TRACKING SOCIAL NORMS AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA: MEASURING ATTITUDES TO CORRUPTION, 2024/25

Report prepared

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPSLSC Scale	Frequency of Private Sector Local Sexual Corruption Scale
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IPSEE Scale	Indirect Public Sector Sexual Extortion Experience Scale
LoRC Scale	Likelihood of Reporting Corruption Scale
LoTiC Scale	Likelihood of Testifying in Court Scale
NACAC	National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council
NACS	National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2020-2030
NPE	National and Provincial Elections
PCR Scale	Perceived Community Retaliation Scale
PIoB Scale	Perceived Instrumentalism of Bribery Scale
PIoC Index	Impact of Corruption Index
PIoSC Scale	Perceived Instrumentalism of Sexual Corruption Scale
PLoLPSC Index	Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption Index
PLoSI Index	Perceived Level of Systemic Inequality Index
PNoOC Index	Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption Index
PPIoC Scale	Perceived Personal Impact of Corruption Scale
PPSLSC Scale	Prevalence Public Sector Local Sexual Corruption Scale
PRE Scale	Perceived Reporting Efficiency Scale
PVoC Scale	Perceived Value of Corruption Scale
RCE Scale	Recent Corruption Experience Scale
RoCoSN Index	Radius of Codes of Silence Norms Index
SASAS	South African Social Attitudes
SEO	State-Owned Enterprises
SES Index	Socio-Economic Status Index
SLoCB Index	Social Legitimacy of Corrupt Behaviour Index
TtC	Tolerance towards Corruption

GLOSSARY

Corruption	The abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It involves dishonest or illegal behaviour by individuals in positions of authority, such as politicians, public officials, or business managers, who use their power to benefit themselves at the expense of others.
Bribery	The act of presenting, offering, receiving, or requesting something valuable (such as money or favours) with the purpose of influencing the decisions or actions of an individual holding a position of authority or responsibility. It is an illegal and unethical practice aimed at gaining unfair advantage or preferential treatment.
Extortion	Often in corrupt transactions, a person in a position of authority agrees to receive an advantage (such as money, gifts, or favours) in exchange for performing (or not performing) an action. This is qualitatively different from when a person in authority explicitly (or implicitly) demands an advantage as a condition for performing (or not performing) an action. Here the perpetrator initiates the corrupt transaction, often leveraging their position to coerce or pressure the other party into compliance.
Sexual corruption	Sexual corruption takes place when an individual abuses their entrusted position of power to secure a sexual favour in return for providing a service or benefit that is linked to their authority.
Sextortion	A form of criminal exploitation in which a person holding authority misuses their power to demand sexual favours in exchange for providing or withholding services or benefits that should be distributed fairly. This coercive behaviour typically involves threats or manipulation to force compliance.
Sexual bribery	A form of corruption whereby a person offers sexual favours as a bribe in corrupt exchange. Sexual bribery specifically emphasises the transactional nature where sex is offered by the subordinate party as a bribe to gain access or favours from a person in a position of authority
Procurement corruption	This type of corruption involves practices (such as bribery, collusion, bid rigging etc.) where public officials abuse their authority to unfairly favour certain companies or individuals in the contracting process.
Role model	A person whose behaviour, actions, or achievements inspire others to imitate or follow their example. They can be found in everyday life, from family members and teachers to public figures and celebrities.
Public opinion	The collective beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments held by a population or a segment of society on various issues, events, policies, or individuals. It reflects the general consensus or prevailing viewpoint within a group at a given time.
Hypothesis	A testable statement or prediction about the relationship between two or more variables. It serves as a starting point for scientific investigation, proposing a potential explanation or outcome that can be confirmed or refuted through experimentation, observation, or data analysis.
Subgroup analysis	A form of analysis that involves assessing a variable by different groups. Examples of different group classifications include age, gender, geographic location, or socioeconomic status.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2020-2030 is an inclusive plan to reduce corrupt practices in South Africa. The NACS acknowledges that corruption is an entrenched problem that permeates both the country's public and private sectors. It recognises that while the nation boasts a sophisticated anti-corruption legal framework, it struggles with enforcement and compliance. The NACS envisions a whole-of-society approach to the problem of corruption in which all citizens contribute to, and benefit from, anti-corruption initiatives. It aims to promote social values amongst the citizen body that will counteract corruption in the country, such as accountability, integrity and transparency. The NACS seeks to encourage active citizen participation in the fight against corruption; calling on members of the public to report corruption if they witness it.

The study is entitled the 'Tracking Social Norms and Behaviour Change in South Africa: Measuring Attitudes to Corruption' and it was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The aim of the study is to provide reliable, evidence-based insights into the factors driving and enabling corruption, as well as efforts to combat it. The study's ultimate goal is to support the NACS. The baseline phase (2023-2024) combined a nationally representative public opinion survey, conducted as part of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). In the second year of the study (2024-2025), a follow-up public opinion survey was conducted, incorporating expert feedback to refine research tools and deepen our understanding of relevant social norms and social values. The survey findings from the 2024/25 SASAS round are organised into nine distinct sections, each addressing a specific aspect of the study.

DATA AND METHODS

In the second year of the study, a public opinion survey was conducted using the SASAS research framework to capture the attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments about corruption in South Africa of a nationally representative sample of individuals aged 16 and older. All interviews were face-to-face. Ethical approval was obtained in mid-2024, and data collection took place face-to-face from February to March 2025; 3,095 participants were interviewed as part of the research process. For purposes of continuity with the previous annual rounds of SASAS, although data collection was slightly delayed and took place in early 2025, the dataset is termed the SASAS 2024/25 dataset.

The report offers an analysis of the key findings from the second-year research survey. Where relevant, the study will provide subgroup analysis; we offer definitions of these subgroups in Section 13.2. To complement the quantitative research component, the second-year study included a qualitative vignette-based research component. This component used a focus group approach to explore the social norms and values around corrupt behaviour amongst young South Africans. Eight focus group discussions were conducted with South African youth. Since the second-year study aimed to build upon the baseline research, this report will, where relevant, reflect on the findings from year one (2023-2024) of the study.

EXPERIENCES OF CORRUPTION

The second section of this report tested the NACS's assumption that citizens are directly or indirectly exposed to public sector corruption in their local communities. This section is focused on the micro-level (i.e., neighbourhoods or villages) where people have more tangible interactions with local officials compared to distant national or provincial governance. Expanding beyond traditional measures of petty bribery, the research captures perceptions of nepotism, sextortion and procurement-related corruption. Most adults reported that they lived in neighbourhoods and villages with public sector bribery (52%) and where officials hire unqualified friends and family (58%). About half (51%) of adults reported that they or a close family member had recently encountered a public official who suggested or requested a bribe or favour in exchange for a service.

We also explored sextortion in the public sector; our results revealed that a significant segment (41%) of the population reported recent indirect experiences of sextortion by public officials. Individuals who personally encountered bureaucratic corruption were more inclined to disclose indirect instances of sexual corruption within the public sector. We also looked at recent indirect experiences of sextortion in the private sector. About two-fifths (43%) of the adult public said that this crime had happened to someone they knew in the five years prior to the SASAS interview. The data analysis showed that

individuals with indirect experience of sextortion in the public sector were also more likely to report an indirect experience of sextortion in the private sector.

Findings revealed that a majority of adults (68%) live in micro-level communities where public sector corruption takes place at least sometimes. About a tenth of the population resides in communities where corruption is reportedly a very common occurrence. Economic disadvantage increased the odds that a person would live in a community characterised by public sector corruption. There were also geographic variations here, with certain provinces (e.g. Limpopo and the Free State) containing more corrupt micro-level communities than others. In addition, there was a notable difference between urban and rural areas, with farm residents exhibiting higher corruption perceptions than their counterparts in rural villages or in urban areas.

OCCUPATIONAL CORRUPTION

The third section of the report looked at that the perceived normality of corrupt practices within occupations. We found that many people, including those who were actively working, thought that their occupation was characterised by corrupt behaviour. Nearly half of employed adults reported rule-bending to benefit friends or family, and over half observed corruption linked to financial gain or bribery within their work environment. Public sector workers reported higher levels of corrupt practices compared to their private-sector counterparts. In addition, we found that certain corrupt practices were more normalised in certain occupations (such as elementary work, service and sales, as well as crafts and related trades). These findings underscore the importance of tailoring anti-corruption initiatives to occupational contexts, focusing on sectors and regions with higher corruption risks.

A composite Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption (PNoOC) Index was developed for the analysis. The index correlated strongly with direct experiences of bribery and indirect exposure to sexual corruption, suggesting an interconnection between different corrupt behaviours in occupational settings. Socio-economic status also plays a role, with economically advantaged individuals reporting lower levels of workplace corruption. Recognising the socio-economic disparities linked to occupational corruption vulnerability is important for designing inclusive, effective interventions that foster corruption-free work environments nationwide. Certain geographic groups (such as rural dwellers) and those residing in specific provinces (KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape) indicated more entrenched corruption in their occupations.

AWARENESS OF CORRUPTION'S IMPACT

The NACS builds on the National Development Plan by outlining a three-pronged approach to combatting corruption (i.e., education, deterrence and prevention). Education, in particular, was identified as a key strategy to raise public awareness and shape societal responses to corruption through campaigns in schools and public resources promoting transparency and accountability. The fourth section of the report looked at public awareness of corruption's impact on their personal and family well-being. A clear majority (61%) thought that corruption had a large impact in SASAS 2024/25, which was similar to what was observed in SASAS 2023. Supplementary analysis showed that certain groups (e.g., racial minorities, urban dwellers as well as residents of the Western Cape and the Free State) became less concerned about the impact of corruption on their personal lives between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25.

Nevertheless, a clear majority of the adult public recognised corruption's significant impact on their local communities. In addition, we found that most believe that corruption has had a large impact on the national economy. People tended to think that both corruption by government officials as well as large private companies had a substantial negative effect on the economy. Awareness of corruption's detrimental effects cut across diverse socio-demographic groups and there was generally low subgroup variance on this issue. However, we did find that certain groups (e.g., KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga residents as well as rural dwellers and the economically disadvantaged) were more likely than others to perceive the impact of corruption as high.

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

The fifth section of the report investigated public perceptions regarding corruption as a pathway to success in South Africa. The study revealed that a significant proportion (42%) of the general public viewed monetary bribes as an important tool for social advancement. A lower, but still significant share (27%) of the adult public, said that sexual bribery was important for success. The perceived instrumentalism of both corrupt practices varied notably by socio-demographic factors. We found that

Black African adults, individuals with low levels of formal education, as well as residents of Limpopo, Gauteng and the Western Cape were more inclined than others of seeing corruption as instrumental for advancement in society.

Public attitudes towards the instrumentalism of corrupt practices were shaped by experiences of work. The more common a person thought that corruption was in their occupation, the more likely they were to perceive corrupt practices as instrumental to success. In addition, data presented in the section showed that many believed that South African society unfairly rewarded non-meritocratic factors (such as being male or being white) with success. Indeed, about a fifth of the adult population thought that society had a very high level of systemic inequality. We discovered that perceptions of systemic inequality were correlated with viewing corruption as a practical tool to overcome entrenched social barriers. To counter corruption effectively, anti-corruption efforts must address deep-rooted systemic inequalities, promote fair, merit-based pathways to success as well as support actions to reduce workplace corruption.

TOLERANCE TOWARDS CORRUPTION

Understanding public tolerance towards corruption (TtC), often defined as the willingness to accept corrupt behaviour, is critical for combating corruption and strengthening democracy. TtC operates as a social norm, encompassing expectations that bribery, nepotism, or corrupt exchanges are acceptable. One of the most central of the NACS goals is zero-tolerance for corruption amongst the general public, aiming to replace permissive norms with values of integrity and accountability. To understand levels of TtC in South Africa we used a composite TtC index that looked at the perceived acceptability of seven corrupt practices. We found that most people in the country have a low TtC, but only a small percentage (27%) adopted a zero-tolerance stance on this issue. TtC levels varied modestly across socio-demographic groups; TtC was highest amongst residents of Limpopo, Western Cape and the Free State as well as workers in the public sector and low-skilled occupations. TfC was, in contrast, found to be lowest amongst adults living Mpumalanga as well as rural area residents and those with no secondary education.

Exposure to bureaucratic corruption was found to increase tolerance for certain corrupt behaviours such as accepting bribes or offering sex to someone in exchange for a job. One of the reasons that TtC was so low in South Africa was that awareness of corruption's impact was negatively correlated with TtC. In addition, we discovered that economic disadvantage was associated with higher levels of TtC. This finding demonstrates the need for anti-corruption policies that are pro-poor and address structural inequalities in the economy. TtC was also positively linked with the perceived usefulness of corrupt practices. The findings outlined in this section emphasise that reducing tolerance requires both improving governance and tailoring public education campaigns that focus on the tangible harms of corruption without normalising its prevalence.

ROLE MODELS

Role models play a crucial part in shaping social norms and values by providing real-life examples of integrity and honesty. The seventh section explored who people in South Africa identified as role models for good ethical conduct. Nearly half (44%) of adults identified family members (especially parents and siblings) as their main role models for integrity and honesty. Public figures, such as politicians (notably Nelson Mandela) and celebrities, are also significant role models, though less so than family. Notably, about 17% of adults said they had no role model for these values. When faced with corruption-related ethical dilemmas, most adults (80%) would seek advice from their social networks, primarily from family (55%) and close friends (32%).

Most workers did not go to workplace mentors for advice when confronted with a moral dilemma. However, the inclination to seek advice from workplace mentors was found to be much higher in the public sector than in the private sector. People who sought advice from workplace mentors had higher levels of TtC than those who did not. Religious figures were not mentioned as often here as may have been anticipated. Only a small percentage (4%) named them as role models and about a tenth (14%) said that they would seek their advice when encountering an ethical dilemma. Religious mentorship showed no significant correlation with lower TtC.

CODES OF SILENCE

Codes of silence (CoS) norms discourage people from reporting wrongdoing within their social networks. Such norms pose a significant barrier to combating corruption in South Africa and the eighth

section of this report examines them. Despite some efforts to create safe and supportive environments for whistleblowing, many individuals perceive reporting the corrupt actions of friends, family or work colleagues as a moral betrayal. They prioritise loyalty to social networks over their duty to law enforcement. We may have expected a distinct urban-rural divide on these kinds of norms, but no such divide was found. The section provided a special focus on CoS norms in the workplace. We found that such norms were stronger amongst workers in the public sector as well as among trade union members and low-skilled and less-educated workers.

For the analysis, a combined Radius of Codes of Silence Norms (RoCoSN) Index was created; a high score on the index indicates a high adherence to CoS norms. The data revealed that the general public was quite divided on this issue. A significant segment (38%) scored 25 or below on the index while a comparable segment (34%) scored 75 and above. We did not see significant differences on the RoCoSN Index across most major socio-demographic groups, but we did find that residents of the Western Cape as well as KwaZulu-Natal and the North West scored highest on the index. Personal experiences with corruption and feelings of material deprivation increased the likelihood that a person would score high on the RoCoSN Index.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION

Many individuals in South Africa refrain from reporting corruption to the authorities. To help us understand why, we asked members of the general public to indicate why people do not report corruption to the authorities. Most attributed non-reporting primarily to external factors, including a lack of trust in law enforcement, inadequate protection measures for whistleblowers and institutional weaknesses. People who were aware of the harmful impact of corruption tended to blame law enforcement failures for underreporting. TtC was also associated (negatively) with blaming non-reporting on external factors; people who were intolerant of corruption were more likely to blame institutional failures. The RoCoSN Index was also negatively linked to attributing non-reporting to external causes; individuals with strong CoS norms tended not to think that institutions were to blame.

The ninth section of the report also evaluated public willingness to fight corruption. In SASAS 2024/25, we found that a significant share of the general public (46%) said that they would report corruption to the authorities if they witnessed or experienced it. This is a 10-percentage point increase relative to what was observed in SASAS 2023. When compared to willingness to report, popular readiness to testify in court was much lower. Less than half (48%) of all adults said that they would be willing to provide evidence in court against the person accused of corruption. We discovered that those with stronger moral opposition to corruption (i.e. low TtC) are more willing to fight corruption by cooperating with the authorities. In addition, we learnt that perceptions of systemic inequality reduce willingness to fight corruption, while viewing corruption as instrumental to success is associated with low levels of trust in reporting effectiveness.

Consistent with willingness to report corruption, we found that public confidence that authorities will act on reports has improved modestly between SASAS 2024/25 and SASAS 2023. There was a 10-percentage point increase in the proportion of the general public who believed that authorities would take action if they reported corruption. Groups that exhibited a high level of positive change were residents of the North West and the Northern Cape, as well as rural dwellers and white adults. Confidence in reporting efficacy was found to be robustly correlated with public willingness to fight corruption. We found that perceptions about the instrumentalism of corrupt practices was negatively associated with confidence in report efficacy.

FEAR AND ANONYMITY

The tenth section of the report looked at fear of retaliation, which is commonly identified as a significant barrier to reporting corruption in South Africa. A clear majority (62%) of adults in SASAS 2024/25 believed that speaking out against corruption in their communities risked the possibility of revenge, including job loss, social ostracism, or violence. We found that certain groups (e.g., rural farm dwellers as well as residents of KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State) displayed higher levels of fear than others. Perhaps unsurprisingly, that this kind of fear was positively correlated with attitudes towards the level of corruption in a person's community and occupational level. People with direct awareness of corruption's societal impact and those working in corrupt environments tended to report higher levels of fear.

Anti-corruption hotlines play a crucial role by offering safe, anonymous or confidential reporting channels that can help overcome fear of making reports to the authorities. The tenth section of the report looked at public awareness of, and trust in, these hotlines. Approximately three-fifths of adults recognised at least one major hotline, with awareness higher for those hotlines belonging to constitutional bodies (like the Public Protector and South African Human Rights Commission). If a person had heard about a hotline, then the odds were good that they trusted that hotline. The main exception to this general trend was the Public Service Commission National Anti-Corruption Hotline. Awareness and trust are higher among educated and working adults, especially in urban areas, while lower among rural and populations with lower levels of formal education. Adults expressing a willingness to combat corruption tended to have greater awareness of and confidence in key anti-corruption hotlines in South Africa.

QUALITATIVE COMPONENT

The qualitative component of the study engaged youth aged 18 to 35 years through focus group discussions (FGDs) to explore their perceptions and experiences. Young participants were selected from a range of diverse backgrounds, and a focus group approach was used. This method provided rich narrative insights into how young people define corruption, its various forms, and the social norms that enable or discourage corrupt behaviour. Youth overwhelmingly linked success to material wealth, which fosters pragmatic tolerance of corruption as a means to achieve financial gain. Corruption by participants was viewed as deeply entrenched and normalised, often seen as necessary for personal advancement within a broken system. Participants were generally sympathetic to those paying bribes and viewed them victims of systemic pressures.

Participants defined corruption mainly as the abuse of power for personal gain, citing greed, poverty, weak leadership, and systemic failure as key drivers. The historical legacy of apartheid and colonialism was seen as shaping entitlement and normalising corrupt practices. Vignettes were used in the focus groups to illustrate moral dilemmas and social pressures. Our findings revealed a pervasive culture where fighting corrupt practices is stigmatised and seen as risky or futile due to fear of retaliation and lack of institutional accountability. The focus group discussions also explored sensitive issues like public sector bribery and sexual corruption, highlighting power imbalances, exploitation and the vulnerability of victims. Despite condemning corrupt behaviour morally, participants expressed a sense of resignation and cynicism about the possibility of change.

Regarding whistleblowing, the data showed a widespread fear of backlash and mistrust in reporting systems. Participants noted social ostracism for “snitches” and documented threats against whistleblowers. The study concludes that successful anti-corruption efforts must address these social norms, empower youth through education and engagement as well as implement strong enforcement and accountability measures. This qualitative research demonstrated that corruption was viewed as a systemic, culturally ingrained issue sustained by social and economic inequalities, underscoring the urgent need for multi-level interventions to combat it effectively. Youth suggested solutions included enhanced education on ethics, anonymous reporting mechanisms and stronger consequence management. Yet, although our young participants talked about the importance of fighting corruption, most doubted that individual efforts could succeed without a broader institutional overhaul.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings underscore the need for carefully calibrated and targeted anti-corruption strategies that combine education with practical actions to achieve sustained societal change. Given that awareness of corruption’s detrimental impact is already so widespread, the study suggests that additional public education campaigns aimed at highlighting the negative impact of corruption might have limited effect. Resources may be better directed toward other types of messaging, perhaps focused on dissuading people of the notion that corruption is a profitable endeavour. Alongside ethics education and workplace culture reforms, particularly in the public sector, there is a need to shift social norms away from viewing corruption as a necessary or rewarding strategy for advancement. The research suggests that anti-corruption efforts in South Africa would benefit from investing in family-focused ethics education and strengthening leadership ethics in workplaces, particularly in the public sector. The survey results suggest that religious institutions appear less effective in fostering a change in attitudes toward corruption than expected. However, it must be emphasised, that these institutions are still regarded by many as a valuable source of values and ethics in society.

Collaborative efforts are needed to help the general public embrace a zero-tolerance view of corruption. Our results highlighted the necessity for policies that prioritise the poor, focusing on social assistance and economic empowerment. People who feel vulnerable are unlikely to take actions that increase their exposure to risks and aggravate their socio-economic precarity. Initiatives aimed at narrowing current economic inequalities are likely to produce lasting positive effects on society's intolerance of corrupt behaviour. Furthermore, our data revealed that tackling root causes of poverty and associated reliance on social networks through structured initiatives could help weaken CoS norms by alleviating concerns about the risks and costs of social penalties.

Exposure bureaucratic corruption has a corrosive impact on social values and norms in South Africa. Bureaucratic corruption can be minimised by efforts to ensure the successful implementation of the Framework for the Professionalisation of the Public Sector, a comprehensive policy initiative aimed at building a capable, ethical, and developmental state through the professionalisation of public service employees. In addition, there is an urgent need for comprehensive legal and practical reforms to significantly strengthen whistleblower protections. These should be accompanied by targeted awareness campaigns, making people more aware of low risk options (such as the Public Protector's toll-free hotline) for reporting corrupt practices. In addition, independent institutions should be empowered and equipped to ensure impartial, effective investigations followed promptly by disciplinary action or prosecutions, as appropriate. Success stories in the fight against corruption should be creatively and widely disseminated to build public trust in institutions and in constitutional democracy.

Public opinions can shift over time, as this report illustrates. Such shifts may result from various factors, including significant events, personal experiences, and external influences, among others. Changes in attitudes often precede behavioural changes. To effectively monitor how public sentiment and behaviours respond to events and anti-corruption initiatives over time, it is essential to conduct regular surveys along with qualitative research that assess shifts in public attitudes and experiences related to corruption. These ongoing surveys and research efforts should be incorporated into the NACS' continuous monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system to observe changes in public views and corruption encounters. Securing stable funding is crucial to ensure consistent and high-quality data collection and analysis. Conducting regular (annual or semi-annual) assessments captures both immediate reactions and long-term trends, especially following key occurrences like scandals, policy reforms, or anti-corruption campaigns. Embedding these data collection activities within the broader NACS MEL framework strengthens national strategies through the integration of diverse knowledge and expertise.

1 INTRODUCTION

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2020-2030 is an all-encompassing plan designed to eliminate corruption in South Africa. The strategy recognises that corruption is a significant problem for the country. It undermines democratic institutions, socio-economic development and service delivery, disproportionately harming the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Acknowledging the complex challenge that corruption poses to the nation's progress, the NACS adopts a holistic approach. The strategy envisions a society-wide effort to establish a zero-tolerance stance against corruption, involving all sectors and promoting individual accountability and engaged citizenship. NACS seeks to empower people to take action against corruption and collaborate with authorities to eradicate it. Its ultimate aim is to foster a deeply ingrained culture of integrity and responsibility throughout the country.

The main goal of our research is to support the success of the NACS and the fight against corruption. Accordingly, this study seeks to improve our evidence-based understanding of public perceptions of corruption in South Africa. Central to this understanding are the social norms and values that influence corrupt behaviour in the post-apartheid context. Hence, the title of the study is “Tracking Social Norms and Behaviour Change in South Africa: Measuring Attitudes to Corruption”. The overall objective of the study is to identify the social values and norms that either promote or discourage corruption, and to monitor changes over time. Through this work, the study aims to contribute to a more effective and comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating corruption.

The current report reviews the data gathered during the second phase of our study. The initial phase (i.e., baseline) of the study (2023–2024) included both a quantitative public opinion survey and qualitative consultations with corruption experts. In the following year (2024–2025), a follow-up public opinion survey was conducted to expand upon the findings from the first phase. The second phase also included a qualitative component designed to understand youth attitudes towards corruption. This study was carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the primary purpose of the second phase is to support the success of the NACS by improving our evidence-based insights into public perceptions of corruption in South Africa. The present section will outline this context of the study, providing information on the methodology used and the theoretical framework employed.

1.1 National Anti-Corruption Strategy

At this stage, it would be informative to reflect on the NACS which underpins our research. The strategy stands as a guiding light for those dedicated to eliminating corruption in South Africa, representing a united effort to promote democratic principles and foster ethical governance. It is founded on the understanding that corruption is a deeply entrenched issue affecting both the public and private sectors across the country. Consequently, the strategy classifies corruption as a pervasive national security risk. In this context, the NACS aligns its objectives with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 (NPC, 2012). The NDP advocated for a resilient anti-corruption system supported by both public officials and citizens. The plan, in particular, wants to empower citizens to resist, and speak out against, corruption. To support the strategy’s rollout, a National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC) was established to oversee initial implementation of the NACS. Backed by inter-ministerial committees and social partners, NACAC is tasked with advising on the effective implementation of the strategy (for more detail, see NACAC, 2025).

The 2016 NACS Diagnostic Report, commissioned by the Steering Committee responsible for developing the NACS in South Africa, served as a key foundational document for the strategy.[1] Compiled by Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI, 2016), the report evaluated previous and existing anti-corruption initiatives, identified effective approaches and pinpointed areas needing improvement. While the report found that South Africa possesses a relatively advanced legal framework against corruption, it highlighted legislative and enforcement gaps. Moreover, it was argued that the government struggled to ensure consistent compliance with rules governing the conduct of public officials. These insights shaped the design and implementation framework of the NACS. In addition, the development of the NACS was shaped by the Zondo Commission which was underway during the formulation of the

[1] The development of the NACS was informed by a thorough process involving literature reviews, extensive consultations as well as quality assurance measures. Central to its creation was robust stakeholder involvement and public engagement, ensuring the strategy enjoys broad-based support and legitimacy. This inclusive methodology reflects the NACS’s dedication to a united societal front against corruption (for a further discussion, please see NACAC (2025).

strategy.[2] In response to the Commission's findings, the President tabled an implementation plan in Parliament in November 2023, which is an across-government effort and includes many legislative and institutional reforms (for a further discussion, see The Presidency, 2023).

The NACS presents a detailed framework and action plan focused on creating a corruption-free society by pursuing six primary goals. These include, importantly for this study, the creation of a zero-tolerance environment for corruption, encouraging whistleblowing and public education. To accomplish these objectives, the NACS calls on all South Africans to take personal responsibility in fighting corruption and to collaborate across political, economic and ideological boundaries. The strategy is premised on the thesis that an active citizenry is essential to building a country where corruption cannot thrive and accountability is the norm. Active citizenship is envisioned as a collective endeavour, powered by coordinated action and steadfast dedication from all involved. Achieving this will require empowering citizens to prevent and confront corruption and addressing the social norms that currently encourage and enable corrupt behaviour.

