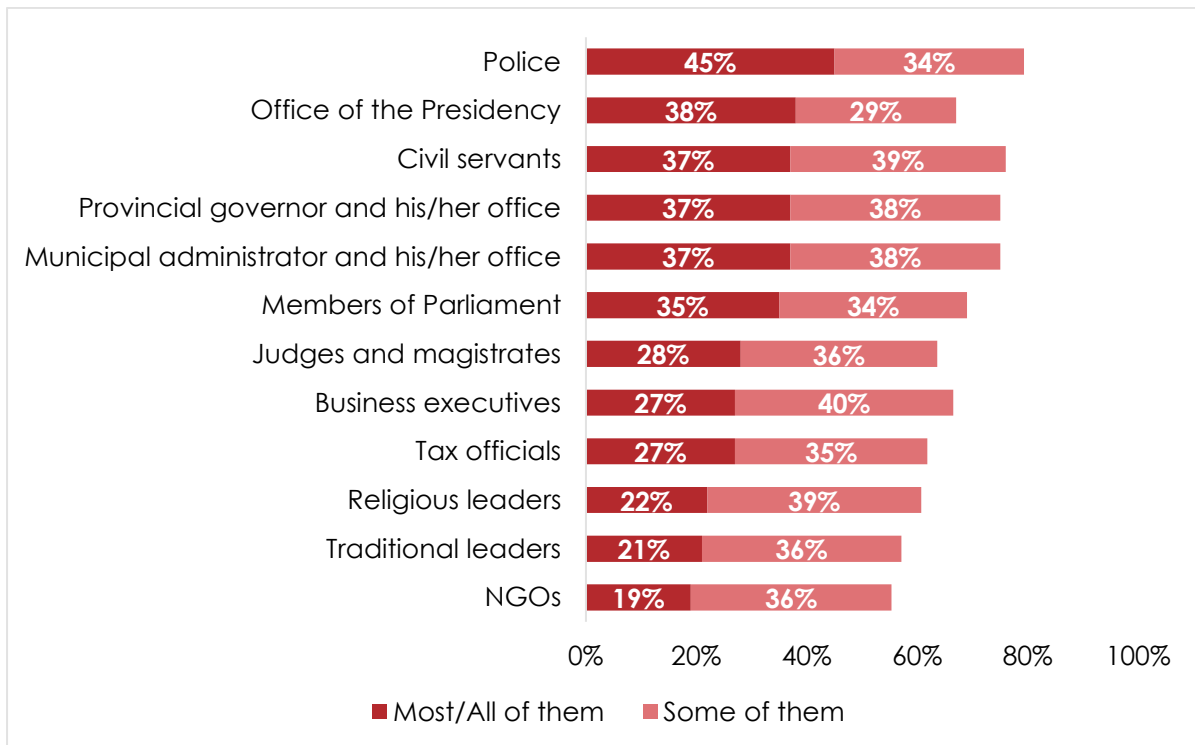
**Who is corrupt?**

Among key leaders and civil servants, the national police are most widely perceived as corrupt: Almost half (45%) of Angolans say that "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt, in addition to 34% who say "some" of them are involved in corruption (Figure 7). The police are followed by the Presidency of the Republic (38% most/all corrupt), civil servants (37%), provincial governors and municipal administrators and their staff (37%), and members of Parliament (35%).

Only 13% of Angolans perceive no corruption in the Presidency, and even fewer (9%) say there is no corruption in the police.

