

Introduction

The objective of the survey "Corruption in Estonia: a survey of three target groups" is to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) how is corruption defined and to what extent it is condemned;
- 2) how far spread is corruption in the opinion of the respondents;
- 3) how frequent is exposure to corruption and what are the situations of potential exposure;
- 4) what is the readiness to report cases of corruption;
- 5) what is the potential material and moral damage caused by corruption?

The survey was carried out by the Criminal Policy Department of the Ministry of Justice. Assistance was provided in preparing the poll, and the results were analysed by Margit Tavits, PhD, researcher at Nuffield College of the University of Oxford, Taavi Annus, docent, at the Faculty of Law of the University of Tartu, and the research company Emor (in respect of preparation and conduct of the poll). An important role in the preparation of the methodology to be used was played by the anticorruption group of the World Bank who suggested that three target groups should be interviewed. The survey was financed by the European Commission (Phare project "Reducing Corruption in Estonia" nr 2003/005-850.01.01) and the Ministry of Justice.

The survey was carried out in December 2004 in three parts: interviews with the general population of Estonia (1002 respondents, one-on-one interviews), entrepreneurs (503 respondents, telephone interviews) and employees of the public sector (901 respondents, internet interviews). A separate questionnaire was prepared for each target group, with some of the questions overlapping for the sake of reference.

In any sociological survey, the possibility of measurement errors must be taken into account. The problem is even more serious if corruption is the object of a survey. Firstly, the definition of the term poses a difficulty. As the term "corruption" has an extremely wide definition, depending on a wider cultural and on the specific context, everybody might not have a similar understanding of the word. As far as ethics goes, people have a huge variety of principles and that, which to some may seem to be corruption, to others it doesn't. For example, giving gifts to officials might be considered to be corruption in some cases while in others, it can be interpreted as a token of heartfelt gratitude.

In addition to the above, people are generally reluctant to talk about their contact with corruption. Experiences are either denied or blown out of proportion. Respondents sometimes tend to provide the answer that they think is expected of them. The fact that people sometimes knowingly tell a lie must also be taken account. However, in the case of a representative sample, a few false answers do not influence the overall outcome. People are not ready to provide answers to some sensitive questions, as it became evident in trying to find out the exact amounts paid as bribes. The role of the media cannot be underestimated in how people perceive corruption. The general public tends to integrate the experiences of corruption in the way that they are presented by the media. Considering the above, it is clear that quantitative measurement of corruption has drawbacks which should be taken into account in analysing the results. However, those drawbacks should not be seen as an obstacle to measuring corruption.

There have been various attempts to measure the scope of corruption in Estonia by including questions on corruption and the presumed scope thereof among other topics. Such polls were organised, for example, by the Jaan Tõnisson Instituut, SaarPoll (2001), the Ministry of Justice and Turu-uuringute AS (2003, 2004), the Estonian Institute of Economic Research (2003, 2004); Transparency International and TNS Emor (2004). It is obvious that two polls might not measure the same thing. For example, the question asked by the Estonian Institute of Economic Research was, whether the respondent had been asked for a bribe during the past year (in 2003, 12% of the respondents gave a positive answer and in 2004, the number had dropped to 10%) while the question posed by the poll organised in 2003 by the Ministry of Justice and Turu-uuringute AS was if the respondent generally gives a bribe (27% of the respondents answered that they "always" or "occasionally" do). In the first case, the question concerned demand for bribe during a certain period of time while in the other, the issue was payment of bribe without no specified time-frame. Where the polls specified above mainly focused on bribes then the aim of this survey is to deal with the issue more widely and involve other forms of corruption. In addition, the team plans to carry out a re-surveys at an interval of a couple of years, using the same methodology which will enable a comparison of the results and lessens the confusion potentially resulting from different surveys. Another specific feature of this survey is that it approaches three different target groups. The answers provided by the representatives of those groups should give an accurate overall picture of the corruption situation.

The data was analysed by means of the data processing program SPSS. The specifics of the methodology of the survey as well as a description of the method used for analysing the data are provided in the technical report of the survey which can be found in the Annex. Data was analysed by way of linear regression in the case of scaled answers while, for two option items, the logistic regression model was used¹.

¹ Regression analysis was performed only if the investigated variable had enough variation. For example, if only 3 % of the interviewed entrepreneurs answered that they have given bribes to border guard officials then the variable has too little variation in order to be adequately explained by ordinary regression analysis involving a control variable.

The report sets out connections which, in the regression analysis, proved to be significant or otherwise interesting. The tables contained in the Annex also point out the connections which were analysed in respect of each question in addition to those specified in the text. In order to make those connections more understandable to the reader, three different methods of illustration are used: 1) cross tables and comparative proportion diagrams (%), 2) a comparison of averages, 3) odds ratio comparison.

Cross tables and comparative proportion diagrams are used to illustrate the connections which, in the course of linear regression, proved to be significant. However, the connections presented in cross tables have not been checked against other potential influences (e.g. Table 2). A comparison of averages was used to illustrate the connections considered to be important upon linear regression only in case the coding of dependant variables into categories was not found to be feasible (for example, where based on the answers to a multiple-choice question, an index lying between 1 and 4 points is prepared, where the value could fall anywhere between those two figures) (e.g. Table 9). The odds ratios comparison was used to illustrate the connections which, in the course of logistic regression, proved to be of importance. Differently from the last two

methods, in the case of a probability coefficient, reference variables can be taken into account. This permits, in comparing the odds, to learn the direction as well as the strength of each individual connection.