1.2 Theoretical Foundations

Before presenting the methodological framework used for this report, it would be informative to reflect on the key theoretical components that underpin it. We start by considering the question: what exactly are social norms? Social norms are informal guidelines that shape how individuals act within a specific group or society. These norms can be divided into two primary categories: (i) descriptive norms and (ii) injunctive norms. Descriptive norms relate to what individuals or groups believe to be typical or appropriate behaviour, whereas injunctive norms concern the expectations others have regarding proper conduct (Bicchieri, 2017). Social norms are maintained through rewards and punishments, such as social approval or disapproval. People typically learn these norms by observing others, receiving feedback and engaging in group interactions. Many norms are accepted without question and simply regarded as the "correct" way to behave (also see Gross & Vostroknutov, 2022).

Understanding which behaviours are considered common or normative is important for comprehending social norms. A person's social norms are significantly shaped by observing and imitating the behaviours of others; this is known as social learning (Bandura, 1977). This mechanism explains how behaviours, including those related to corruption or ethical conduct, become entrenched within communities. Research on social norms and corruption has found that a person is more likely to engage in (or at least tolerate) a behaviour if they believe it is widely practiced by other people (Camargo, 2017). This tendency becomes particularly strong when a person depends on those people for social or material support (also see Hoffmann & Patel, 2017). A person often has strong incentives to align with group norms to maintain acceptance within social networks and access to resources, even when the behaviours in question may be illegal and personally repugnant, contradicting personal value systems (see below).

A good example of how social norms can encourage corrupt behaviour was identified by the Corruption, Justice and Legitimacy Programme at Besa Global. Millier et al. (2024) provided an in-depth research-to-practice analysis focused on how informal social norms significantly drive corrupt practices among civil servants. The researchers argued that there are common types of social norms relevant to public sector corruption. Certain social norms allow officials to condone blatantly corrupt practices such as predatory authority (i.e., the belief that public officials have the right to exploit office). The research showed that many civil servants feel limited in their power to behave differently due to political and social pressures in the workplace and within their broader social networks which can trap individuals in corrupt systems.[3] These pressures, as well as horizontal and vertical organisational influences, create

[2] The Zondo Commission, officially called the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector, was established in South Africa in 2018 to investigate widespread corruption during former President Jacob Zuma's tenure. It was chaired by Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo and examined how powerful individuals and networks manipulated state institutions and resources for personal gain. A history of the Zondo Commission as well as its findings and recommendations are summarised and discussed by Holden (2023).

[3] People often have to navigate multiple and sometimes conflicting social norms. These include from within the bureaucracy (i.e., hierarchical and peer pressures) and from broader social networks (i.e., kinship and community groups). Which norms prevail can depend on context and issue. In an analysis of pro-corruption social norms amongst civil servants, Miller (2023) argued that this group was trapped between formal bureaucratic expectations (idealised impartial, rule-bound public service) and actual

strong incentives to conform to corrupt norms due to fear of social sanctions (also see Scharbatke-Church & Chigas, 2019).

In contrast to social norms, social values can be understood as the core beliefs and principles that direct individuals' behaviour in social settings. They affect how people interpret social situations and influence their choices (for a more in-depth discussion, see Rokeach, 1973). Examples of social values that would be relevant to this study include honesty, integrity and fairness. They are internalised through socialisation processes from an early age, often transmitted by family or education, and form the foundation for the development of social norms. Social values usually play a key role in shaping individuals' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. When compared to social norms, social values are more abstract, long-lasting and deeply embedded within a culture (see also Hofstede, 2001). In essence, social values underpin the creation and reinforcement of social norms, guiding not only what people do but also why they do it.

Researchers have come to the realisation that, if we are to design effective interventions to reduce corruption, then we need to understand social norms and social values. This body of work demonstrates that social norms and values play a crucial role in sustaining or fighting corrupt practices.[4] But this approach can be quite challenging; the social values and norms that inform corruption are diverse and sometimes contradictory because individuals belong to multiple social networks with different expectations. By engaging with these social dynamics, it is possible to relieve the normative pressures that sustain corruption and enable collective shifts toward integrity and accountability. Ultimately, addressing the social norms and social values that sustain corruption can facilitate more sustainable and community-supported efforts to combat corruption, making anti-corruption initiatives more effective and durable.

1.3 Data and Methods

The baseline study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. A nationally representative public opinion survey was carried out to explore the social norms and values shaping corruption in South Africa. This survey, conducted in 2023, targeted individuals aged 16 and older residing in private households. Data collection took place between August and October 2023, during which 3,112 respondents were interviewed. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) utilised the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) framework to implement the survey. In addition to this, a separate survey was administered to sixty-seven experts from diverse fields, including political science, law, social policy, governance and public administration. Furthermore, sixteen qualitative sessions were conducted with key specialist experts and these focused on specific thematic areas relevant to the research. A brief outline of the methodological approach used to gather expert opinion data is provided in Section 13.1.

A research roundtable with academics and practitioners from different disciplines was held on the 17th of September 2024 to present the results of the baseline study. This interdisciplinary gathering served as a platform for experts to critically engage with the research findings, share insights grounded in their respective fields and provide constructive feedback. At the roundtable, experts sought ways to help the HSRC refine the public opinion research instrument going forward. On the 9th of October 2024 the HSRC hosted a symposium with academics and members of civil society to present data findings from the baseline study. The symposium offered a forum for dialogue about the implications of the findings, encouraged knowledge exchange, and fostered collaboration between researchers and civil society actors actively involved in anti-corruption efforts. These engagements were utilised to inform changes to the quantitative component of the study's second phase.

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everyday behaviour shaped by social and cultural pressures. He identified common social logics that civil servants use to navigate this environment including negotiation of rules, gift-giving as reciprocity and solidarity networks.

[4] This body of scholarship tends to conclude that many past anti-corruption programmes have failed because they overlook these social factors. For meaningful change, interventions must be tailored to specific contexts, taking into account how corrupt behaviours are socially reinforced. Strategies such as public awareness campaigns, empowering individuals to resist corrupt norms, creating safe channels for whistleblowing, and institutional reforms can help shift these norms over time. For a further discussion, see Kubbe (et al., 2024).

A public opinion survey, similar to the baseline survey conducted at the end of 2023, was used for the second year of the study. The goal of the survey was to gather pertinent attitudes and beliefs that aligned with the study's objectives. The nationally representative sample ensured reliable insights by asking standardised questions to a diverse group of individuals aged 16 and older living in private households. Ethical approval was granted by the HSRC's Research Ethics Committee in mid-2024. Conducted face-to-face between February and March 2025, the survey interviewed 3,095 participants using the SASAS research framework. A comprehensive explanation of the survey methodology, including details on the sampling frame and response rate, can be found in Section 13.4.

All respondents were assured of anonymity throughout the interview process, creating a safe and confidential environment that encouraged participants to share their honest views, especially when addressing sensitive topics. This guarantee of anonymity is crucial because it helps reduce respondents' fears of judgment or reprisal, which can alter how they answer the questions. Despite these safeguards, it is important to recognise that any survey involving personal experiences with corruption, and especially sexual extortion, remain vulnerable to sensitivity or social acceptability bias. While anonymity provisions improve the likelihood of truthful reporting, researchers must remain mindful of their inherent limitations. One approach to mitigating this problem was to ask survey respondents about indirect experiences. A benefit of asking about indirect experiences is that respondents may also feel sufficiently safe to also relate direct experiences. Most public opinion surveys that look at corruption are primarily concerned with personal victimisation rates and tend to overlook indirect experiences.

To add to the quantitative research that was completed for the study's second year, a qualitative component was included. Qualitative focus group discussions were used to study corruption in South Africa to capture rich insights into how young people understand, experience, and negotiate social norms related to corruption. The qualitative research focused on the adult youth, an often marginalised group in societal discourse. This method allowed us to explore the complex social values and incentives that encourage or discourage corrupt behaviour from the perspectives of this group. By facilitating in-depth conversations, our qualitative approach provided a deeper contextual understanding of corruption beyond what quantitative data can reveal. The discussions also helped to uncover the social pressures, historical legacies, and institutional weaknesses that shape corrupt practices, thereby complementing the broader research objectives of tracking social norms and behaviour change in South Africa. In addition, this qualitative approach was especially important for exploring sensitive issues like sexual corruption and whistleblowing, capturing personal narratives and ethical reasoning that inform attitudes toward these issues.

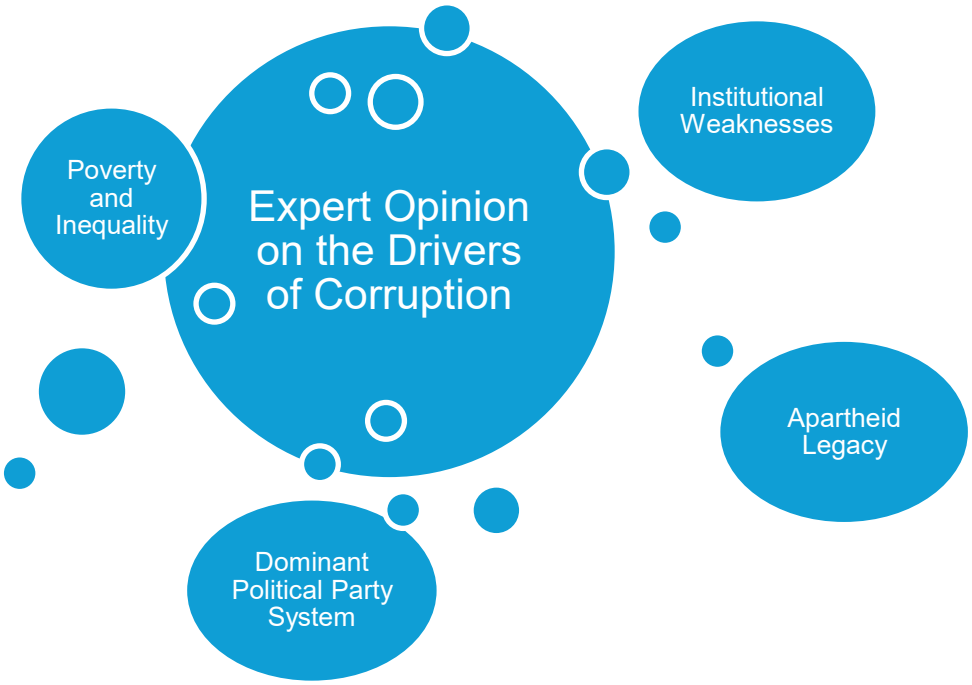
1.4 Background

As aforementioned, the baseline study engaged with a range of experts on the problem of corruption in South Africa. To provide a context for the study, it would be informative to provide an outline of the main findings from these engagements with experts. When experts talk about corruption in the country, bribery is often the focal point of much of the discussion. Here, a significant distinction needs to be made between accepting a bribe and extorting a bribe.[5] In addition to the bribery issue, it is important to acknowledge that nepotism and procurement corruption are two crucial forms of corruption. Overall, there is no single definition of corruption that comprehensively captures its many dimensions and forms, and there was no broad consensus on a definitive definition amongst the experts we talked to. Nevertheless, the research team utilised as a guide a variation of the commonly used definition endorsed by the United Nations, Transparency International and the World Bank, viz., 'the abuse of entrusted power for personal or sectional advantage'. This definition includes corruption in the public and private sectors and recognises that corruption need not be for direct personal benefit alone[6].

We discovered that, while some expressed differing views, the majority of experts surveyed agreed that corruption levels have worsened over time. Specifically, 87% of the expert respondents believed that corruption in South Africa had intensified since 1995 and 67% indicated an increase since 2015. We

[5] For a theoretical and conceptual discussion of the difference between the two, see Khalil et al. (2010).
[6] Farrales (2011) provides a comprehensive review of how to define corruption has been defined, particularly focusing on developments from the mid-20th century onward. It examines how the understanding and definition of corruption have changed over time, highlighting the challenges in arriving at a single, universally accepted definition. The paper explores different theoretical frameworks and disciplinary perspectives that have shaped corruption research, stressing the complex, multifaceted nature of corruption as a social and political phenomenon.

also explored experts' views on the historical origins of corruption, paying particular attention to the enduring impact of apartheid and colonialism. While some opinions varied, the majority of experts believe that the apartheid legacy has had a significant influence on the present-day extent of corruption in South Africa. Several experts connected corruption to the poverty and inequality that apartheid entrenched,[7] arguing that the resultant socio-economic environment pushes individuals toward engaging in corrupt activities.



The baseline study analysed expert feedback on other reasons why they thought that the level of corruption in the country had grown in recent decades. Several interconnected factors emerged, with a focus on political corruption and institutional weaknesses. Experts voiced significant concerns over the lack of accountability, ineffective law enforcement and the absence of a genuine political commitment to combat corruption. Many highlighted the deterioration of the public service, where resistance to merit-based hiring and burgeoning of unethical leadership have entrenched corrupt behaviour. Much of this critique focused on the African National Congress (ANC) and its failure to meaningfully tackle corruption. For a number of experts, the dominant political party system (particularly the ruling party's cadre deployment policy) was viewed as prioritising loyalty over integrity and competence, thereby enabling corruption and weakening accountability mechanisms.[8]

Expert perspectives on the social values and norms that encourage corrupt actions among the wealthy and powerful were examined in the baseline study. Experts pointed to a prevailing sense of entitlement, materialistic attitudes, and opportunistic behaviour as key drivers. Corrupt conduct was often justified by elites as essential for achieving success and navigating a dysfunctional governance and regulatory system. Additionally, experts discussed a prevailing culture of impunity where corruption is viewed as a risk-free tool for elites to preserve their power and influence.[9] On the subject of impunity, experts were

[7] Recent and insightful research, notably by van Vuuren (2019), has examined the scale and nature of corruption during the apartheid era.
[8] The experts' views noted here aligned with the findings of Bhorat et al. (2018), who demonstrated that the cadre deployment policy significantly fuelled corruption within the public sector. This process facilitated the progressive 'capture' of numerous state institutions by networks engaged in corrupt patronage. Renwick (2018) put forward a similar argument in his book, which examined the corrupt patronage networks established under former National President Jacob Zuma. He offered a strong critique of the former President's involvement in sustaining and enabling corruption in South Africa.
[9] This viewpoint corresponds with research by Mkhabela (2022) on corruption in South Africa's ruling party. He argued that the party's tolerance of corrupt conduct and its shielding of implicated members from legal consequences or accountability allowed corruption to become deeply rooted within the party itself and, by extension, the South African government. Looking at an earlier period, Feinstein (2010)

asked what they thought about whistleblowers. Many agreed that whistleblowers were brave but that they face significant challenges (including weak legal protections, cultural resistance and a lack of action by authorities in response to reports of corruption). There was a feeling that these challenges discouraged individuals from coming forward to report corruption.

The baseline investigation also explored expert perspectives on social values and norms that foster corruption amongst the non-elite population. Greed and materialism were commonly cited, with experts identifying the drive for personal gain at the expense of ethical conduct as a major motivator. They observed that the breakdown of community cohesion, especially in urban areas, had further exacerbated the problem. Material desperation, stemming from poverty and scarce economic opportunities, was also seen as a major driver of corrupt behaviour. Additionally, concerns about access to services and governmental inefficiency were raised, with some experts suggesting that bribery had become the primary means for many to navigate dysfunctional bureaucratic systems. Reliance on patronage networks for survival was also identified as a significant contributor. Institutional shortcomings in law enforcement, traditional leadership structures, and provincial governments were also noted.

One of the main issues identified by experts was the problem of sextortion in South Africa, a problem that is gaining global recognition. [10] We looked, in particular, at expert attitudes towards sextortion, a form of sexual corruption (for a more in-depth discussion of how this form of sexual corruption differs from others, see Bjarnegård et al., 2024). A notable share of experts we surveyed believed that sexual extortion happens frequently: 16% reported it occurred very often, 37% quite often and 29% occasionally in South Africa. The patriarchal system was described as fostering a sense of entitlement among perpetrators who exploit vulnerable victims. Furthermore, institutional disrespect toward women and weak enforcement of laws were highlighted as factors allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. This impunity was reinforced by victims' fear of reporting and lack of support. Economic dependency was also seen as intensifying vulnerability, forcing some individuals to trade sexual favours for essential needs.

1.5 Macro-Level Context

It is important, at this stage, to note that how people respond to public opinion surveys is influenced by their environment, including the macro-level context in which our surveys took place. Indeed, one of the reasons that researchers conduct public opinion surveys is to understand how the context of a specific time period or moment in time affects public opinion. The baseline survey took place in the latter part of 2023, and this was a period of particular difficulty for South Africa. It was at the peak of the so-called 'energy crisis'; a time of when there was frequent, widespread and longstanding periods of loadshedding. There were daily rolling blackouts, causing many households and businesses to be without electricity for prolonged periods (sometimes lasting up to 10 hours a day).[11] In conjunction with the 'energy crisis', there was a severe cost of living crisis in 2023. Many families face difficult trade-offs, cutting back on meals and essential spending while managing rising debt burdens. The crisis was driven by factors such as global supply disruptions, domestic electricity shortages as well as currency volatility.[12]

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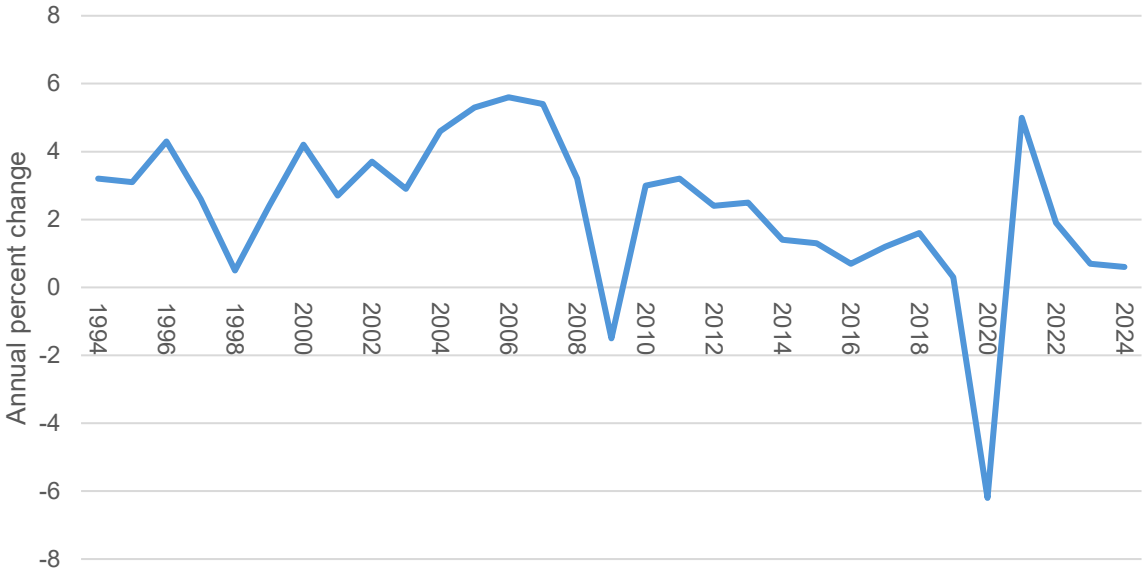
provided a revealing insider account of corruption within the ruling party and the broader government during the tenure of National President Thabo Mbeki. He detailed how political infighting, patronage and a decline in institutional integrity led to the weakening of state institutions and the rise of autocratic tendencies in the South African government.

[10] A form of corruption where sexual favours are demanded or coerced in exchange for services or benefits by those in positions of power. It represents a form of violence and coercion that severely compromises the safety, autonomy, and dignity of those subjected to it (for a more in-depth discussion, see Feigenblatt, 2020).

[11] For a comprehensive discussion of the crisis during this period, see Ballim (2023).

[12] The National Planning Commission, with support from United Nations Children's Fund, looked at the cost of living crisis in South Africa in a 2025 report. It analysed cost of living trends from 2011 to 2023, highlighting sharp increases in prices for essentials like electricity (which tripled), education (more than doubled) and food (rose by 136%). The report emphasises how these rising costs have disproportionately impacted poor and working-class households, far outpacing wage growth and contributing to increased financial hardship.

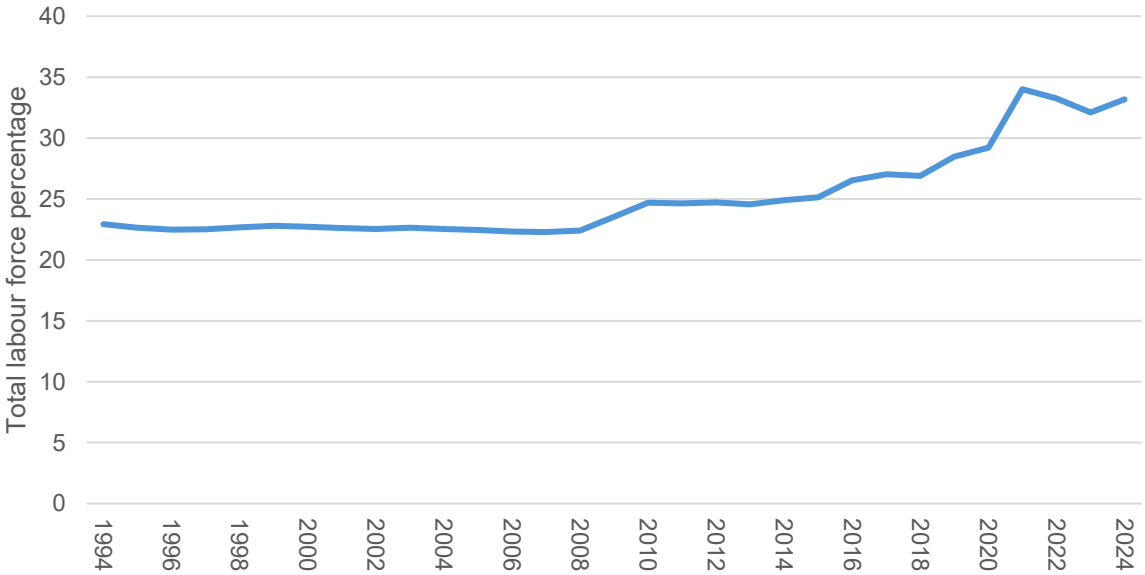
Figure 1: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita growth (real, annual %) for South Africa, 1994-2024



Source: Information Monetary Fund - National Accounts Data

So, what was the macro-level context like in early 2025 when the second-year survey was carried out? Compared to late 2023, certain macro-level conditions had shown some improvement. The 'energy crisis' started to ease over the course of 2024; the scheduled loadshedding system was halted in August 2024 and remained suspended during the SASAS fieldwork between February and March 2025. In addition, the cost-of-living crisis had ebbed. South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita growth rate rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic (Figure 1, pg. 17); yet the recovery's momentum has been limited by several longstanding structural and systemic challenges. Job creation has failed to keep pace with the expanding workforce, leading to a growing number of unemployed individuals. By the end of 2024, the unemployment rate remained high at 33% (Figure 2, pg. 17), with women and young people continuing to experience disproportionate impacts.

Figure 2: Unemployment, total (% of total labour force) for South Africa, 1994-2024



Source: International Labour Organisation Modelled Estimates and Projections Database

From a political standpoint, the 2024/25 round of fieldwork marked a significant departure from the political landscape observed in the previous year. Entering 2024, South Africa was in the midst of vigorous election campaigns ahead of the National and Provincial Elections (NPE) scheduled for that

year. These election campaigns were heavily focused on addressing some of the country's most pressing challenges, including high unemployment rates, the energy crisis, the rising cost of living and pervasive corruption. The politics of the period was marked by the entry of a number of new political parties that were seeking to contest the 2024 NPE. The most successful of these was the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party which was founded in December 2023 (for a further discussion of the MK Party, see Gordon et. al., 2025).

The 2024 NPE, held on the 29th of May 2024, resulted in a historic outcome: the ruling ANC lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in three decades. The MK Party found electoral success in certain regions, particularly KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, drawing votes away from established parties such as the ANC and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This significant shift compelled the ANC to enter into a Government of National Unity (GNU), a coalition arrangement aimed at ensuring stability and shared governance in the new fragmented political environment. Although there were a number of different partners in the GNU, the main partnership is between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance (DA). The formation of the GNU was met with cautious optimism by many citizens and political observers, who hoped that this new collaborative approach would lead to better governance, more effective service delivery and stronger efforts to combat corruption.

On the anti-corruption front, the government has worked to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement and prosecution bodies, such as the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) in combating corruption. For example, the government increased the NPA's budget from ZAR 4.5 billion to ZAR 5.4 billion (equating to 0.1% of GDP) between 2021 and 2023 (The Presidency, 2023). Additionally, legislative reforms through the NPA Amendment Act (No. 10 of 2024) bolstered the NPA's capacity through the permanent establishment of the Investigating Directorate Against Corruption (IDAC). This unit specifically targets the highest-priority corruption cases, and the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) is empowered to appoint its investigators. In 2024, the President also signed into law the Public Procurement Act (No. 28 of 2024), which, although not yet implemented pending the finalisation of regulations, promised to address several recommendations from the Zondo Commission by establishing a unified framework for the previously fragmented procurement system and improving transparency in procurement processes.

1.6 Research Design

The present report will present data on how the public thinks about corruption. In this report, we aim to assess public perceptions and experiences of corruption, identify social values and norms that influence the tolerance of corrupt behaviour, and explore attitudes toward sexual corruption. It also seeks to understand the incentives and disincentives that affect participation in anti-corruption actions. Additionally, based on the research, the report will provide strategic recommendations to enhance citizens' willingness to report corruption and suggest ways to strengthen broader public support for government initiatives combating corruption. Ten chapters of the report present the study results, and the concluding chapter provides a detailed summary of the main findings of our report.

The report will present data on what the general public thinks about different corruption-related issues. But we are aware that readers' interest extends beyond general public attitudes and encompasses how these attitudes vary across the country's diverse socio-demographic divisions. This report therefore includes a thorough subgroup analysis of key variables, pinpointing where significant differences in attitudes arise among major population groups. We provide definitions of the main subgroups we examine in Section 13.2. While such subgroup analysis offers valuable insights, it primarily highlights differences between groups without being able to fully explain the underlying factors shaping those attitudes. It tends to overlook the attitudinal and experiential influences that contribute to opinion formation, which can result in partial or skewed interpretations. This limitation is particularly significant when attempting to identify the social norms and values that either foster or deter corruption.

Even though subgroup analysis has its benefits, a more nuanced approach is necessary to capture the complex interplay within the data. Building on the subgroup analysis, the report therefore adopts a hypothesis-driven methodology. It puts forward a set of hypotheses concerning the social values and norms that promote or inhibit corruption. For each hypothesis the rationale is explained, and this is then followed by an assessment of empirical support. Testing is conducted using multivariate analysis techniques, which evaluate multiple variables concurrently. This approach enhances the analytical depth and statistical rigor of the report, allowing for clearer identification of the key factors driving

important variables. Ultimately, this method revealed deeper insights into the fundamental nature and determinants of corruption perceptions in South Africa.