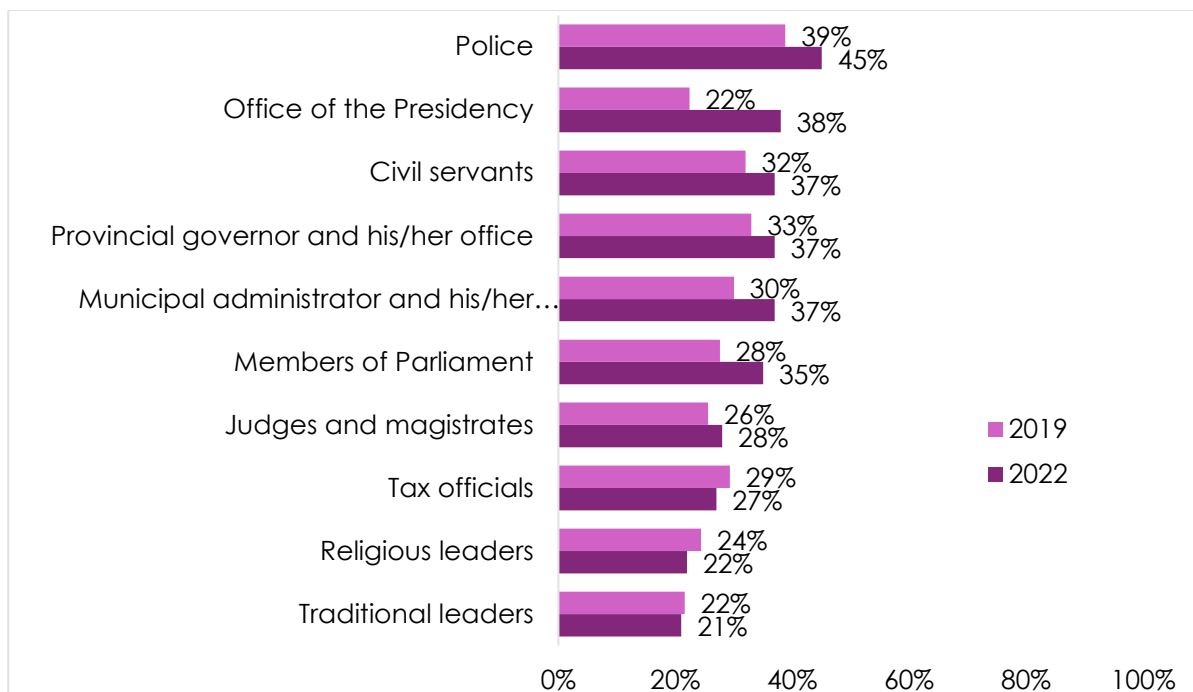
Compared to 2019, perceptions of widespread corruption in the Presidency increased by 16 percentage points, with smaller increases recorded for the police, provincial governors, civil servants, municipal administrators, and members of Parliament (Figure 8).

**Figure 7: Perception of corruption among institutions and leaders | Angola | 2022**



**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?

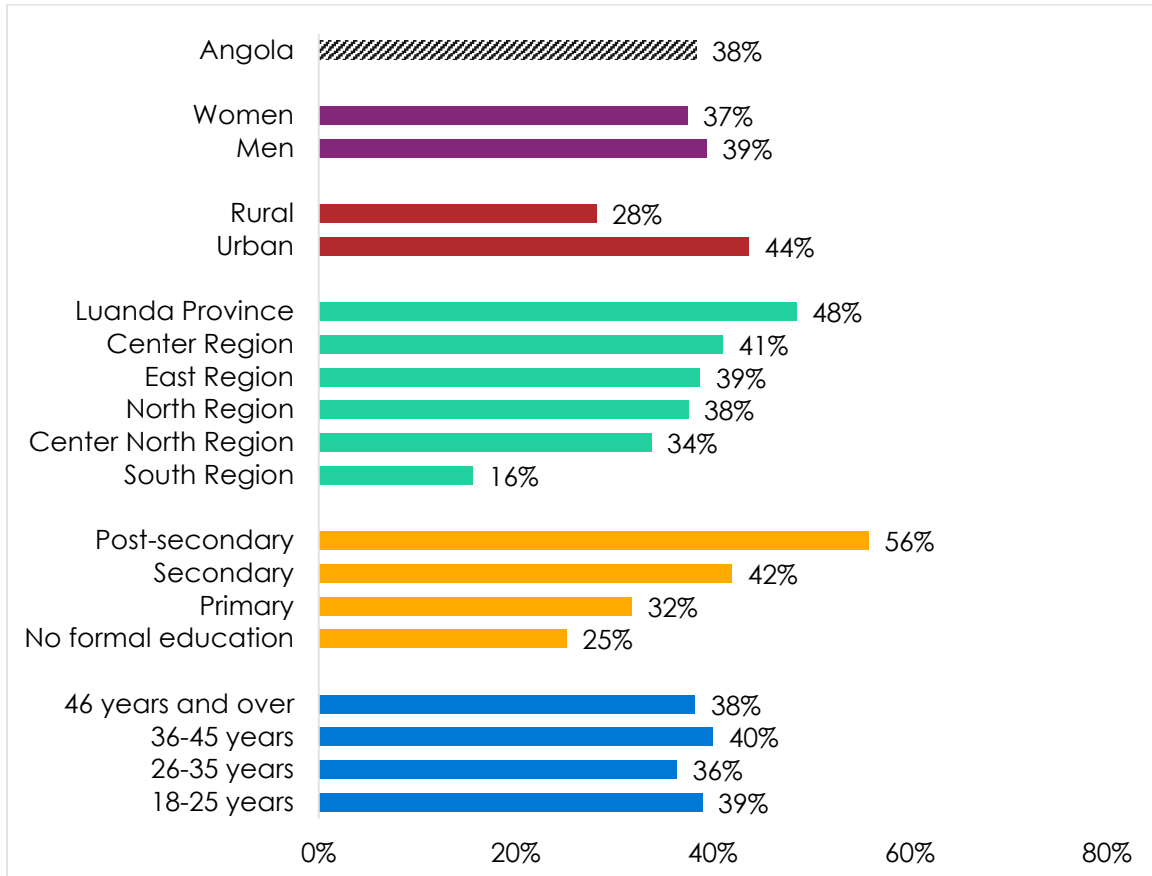
**Figure 8: Widespread corruption among institutions and leaders | Angola | 2019-2022**