Summary

1. How is corruption defined and to what extent it is condemned?

The activity most frequently defined as corruption, and condemned as such, is bribery. Activities where no person bears direct damage or reaps direct benefit are less often perceived as corruption: for example, the case where an entrepreneur calls an official who is an acquaintance in order to speed up the processing of the papers of his enterprise. About one half of the respondents does not consider giving gifts to officials to be corruption; and about the same amount of persons find nothing condemnable in the behaviour of an official who orders computers from a firm where his son is a partner.

Men, non-Estonians, employees of the private sector and city dwellers are more tolerant of corruption. Residents of Virumaa county are more tolerant with respect to a number of different forms of corruption. Employees of the public sector are less tolerant of corruption than the other target groups. In that group, political appointments stand out to some extent by being more accepting of nepotism and misuse of official position than the rest.

2. How far spread is corruption in the opinion of the respondents?

The more any activity is accepted the more widely spread it is usually considered to be. The respondents deemed misuse of official position to be the most probable, and bribery - the least probable. 87 % of the general population as well as employees of the public sector are sure that using an official vehicle for personal purposes is a practice which is moderately or widely spread. Both the representatives of the general population and the employees of the public sector believe that bribery is most frequently used with the aim to prevent imposition of fines or other punishments, and least frequent for influencing the legislative process. In comparison with the employees of the public sector, the representatives of the general population perceive a wider spread of different forms of corruption. In the opinion of the employees of the public sector, bribery is slightly more common today than five years ago, while the employees who consider their remuneration to be fair, tend to believe that bribery is less frequent in their place of work than the workers who see themselves as underpaid.

3. How frequent is exposure to corruption and what are the situations of potential exposure?

Bribery

16 % of the representatives of the general population as well as the entrepreneurs state that they have given bribes. 25 % of the representatives of the general population and 24 % of the entrepreneurs say that they have been asked for a bribe for performance of a public service. 27 % of the employees of the public sector insist that they personally have been offered a bribe. The representatives of the general population have been asked for a bribe most often in communication with doctors (10 %). And 8 % of the respondents have been asked for a bribe in

communication with the police, upon registration of a vehicle, survey of a vehicle or obtaining a driver's licence.

Entrepreneurs have been asked for a bribe more often upon registration or survey of a vehicle - 13 %. Imposition of a fine (9 %) and application for permits and licences (7 %) rank next. Any sectoral differences in bribery could not be defined, except in communication with the border guard where companies based on foreign capital were asked to pay a bribe more frequently than enterprises based on Estonian capital only. Enterprises belonging to the trade or services sector were found to have paid more to the border guard than companies engaged in other walks of life. Law enforcement authorities (the police, the Security Police, prosecutor's offices, courts, the Border Guard Administration, the Information Board, the Tax and Customs Board) are offered bribe more often as compared with other authorities – 62% and 48%, respectively.

Corruption, an extensive overview

24 % of the representatives of the general population and 42 % of the entrepreneurs had personally participated in a form of corruption. 25 % of the employees of the public sector have encountered corruption whereas the respondents themselves need not have been active participants in the situation.

The representatives of the general population have met corruption in the form of a situation where an official is given a gift (14 %) or where, thanks to having an acquaintance, proceeding of a matter was expedited (13 %). The probability of exposure to corruption is three times higher for a respondent living in East Virumaa county than for a resident of any other region. The probability of exposure to corruption is higher for younger respondents than older respondents. Entrepreneurs have been exposed to corruption most often in the form of a situation where, thanks to having an acquaintance, proceeding of a matter was expedited (33 %) and where an official was given a gift (26 %). The main reasons for not participating in a public tender were the complexity of the tendering procedure (42 %) and the lack of fair competition (27 %). No respondent specified the request of a bribe to be the reason for failing to apply. No regional or sectoral differences became evident which leads to the conclusion that corruption is not more widely spread in certain sectors or regions. However, differences in types of corruption encountered in different sectors and regions still exist.

About 12 % of the employees of the public sector are receptive to corruptive offers. Political appointments (members of the Riigikogu, city and rural municipality councils) have been the most exposed to corruption, in their own words. The probability that a respondent in that group encounters corruption is four times higher than for other public servants. The most receptive are the respondents who are political appointments or public officials. Non-Estonians tend to be more receptive to corruption than Estonians.

4. What is the readiness to report cases of corruption?

80 % of the representatives of the general population do not know who to address in order to report an incident involving corruption. 60 % of the employees of the public sector who failed to report an incident of corruption also did not know who to address. Readiness to report corruption has a strong connection to the gender of the respondent and the region they live. More men than women, and more residents of small towns and rural areas than city-dwellers know where to report in case of corruption.

The main reasons for failing to report a corruptive incident is that the complainant is likely to suffer as a result and in any case, the offender would not be brought to justice.

5. What is the potential material and moral damage caused by corruption?

10 % of the representatives of the general population believe that they have been suffered moral or material damage as a result of corruption. The representatives of the general population spend an average of 500 kroons on bribes. The most frequent form mentioned was giving a gift or returning a service to a doctor. Entrepreneurs have paid most bribes upon registration of a vehicle in which case the sum paid usually amounted to 1000 kroons.

There is a significant connection between the spread of corruption, as perceived by the respondents, and the respondents' opinion of the court system, the police and politicians. For example, a statistically important connection was established between the trustworthiness of politicians and the presumed spread of corruption: the more the respondents believed that politicians act in the best interests of the state, the less they suspect that corruptive activities are widely spread. The representatives of the general population who are not sure that the judicial system can be trusted in its administration of justice also believe corruption to be more commonly spread than those who have trust in the court system.