Quantitative public opinion surveys are not without their limitations, and it is important to acknowledge this. Opinion surveys involve a structured questionnaire with mostly close-ended questions. This restricts respondents to predefined answer options; it does not allow respondents to explain or elaborate on their answers. While quantitative data can show correlations and trends, it is sometimes puzzling why these relationships exist. Statistical analysis can also be complex and (especially for readers without strong mathematical backgrounds) difficult to follow. This lack of familiarity with the complexities of statistical procedures can sometimes result in misleading interpretations of stated research findings. An attempt is therefore made, within reason, to present the data in a manner that is accessible to those who are not well versed in statistical methodologies. The more complex statistical descriptions will be confined to appendixes in Section 13, and an effort will be made not to burden the reader with the technicalities of statistical tests. But a glossary of statistical terms can be found in Section 13.3 for those who are interested.

The study also presents a comprehensive qualitative analysis based on focus group discussions with South African youth on social norms and attitudes toward corruption. The analysis of this qualitative data is presented in Section 11. Key themes include diverse youth definitions and perceptions of corruption, its various forms (such as public sector bribery and sexual corruption), and the social and economic drivers of corrupt behaviour. The section examines the social norms and values that promote corruption by presenting group participants with ethical dilemmas and then asking them to discuss these dilemmas. Finally, the section looks at youth perspectives on possible anti-corruption solutions, emphasizing education, accountability, and systemic change. It also reflected on a sense of resignation and distrust in current institutions that makes the youth pessimistic about finding a solution to post-apartheid corruption. This qualitative evidence complements quantitative findings by adding nuanced human experiences and social barriers to reporting corruption.

2 EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

The NACS was designed with the following principle in mind, preventing corruption by identifying potential corrupt activities at an early stage. The NACS therefore advocates for and supports proactive citizen engagement, encouraging all members of South African society to actively take part in combating corruption. The strategy envisions that a comprehensive, society-wide, and coordinated approach to tackling corruption will reduce the need for expensive commissions of inquiry, forensic investigations, often-protracted prosecutions and other legal procedures. One of the main priorities of the NACS, and the place where citizens can play an active role, is local governance. Indeed, the NACS builds on the work of the 2016 Local Government Anti-Corruption Strategy. The strategy recognises that corruption by public officials in local areas is a substantial problem and local government was identified as one of the key areas requiring action and reform by the NACS.

The decision to focus on active citizenry by the NACS assumes that the general South African public is exposed, either directly or indirectly, to corrupt activities by public officials in the localities where they live. The aim of this section of the report will be to test this assumption and look at how exposed the public is to different kinds of corrupt practices. The focus of the present section is the micro-level, the neighbourhood or village where most people spent much of their time. This micro-level focus is critical because, unlike perceptions of corruption at macro- (national leadership) or meso- (provincial government) levels, the public often has little direct experience with those distant governance tiers, relying instead on media reports or hearsay. But things are different at the micro-level; at the local level, citizens typically have more tangible exposure to corrupt practices because local officials and public service providers directly impact daily life through service delivery and resource allocation.

The current section builds on past research, which has looked at public exposure to corruption in the country. Most of that prior work has been focused on petty corruption, primarily trying to capture whether people have paid bribes to public officials for various reasons. Our research moves beyond this narrow focus, looking to obtain data on perceived levels of nepotism, sexual corruption and procurement corruption. Here the emphasis will be on indirect experience; this kind of experience can also provide individuals with a contextual understanding of important issues by grounding abstract concepts in real-world situations.[13] This expanded focus aligns with recent studies that stress the importance of capturing social narratives at the community level surrounding corrupt behaviours.

2.1 Community Exposure, Perceptions, and Diverse Forms of Corrupt Practices

Most surveys tend to include questions on the level of public sector corruption at the macro-level, asking people, for instance, if they thought that the National President was corrupt. Other survey instruments tend to focus on the meso-level, querying people about the level of corruption amongst, for example, the provincial government.[14] But it is unlikely that people have any experience of corruption at that macro- or meso-levels of government and will tend to rely on various types of media sources for information on these issues. People have much more experience of public sector corruption at the micro-level (i.e., the neighbourhoods or villages where they live). These include experiences with locally based offices of national or provincial government departments. When asked about corruption at the micro-level, it is more likely that respondents' answers will be based on locally sourced information. This would include word of mouth, first-hand accounts, local (or community) newspapers and localised online communities (e.g. community WhatsApp groups).

Local governance in South Africa is very significant, as local officials make key decisions affecting service provision, resource allocation and community development. This places local officials in a position to have direct and significant influence over the general quality of life for most people. The most accessible form of micro-level governance in South Africa is the ward. A fundamental component of the country's local government system, wards were designed to promote community participation and enhance transparent governance and democratic accountability at the grassroots level. Central to this system are ward committees, statutory bodies established to facilitate participatory democracy by

[13] Indirect experiences are incidents that are 'witnessed' or heard about from others, rather than happening to a person directly (Tyler, 1980). Hearing about a crime from kinsfolk, colleagues, or friends increases awareness and fosters conversations about the crime.

[14] For a discussion of past survey research on corruption, see Melgar et al. (2010), Chabova (2017) and Wysmułek (2019).

enabling residents to identify local needs, express concerns, and engage in municipal planning processes. The governance role of ward committees includes advising ward councillors on issues affecting their communities, participating in monitoring municipal performance, and contributing to budget prioritisation and service delivery decisions. Because local officials operate at the coalface of government, and the public needs to engage more directly with them, the public tends to have more knowledge of and access to information about them and their activities.

Like elsewhere in the world, surveys on exposure to petty corruption in South Africa are quite common. For example, the 2017/2018 Victims of Crime Survey (VCS) asked participants if they had "personally been asked by a public official to pay a bribe and/or paid a bribe to a public official in the past 12 months." Unlike other types of corruption, this kind of bureaucratic corruption is usually more tangible and easier for the general public to accurately grasp and report on. About one in ten adults reported being solicited for a bribe within the period specified in the VCS interview. In a more recent example, the 2021/2022 Governance Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJS) posed a broader question regarding bribery. GPSJS respondents were asked: "In the past two years, have you encountered a dispute or problem involving corruption, bribes, or nepotism?" Only a small fraction (3%) admitted to facing such issues during that timeframe. In summation, this data suggests that only a minority in the country have direct experience of public sector corruption.[15]

It could be argued that the level of self-reported corruption experience noted in GPSJS 2021/2022 as well as VCS 2017/2018 is lower than we may have expected. This may result from social desirability bias, leading individuals to under-report their involvement with corrupt practices. While response bias should not be overlooked,[16] it is also crucial to recognise that various barriers affect people's exposure to corruption. A large portion of South Africa's poor and economically inactive lack the financial means to engage regularly in corrupt transactions. Furthermore, many economically disadvantaged individuals have limited contact with government officials, which reduces their chances of encountering corruption in the public sector. Indeed, it would be unrealistic to assume that most people in South Africa are solicited for bribes on a regular basis.

Our baseline study in 2023 included some analysis of corruption at the community level. The current second-year study sought to improve on this prior work and provide new insights into how the public perceives the prevalence of corruption at the micro-level. Extensive consultations with experts yielded a range of suggestions to broaden and deepen the initial study's exploration of perceived societal corruption. Several experts advised that greater differentiation should be made between various forms of public sector corruption. Some argued that concentrating solely on bribery payments often masks the complexity and diversity of corrupt practices (for a more detailed discussion of the different kinds of corrupt practice, see Bussell, 2015). The decision was made to focus on a wider range of corrupt activities, including nepotism and procurement corruption. In addition, experts advocated for a greater focus on sexual corruption, particularly the extortion of sexual favours by public officials at the micro-level.

2.2 Exposure to Petty Bribery

A large body of earlier public opinion research has concentrated on individuals' experiences with petty corruption. Frequently, this research examines how often members of the public encounter requests for bribes from government officials (for an analysis of bribes and their ethical background, see Noonan,

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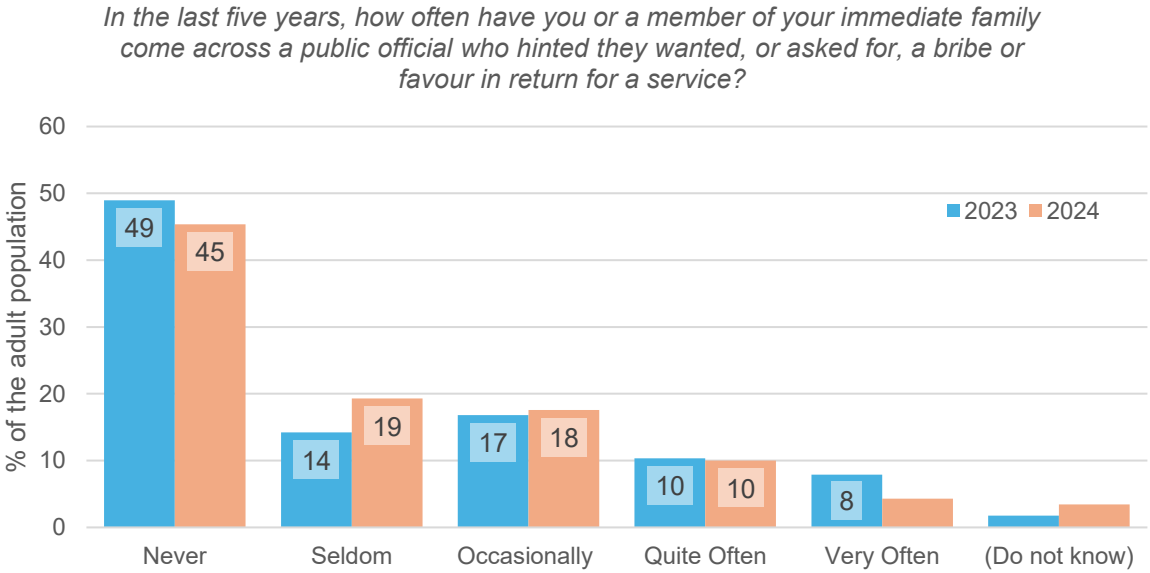
[15] The 2017 South African Citizens' Bribery Survey by the Ethics Institute (2017) revealed concerning trends about bribery experienced and perceived by people in the country. The sample consisted of individuals from five out of South Africa's nine provinces, primarily from major urban areas across the country. About a third (37%) of participants knew someone who was asked to pay a bribe in the previous year. The majority of bribes are linked to traffic-related offenses, with 39% related to avoiding fines for traffic violations and 18% related to obtaining driver's licenses. Other common bribes include those for jobs (14%), public services (8%) as well as police and criminal charges (7%). Around a third (35%) of respondents had refused to pay a bribe at some point. The primary motivation put forward by this group to explain their actions was moral reasons (47%); respect for the law was also a factor but less common, while fear of being caught was a minor motivation.

16 Respondents have a tendency to underreport their participation in corruption due to the sensitive or illegal nature of such experiences (for a further discussion, see Agerberg, 2022). People may, for example, under-report stigmatised or undesirable actions (such as paying bribes), thus affecting the accuracy of self-reported data.

1984). This type of corruption (also called “bureaucratic” corruption) usually involves everyday citizens giving small payments or favours to frontline public servants (such as police officers, healthcare workers municipal officials or educators) in order to receive services that are supposed to be delivered fairly and free of additional costs. Such corrupt exchanges undermine fairness, access and trust in public institutions. They often disproportionately affect vulnerable populations who may feel compelled to pay bribes to receive basic services (for a further discussion of how this occurs, see Boly, & Gillanders, 2023).

Figure 3: Self-reported exposure to public sector bribe solicitation in 2023 and 2024/25



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2023 and2024/25

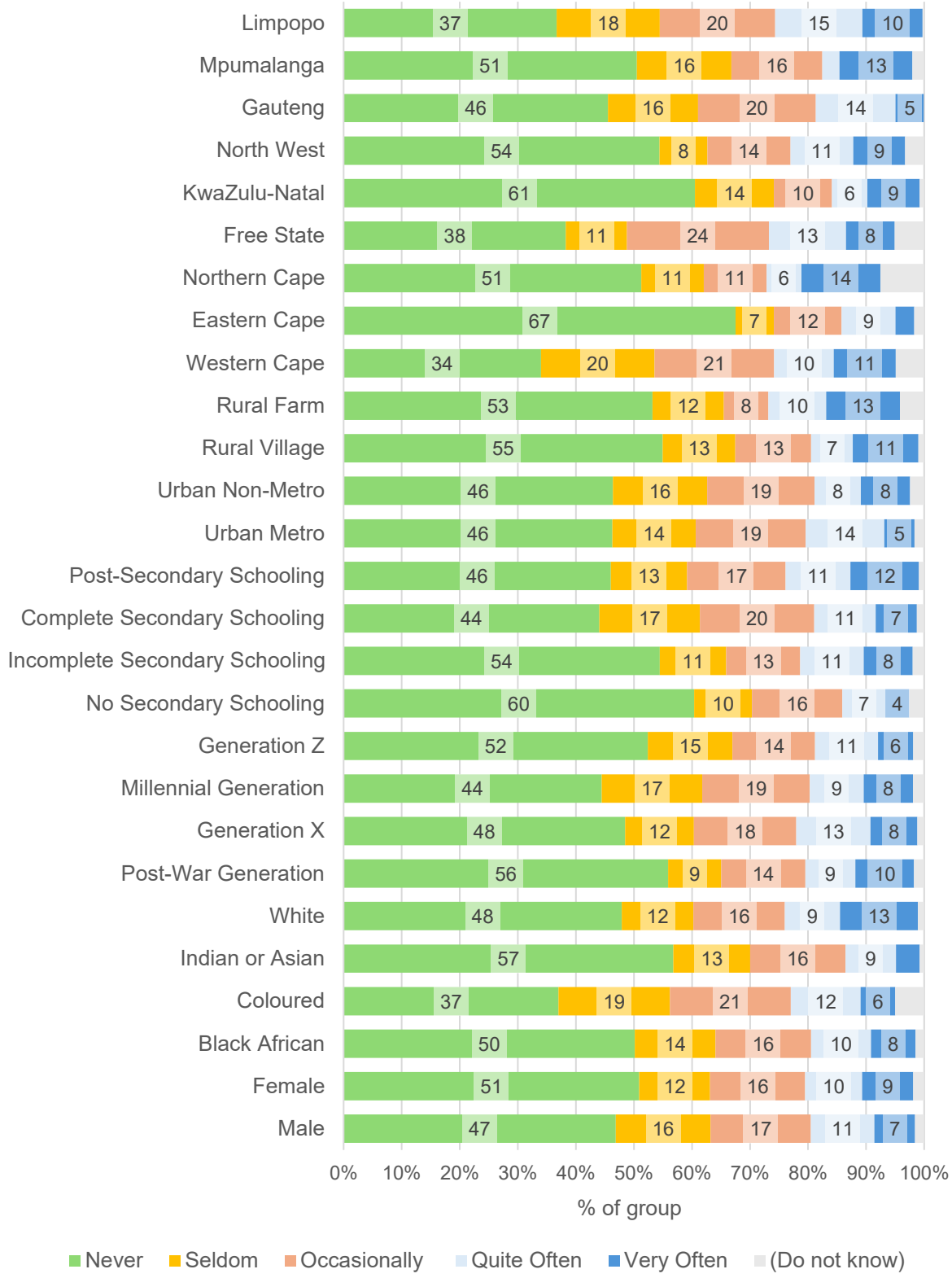
Respondents during SASAS 2024/25 were asked: “In the past five years, how often have you or a close family member encountered a public official who implied or directly requested a bribe or favour in exchange for a service?” Almost half (49%) of adults reported that they or a close family member had not encountered a public official who suggested or requested a bribe or favour in exchange for a service in the specified timeframe (Figure 3, pg. 22). Nearly an eighth (14%) of the mass public said it happened rarely and 17% reported that they experienced it occasionally. A notable portion of the public reported higher levels of exposure, with 10% of all adults stating it occurred often and 8% very often. The remaining adults (2%) were uncertain about how to answer. Comparing data from SASAS 2024/25 with that from SASAS 2023, it is clear that a small portion of the general public experienced an increase in petty corruption during the period under review while another group saw a decrease.[17]

It is reasonable to expect that a person’s likelihood of being solicited for a bribe in the public sector differs considerably based on their socio-demographic characteristics, especially in our deeply unequal society such as ours. To explore this hypothesis, we examined the responses to the bribe solicitation question across various demographic subgroups. The distribution of answers among these different groups is illustrated in Figure 4 (pg. 23). Of the different race groups in South Africa, we found that white adults reported the highest level of bribe solicitation. About a quarter of white adults reported that they had been solicited quite often (9%) or very often (13%) in the five years prior to the interview.

[17] The 2006 SASAS featured an identical question regarding recent experiences with public sector corruption, allowing for a temporal comparison of self-reported bribe solicitations. In 2006, most adults (63%) indicated that they had not been asked for a bribe by a public official in the five years prior to the interview. Comparing the data from 2006 with our current data, the demographic groups experiencing the most significant rise in bribe solicitations included men, employed individuals and residents of metropolitan urban areas. This observed increase might be attributed to an actual proliferation of corrupt practices among public officials during the specified period. However, an alternative explanation could be a reduction in the social stigma associated with reporting instances of bribe solicitation, potentially leading to more open disclosures.

Figure 4: Self-reported exposure to public sector bribe solicitation by selected subgroups

In the last five years, how often have you or a member of your immediate family come across a public official who hinted they wanted, or asked for, a bribe or favour in return for a service?



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Exposure to bribe solicitation was not found to differ significantly by generational group; older generations were just as likely to be solicited as their younger peers.

Of the nine provinces, Limpopo and Free State residents reported the highest level of recent bribe solicitation from public officials. Western Cape residents also reported quite high levels of bribe solicitation; a fifth of adults in the province said that they had been solicited quite often (10%) or very often (11%) in the five years prior to the interview. Bribe solicitation was also found to be higher in metropolitan urban areas than in non-metropolitan areas or rural areas. If we focus just on metropolitan areas, then we discovered that solicitation was highest in Eastern Cape metropoles. We found that 63% of metropolitan residents in the Eastern Cape had been solicited recently; 27 percentage points higher than what we observed in the KwaZulu-Natal metropoles and 9 percentage points higher than what we see in Gauteng metropoles. Even though rural residents tended to report lower levels of bribe solicitation, there were geographic differences in how this was reported. Amongst the country's rural dwellers, those in the Eastern Cape reported the lowest levels of solicitation and those in Limpopo the highest.

An educational attainment gradient was observed in Figure 4 (pg. 23). Adults with higher levels of formal education tend to report more bribe solicitation than their peers with lower levels of formal education. Consider, for example, that only two-fifths of those with no secondary education had been solicited in the last five years. A similar proportion (45%) of those with incomplete secondary education gave a similar answer. If we narrow our focus to just those without completed secondary education, then it is possible to observe some interesting geographic variations in terms of who reported bribe solicitation. Adults in the Eastern Cape with no secondary education reported the lowest level of solicitation; 22% of this group had been solicited during the period under review. Adults with no secondary education in the Western Cape, in contrast, reported much higher levels of solicitation; 63% of adults in this group reported being solicited during the specified timeframe. The poorly educated in the Free State and Limpopo also reported comparatively higher levels of solicitation.

2.3 Indirect Exposure to Sextortion

During the 2024/25 SASAS round, respondents were asked: "How often have you heard about an official making requests of a sexual nature from someone you know in exchange for a government service or benefit in the last 5 years?". This question was designed to measure *indirect* experiences of sexual corruption in the public sector; this indirect approach was designed to help participants feel more at ease and willing to share accounts with fieldworkers of their most recent indirect experiences related to sexual corruption, possibly also giving respondents the psychological space to report their own direct experience as indirect experience. About a fifth of adults had heard about this happening to someone they know either quite often or very often in the five years prior to the interview. Public responses are presented by gender in Figure 5 (pg. 25). Gender differences are quite minor; both men and women had heard about public sector officials engaging in this kind of behaviour to (more or less) the same degree.

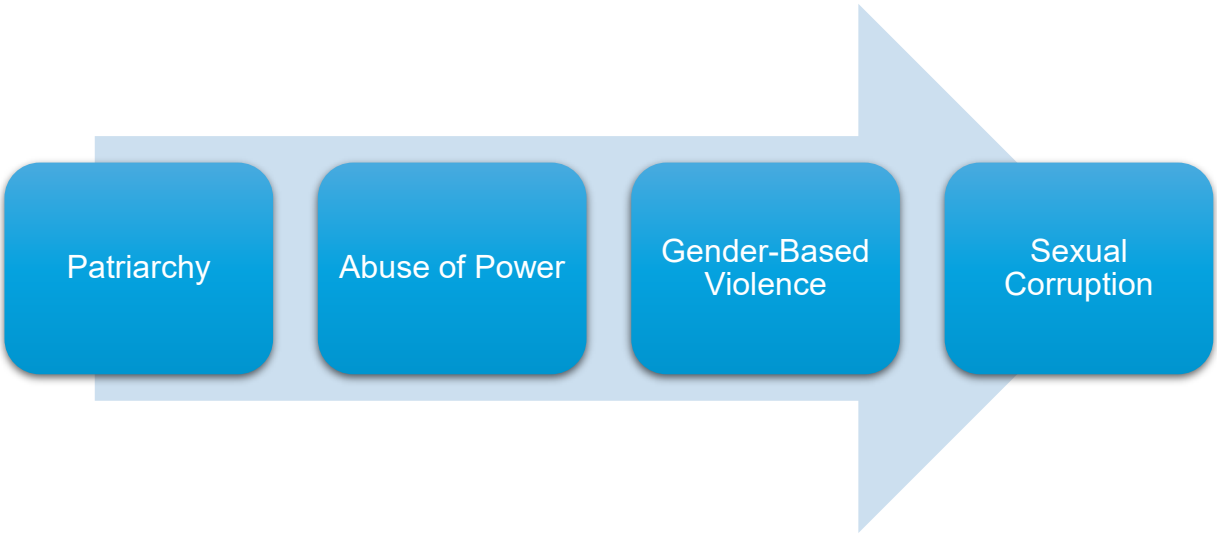
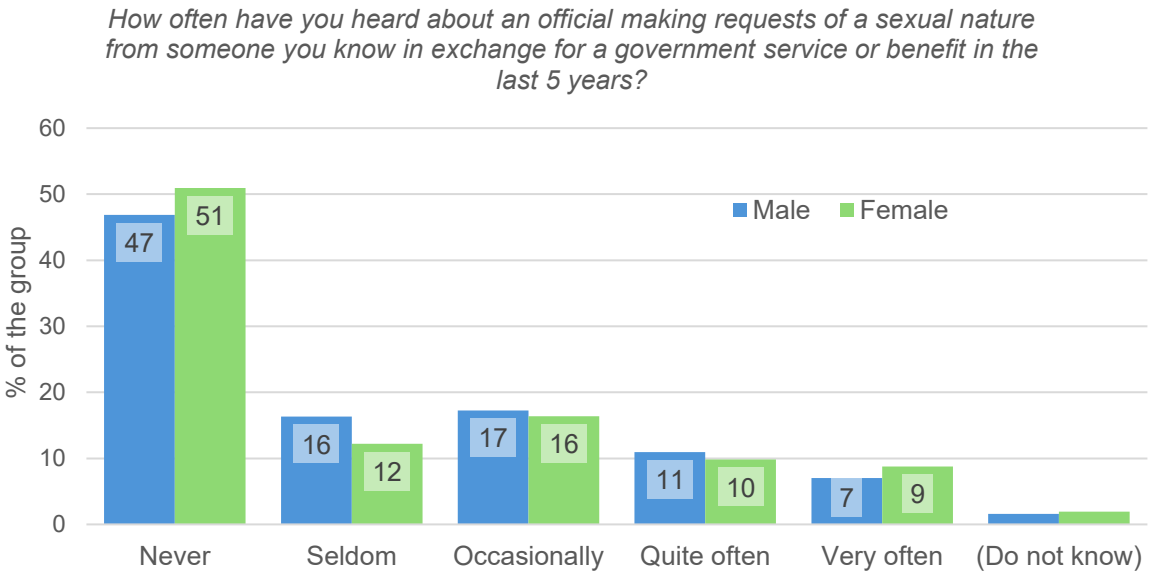


Figure 5: Self-reported level of recent indirect experience of public sector sextortion by gender

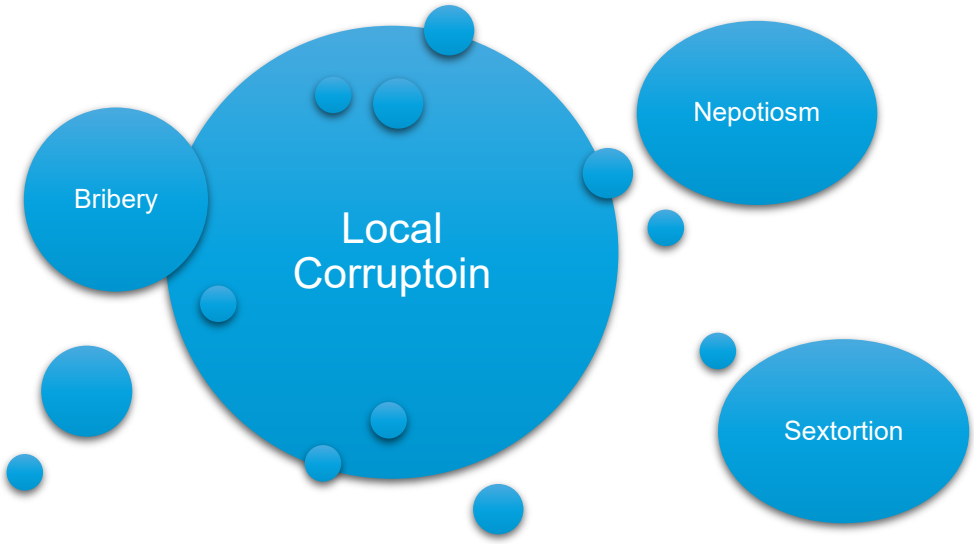


Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

How people responded to the sexual extortion question differed significantly by socio-economic status. Individuals who were on the upper rungs of the socio-economic ladder tended to report lower levels of sexual extortion than others. Approximately three-quarters (71%) of the economically more advantaged had never heard about this kind of crime happening to people they know during the specified timeframe. More or less a tenth (11%) said that it had happened seldom, and a similar proportion (13%) reported that it had occurred occasionally. Only a small percentage of this group said that they had heard about this happening to someone they know either quite often (4%) or very often (1%) in the five years prior to the interview. Even if we used a multivariate regression analysis to take other factors into account, it remained evident that individuals with greater economic advantages were less likely to report indirect experiences of sextortion within the public sector (the results of this statistical analysis are detailed in Section 13.5 on pg. 146). It would appear that economic advantage may afford a degree of protection or insulation from such abuses, affecting both personal experiences and a person's knowledge of these offences affecting others.

People who had a direct experience of bureaucratic corruption were found to be more likely to report indirect experiences of sexual corruption in the public sector. Consider, for example, those who had not been solicited for bribes by public officials in the last five years. Approximately nine-tenths (87%) of this group had no indirect experience of sexual extortion; this is 28 percentage points above the national average. Amongst those who had regularly been solicited for bribes, about half had heard about sexual corruption happening to people they knew either occasionally (19%), quite often (23%) or very often (7%). To establish the strength of this connection, a multivariate analysis was used to take socio-demographic factors into account. We confirmed that there was a robust correlation between these two variables. An increase of one unit on bribery solicitation scale depicted in Figure 3 (pg. 22) raised the likelihood of reporting indirect experience by 129% (details on the outcome of this statistical test can be found in Section 13.5 on pg. 147).