**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? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

Urban dwellers are more likely than rural residents to perceive widespread corruption in the Presidency (44% vs. 28%), as are residents of Luanda Province (48%) compared to other parts of the country (16%-41%) (Figure 9). Perceptions that “most” or “all” officials in the Presidency are corrupt increase with respondents’ education level, ranging from 25% of those with no formal schooling to 56% of those with post-secondary qualifications.

**Figure 9: Perception that most/all officials in the Presidency of the Republic are corrupt | by demographic group | Angola | 2022**



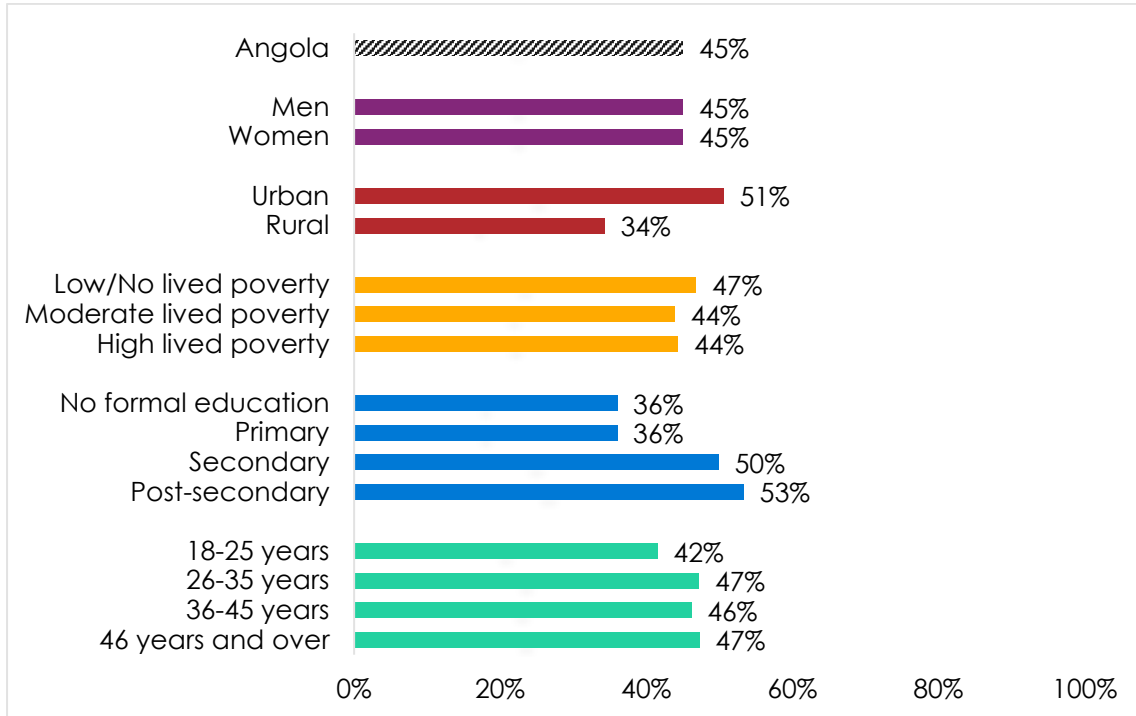
**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The President and officials in his office? (% who say “most of them” or “all of them”)

Regarding the national police, the perception that “most” or “all” of them are involved in acts of corruption is particularly common among Angolans with secondary or university education (50%-53%) and urban residents (51%) (Figure 10).

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**Figure 10: Perception that most/all police officials are corrupt | by demographic group | Angola | 2022**



**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: Police? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

## Conclusion

Findings from the most recent Afrobarometer survey show that Angolans believe the government is not doing enough to fight corruption. Many citizens say they have had to pay bribes to avoid problems with the police or to seek police assistance, to access services from public schools or health facilities, or to obtain government documents. And a majority think ordinary people risk retaliation if they report corruption.

Recent events that have shaken the higher bodies of justice and rekindled debate on the serious nature of corruption deserve a profound reflection by society as a whole.

In this context, it is necessary for policy makers and, above all, the president of the Republic and the Attorney General's Office to adopt strategies to increase the sense of personal security of citizens who become involved in campaigns to denounce corruption.

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