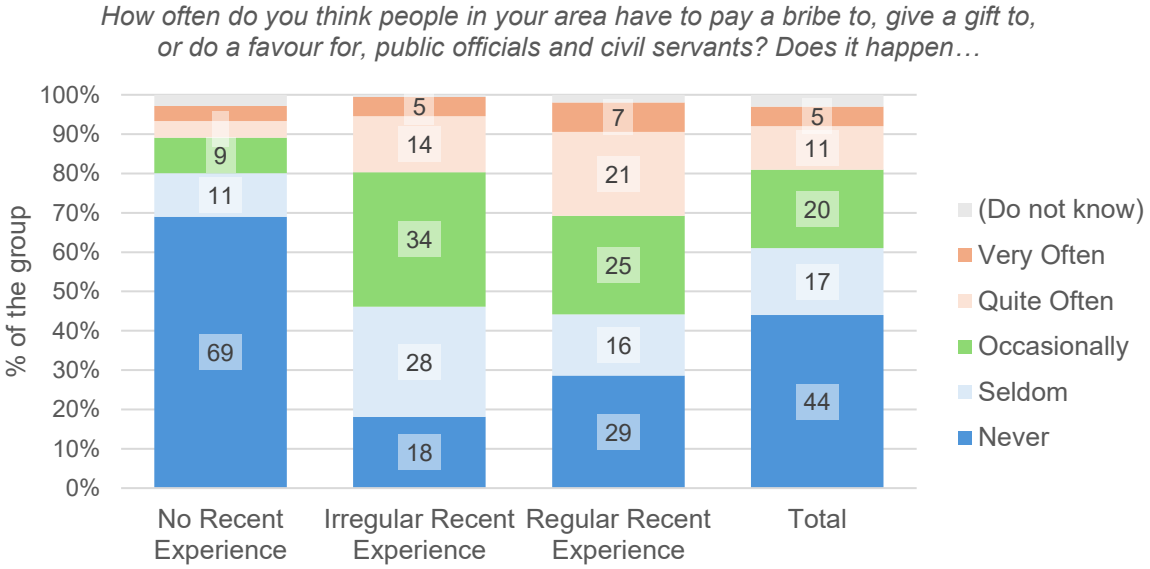
The findings presented in this subsection suggest a strong association between direct experiences of bribery and indirect experience of sexual corruption, underscoring how different forms of corruption may be interconnected in peoples lived experiences. This relationship suggests that people who experience one form of corruption firsthand are more likely to recognise or be affected by other related corrupt practices within the same environment. The overlap points to the fact that various types of corruption do not occur in isolation but are often intertwined, reinforcing and perpetuating each other. These interconnected corrupt behaviours create a complex web of abuses that shape individuals' overall experiences of the public sector. By highlighting this connection, the findings emphasise the importance of addressing corruption comprehensively rather than treating different forms as separate issues.



2.4 Micro-Level Corruption

Fieldworkers told SASAS 2024/25 participants that they wanted to know about their experience with public officials and civil servants in their area. Here 'area' was defined as the local neighbourhood or village where participants lived. To measure the perceived extent of micro-level corruption, survey participants were asked the following question: "How often do you think people in your area have to pay a bribe to, give a gift to, or do a favour for, public officials and civil servants?" A majority (52%) of the adult public said that they lived in neighbourhoods or villages characterised by public sector bribery. A noteworthy minority of the adult public said that they lived in an area where people paid to public officials either often (11%) or very often (5%).

Figure 6: Perceived level of public sector bribery at the micro-level by recent public sector bribery experience



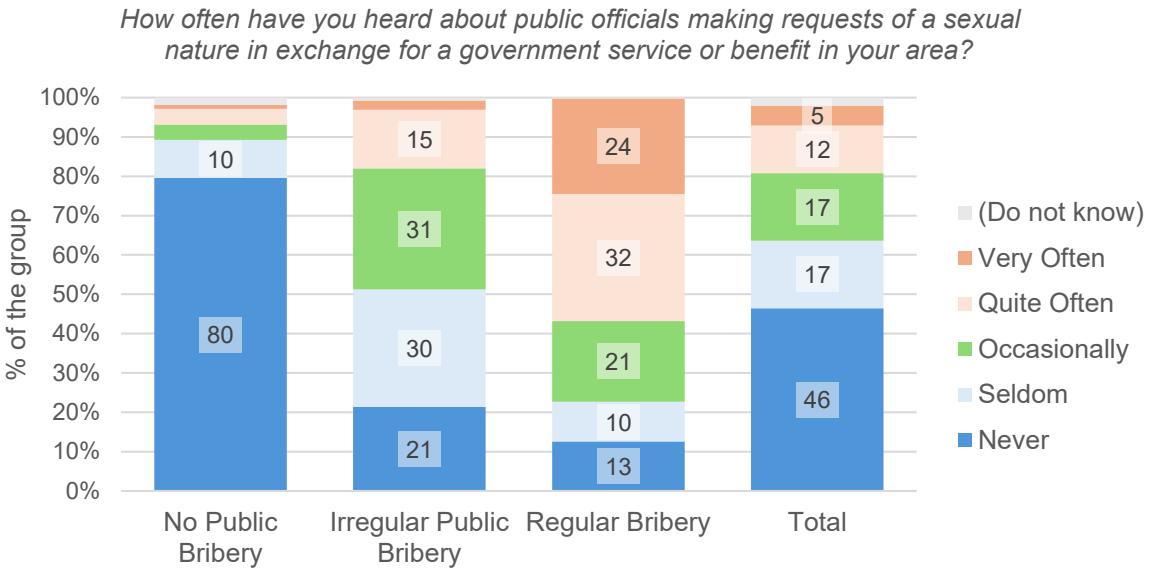
Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

People who had recently had a public sector bribery experience tended to live in areas where paying bribes to public officials was common. This association is clearly depicted in Figure 6 (pg. 26) which showed responses to the perceived ubiquity of local bribery question by whether a person had a recent experience of public sector bribe solicitation. Take, for instance, individuals who had not had a recent experience of public sector corruption. Our findings showed that more than two-thirds (69%) of this group lived in an area where people never paid bribes to public officials; 25 percentage points above the national average. Even if we were to take socio-demographic factors into account, then we still found that bribery experience increased the odds of living in a bureaucratic corruption 'hotspot'. A one

unit change in the bribery solicitation scale in Figure 3 (pg. 22) increased the odds of a person stating that they lived in an area where paying bribes was common by 64% (information regarding the results of this statistical test is provided in Section 13.5 on pg. 147).

SASAS respondents were queried on how often they had heard that public officials in their neighbourhood had been making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a government service or benefit. A notable portion reported that public officials in their area were involved in this kind of corruption frequently (12%) or very frequently (5%). Roughly one-third (34%) indicated they reside in areas where this type of corruption takes place rarely or sometimes. People who had indirect experience of sextortion by public officials tended to believe that officials in their area often engaged in sexual corruption. This relationship is clearly illustrated in Figure 7 (pg. 27), which presented how answers to the question about the prevalence of local sexual extortion corresponded with responses to the question about indirect experience of sextortion. After accounting for socio-demographic factors, we still observed that having indirect experience significantly raised the likelihood[18] of residing in an area where sexual corruption is common (further details about the findings of this statistical test are available in Section 13.5 on pg. 147).

Figure 7: Perceived level of public sector sexual corruption at the micro-level by perceived level of public sector bribery

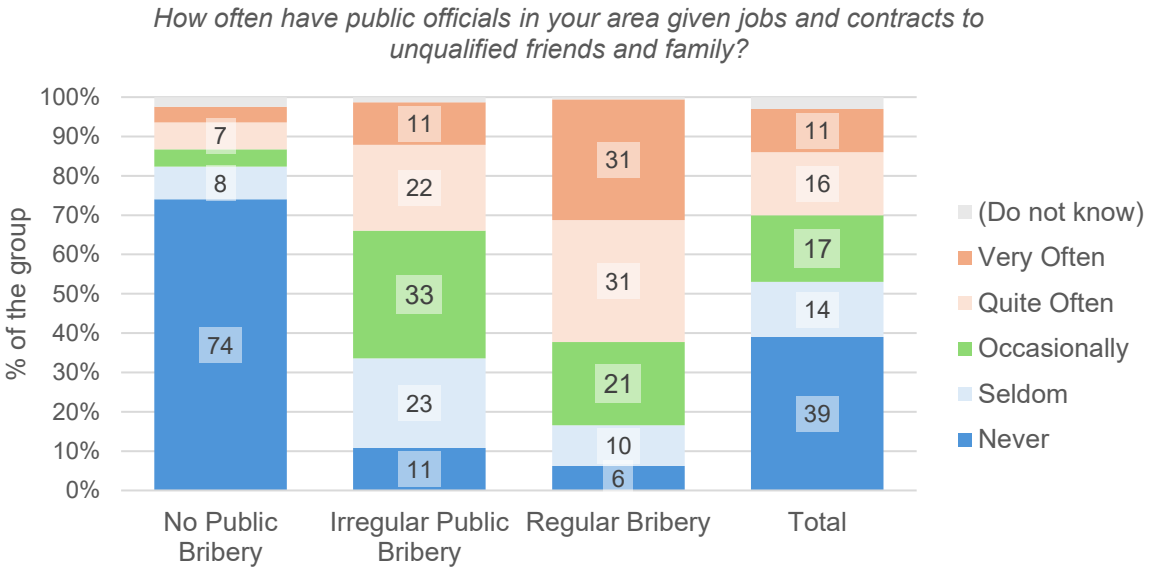


Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

During the SASAS 2024/25 round, participants were asked how often public officials in their area have given jobs and contracts to unqualified friends and family. A majority (58%) of the mass public said that they lived in areas where this kind of corruption occurred. Notably, a significant share reported that public officials in their neighbourhood engaged in nepotism often (16%) or very often (11%). Figure 8 (pg. 28) presents data on how people responded to the question about the perceived prevalence of local nepotism by whether paying bribes to public officials in their area was common. It is clear from the data presented that there is a positive relationship between these two questions. To illustrate this, let's look at those who thought that people in their local area regularly paid bribes to officials. Approximately two-thirds (62%) of this group thought that local officials in their area engaged in nepotism quite often or very often.

[18] A one-unit increase on the sexual extortion indirect experience scale was associated with a 194% increase in the odds that a person reported living in a locality where public sector sexual corruption was prevalent.

Figure 8: Perceived level of public sector nepotism at the micro-level by perceived level of public sector bribery



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

2.5 Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption Index

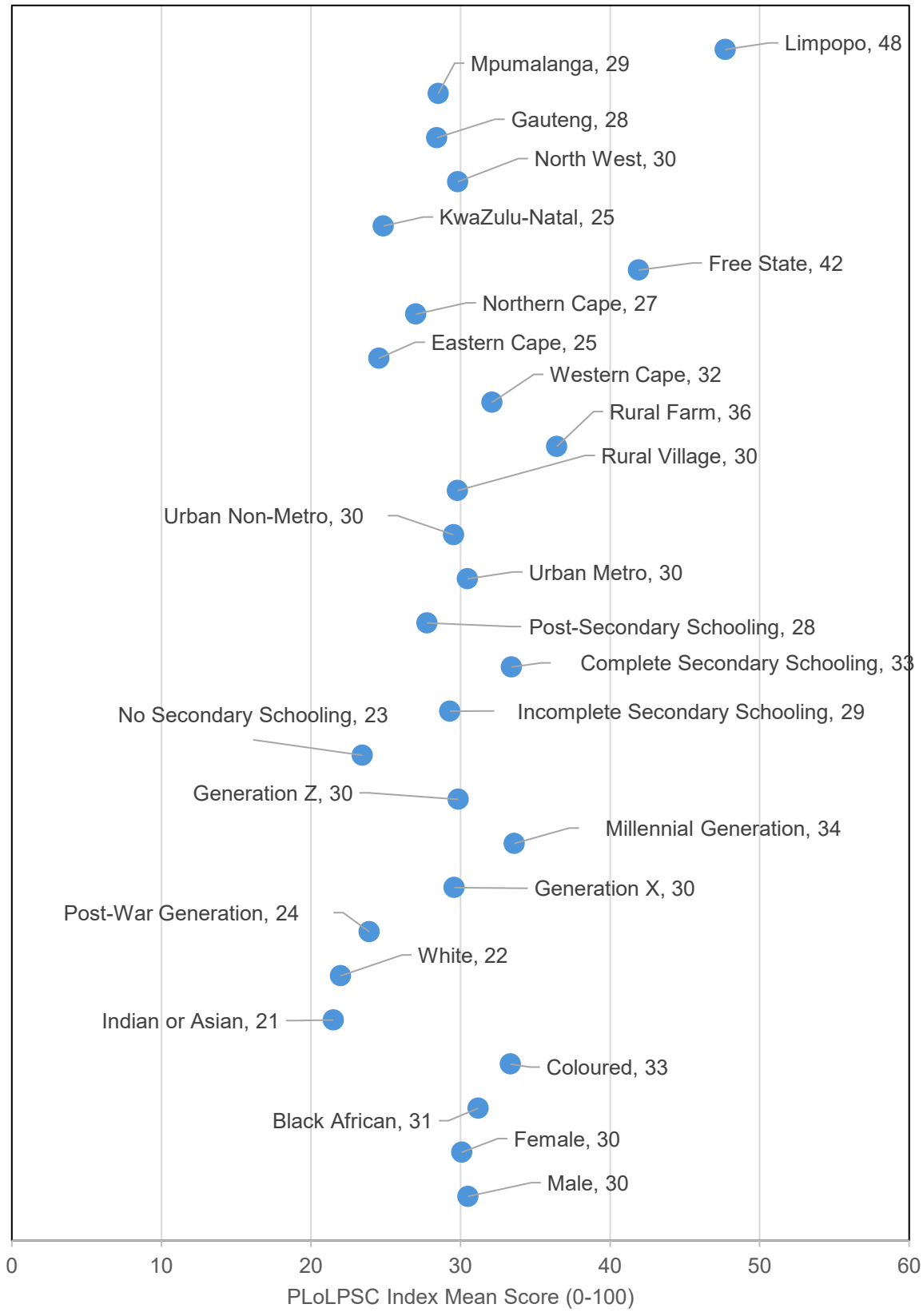
The results presented in the previous subsection seem to suggest that perceiving one type of corrupt practice (e.g., nepotism) by public officials as widespread tended to be associated with believing that other types of corruption were common. A bivariate analysis was conducted to confirm this thesis, seeking to understand whether the three questions outlined in the previous subsection are closely connected to each other (see test results in Section 13.5, pg. 148). The bivariate analysis showed that when individuals perceived one form of public corruption in their community (such as bribery) as widespread, they were also more likely to view other forms of corruption as prevalent. This suggests that, in the public's perception, different types of corruption are closely connected and equally common.

Based on the statistical testing delineated above, we constructed an index to measure the perceived severity of micro-level public sector corruption using the three questions previously discussed. The index in question was built to range from 0 to 100; the higher the value on the index, the greater the perceived level of public sector corruption at the micro-level. The variable was labelled the Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption (PLoLPSC) Index. The national distribution on this index was skewed towards the left; 32% of the adult population had a PLoLPSC Index of 0. A tenth of the general public, on the other hand, had an index score of 75 and above, believing that they lived in local hotbeds of corruption where local public officials are always engaging in corrupt behaviour.

Average scores for the PLoLPSC Index are shown in Figure 9 (pg. 29) across various socio-demographic groups. As may have been anticipated, significant variations in the PLoLPSC Index were observed among the different provincial populations. Adults in Free State (M=42; SE=1.994) and Limpopo (M=47; SE=1.550) had higher average index scores than their peers in other provinces. Although Northern Cape residents exhibited index score close to the national mean, there was a considerable degree of variance in that province. About a fifth (21%) of adults in the Northern Cape scored 75 above on the PLoLPSC Index; indicating that they lived in areas where local public officials regularly participate in corrupt activities. Of the nine provinces, residents of the Eastern Cape (M=25; SE=1.403) were more likely to have a lower PLoLPSC Index score than their counterparts in other provinces. Indeed, about half (46%) of residents in this province said that they lived in local areas where public officials never engaged in corrupt practices.

There was a notable difference between urban and rural areas, with farm residents exhibiting higher index scores (M=36; SE=0.260) than their counterparts in rural villages or in urban areas. Further data analysis revealed quite a large urban-rural divide in the Eastern Cape on this issue. Rural adults in the province had much lower index scores (M=13; SE=1.875) than their urban counterparts (M=37; SE=1.782). Approximately two-thirds (64%) of rural inhabitants in this province reported living in

Figure 9: Mean of the Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption (PLoLPSC) Index by socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

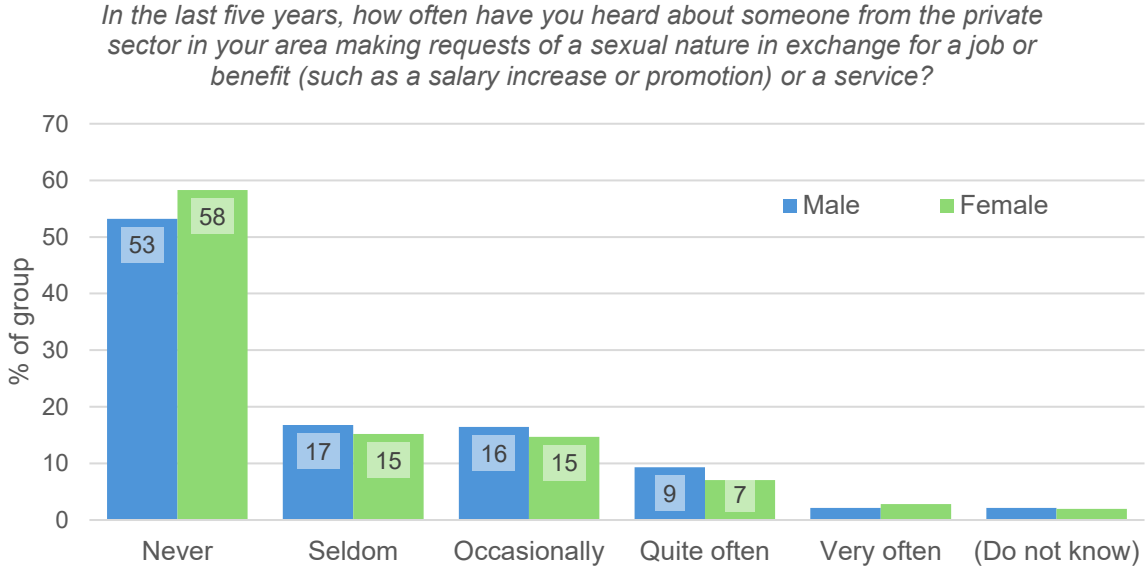
villages and farms where public officials never took part in corruption. A similar, if less pronounced, urban-rural divide was observed in the North West. If we narrow our analysis to focus just on metropolitan areas, we find that Eastern Cape (M=40; SE=1.968) and Western Cape (M=35; SE=1.714) residents had higher PLoLPSC Index scores than those in other provinces.

PLoLPSC Index scores differed significantly by socio-economic status. Individuals who were on the upper rungs of the socio-economic ladder tended to have lower index scores than others. Economically advantage adults had an index score of 18 (SE=1.067), nearly half the national average. Indeed, we found that about half (52%) of the economically advantaged said that they lived in areas where local public officials never engaged in corruption. Advantaged persons in Gauteng were found, in particular, to have low PLoLPSC Index scores; this group scored 13 (SE=1.452) on the index which was a much lower score than advantaged adults elsewhere in the country (M=25; SE=1.511). Even after controlling for socio-demographic variables through multivariate regression analysis, we still found that having an economic advantage reduced the likelihood of residing in a community that is a hotbed of public corruption (the results of this statistical test are outlined in Section 13.5 on pg. 148). It seems that having an economic advantage could provide some level of shield against government abuses at the micro-level, influencing not only individuals' direct experiences but also their awareness of such violations in their localities.

2.6 Private Sector Sextortion

The second-year study sought to deepen our insight into public perceptions of sexual corruption. Through detailed consultations with relevant experts (including feminist scholars and activists), we decided to broaden our scope of analysis. Experts emphasised that the private sector should also be included in the analysis, noting that focusing exclusively on the public sector could obscure the reality that sexual corruption also takes place within private enterprises. Since this area of study is still relatively new, it was uncertain how the general public might respond to questions about sexual corruption in the private sector. Nonetheless, acknowledging the private sector's involvement is crucial for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the problem and assessing its full scope.

Figure 10: Self-reported level of recent indirect experience of private sector sextortion by gender



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

SASAS respondents were asked, in the last five years, how often they had heard about someone from the private sector in their area making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a job or benefit (such as a salary increase or promotion) or a service. To assist respondents, a brief definition of the private sector was provided by fieldworkers to the respondents.[19] This question aimed to assess awareness of

[19] The exact definition was as follows: "The private sector consists of companies and organisations not controlled by government. Private sector companies and organisations can be very small (e.g., a spaza shop) or very big (e.g., a cellphone company or a bank)".

private sector sexual corruption at the micro-level, with the responses broken down by gender in Figure 10 (pg. 30). About a third (32%) of the adult public said that they had heard about it happening occasionally or seldom in the five years leading up to the interview. Approximately one in ten individuals from each gender mentioned that they had heard of this happening to someone they knew frequently. The differences between genders were minimal, as both men and women reported hearing about such criminal behaviour occurring in the private sector to a similar extent.

There was an association between how a person responded to the private sector sexual extortion question and indirect experience of public sector sexual corruption. Data analysis demonstrated that having indirect experience of sextortion in the public sector increased the likelihood that a person would have indirect experience of private sector sextortion. As a robustness check, the relationship between the two variables was tested using a multivariate regression analysis. After taking a range of socio-demographic factors into account, a positive (and statistically significant) association between the two variables remained evident. A one unit change in the indirect experience scale used in Figure 5 (pg. 25) increased the odds of a person stating that they lived in an area where private sector sexual corruption was common by 194% (the results of this statistical test are detailed in Section 13.5, pg. 148).

Table 2-1: Mean Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption (PLoLPSC) Index Scores by level of indirect experience of private sector sextortion

	Male		Female	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Never	15	(0.789)	16	(0.776)
Seldom	38	(1.417)	37	(1.387)
Occasionally	47	(1.347)	56	(1.309)
Quite Often/Very Often	63	(1.563)	62	(1.623)
Total	30	(0.738)	30	(0.730)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.
Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Local environments with entrenched corrupt practices often influence the public and private sectors simultaneously, making individuals aware of corrupt behaviours broadly rather than in isolated silos. Indeed, private sector corruption in South Africa frequently involves interactions with public officials, creating a direct nexus between private and public sector corruption. This suggests that we should see an association between the PLoLPSC Index and awareness of private sector sextortion. When tested, as can be observed from Table 2-1, a link was found between an individual's score on the PLoLPSC Index and their reported indirect experience with sexual extortion. As a robustness check, the relationship between the two variables was tested using a multivariate regression analysis. After taking a range of socio-demographic factors into account, a positive (and statistically significant) association between the two variables remained evident. An increase of one unit in the PLoLPSC Index raised the likelihood that an individual would report having indirect experience with sexual extortion in the private sector by 6% (Section 13.5, pg. 148) contains a detailed account of the results of this statistical test).

2.7 Conclusion

The present study sought to improve on prior work into the perceived level of public sector corruption in society by investigating perceptions at the micro-level (i.e., the area where people live). We found that many people had heard about various kinds of corruption by public officials in their localities. In addition, indirect experiences tended to be intercorrelated, suggesting that awareness of various forms of public sector corruption tends to cluster. This result, no doubt, reflects a broader pattern of unethical behaviour amongst certain public officials. It is evident that many people thought bureaucratic corruption was a common feature of how their communities functioned. Our analysis found that only a third of all adults lived in localities that they thought were free of public sector corruption. About a tenth of adults lived in areas which they believed were characterised by extreme levels of corruption.

It would appear that the NACS is correct to assume that many citizens in the country have knowledge that could be useful in the fight against corruption. But which groups have the most knowledge? The current section provided a profile, focusing on provincial variations, of where exposure to corruption was the most common. Exposure did not appear to be uniformly distributed across the country but was rather concentrated in specific geographic areas. Data analysis showed that certain groups (e.g., Limpopo and Free State residents as well as residents of rural farms) had more exposure to corruption

than other groups. In addition, the section found that the economically disadvantaged groups were more likely to live in neighbourhoods and villages characterised by corruption. This suggests that poverty and limited economic resources may increase the vulnerability of micro-level communities to corruption and its effects.

Finally, the findings presented in the previous subsection demonstrate that it is important to study sextortion in the private as well as the public sector. It is clear from the data presented that sexual corruption is not limited to the public sector; it also seems quite common in private businesses. Consequently, studying sexual extortion across both private and public spheres is essential for capturing the full magnitude of the problem and devising effective interventions. Data analysis reveals that this kind of indirect experience is more common in areas where public sector corruption is widespread. Furthermore, the section revealed that individuals facing economic hardship were more prone to indirectly encountering sexual corruption. This indicates that economic deprivation may heighten the susceptibility of local communities to this form of corruption.

The section demonstrated the importance of consistently monitoring indirect experiences of corruption and tracking how these perceptions evolve over time. With this kind of longitudinal data, it becomes possible to identify communities where exposure to corruption is rising or persistently high. Armed with this information, appropriate parties (e.g., local government, anti-corruption agencies, companies wanting to be good corporate citizens and civil society organisations) could strategically target specific localities where exposure to corruption was most prevalent. This targeted approach would encourage residents in those communities to share information or report corrupt activities, thereby enhancing early detection and prevention efforts. Engaging local populations and fostering an environment where they feel safe and empowered to come forward will strengthen collective anti-corruption initiatives in line with the NACS.

3 CORRUPTION IN PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS

The NACS regards workplace corruption as a critical issue cutting across public and private sectors. The strategy aims to create workplaces where integrity, transparency and accountability are the norm, not the exception. One of the central pillars of the strategy is, in fact, the professionalisation of employees so that we can create corruption free workplaces. The NACS wants to see, in particular, the implementation of Batho Pele principles[20] in the public service as well as good citizenship values in private business. The strategy considers this goal as essential to its comprehensive, society-wide and coordinated approach to tackling corruption. To achieve this, the NACS calls for greater public engagement and discussions around ethical behaviour, promoting a shift in national awareness and a societal transformation towards a values-driven approach in South African workplaces and beyond.

Within the NACS there is a recognition that an occupational culture plays a crucial role in shaping professional behaviour. When occupations, professions and workplaces uphold social values that are anti-corruption (such as integrity, respect for legal frameworks and accountability), they foster a people-focused environment that supports ethical norms and conduct and drive improved performance. Occupations that prioritise these core social values become more resilient, sustainable, and capable of delivering quality services or products that align with the broader goals of social integrity. The NACS's choice to include a focus on workplaces is based on the premise that there are certain occupations and work environments in South Africa where corruption is normative or normalised. This section intends to examine this premise by assessing the extent to which employees are exposed to various forms of corrupt behaviour within their occupations.

The majority of earlier studies on workplace corruption have concentrated on individual organisations, mainly aiming to understand the culture within a single company or governmental agency. Our research moves beyond this narrow focus, looking to obtain data at a national level. The focus of the present section is the occupation, the type of work or profession someone is engaged in as their main source of income or career (e.g., engineer, farmer or administrative assistant). By focusing on occupations, we can include in our analysis those who are not working but had worked previously or are seeking work. This emphasis should provide a deeper understanding of the daily work experiences of the adult population and identify those types of corruption that are most normative in the South African labour market.

3.1 The Influence of Occupational Culture on Ethical Behaviour

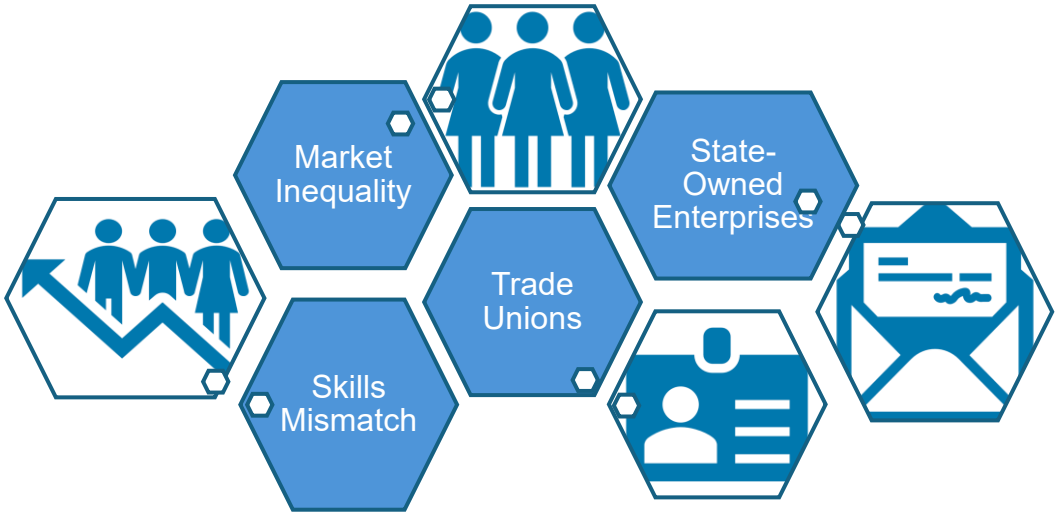
After the end of apartheid in 1994, the labour market underwent significant structural changes. Macro-economic changes have shifted demand from unskilled to skilled labour, exacerbating unemployment among workers lacking formal education and relevant skills (Festus et al., 2016). The legacy of apartheid's unequal education system significantly contributes to a skills mismatch between employers and job seekers. This mismatch limits opportunities for many and contributes to persistently high unemployment rates, particularly among youth (also see Francis, & Webster, 2019). Trade unions maintain relatively strong influence in the labour market, with union membership associated with wage premiums. Labour market experiences also differ spatially, with rural areas showing more informal employment and higher vulnerability to labour market inequalities.

Public sector employment includes a mix of permanent government employees and workers in state-owned enterprises, across national, provincial and local government levels. This sector plays a vital role in governance and service delivery in South Africa, making it a key focus for policies addressing corruption. Though exact figures vary slightly depending on sources and definitions of public sector employment, approximately 15% to 20% of the national workforce is employed in the public sector. This figure includes national, provincial and local government as well as state-owned enterprises or entities (for a further discussion, see National Treasury, 2023). The public sector tends to employ a higher

[20] The Batho Pele initiative, introduced by the South African Government in 1997, aims to provide public services that are centred around the needs of citizens. This programme is guided by eight key principles: (i) engaging with citizens through consultation, (ii) establishing clear service standards, (iii) enhancing accessibility, (iv) guaranteeing respectful treatment, (v) offering relevant information, (vi) promoting openness and transparency, (vii) ensuring mechanisms for redress, and (viii) delivering value for money.

proportion of professionally qualified and skilled workers compared to the private sector, which has more semi- and unskilled workers.[21]

During the baseline study, engagements with experts (particularly those in the private sector) highlighted the important role played by occupational culture in South Africa. Occupational culture is the unique set of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, norms and behaviours that characterise members of a particular profession or occupational group. Experts we engaged with argued that occupational culture is vitally important because it shapes the shared values, norms and behaviours within a workplace or profession. As research in South Africa by The Ethics Institute (2025) makes clear, occupational culture shapes how individuals within that occupation think, communicate and act, creating a distinct identity and sense of belonging among its members. This culture is closely linked to broader social norms and values, as it both reflects and reinforces the accepted standards of behaviour within the occupation (also see Vorster & van Vuuren, 2022). As a result, occupational culture can directly influence how participants act and make decisions, as well as their sense of accountability.



Studying how people generally behave in their occupation can help us understand the underlying social norms and values within occupational culture. A toxic culture is one where, for example, people often engage in rule bending or bribe solicitation for private gain (Ashforth, & Anand, 2003). An ethical occupational culture, on the other hand, discourages such practices. Instead, it promotes ethical principles such as integrity, transparency and accountability (also see Treviño et al., 2006). When an occupational culture is grounded in ethical principles, participants are more likely to internalise these values, leading to consistent ethical conduct and efforts to prevent corrupt practices (Miller, 2023). When talking about occupational corruption, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of occupations within a society. No doubt, not all occupations lend themselves to the same type or extent of corrupt practices due to differences in the nature of their work, levels of discretion and opportunities for personal gain (also see Tunley et al., 2018).

Access to meaningful economic advancement in South Africa is, for better or worse, largely centred around finding and securing employment in an occupation of some kind, although there is a large informal sector. The general public has, as a result, developed some strong opinions about their chosen or preferred occupation. This includes those who are not currently employed. Even though employment rates are low in the country, many are seeking a job or are studying (or training) for a future job in a particular occupation. In addition, others have worked in an occupation for a long time and are now retired. Despite the relevance of occupation to the lives of most of the adult public, public opinion surveys tend not to ask about occupational culture. Most of the existing work is on largescale formal organisations and tends to be unrepresentative of workers in that organisation. This narrow focus can mask the existence and impact of toxic occupational cultures and how widespread such toxicity might be. By overlooking occupational culture in surveys and research, there is a risk of missing critical insights into how the problem of corruption in South Africa could be countered.

[21] For a discussion of public sector employment trends over the post-apartheid period using household survey data, see Kerr and Wittenberg (2017).

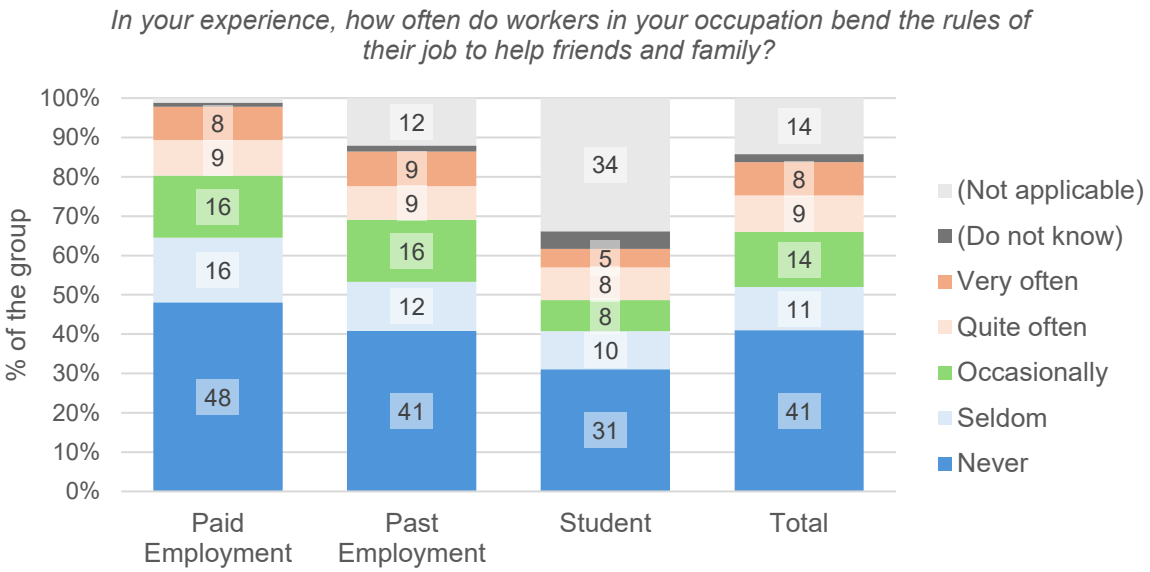
In the second year of the study, the decision was taken to investigate occupational corruption in South Africa. The focus was on how normative certain corrupt behaviours were within occupations in the country. A list of corrupt behaviours that are commonly associated with the workplace were selected for analysis. This included, for example, bribe solicitation and bending the rules of the job for private gain. In designing this component of the research, it was apparent that there would be certain limitations. First, due to low levels of formal labour market participation in the country, some may not feel that they have an occupation. Second, some persons would have better knowledge of their profession than others. Finally, it is necessary to consider the possibility of response bias, as respondents may hesitate to openly acknowledge that certain illegal activities are viewed as normal in their profession or occupation or workplace.

3.2 Assessing the Prevalence of Corrupt Practices Across Occupations

During the 2024/25 round of SASAS, participants were asked to imagine their most recent occupation. A brief definition of an occupation was then provided to the respondent so that the meaning of the term was understood by all participants.[22] If the respondent was not working, then they were asked to think about the occupation they used to work in or the occupation they studied (or trained) to work in. Given South Africa's high levels of unemployment or informal work, it was unsurprising that a notable minority (14%) were unable to think of an occupation and said 'not applicable'. Then respondents were asked to say, from their own experience, how often corrupt and unethical behaviour occurred in their profession. By grounding these questions in the respondent's identified occupation, the survey could more precisely assess social norms concerning workplace corruption in the country.

Survey participants were asked the following question: "In your experience, how often do workers in your occupation bend the rules of their job to help friends and family?" Responses to this question are displayed by labour market status in Figure 11 (pg. 35). Nearly half (48%) of all adults who were employed reported that such practices never occurred within their occupations. However, a significant portion of the employed indicated that, in their occupations, behaviour of this kind happened frequently (9%) or very frequently (8%). The remaining workers said this occurred sometimes, suggesting that it occurred either rarely (16%) or sometimes (16%). It was interesting to observe that many people studying for an occupation tended to think that unethical behaviour was common in their future occupation. Roughly a twelfth (13%) of the employed said that this kind of unethical conduct took place often in the occupation that they were studying to work in.

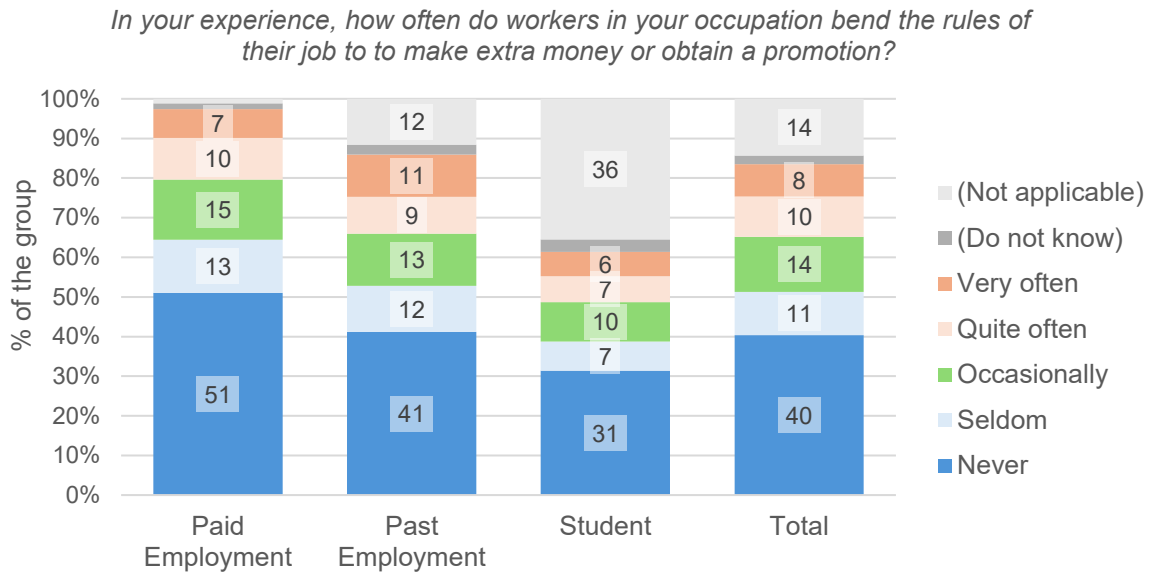
Figure 11: Perceived frequency of nepotistic or favouritism-related unethical behaviour within South African occupation by labour market attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

[22] The exact wording of the definition is "An occupation is a person's profession or type of work that they regularly do (e.g., plumber, lawyer or farmer)."

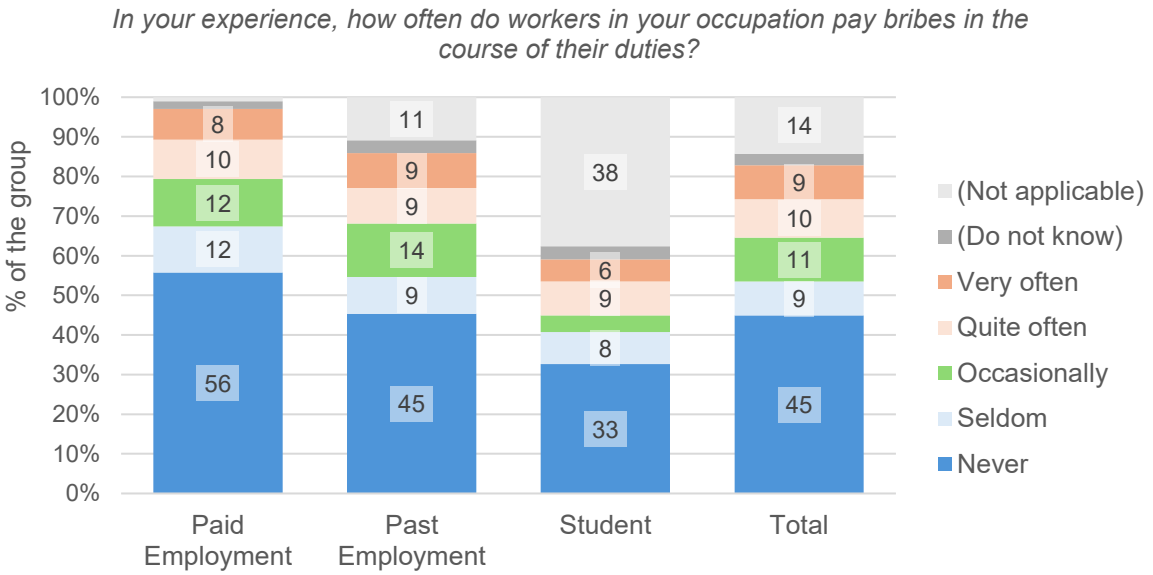
Figure 12: Perceived frequency of self-interested and corrupt rule violations within South African occupation by labour market attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

We wanted participants to reflect on what they knew about the extent of self-interested and corrupt rule violations in their occupation. To that end, survey participants were also asked the following question: "In your experience, how often do workers in your occupation bend the rules of their job to make extra money or obtain a promotion?" This inquiry aimed to gauge perceptions about the prevalence of unethical conduct related to career advancement and financial gain in their line of work. Over half (51%) of all employed individuals stated that these behaviours never took place in their occupation (Figure 12, pg. 36). However, a notable share of adult workers reported that, within their occupations, bending the rules for financial gain occurred fairly (10%) or very (7%) often. The rest of the workforce indicated that such unethical actions happened either rarely (13%) or from time to time (15%). Past workers were more likely than current workers to state that this kind of behaviour happened often. When compared to those seeking work, retired workers were less likely to state that this kind of unethical conduct was common in their old workplaces.

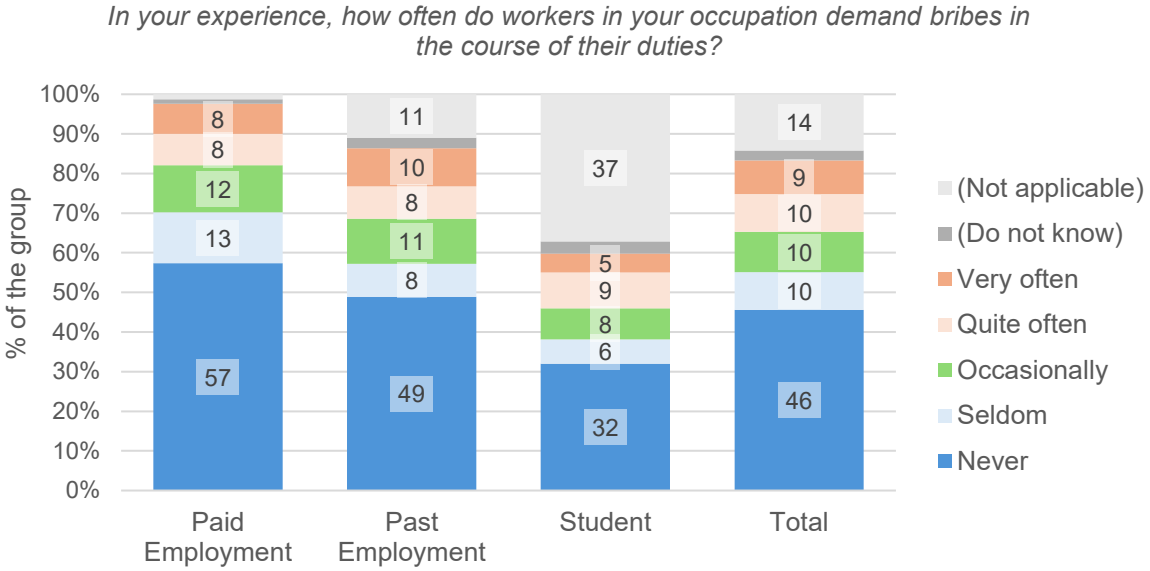
Figure 13: Perceived frequency of bribe paying behaviour within South African occupation by labour market attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

We wanted to assess the perceived frequency with which employees within the respondent's occupation engage in bribery as part of their professional responsibilities. Survey participants were asked the following question: "In your experience, how often do workers in your occupation pay bribes in the course of their duties?" The answers to this question were presented according to labour market status in Figure 13 (pg. 36). Nearly three-fifths (56%) of all employed individuals stated that workers in their occupation never paid bribes. A notable share of adult workers reported that within their occupations, paying bribes occurred quite often (10%) or very often (8%). The rest of the workforce indicated that such unethical actions happened either seldom (12%) or occasionally (12%). Amongst employed workers, the self-employed were less likely to state that people in their occupation had to pay bribes. Consider, for example, that only 9% of self-employed adults said that people in their occupations regularly paid bribes. This figure was half of what was observed for waged employees; a distinction that might reflect the fact that most self-employment in the country is at the micro-level and requires fewer bureaucratic interactions that might necessitate bribery.

Figure 14: Perceived degree to which extorting bribes was common within South African occupation by labour market attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Survey participants were asked the following question: "In your experience, how often do workers in your occupation demand bribes in the course of their duties?" The responses to this bribery question were categorised by labour market status and are illustrated in Figure 14 (pg. 37). Almost three-fifths (57%) of employed adults reported that workers in their occupation never solicit bribes during their duties. A significant portion of adult workers indicated that such extortion took place fairly often (8%) or very frequently (8%) within their professions. The remaining respondents stated that these unethical practices occurred either rarely (13%) or sometimes (12%). Looking just at those who had worked before, we found that workers in the public sector were more likely to state this kind of behaviour was common in their profession than were their private sector counterparts. Consider, for example, that 26% of those who were working (or had worked) in the public sector thought that extorting bribes was common among people in their occupation. This figure is 10 percentage points above those who were working (or had worked) in the private sector.

3.3 Measuring and Understanding Occupational Corruption Norms

A bivariate analysis revealed a strong correlation between the way that people answered the different questions presented in the previous subsection (the results of these tests are presented in Section 13.6, pg. 149). If an individual believed that one type of corrupt behaviour (e.g., paying bribes) in their occupation was common than they were more likely to think that other types of corrupt behaviour (e.g., demanding bribes) were too. Given that these behaviours are quite dissimilar, this is a noteworthy finding. We can conclude, therefore, that there are some occupations in South Africa where various different kinds of corruption are considered normative. Supplementary statistical analyses validated the

internal consistency of this group of questions, indicating that they can be reliably merged into a single composite measure (test findings are reported in Section 13.6, pg. 149).

Based on the statistical testing, we constructed an index to measure the perceived normality of occupational corruption using the questions discussed above. For purposes of the index, those without a self-identified occupation (14% of the adult population) were removed, so we are focusing only on those individuals with an occupation. To simplify interpretation, the index was designed to span from 0 to 100; the higher the value on the index, the greater the perceived normality of corruption in a person's occupation. The variable was labelled the Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption (PNoOC) Index. The national mean score on this metric was 29 (SE=1.064) and the national distribution on the index was skewed to the left. However, there is a notable share (22%) of adults with an occupation that scored 60 or above on the index and 10% of this group scored 80 or above.

It appears logical to presume that adults who were in highly corrupt occupations would be more likely to encounter bureaucratic corruption than those who did not. This assumption stems from the idea that workplace environments vary in their exposure to and tolerance of unethical behaviours, with certain professions presenting higher risks of encountering activities like bribe solicitation or other forms of immoral conduct. To test this assumption, a multivariate analysis was used to take socio-demographic factors into account. We confirmed that there was a robust correlation between recent experiences of bribe solicitation and the PNoOC Index (details on the outcome of this statistical test can be found in Section 13.6 pg. 150). This finding substantiates the link between working in occupations where corruption is perceived as normal and direct encounters with corrupt demands or practices.

Certain occupations are more prone to sextortion than others. It stands to reason, therefore, that adults in corruption-prone occupations are more likely to hear or learn about sexual extortion incidents, even if they are not directly involved. We hypothesised that adults employed in occupations associated with corruption are more likely to have indirect exposure to sexual corruption. To examine this hypothesis, a multivariate analysis was conducted; it controlled for background characteristics. The analysis confirmed a strong correlation between indirect experiences of sextortion and the PNoOC Index (further details on this statistical test are available in Section 13.6 on pg. 150). Our data indicates that individuals working in corruption-prone occupations are more likely to have heard accounts of corruption than those outside such occupations. Interestingly, the PNoOC Index had a stronger association with indirect experiences of sextortion in the private sector than the public sector.[23]

Building on the work presented in Section 2, we can assume that there is a connection between living in corrupt neighbourhoods and working in occupations with higher corruption risks. This assumption is based on the hypothesis that social and residential environments influence the likelihood of entering and remaining in corruption-prone work sectors. In other words, the environment in which people live profoundly influences their social networks, educational opportunities and, ultimately, their employment prospects. These interconnected factors create pathways that link residential settings to occupational experiences. To test this thesis, we used the PLoLPSC Index that was discussed in Section 2 (pg. 28) and tested whether it was associated with the PNoOC Index. Multivariate analysis was used to take socio-demographic attributes into account (outcomes of this statistical analysis are presented in Section 13.6 on pg. 150). The results demonstrate a positive and robust association between the two variables. This outcome means that individuals living in corrupt neighbourhoods are more likely to enter into and stay in work sectors with higher risks of corruption.

3.4 Socio-Economic and Sectoral Variations

Scores on the PNoOC Index varied notably according to socio-economic status. Adults positioned higher on the socio-economic scale generally reported lower index values compared to those in lower strata. For instance, individuals considered economically advantaged had an average score of 15 (SE = 1.740) on the index, which is 14 points below the overall national mean. This relationship persisted even after controlling for other variables such as employment status through multivariate regression analysis, clearly showing that those with greater economic resources were less likely to work in

[23] There may be several reasons for this unanticipated finding. It may be, for instance, that people view public sector sexual corruption is viewed through a political lens and associated it with power imbalances, patriarchal norms, and wider public inefficacy in enforcement. While recognised as serious, sexual corruption in the public sector might be seen as distinct from "normal" workplaces in the private sector. But further research is required to understand this outcome.

occupations where corruption is perceived as a common or accepted practice (further details on this statistical test are presented in Section 13.6 on pg. 150). Individuals with greater economic means may be employed in parts of the labour market that are less vulnerable to corrupt practices due to stronger institutional controls, professional norms and higher levels of oversight. They may also have better access to accountability institutions as well as law enforcement that makes them less vulnerable to corrupt extortive practices. As a result, they may be less likely to work in occupations where they would experience or witnessing corruption firsthand.

The PNoOC Index mean score for those in employment was 26 (SE=1.670) and the distribution is platykurtic (i.e., it meaning it has fewer extreme values or outliers). The unemployed had a lower index mean scores than the employed.[24] There were significant mean score variances between different types of work here. PNoOC Index mean scores for different kinds of workers are displayed in Table 3-1 (pg. 39). People who work in the public sector were found to have a somewhat higher index score (M=31; SE=2.784) than those in the private sector (M=24; SE=2.180). This suggests that private sector workers tend to think their professions are more honest than those of their public sector peers.[25] Workers who were members of trade unions did not have, on average, higher index scores than their non-unionised counterparts. There some minor differences between workers based on whether they supervised others as part of their duties[26]

Table 3-1: Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption (PNoOC) Index by labour market attributes

	Mean		[95% Conf. Interval]	
Sectoral Status				
Private	24	(2.180)	26	37
Public	31	(2.784)	19	28
Trade Union Status				
Member	29	(3.688)	22	36
Non-Member	29	(1.118)	27	31
Geotype Group				
Urban Metro	24	(2.355)	19	28
Urban Non-Metro	23	(2.289)	18	27
Rural	39	(4.068)	31	47
Skill Status				
High	19	(2.483)	14	24
Medium	31	(2.719)	26	36
Low	31	(3.783)	23	38

Notes: 1. Linearised standard errors in parenthesis; and 2. Data is restricted to persons who are employed.

It would appear that adults working in rural settings perceive corrupt practices as being far more widespread and thus normalised in their occupational environments than those working in more urbanised regions. Rural workers were found to have much higher PNoOC Index mean scores (M=39; SE=4.068) than their counterparts in urban metropolitan (M=24; SE=2.289) and non-metropolitan (M=23; SE=2.355) areas. This may be due to the fact that rural labour markets may be more informal, with less regulation and fewer readily available safeguards against unethical practices, making corruption easier to perpetuate and normalise. In addition, we found that there were significant differences for workers in the PNoOC Index based on their province of residence. Workers in KwaZulu-

[24] Adults seeking work tended had a PnoOC Index score of 31 (SE=1.766). Job seekers who had never worked tended to have similar scores (M=30; SE=2.454) to those who had worked before (M=32; SE=2.529)

[25] Public sector employees were more likely to think that people in their occupation bent the rules to make extra money or obtain a promotion than private sector workers. We found that more than half (54%) of public sector workers thought that this occurred in their occupation at least sometimes. Only about two-fifths (44%) of private sector workers gave the same answer.

[26] Those who supervised other workers (M=23; SE=4.007) tended to have moderately lower PnoOC Index scores than those who did not (M=27; SE=1.940). Here there was a small difference between employed adults who supervised five or less workers (M=24; SE=5.805) and those who supervised more than five (M=20; SE=4.134).

Natal (M=30; SE=4.001), Mpumalanga (M=31; SE=4.973) and the Eastern Cape (M=34; SE=4.823) tended to have higher index scores than their peers in other provinces.

Skilled workers were found to have a lower PNoOC Index mean score (M=19; SE=2.483) than their counterparts in semi-skilled (M=31; SE=2.719) and unskilled (M=31; SE=3.783) work. Looking at the matter more closely we found that there were large disparities between different types of medium-skilled workers. Clerical support workers (M=24; SE=5.333) had lower index scores than those in service and sales (M=36; SE=3.643) as well as workers in crafts and related trades (M=32; SE=5.361). There was also a significant dissimilarity in PNoOC Index scores amongst different types of low-skilled workers. Workers in elementary occupations (i.e., jobs requiring minimal vocational training) had relatively high index scores (M=32; SE=4.897). Workers in elementary occupations were, in particular, more likely to state that extorting bribes was quite common in their profession than their counterparts in other professions. Consider, for instance, that about a quarter (26%) of these workers said that such behaviour occurred often in their occupation. This figure can be compared with the percentage of professional workers (9%) who gave the same answer.

3.5 Conclusion

What the data presented in this section makes clear is that a significant share of workers in South Africa think that corruption is normalised in their occupation. These results show the need for initiatives designed to create corruption-free workplaces in the country. The NACS emphasises that creating a corruption-free workplace is not just about rules and enforcement, but also about changing workplace culture and social norms through long-term education, ethical mentoring and professional support. Implementing robust workplace codes of ethical conduct as well as supportive mentoring systems can help prevent normalisation of corrupt behaviours. In making this recommendation, the section highlighted the importance of occupational context in shaping social norms around corruption. Anti-corruption efforts might need to be tailored to address the specific risks, and cultural dynamics present within different workforce segments.

The data provided in this section can be used to design anti-corruption initiatives that target particular types of workplaces. It showed that there should be a focus on occupations and sectors with higher PNoOC Index scores, such as service and sales, elementary occupations and those in craft and related trade professions. There should be occupation-specific training and ethics-awareness campaigns that address the particular corruption risks and cultural norms identified in these groups. Specialised anti-corruption strategies should be implemented in areas and provinces (KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape) where corrupt occupational norms are more widespread. This could include increased support for regulatory enforcement, transparency initiatives and civic engagement in rural contexts. In doing so, it is necessary to recognise the greater informality and weaker institutional safeguards in such contexts.

Even though corrupt occupational norms were identified in the private sector, we found such norms to be higher amongst public sector workers. Given this disparity, there is a need to reinforce public sector ethics frameworks, transparency measures as well as disciplinary actions. This could include encouraging ethical leadership and supervision training for managers and supervisors. Public sector workers need continuous ethics training, mentoring and leadership development to embed integrity within their occupational cultures. It is also essential to expand whistleblower protections and confidential reporting channels to empower employees in high-risk public sector roles. In addition, there is a need to recognise underlying socio-economic disparities that correlate with a higher incidence of direct corruption experiences and higher indirect corruption perceptions. Poorer persons may feel that they need to accept corrupt practices as they have little recourse or alternative.

4 PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CORRUPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA: PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION

The National Development Plan (NDP) indicates that combating corruption in South Africa requires efforts on three fronts: (i) deterrence, (ii) prevention and (iii) education. The NACS builds on the NDP and seeks to combat corruption on these three fronts. In terms of education, the NACS emphasises the importance of raising public awareness and providing education about corruption as key strategies in the fight against it. The Strategy recognises that effective communication and educational initiatives are crucial for shaping how society interacts with, and reacts to, corruption. This approach involves rolling out educational campaigns across all schools and creating public education resources aimed at promoting transparency and accountability. Given the importance placed on education by the NACS and the NDP, it is worth asking how aware the general public is of corruption and its impact. The goal of this section will be to try and answer these questions.

The present section will look at public awareness of corruption and whether people in South Africa think it has had a significant impact on the country. A distinction is made between sociotropic and egotropic views of this problem.[27] The section will argue that public awareness of corruption is quite high and cuts across all major socio-demographic groups. The general public tends to view both private and public sector corruption as having a large impact on the national economy. Concerns about corruption at the macro-level are strongly linked with concerns at the micro-level, and a majority of the general public believes that corruption has a detrimental effect on their quality of life. There is some evidence that concerns about corruption are shaped by partisan politics and have shifted in response to national elections in 2024.

The section will conclude with a discussion of public awareness of corruption We will demonstrate that there are a few key groups that are less aware of the harm that corruption can cause. These groups could be targeted in education campaigns, but, given the high level of awareness about corruption evident in this study, the value of funding further awareness campaigns on the dangers of corruption is uncertain. It may be more effective to focus resources on practical actions like improving governance, strengthening enforcement and increasing transparency, which can be followed by highlighting successes achieved. The key challenge is to balance education with other anti-corruption strategies to ensure that public resources drive meaningful and lasting change.

4.1 Corruption's Societal and Economic Costs

Policymakers widely recognise that corruption poses a serious obstacle to a country's economic development. It undermines fair competition, discourages investment and increases the cost of doing business, which in turn slows economic growth (Salahuddin et al., 2020). Corruption diverts public resources away from essential services such as education, healthcare and infrastructure (also see Hope, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2015; Mignamissi et al., 2025). This misallocation of resources means that large segments of the population do not receive the support they need to improve their living conditions or fully participate in the economy. Furthermore, it erodes public trust in institutions and governance, weakening the overall business environment and discouraging both domestic and foreign investors (Uslaner, 2004), as well as trust in democratic government. As a result, addressing corruption is seen as critical for achieving sustainable economic progress and improving the quality of life for citizens.

Although numerous scholarly studies have explored perceptions of corruption's impact, the majority of this research is heavily focused on European contexts.[28] This was the knowledge gap that the baseline study sought to address, as it tried to establish whether members of the adult population in South Africa understood the *cost* of corruption for society. By focusing on public perceptions of corruption's personal and societal impacts, the study intended to provide a clear picture of how the public saw the severity of corruption. The baseline study found that more than three-quarters of the mass public believed that the

[27] In the context of corruption, an egotropic concern means that an individual is worried about corruption specifically because of how it directly affects them or their family. A sociotropic concern, within this context, refers to how worried a person is about the impact of corruption on the collective. There are, of course, different kinds of collective; think about, for instance, the difference between the neighbourhood collective and national collective. For a further discussion of the difference between "egotropic" and "sociotropic", see Lockerbie (2006).

[28] For a discussion of this body of scholarship, see de Sousa et al. (2023), Wysmułek (2019) and Charron (2016).

impact of corruption on the general economy had been large. In addition, the baseline study found that four-fifths of all adults said that corruption had had a large impact on State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in the country and only a small minority (7%) asserted that it had a small impact on SOEs. By and large, individuals across the nation generally demonstrated strong and deeply held concerns about the broader societal harm caused by corruption. [29]

Seeking to expand on the findings of baseline study, the second-year study sought to examine our understanding of public perceptions of the *cost* of corruption. Through extensive discussions with experts in various forums, several suggestions were gathered on how to deepen and broaden the baseline study's research into this issue. Experts suggested that a more significant distinction be made between the perceived impact of private and public sector corruption. In addition, there was a request for a greater focus on local contexts and whether corruption was influencing life at the neighbourhood level. Corruption at the local level is often less abstract for the general public than corruption at the commanding heights of the economy and government. Studying perceptions of corruption at this level, therefore, is preferable because it provides a more detailed understanding of how corruption affects individuals and communities in their daily lives.

At this point, it is important to recognise that individuals' responses to public opinion surveys are shaped by their surrounding environment, including the broader macro-level context within and during which

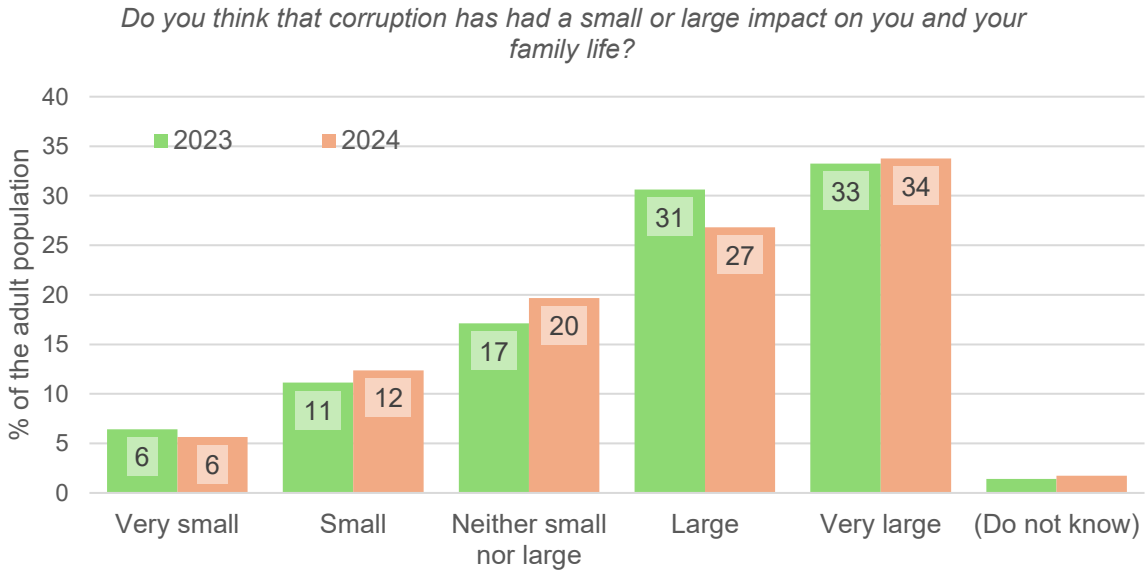
[29] People surveyed for the baseline study displayed substantial concern about the corrupt practices of politicians in South Africa. Consider, for example, that 42% of adults thought that all politicians were corrupt. This aligns with findings from expert engagements during the baseline study; a majority of experts believed most politicians engaged in corrupt activities.

the survey is conducted. While some views tend to remain stable despite changes in the wider environment, others are highly sensitive to it. In fact, one key purpose of public opinion research is to examine how the specific circumstances of a given time influence people's attitudes. There have been significant changes in South Africa over the last year or so, especially at the political level. There were, of course, considerable variations in how different groups in society responded to these changes. The longitudinal nature of the dataset will allow us to understand how public concerns about corruption and its impact have changed between 2023 and 2024/25. The value of a longitudinal dataset grows over time as it is able to identify not merely short-term changes but also long-term trends that are critical for assessing the impact of policy changes on lived experiences. This section will look at how the attitudes of different socio-demographic groups shifted in response to these changes during the period of the study.

4.2 Egotropic Perceptions of Corruption

As part of the baseline study, we examined how individuals perceived the impact of corruption on their quality of life. Participants were asked to assess the extent to which corruption affected their personal and family well-being. The majority of the general public indicated that corruption had a notable impact on themselves and their families, with about three-fifths of the mass public reporting a significant impact. Approximately a fifth believed the impact was minor while the remaining participants felt the effect was moderate or were unsure how to respond. Similarly, in SASAS 2024/25, respondents were asked to evaluate the influence of corruption on their personal and family lives. Most participants reported that corruption had a substantial effect on them and their families (Figure 15, pg. 43). Around 61% of the adult public stated the impact was large, about 18% considered it small. The remaining share of the public viewed it was neither small nor large (20%) or were uncertain how to answer (2%).

Figure 15: Perceived scale of the impact of corruption on personal life in 2023 and 2024/25



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and2024/25

We can conclude from the data that a majority of the population thinks that corruption has a negative effect on their own interests and wellbeing. This type of concern can be labelled egotropic, primarily motivated by an individual's personal interests or self-benefit. The data presented in Figure 15 (pg. 43) did not show a substantial change in the perceived personal impact of corruption, but if we look more closely at the data then it is possible to observe meaningful changes between certain subgroups over time. **Table 4-1** (pg. 44) presents the percentage of various socio-demographic categories who indicated that corruption had a significant or very significant effect on themselves and their families. For certain groups we can observe little change between 2023 and 2024/25; only minor differences, for example, were noted within different generational groups. But there were groups in which a significant shift can be observed.

Table 4-1: Proportion of different socio-demographic groups that stated that corruption had a large or very large impact on themselves and their family

	2023		2024/25	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Gender Group				
Male	64	(1.278)	59	(1.301)
Female	64	(1.160)	65	(1.202)
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	67	(1.981)	65	(2.219)
Generation X	64	(1.711)	66	(1.839)
Millennial Generation	64	(1.430)	62	(1.450)
Generation Z	62	(2.026)	59	(1.822)
Race Group				
Black African	65	(1.087)	65	(1.122)
Coloured	64	(2.029)	55	(2.194)
Indian	75	(2.379)	41	(2.638)
White	65	(2.789)	45	(2.741)
Geotype				
Urban Metro	66	(1.357)	58	(1.395)
Urban Non-Metro	68	(1.397)	61	(1.512)
Rural Village	62	(2.025)	66	(2.001)
Rural Farm	66	(3.411)	76	(3.342)
Province				
Western Cape	61	(2.709)	49	(2.657)
Eastern Cape	62	(2.310)	56	(2.472)
Northern Cape	72	(3.039)	76	(2.958)
Free State	64	(3.062)	55	(3.332)
KwaZulu-Natal	78	(1.660)	75	(1.770)
North West	60	(3.345)	63	(3.147)
Gauteng	65	(2.052)	64	(2.230)
Mpumalanga	57	(3.100)	64	(3.028)
Limpopo	45	(3.044)	49	(3.048)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

Between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25, there were significant changes observed among the country's three major racial minorities on the perceived personal impact of corruption. Of the three groups, the largest degree of change was noted among the Indian minority. The share of Indian adults who said that corruption had a large personal impact declined from 75% (SE=2.379) at the start of the period to 41% (SE=2.638) at the end. Significant changes can also be observed among Coloured and White adults. Overall, this suggests that members of the country's racial minorities have responded well to recent changes in the 2023-2024/25 period. A similar statement cannot be made of the Black African majority, which did not change how they responded to the personal impact question over this short time.[30] In addition, we found a moderate change in how male adults evaluated the perceived corruption question. Unlike what was observed in SASAS 2023, men (59%; SE=1.301) in SASAS 2024/25 were less likely to perceive the impact of corruption as large when compared to women (65%; SE=1.202).

Urban dwellers were found to be more affected by corruption than their rural counterparts in SASAS 2024. Although rural residents reported higher levels of perceived impact in SASAS 2024/25, there were some significant divisions between people living on commercial farms (76%; SE=3.342) and those residing in villages (66%; SE=2.001). Rural farm-dwellers reported that corruption had a more personal impact on their lives in SASAS 2024/25 than in SASAS 2023. The percentage of farm dwellers reporting that corruption had a substantial personal effect increased ten percentage points between the two

[30] This change over time differed by political partisanship. Nearly three-quarters (73%; SE=2.061) of DA supporters said that corruption had a large impact on their personal lives in SASAS 2023. When asked the same question in SASAS 2024/25, 47% (SE=2.178) of DA partisans indicated that corruption significantly affected their personal lives. A similar rate of decline was not observed for EFF and ANC partisans.

periods. We can observe a significant urban-rural difference for KwaZulu-Natal Adults living in rural areas reported, (90%; SE=2.727), on average, a higher level of perceived impact than their urban peers (62%; SE=2.227). A similar disparity was observed in the North West; urban residents (52%; SE=4.365) in that province reported much lower levels of perceived impact than their rural counterparts (71%; SE=4.447).

There was a considerable degree of provincial variance in how people responded to the personal impact question. Of all the provincial populations, KwaZulu-Natal (75%; SE=1.770) and the Northern Cape (76%; SE=2.958) reported the highest perceived impact. Residents in the Western Cape (49%; SE=2.657) had a lower perceived impact than the national average (62%; SE=0.885). There was a decline in the share of adult residents who said that corruption had a large impact on their personal lives in five of the country's nine provinces. The largest decline was in the Western Cape; there was a decrease of 11 percentage points between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25 in the share of adults in that province who described the personal impact of corruption as large. Similar noteworthy (albeit less substantial) declines were noted in the Eastern Cape and the Free State. These observed changes implied that adults in many parts of the country have responded positively to recent developments over the past year.

Further data analysis found an employment status effect on the personal perceived impact of corruption. We found that those who were unemployed (68%; SE=1.442) were more likely to describe the impact as large when compared to the employed[31] or those outside the labour market (58%; SE=1.631). If we narrow our focus to those looking for work, we find that unemployed adults who had never worked before (72%; SE=1.800) were much more likely to state that the impact of corruption on their lives was large than those who had worked previously (60%; SE=2.367). Amongst those outside the labour market, we found that students (51%; SE=3.282) were less likely than pensioners (63%; SE=2.336) or other groups (60%; SE=3.088) to describe the personal impact of corruption as large. Some workers were found to feel the personal impact of corruption more than others. Focusing only on the employed, we discovered that those working in the public sector (54%; SE=2.736) reported a somewhat lower level of perceived impact than their peers in the private sector (58%; SE=1.941)[32]

It seems reasonable to assume that people who had a direct experience of bureaucratic corruption were found to be more likely to report that corruption had affected them and their family personally. To establish the strength of this connection, a multivariate analysis was used to take socio-demographic factors into account. We confirmed that there was a robust correlation between recent experiences of bribe solicitation and egotropic evaluation of corruption. An increase of one unit on bribery solicitation scale depicted in Figure 3 (Section 2; pg. 22) raised the likelihood of stating that the personal impact of corruption was large by 21% (details on the outcome of this statistical test can be found in Section 13.7 on pg. 151). This finding demonstrates the important link between lived experiences of corruption and personal perceptions of its severity and consequences. Attitudes toward corruption reflect not only abstract or generalised views but also the concrete, everyday realities faced by individuals. These findings demonstrate the importance of micro-level contexts for understanding what individuals regard as normative.

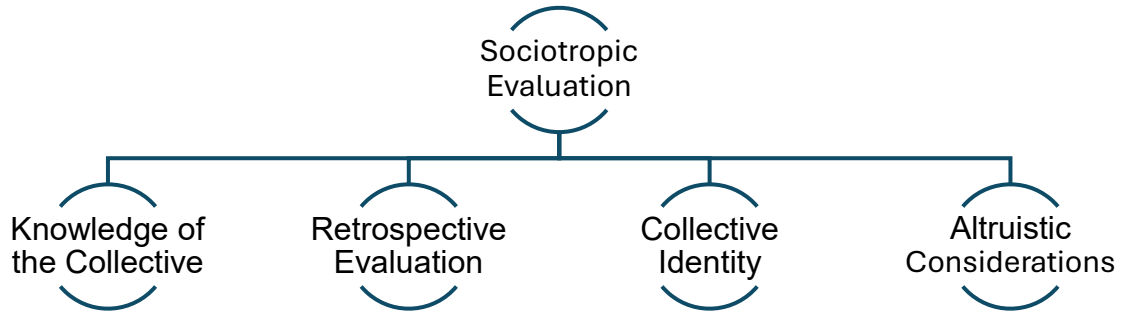
4.3 Sociotropic Perceptions of Corruption

SASAS participants were requested to indicate whether corruption had a large or small effect on the "area (e.g., town, village, suburb or township) where you live". The majority of the mass public reported that corruption significantly affected their area, with approximately 72% of all adults indicating a large impact. Only a minority (10%) felt the impact was minor, while 16% believed it was neither small nor large and 2% were unsure how to answer. This finding demonstrates that (in addition to their concern about personal impact) we found that the general public was also significantly concerned about how corruption affects their community. In essence, the majority of the public grasps the societal detriment caused by corruption and believes it exerts a significant influence in their local area. This concern can

[31] This represents a noteworthy change between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25. In the second survey year, 55% (SE=1.533) of paid workers said that corruption had a large impact on their personal lives. This figure is 11 percentage points lower than what was observed for the same group in the first survey round.

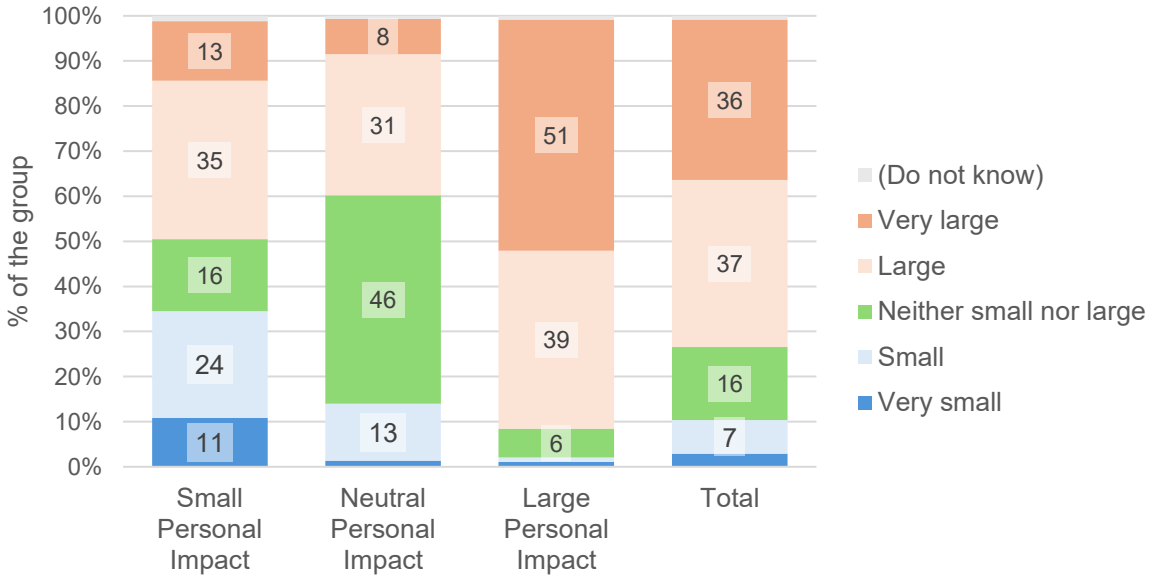
[32] Looking at the perceived personal impact of corruption amongst workers by occupational skill level, we found that high skilled workers (44%; SE=5.058) reported a lower level of perceived personal impact than their medium- (61%; SE=5.002) and low- (55%; SE=5.653) skilled peers.

be described as sociotropic (i.e., focused on the interests or wellbeing of the community and society as a whole).



There is, no doubt, an association between this type of sociotropic concern and concerns about the personal impact of corruption. Data analysis confirmed this and we found that, as can be observed from Figure 16 (pg. 47), sociotropic concerns had a positive association with egotropic concerns. Individuals who perceived corruption as having a significant impact on society were far more likely to believe it also affected their own lives considerably. Take, for instance, individuals who characterised the effect of corruption on their own lives as large. Our findings showed that nine-tenths of this group believed corruption had a large (39%) or very large (51%) impact on their local area. Our empirical findings suggest that individuals' sociotropic concerns about corruption influenced their personal worries about it. Egotropic concerns about corruption are linked to sociotropic concerns because societal evaluations of corruption often serve as signals or lenses through which people evaluate the impact of corruption on their own lives.

Figure 16: Perceived scale of the impact of corruption on a person's area (e.g., town, village, suburb or township) where you live by whether an adult was personally impacted by corruption

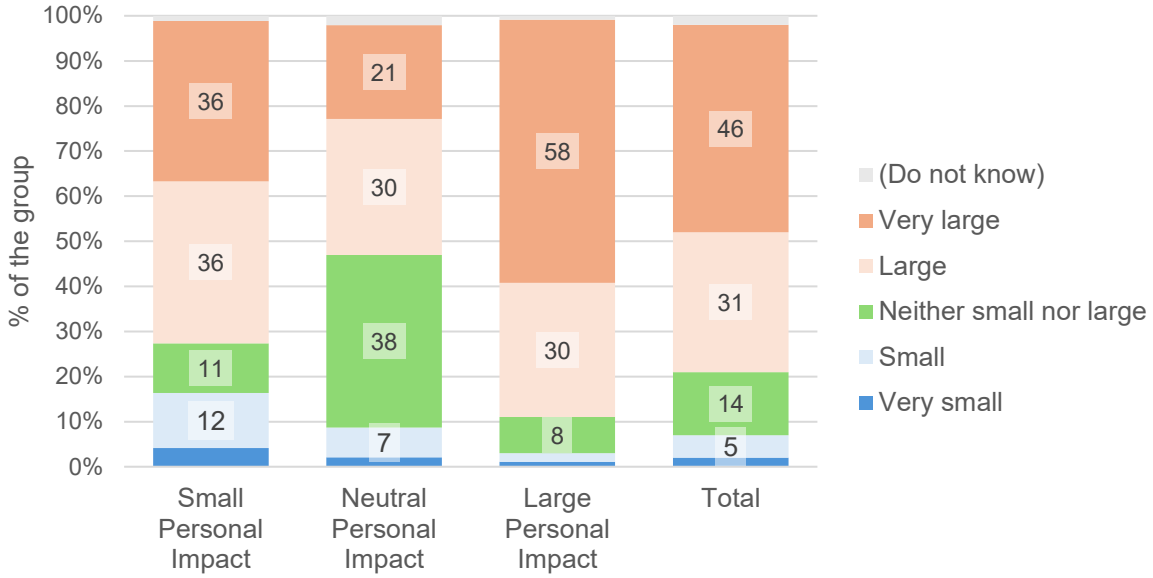


Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

SASAS 2024/25 participants were asked to assess the overall effect of corruption on the South African economy. They were first asked to indicate whether they believed corruption within large corporations (such as banks or construction firms) had a minor or major impact on the national economy (Figure 17, pg. 47). Approximately 77% of the mass public felt the impact was significant, while a small portion (7%) considered it to be minimal. The rest viewed the impact as neither minor nor major (14%) or were unsure how to answer (2%). In a finding consistent with what we observed above, people who saw themselves as personally affected by corruption were more likely to contend that corruption in the private sector had a large effect on the national economy. Consider, for example, people who described the impact of corruption on their personal lives as substantial. Our results indicated that 88% of these individuals

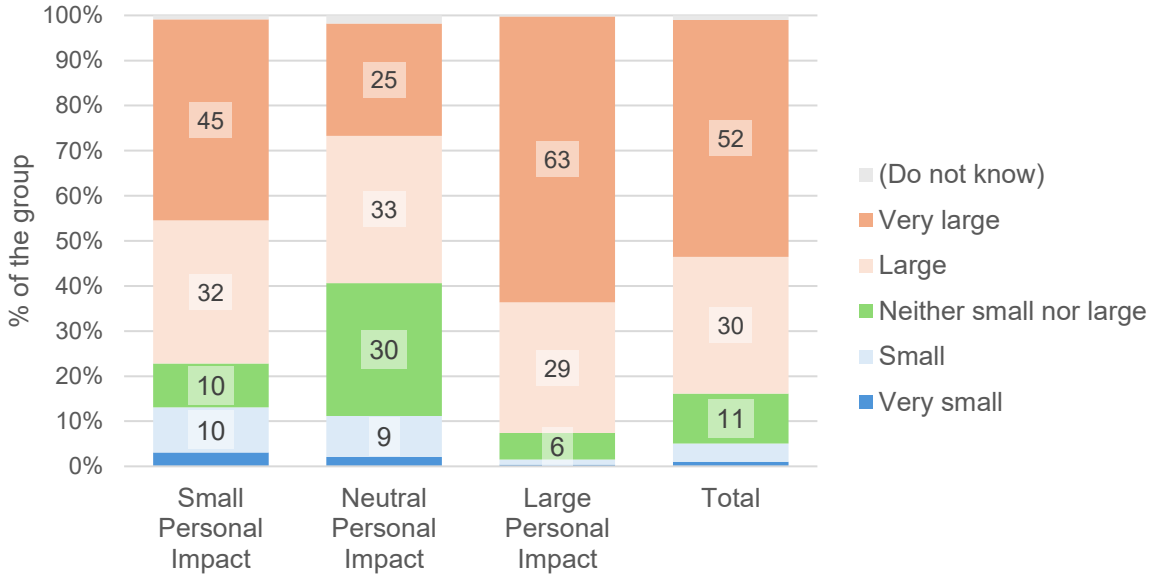
thought that corruption in the private sector had a major effect on the economy, while only 3% viewed the impact as minimal.

Figure 17: Perceived scale of the impact of corruption in the private sector on the national economy by whether an adult was personally impacted by corruption



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

Figure 18: Perceived scale of the impact of corruption by government officials on the national economy by whether an adult was personally impacted by corruption



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

As of part of SASAS 2024/25, respondents were asked to assess whether corruption by government officials has a minor or major effect on the nation's economy. Nearly four out of five adults (82%) stated that they believed the impact was significant and only a small portion (5%) felt the impact was minimal. The remaining respondents reported that the impact was neither large nor small (11%) or were uncertain how to respond (1%). In line with our earlier findings, adults who perceived themselves as personally impacted by corruption were more inclined to believe that corruption by government officials significantly affected the national economy (Figure 18, pg. 47). However, even adults who viewed themselves as largely unaffected by corruption still described the influence of corruption by government officials as significant. Looking at people who described the impact of corruption on their personal lives

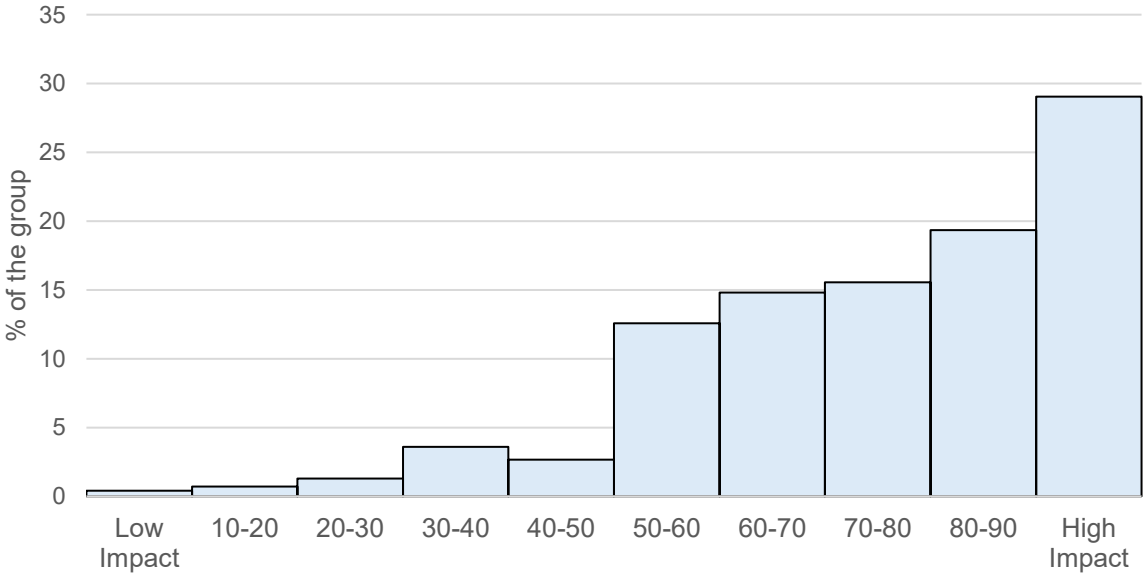
as small, our analysis revealed that a clear majority of this group believed corruption by government officials had a large (32%) or very large (45%) impact on the country's economy.

The SASAS 2024/25 data revealed that a significant portion of the adult population is concerned about how corruption is affecting the national economy. Statistical analysis demonstrated that the four questions examined in this subsection were closely connected (the detailed results appear in Section 13.7, pg. 151). Those worried about corruption in big businesses were similarly concerned about corruption involving government officials. This close association likely stems from the public's perception that corruption in the public and private sectors is frequently interconnected. Furthermore, it was clear that individuals who felt personally harmed by corruption were also likely to perceive corruption as having detrimental effects on a broader, societal level. This linkage helps explain why those who feel personally affected by corruption are more likely to view it as a significant problem for society at large.

4.4 Perceived Impact of Corruption (PIoC) Index

Building on the statistical testing described in the previous subsection, we proceeded to develop an index designed to assess the perceived societal cost of corruption. Statistical analyses confirmed the internal consistency of the four questions, demonstrating that they could be reliably combined into a single measure (results can be found in Section 13.7, pg. 151). Following this test, an index was created and scaled from 0 to 100, where higher scores indicated a stronger belief that corruption has a significant impact. This measure was named the Perceived Impact of Corruption (PIoC) Index. The national average score on this index was 76 (SE=0.563), and there was a right-skewed distribution among the population on this index (Figure 19, pg. 48). It would appear, based on the available evidence, that sociotropic concerns about corruption are skewing the distribution towards the right.

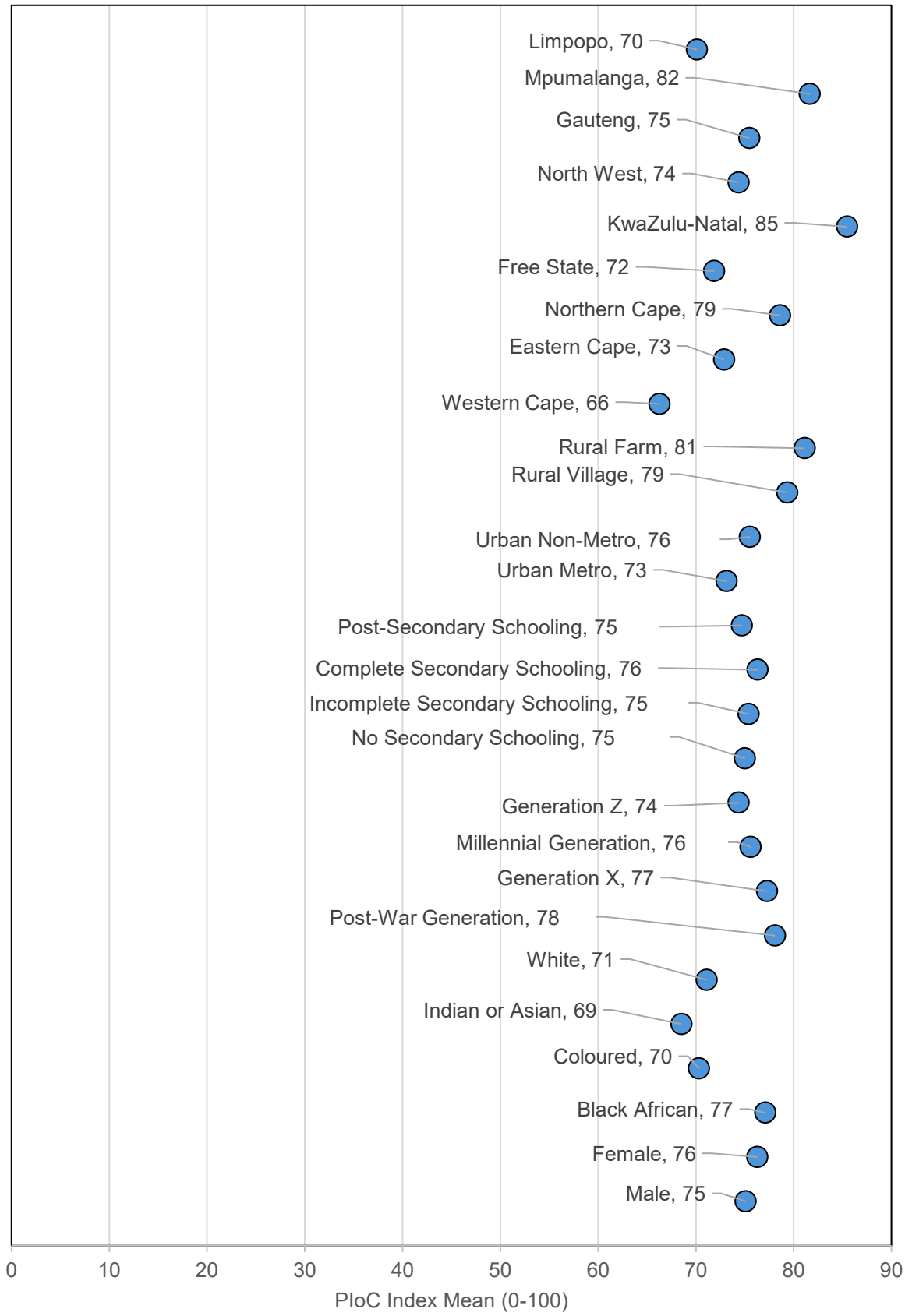
Figure 19: Population distribution on the Perceived Impact of Corruption (PIoC) Index (histogram)



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

Mean results for the PIoC Index are presented in Figure 20 (pg. 49) for a diverse set of socio-demographic groups. As can be observed, there is limited subgroup variation here. Even though some groups reported a higher PIoC Index score than others, there is relatively little variation in these scores across most subgroups. Recognition of the damaging effects of corruption extends across different genders, age groups and levels of educational attainment. This suggests a broad consensus among the population regarding the harmful consequences of corruption. Regardless of socio-demographic differences, individuals generally share a similar understanding that corruption negatively impacts society. This uniformity highlights the pervasive nature of concern about corruption throughout the population, indicating that the issue resonates deeply with diverse segments of society and transcends typical economic and demographic boundaries.

Figure 20: Mean average on the Perceived Impact of Corruption (PIoC) Index for a range of socio-demographic groups



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

Nevertheless, there are some PIoC Index differences between subgroups that are worth highlighting. Black African adults had, on average, marginally higher index scores than other race groups. In addition, there was a notable difference between urban and rural residents with the latter found to have higher index scores than the former. As may have been expected, we were also able to detect notable differences between provincial groups. Adults in the Western Cape (M=66; SE=1.322) had lower average index scores than their peers in other provinces. Of the nine provinces, residents of KwaZulu-Natal (M=85; SE=0.724) and Mpumalanga (M=82; SE=1.186) were, in particular, more likely to have a higher PIoC Index score than their counterparts. Rural (M=90; SE=1.259) and non-metropolitan urban (M=86; SE=1.494) adults in KwaZulu-Natal had somewhat higher average index scores than their metropolitan (M=79; SE=1.081) counterparts. A similar urban-rural divide was not noted in the other provinces, highlighting an issue that is peculiar to KwaZulu-Natal.

Additional analysis revealed that concern about the detrimental effects of corruption is shared widely across South Africa's political landscape. ANC supporters recorded average scores on the PIoC Index of 75 (SE=0.725), reflecting a strong awareness of the harmful impact of corruption. Similarly, and perhaps surprisingly, those aligned with the DA had comparable perceptions, with an average score of 69 (SE=0.932) while followers of the EFF reported average scores of 76 (SE=1.210). These results indicate consistent recognition of corruption's negative impact across these major political groups. Interestingly, proponents of the recently established MK Party exhibited notably higher average scores on the PIoC Index, with a mean of 87 (SE=1.397). This suggests that supporters of the MK Party perceive corruption as an even more severe problem when compared to members of the other political parties. The elevated level of concern among MK supporters may reflect the election campaign launched by the MK leadership which criticised the previous ANC-led administration for corruption.

4.5 Conclusion

The data portrayed in this section demonstrated that the general public is quite aware of corruption as a serious problem in South Africa. The bulk of the adult population believes that corruption has had a large impact on the general economy as well as the local area where they live. One of the consequences of this high level of awareness is that a majority of the public believed that they have been personally impacted by corruption. When individuals perceive corruption as harming the national economy, it heightens their awareness and sensitivity to corruption's effects on their own lives and their ability to succeed in the country. Although the direction of the connection is difficult to prove empirically, it is clear that concerns about corruption at the national level is linked to opinions about the consequences of corruption for a person's life and the welfare of their family.

When it comes to the personal impact data, it is apparent that there is a significant degree of subgroup variance in whether people report being affected by corruption. While members of all the major socio-demographic categories (such as age and gender) generally agreed that corruption has had a detrimental effect on their lives, the strength and certainty of these beliefs varied significantly across groups. Some groups (e.g., KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Cape residents) expressed a much stronger conviction that they had personally suffered because of corruption, indicating that their experiences may be more acute or salient when compared to others. In addition, it would appear that some groups (e.g., racial minorities) responded positively to changes over the 2023-2024/25 period while others (e.g., farm dwellers) responded negatively. These results suggest the necessity of tracking how corruption impacts quality of life over time. Tracking these variations helps to identify which populations are most vulnerable to the harmful effects of corruption and how their perceptions evolve in response to policy interventions, economic shifts or political changes.

Even though there is, no doubt, much that the general public does not know about corruption, it is quite clear from the data presented in this section that most people are aware of the *cost* of corruption for society. Consequently, it is not apparent how important it is to fund campaigns aimed at making people aware of the impact that corruption has on society. While such campaigns can be valuable in fostering deeper understanding and motivating collective action, it is unclear whether further awareness-raising initiatives would significantly change public attitudes or behaviours when a high level of concern already exists. Instead, this suggests the possibility that efforts and funding might be better allocated toward practical measures such as improving governance and preventive measures, strengthening anti-corruption enforcement and enhancing transparency. Ultimately, the challenge lies in determining how to balance educational campaigns with other strategies in the fight against corruption, ensuring that public resources are used efficiently to promote not only awareness but primarily meaningful action and sustained change within society.

5 PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION AS A PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

In recent years, South Africa has witnessed the troubling rise of corruption involving many wealthy and influential individuals, including business leaders, senior public servants and politicians. This may have given members of the general public the idea that ours is a society that rewards corrupt behaviour. The NACS aims to push back against such a view and establish a society that punishes corrupt behaviour by fostering a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability. By promoting a zero-tolerance stance towards corruption, encouraging active citizenry and supporting ethical leadership, the NACS works to weaken social norms that associate corruption with societal success. Ultimately, the NACS aims to dismantle entrenched systems of patronage and impunity, replacing them with a governance culture rooted in democratic values and social justice.

It is important to study whether corruption is seen as a legitimate pathway to success because such perceptions deeply influence people's willingness to engage in, and condone, corrupt behaviour. When corruption is widely viewed as a key to success or as a necessary means to "get ahead" in life, it can become normalised and embedded within communities, organisations and broader society. Believing that corrupt actions are socially rewarded reinforces deleterious social norms and expectations.[33] For example, if people observe that others in their social networks or institutions routinely benefit from corruption without facing negative consequences, they may conclude that corruption is a typical, acceptable or even expected strategy to achieve personal or group goals. Studying this kind of perception helps reveal the social and psychological mechanisms that sustain corrupt practices.

The focus of the present section is whether the general public views corruption as a rewarding activity. First, we look at the perceived instrumentalism of bribery and then we examine the perceived instrumentalism of sexual corruption. Understanding these perceptions is crucial, as it sheds light on the extent to which corruption is normalised or rationalised within society. Then we look at whether attitudes towards the instrumentalism of corruption are associated with attitudes towards structural privilege (e.g., racial and gender) in South Africa. Uncovering this connection is vital because perceptions of structural inequality may either fuel acceptance of corruption as a compensatory mechanism or motivate rejection of corrupt practices as further entrenching unfairness. The data presented in this section contributes to how we understand the relationship between systemic inequality and corruption in South Africa, highlighting the complexity of changing social norms and ethical standards.

5.1 Historical Legacies, Social Norms and Perceptions of Material Gain

As part of the baseline study, we talked to experts about the roots of corruption in South Africa. Although there were some differing opinions, experts generally agreed that the legacy of colonialism and apartheid had contributed significantly to the current levels of corruption in the country. Experts, in particular, identified how settler colonial systems of oppression stymied social mobility for people of colour. Some contended that the unjust exclusionary structures established during apartheid continue to dominate the contemporary economy, continuing the marginalisation of many. Moreover, experts talked about the deep roots of patriarchy within the post-apartheid nation. Several experts observed that patriarchal structures allow men to exploit their authority for personal benefit, often without accountability, thereby sustaining both gender inequality and corruption. They noted that cultural norms reinforce these patriarchal views, confining women to subordinate positions characterised by greater vulnerability.

The baseline study analysed expert opinion on the social values and norms encouraging corruption. Greed and materialism emerged as dominant themes, with experts noting the pursuit of personal enrichment at the expense of integrity as a main driver of corrupt behaviour. Desperation and survival instincts, driven by poverty and limited economic opportunities, were also a recurrent theme. In addition, difficulty accessing services and inefficiency concerns were cited with some, arguing that bribery was the main solution for many who needed to navigate dysfunctional government systems. A number of

[33] The belief that society rewards corrupt behaviour is reinforced when success or access to resources appears to hinge more on connections or illicit payments than on merit or fair competition (Kubbe et al., 2024). When formal rules and institutions are seen as ineffective or biased, corruption is rationalised as a practical response to structural inequalities or blocked opportunities. In such environments, corrupt behaviour is not merely an individual moral failing but a socially embedded strategy to overcome barriers and gain advantage (also see Cheeseman & Peiffer, 2022).

experts saw corrupt practices as the only way to access unreliable essential public services. Expert opinion demonstrated that recognising the societal value attributed to corruption can help explain why people engage in it.

In addition to our study of expert opinion, the baseline study investigated popular perceptions of why ordinary people engage in corruption. A clear majority (50%) of the general public thought that the main reasons that the non-elites engaged in corrupt behaviour was greed and a desire for quick wealth. This finding shows that the mass public thought that there was a material return to corrupt behaviour, and that people engaged in it because it was a rewarding activity. This implies that the root of non-elite corruption is perceived to originate in the prioritisation of personal material wealth over integrity and ethical standards and broad social benefit. In addition, a minority (30%) of the adult public attributed non-elite corruption to the need to navigate a dishonest system. It was seen as a necessary means to navigate or compensate for shortcomings in formal state institutions (such as poor service delivery or unequal access to resources).

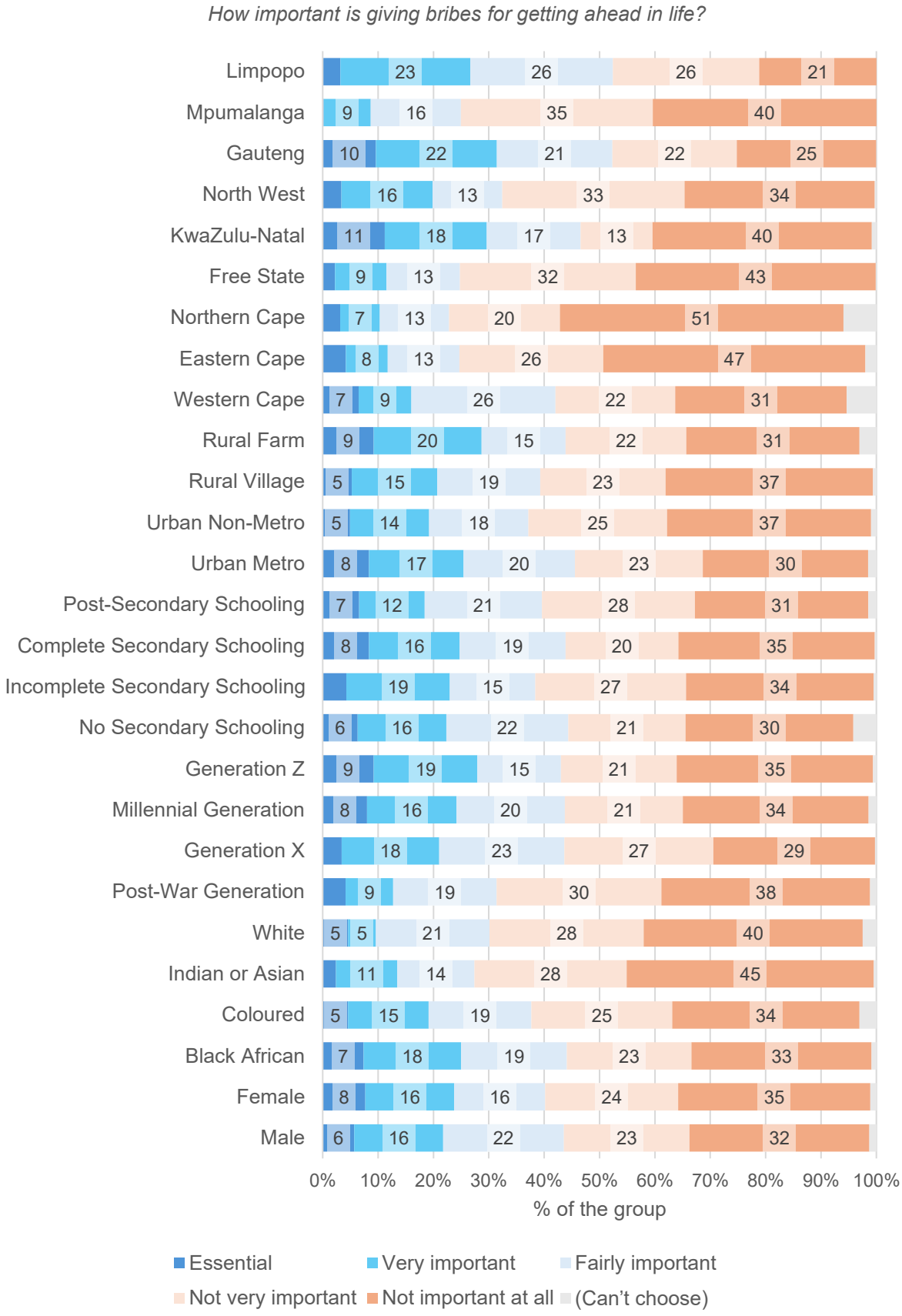
In the study's second year, the focus shifted to the perceived instrumentalism of corruption for achieving success. Through extensive consultations with experts across multiple platforms, a variety of insights were collected to expand and enhance the initial research on this topic. Many experts emphasised that if corruption is widely perceived within society as an effective or even necessary means to achieve advancement, this perception can significantly influence individuals' willingness to participate in corrupt acts. In other words, we need to understand whether corruption is seen as a legitimate pathway to so-called 'success'. If corruption is widely understood as a key avenue to 'success', this perception could help explain why people might be willing to engage in it or, at the very least, condone it. To develop relevant questions on this matter, clear points of comparison were needed. Therefore, the study also included questions aimed at capturing other non-meritocratic factors influencing 'success'.

5.2 Normative Beliefs about Bribery's Role in Social Advancement

Fieldworkers first informed survey respondents that they were going to ask them questions about opportunities for getting ahead in South Africa. Subsequently, they asked respondents to specify the significance they attributed to giving bribes as a means of getting ahead in life. The question was designed to capture normative beliefs about bribery as a means to achieve success or advancement. Roughly one in ten adults (7%) indicated that this type of behaviour was crucial for success whereas approximately one-third considered it either very important (16%) or somewhat important (19%). About three-fifths of the general public said that paying bribes was either not very important (23%) or not at all important (34%). A small percentage (2%) of the public were unsure of how to answer the question. These results demonstrate that a significant proportion of the adult public thought that corrupt behaviour (or, at least, this form of it) was important for getting ahead.

It is plausible to assume that an individual's attitudes towards the perceived instrumental nature of bribery would vary noticeably based on their socio-demographic characteristics. To investigate this hypothesis, we analysed the responses to the question about the importance of giving bribes across multiple demographic categories. Figure 21 (pg. 23) displays how distinct socio-demographic subgroups answered this question. Of the different race groups in South Africa, we found that Black African adults were the most likely to think that corrupt behaviour was important for getting ahead in life. About two-fifths (44%) of Black African adults reported that they considered bribery to be either extremely or very important for success. This figure is 14 percentage points higher than what was observed for white adults and 17 points higher than what was seen for Indian adults.

Figure 21: Perceived level of importance attributed to bribery for success in life by a range of socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

The perceived instrumentalism of bribery was not found to differ significantly by generational group, but the Post-War Generation were somewhat less likely to perceive bribery as instrumental for success than other generational groups. A moderate educational attainment gradient was observed in Figure 21 (pg. 53); adults with higher levels of formal education were less likely to have an instrumental view of bribery than their peers with low levels of formal education. Consider, for example, that approximately half of those with no secondary education thought that bribery was not important (21%) or not at all important (30%) for success. This figure is 8 percentage points higher than what was observed for adults with post-secondary education. The disparity is much larger if we disaggregate post-secondary education; those with university education were much more likely to see bribery as incompatible with success than those with non-university post-secondary qualifications.[34]

Of the nine provinces, Limpopo and Gauteng residents were the most likely to associate bribery with success. More than half of the adult public in each of these provinces saw bribery as important for getting ahead. Residents of the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape, on the other hand, were the least inclined to link bribery with achieving success. The perceived instrumental nature of bribery was found to be higher in metropolitan urban areas than in non-metropolitan areas or rural areas. Of the different provincial metropoles in South Africa, residents of KwaZulu-Natal metropoles were the least likely to have an instrumental view of bribery. Consider, for example, that approximately a third (36%) of KwaZulu-Natal metropolitan adults thought that bribery was important for success; 9 percentage points below the metropolitan average. Of the different rural populations, resident of rural KwaZulu-Natal were the most likely to have an instrumental view of bribery. Consider, for example, that more than half (57%) of this group thought that bribery was important for success; 17 percentage points above the rural average.

5.3 'Sexual Bribery' as a Strategy for Success

Now let's turn our attention to sexual corruption. Fieldworkers asked SASAS participants if they thought that doing sexual favours for powerful people was important for getting ahead in life. The question aimed to assess prevailing beliefs about the instrumentalism of sexual bribery.[35] Less than a twentieth (3%) of the general public said this was essential to success and only about a quarter thought it was very (9%) or fairly (15%) important. Nearly three-quarters of the mass public stated that this practice was either not very important (24%) or not important at all (47%). When interpreting the data it should be borne in mind that it is possible that the majority of the public viewed sexual bribery primarily as the abuse of vulnerable individuals rather than a legitimate route to success in society. Furthermore, the patterns in responses likely indicate the presence of firm social norms that view all forms of sexual corruption as unacceptable. The social acceptability of different type of sexual corruption will be discussed in more detail in Section 6 (on pg. 62).

It is plausible to assume, given that sexual bribery is likely to be offered only when the offeror is unable to offer a material (cash) alternative, that an individual's attitudes towards the perceived instrumental nature of sexual bribery would vary noticeably based on their socio-demographic characteristics. To investigate this hypothesis, we analysed the responses to the question about the importance of sexual corruption across multiple demographic categories. Figure 22 (pg. 55) displays how the answers to this question were distributed among different subgroups. We did not find, perhaps surprisingly, a significance difference between men and women on this measure. The perceived instrumentalism of sexual bribery was also not found to differ significantly by generational group, but the Post-War Generation was less likely than other generational groups to perceive sexual bribery as instrumental for success. Of the various generational groups included in the survey sample, Generation X was the most likely to view sexual corruption as important for success.

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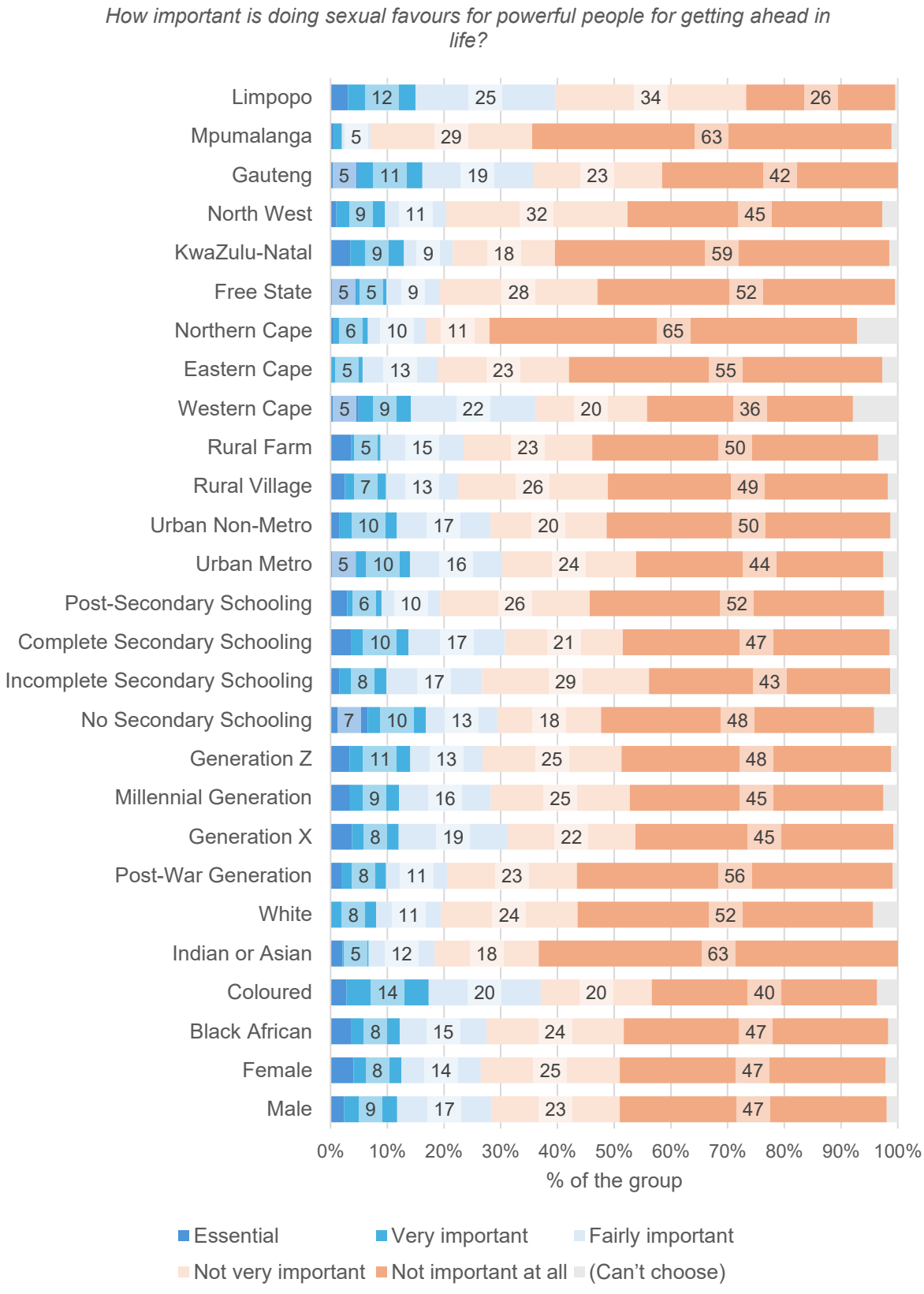
[34] We discovered, for instance, that roughly two-thirds (64%) of those with university education said that bribery was not important for success. This figure is 12 percentage points above what we see for those with non-university post-secondary and 6 percentage points higher than the national average.

[35] It is important to remember that sextortion and sexual bribery are not separate phenomena; rather, they represent different ways abuse of authority occurs in these exchanges. Sexual extortion being oppressive and involves coercion while sexual bribery is opportunistic and involves voluntary offers. Situations where the abuse of authority in the exchange is based on offers of sexual favours are more accurately described as sexual bribery (for a further discussion of the term 'sexual bribery' see Bjarnegård et al. 2020 who discusses the differences between the two terms). But it is important to reiterate that both sextortion and sexual bribery are products of power imbalances, and both involve abuses of authority.

Figure 22: Perceived level of importance attributed to sexual corruption for success in life by a range of socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

The perceived instrumental nature of sexual bribery was found to be higher in urban areas than in rural villages or farms. Looking at urban dwellers, we found that adults living in metropolitan areas were more inclined to have an instrumental view of sexual bribery than their peers in non-metropolitan urban areas. There was a considerable degree of provincial variation in how people answered the question about the instrumentalism of sexual bribery. Adults in Limpopo, Gauteng and Western Cape were much more likely to view sexual corruption as important for success than people in other provinces. The provincial population that was the least likely to have an instrumentalist view of sexual bribery was Mpumalanga. There were significant urban-rural divides in the Eastern Cape. Rural dwellers in that province were much less likely than their urban counterparts to view sexual bribery as important for success. .

Figure 22 (pg. 55) reveals a pattern related to educational attainment, showing that adults with lower formal education were more prone to perceive sexual bribery as instrumental for success when compared to those with higher educational levels. Consider, for example, that roughly a fifth (19%) of those with post-secondary education thought that sexual corruption was important for success. This figure is 10 percentage points below what was observed for those with no secondary education. Among the different race groups in South Africa, we found that Coloured adults were the most likely to think that sexual corruption was important for getting ahead in life. About two-fifths (37%) of Coloured adults reported that they considered sexual corruption to be important for success. This figure is 10 percentage points higher than what was observed for Black African adults and 18 points higher than what was seen for white adults. Further data analysis revealed that Coloured adults from the Western Cape were much more likely to view sexual corruption as vital for success than their counterparts outside the province.

Individuals do not form attitudes about sexual bribery in isolation but are influenced by their networks and the environments they observe. There was, thus, an association between how a person responded to the question about the instrumentalism of sexual bribery and indirect experience of sextortion. Data analysis demonstrated that having indirect experience of sextortion increased the likelihood that a person would have an instrumentalist view of sexual bribery. As a robustness check, the effect of indirect experiences of sexual extortion in the private sector as well as the public sector were tested using a multivariate regression analysis. After taking a range of socio-demographic factors into account, we found a positive (and statistically significant) association between indirect experience and instrumentalist attitudes (the results of this statistical test are detailed in Section 13.8, pg. 152). Reviewing the data, it was apparent that indirect private sector experiences had a similar effect on attitudes as indirect public sector experiences.

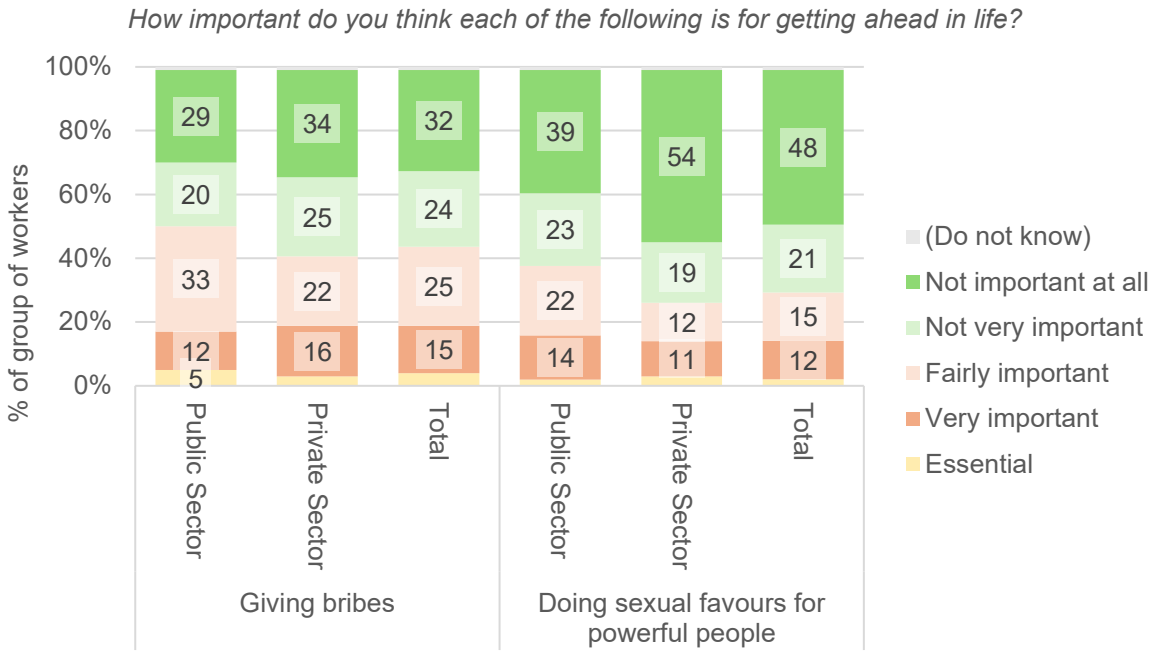
The data analysis demonstrated that individuals who have indirect experience of sexual extortion are more likely to adopt an instrumentalist view of sexual bribery than those with no indirect experience. This means they are more prone to rationalise sexual bribery as a tool or tactic used to achieve specific goals, rather than viewing it purely as an unethical practice. It would appear that indirect exposure can erode the initial moral aversion to sexual corruption in both forms. It could be that the more common (and discussed) such experiences are, the more society shifts away from seeing sexual corruption as a shameful private matter to viewing it as a public, instrumental transaction or, at least, to having an understanding of how sexual corruption can be viewed in this way. Seeing others justify or tolerate such practices allows individuals to disengage from only the ethical implications, focusing also on the “outcomes” or benefits. This can, over time, reduce stigma and increase the chances of more people considering instrumental justifications for such conduct.

5.4 Socio-Economic Status and Occupational Corruption

We were interested in whether people higher on the socio-economic ladder viewed corrupt practices as important for success. This inquiry was motivated by the possibility that people with greater economic resources might have different attitudes toward the usefulness of (or need for) corrupt practices. Our data analysis found that there were no meaningful difference between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged on this issue. Even if we used a multivariate regression analysis to take other factors into account, it remained evident that individuals with greater economic advantages were not more or less likely to view corruption as instrumental for success. This result held true regardless of whether we were looking at attitudes towards bribery or sexual corruption (the results of this statistical analysis are detailed in Section 13.8, pg. 152). It would appear that the perception of corruption’s instrumental value transcends economic position and may be shaped more by broader societal or cultural factors, rather than personal socio-economic standing. This finding seems to indicate that those who are relatively well off are not more likely than those who are less well-off to endorse greed-based corruption.

People in employment were somewhat more likely to see corrupt practices as important for success than those who were not working. Amongst employed we found considerable variation in how this group thought about the perceived instrumentalism of bribery. As can be observed from Figure 23 (pg. 57), roughly half of all public sector workers said that bribery was important to getting ahead in life; this figure is 9 percentage points above what was seen among private sector workers. A similar disparity was seen for sexual corruption, with public sector workers more likely to think that sexual corruption was important for success. Roughly a quarter (26%) of private sector employees indicated that sexual corruption plays a significant role in advancing in life; this figure is 12 percentage points lower than the proportion reported by public sector workers. These disparities between public and private sector workers may reflect differences in institutional cultures and opportunities for corrupt exchanges within the two sectors.

Figure 23: Perceived importance of bribery and sexual corruption for social mobility in South Africa amongst workers by sector



Note: Figure is restricted to those adults who are working.
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

Perceived normality of occupational corruption is likely to have a positive relationship with viewing corruption as important for success. This is because when corruption is seen as a common and accepted part of workplace behaviour, individuals may conclude that engaging in corrupt practices is necessary or advantageous for career advancement and achieving success. In environments where corruption is normalised, workers may perceive that leveraging bribery, favouritism or other unethical acts is an effective strategy to gain advantages (e.g., promotions or secure contracts). This perception stems from the lived experience or observations that those who participate in corruption often reap benefits, while those who refrain may be disadvantaged. As corruption becomes embedded in occupational cultures, it shifts from being seen merely as wrongdoing to being viewed as an essential mechanism to navigate bureaucratic hurdles and marketplace competition. This can lead to a widespread belief that corruption is not only prevalent but also a critical factor for success, shaping attitudes that justify or rationalise corrupt behaviours.

Building on the discussion above, we proposed the hypothesis that perceiving one's occupation as corrupt is likely to increase an individual's belief in the instrumental value of corruption. The PNoOC Index was used to test this thesis; the index measures the perceived level of corruption in a person's occupation (details on how this scale was constructed are provided in Section 3 on pg. 37). Our statistical analysis confirmed that there was a positive relationship between this index and evaluations of the importance for bribery for success. This finding suggests that individuals who perceive corruption as more widespread and normalised in their occupation were also more likely to view bribery as an essential tool or strategy for advancement (the results of this analysis are displayed on pg. 153 in

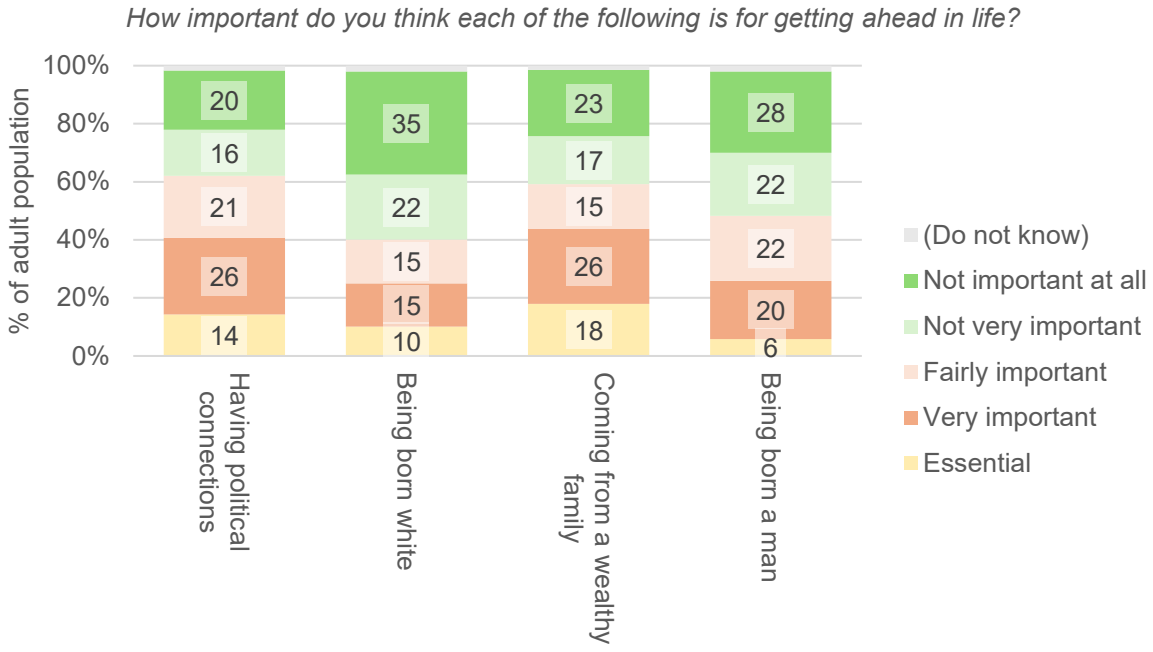
Section 13.8). The PNoOC Index also had positive (albeit a much weaker) correlation with viewing sexual corruption as important for success.

5.5 Non-Meritocratic Beliefs and Perceptions of Systemic Inequality

Non-meritocratic beliefs refer to individuals' convictions that structural or external factors (such as race, wealth, social connections, family background, etc.) play a significant role in determining success within society, independent of personal effort or ability. These beliefs emphasise that systemic advantages or disadvantages, embedded in social and institutional contexts, contribute to unequal opportunities and outcomes (Kunovich & Slomczynski, 2007). They reflect the view that societal rewards are not solely or primarily distributed based on individual merit (like talent or hard work) but are also heavily influenced by inherited (or ascribed) characteristics and entrenched social hierarchies. For example, a person endorsing non-meritocratic beliefs might see being born into a wealthy family as a critical determinant of success (also see Xian & Reynolds, 2017). Recognising these determinants can lead to a cynical perspective on merit-based pathways to success, which might incline those who hold these views to be more open to engaging in corrupt means for 'circumventing the system'.

As part of the SASAS fieldwork, participants were asked about a number of selected non-meritocratic criteria for getting ahead in life. These criteria included (i) having political connections; (ii) being born white; (iii) coming from a wealthy family; and (iv) being born a man. The goal of these four questions is to understand how much a person believed that success depends on unfair or structural advantages and were designed in correspondence with existing scales on non-meritocratic beliefs.[36] Responses to these questions are portrayed in Figure 24 (pg. 58). Reviewing the results, it would appear that a clear majority of the general population think that non-meritocratic factors play a significant role in societal and economic success.

Figure 24: Perceived importance of different traits and actions for social mobility in South Africa



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

Of all the non-meritocratic factors in Figure 24 (pg. 58), possessing political connections was considered the most beneficial for achieving success in society. More or less an eighth (14%) of the public said this

[36] In line with existing research, the concepts of non-meritocratic factors are derived from a set of questions reflecting individuals' beliefs about what it takes to succeed in society. These questions are derived from the International Social Survey Programme Module on Social Inequality. They offer crucial insight into people's perceptions of the key elements necessary for social advancement. Each question addresses a distinct factor perceived as essential for progress, including elements such as race, gender, family background, and social networks (for further discussion of these questions and their operation in South Africa, see Kirsten, & Biyase, 2025).

was essential to success, while around half considered it very (26%) or fairly (21%) important. A non-meritocratic factor that was also seen as very advantageous for societal success was generational wealth. Approximately a fifth (18%) of the general public indicated that being born into a wealthy family was regarded essential to success, while roughly two-fifths (41%) said it was either very (26%) or fairly (15%) important. When compared to these two non-meritocratic factors, people were less likely to state that gender and race were important. This suggests a hierarchy of perceived non-meritocratic advantages where, in the public's view, political and economic connections (i.e., elite class membership) outweigh more explicitly demographic criteria.

Bivariate tests demonstrate connections between the way people responded to the four questions discussed above (test findings are reported in Section 13.8 on pg. 153). For example, recognising gender as a determinant of success often corresponds with seeing factors like wealth, social connections or inherited privilege as important for success. The strong association, in particular, between race and generational wealth show that the adult public tend to understand success through the lens of enduring structural racial and class inequalities. This clustering of attitudes suggests that people do not view these factors in isolation but perceive them as interconnected elements of a broader, systemic pattern of structural inequality. Ultimately, the bivariate test results illustrate the deep-rooted awareness of social injustice among people in South Africa.

5.6 Perceptions of Systemic Inequality in South Africa

Based on the statistical testing delineated above, we constructed an index to measure the perceived level of systemic inequality within South African society using the four questions previously discussed. The index in question was built to range from 0 to 100; the higher the value on the index, the greater the perceived systemic inequality. The variable was labelled the Perceived Level of Systemic Inequality (PLoSI) Index. The overall distribution on this index had a nearly symmetric distribution with a slight rightward skew. The national average on this measure was 43 (SE=0.824) and 8% of the mass public scored 0 on this metric. This implies that only about a tenth of the public believed that they lived in a society that was equal and where socio-economic opportunities were open to all. But, on the other hand, only a minority (16%) of the adult public scored 75 or above on the PLoSI Index. It would appear that just a limited share of the population perceived their society is entirely unequal, with socio-economic opportunities accessible to only a few.

Many people would argue that if a person was from a relatively economically advantaged household, they would be more likely to think that they lived in a country that was structurally or systemically fair. This expectation is grounded in the idea that those with greater wealth or resources benefit more from existing social structures and therefore have less reason to view society as unfair or systematically unequal. However, we found that there was *not* a strong relationship between the PLoSI Index and economic advantage.[37] Even after controlling for various factors through multivariate regression, it was clear that people with greater economic resources were actually less likely to view their society as fair (see detailed statistical findings in Section 13.8 on pg. 146). It would seem that those with wealth were well aware of the structural inequalities that shaped their pathway to success.

We hypothesised that perceptions of systemic inequality are associated with thinking that corruption is important for getting ahead in life. When people perceive a society as deeply unequal (with success shaped by, for example, race or political connections) they may see formal rules as incompatible with success. In such contexts, corruption (including sexual bribery) becomes a pragmatic and normalised "instrument" or tool to overcome structural barriers and gain access to opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible (Uslaner, 2008). This hypothesis links perceptions of systemic barriers directly to justifications for corrupt practices. In addition, in societies with strong systemic inequalities, individuals often lose faith in institutions that are supposed to ensure fairness (such as government or labour markets). When institutions are seen as biased or ineffective in addressing inequality, corruption fills the vacuum, perceived as a parallel system necessary to succeed (also see Jong-Sung & Khagram, 2005).

[37] Reviewing the data, we did find that there was some minor variance in how different socio-economic groups responded to the question about the importance of generational wealth for success. We found that about a quarter of the economically advantaged thought that family wealth was essential (10%) or very important (12%) for getting ahead. This percentage is 4 points lower than the national average and 6 points below that of those at the lowest socio-economic level.

To assess the hypothesis described above, we examined the connection between the PLoSI Index and views regarding the pragmatic use of bribery. Our multivariate analysis supported the hypothesis, revealing a positive link between the index and the belief that bribery functions as a practical tool. Even after controlling for various other factors, the findings show that individuals who perceive society as structurally unequal are more inclined to see bribery as a crucial means for advancement in life (detailed test results can be found in Section 13.8, pg. 154). As an additional check on the robustness of these findings, we explored the association between the PLoSI Index and perceptions about the instrumental role of sexual corruption. This analysis similarly confirmed a significant positive relationship between these variables, further reinforcing the validity of our hypothesis (see Section 13.8, pg. 154 for the test results). Our findings demonstrate the critical role that perceptions of systemic inequality play in shaping attitudes toward corruption.

5.7 Conclusion

The data presented in this section showed that a sizeable minority in South Africa views bribery and, to a lesser extent, sexual bribery as important tools for social advancement. While most reject these corrupt means-to-an-end, their instrumental normalisation among some subgroups suggests challenges for anti-corruption efforts. Indirect experience played an important role here; people indirectly exposed to sextortion (i.e., knowing others who have extorted in this way) were significantly more likely to perceive sexual bribery as instrumental to success. Anti-corruption messaging needs to counter the instrumentalist views highlighted in this section. This could include moral and ethical education in schools and community programmes to shift normative beliefs about corruption's role in advancement. It will also help to promote stories and examples of successful individuals advancing without engaging in corrupt behaviours to challenge the belief that corrupt practices (such as sexual bribery) are necessary for social mobility.

We discovered that attitudes toward corruption’s instrumental value transcend individual socioeconomic status and are more strongly shaped by workplace environments. Changes in institutional culture, oversight and social norms around occupational corruption are essential. Section 3 discussed the need to tackle existing social norms around occupational corruption in the South African labour market. In that section we outlined the importance of developing, and implementing, workplace ethics programmes tailored to sectors where corruption is normalised. In light of the fact that public sector workers are significantly more likely than private sector workers to view bribery and sexual bribery as important for advancement, we should prioritise reforms in public institutions. Initiatives that encourage ethical leadership in the public sector to model integrity and reject corruption as a means of success could be beneficial here. Determined and thorough implementation of the Framework for the Professionalisation of the Public Sector is, therefore, an essential mechanism in service of the NACS.

The evidence presented in this section underscored that perceptions of systemic inequality and non-meritocratic rewards heavily shape attitudes toward corruption as an instrumental tool. Policies must, therefore, go beyond punitive anti-corruption measures to address fundamental social and institutional inequities that erode trust and normalise corruption. Addressing structural inequalities is important if we want to restore faith in a meritocratic view of success. This would require supporting reforms that fight systemic exclusion and promote fair competition and equal opportunity based on merit, helping to shift the public perception that success depends on inherited advantages. We should implement policies that actively reduce socio-economic disparities stemming from race, gender, wealth and political connections. In addition, we should promote narratives and role models that illustrate success through ethical means despite structural disadvantages, helping to counteract the perceived normalisation of corruption as a necessary “instrument” for advancement.

6 UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING PUBLIC TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPTION

Understanding public Tolerance towards Corruption (TtC) is widely considered crucial for fighting corrupt behaviour in any society. Understanding what TtC really entails and how it manifests is essential for addressing corruption effectively and enhancing democratic quality. TtC (i.e., the willingness to accept corrupt behaviour) is typically viewed as a social norm. Such norms can include expecting bribes to access services, viewing nepotism as a natural part of employment practices, or rationalising corrupt exchanges as practical solutions to bureaucratic inefficiencies. Citizens' tolerance for corruption can create a self-reinforcing cycle that erodes democratic governance and accountability over time. In recent years, there has been an expansion in public opinion studies related to TtC; this research is part of a broader body of work on morally debatable behaviours.[38] Public opinion research has shown that TtC is associated with a willingness to participate in corrupt practices.[39]

The NACS explicitly promotes a culture of zero tolerance towards corruption. It recognises TtC as a social ill that undermines democratic values and public trust. This zero tolerance goal is also in keeping with the objectives of the NDP. The strategy envisions a society that is ethical and accountable, with high levels of integrity and respect for the rule of law. It aims for a society where TtC must be replaced by social norms that reject corrupt behaviour as unacceptable and immoral. But the main obstacle to achieving this goal is a shared understanding of *how* it should be achieved. Hence, it is necessary to identify what are the main drivers of societal tolerance for corrupt practices in South Africa. This is a new area of research and not much is known about the level of TtC in South Africa.

The current section builds on past research including the baseline study. Based on this prior work, a composite index of TtC for the South African context was developed. The data presented in this section will look at how the level of TtC amongst the adult population varied by socio-demographic group. Then we investigated what the main drivers of TtC were, providing insight into what interventions could help the country achieve its vision of a zero-tolerance society. The determinants that were identified as most important included awareness of the impact of corruption, perceptions about the instrumentalist value of corrupt practices, as well as the perceived level of corruption within a community. In addition, the study found that TtC was linked with socio-economic status.

6.1 Cultural Norms, Historical Stereotypes, and Differentiating Forms of Behaviour

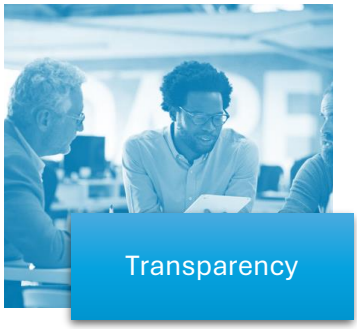
TtC differs significantly across societies, with some cultures showing higher tolerance or justification for corrupt practices than others. Societies with greater acceptance of corruption tend to have weaker democratic norms and lower trust levels (Moreno, 2002). This finding can be attributed to the fact that in newly democratised countries, remnants of authoritarian governance and longstanding corrupt practices persist, undermining trust in institutions and making the fight against corruption a crucial but challenging task. This is not just a problem of poor underdeveloped countries. Gouvêa (2021) explored the acceptance of corrupt acts across European countries, focusing on how values regarding corruption vary within the continent. Using cross-national survey data, he revealed that a significant portion of European citizens find some forms of corruption acceptable.

For many decades, there has been a widespread stereotype in international discussions that suggests Africans exhibit exceptionally high levels of TtC. This perception has deep historical roots, often tracing back to colonial-era prejudices that depicted Africa as inherently corrupt and culturally dysfunctional (Akpome, 2021). Such views were not simply impartial observations but were embedded in the colonial mindset that sought to justify domination by portraying African societies as morally and institutionally inferior. Labelling African people as broadly permissive of corruption denies them agency by implying that TtC is an unchangeable cultural trait rather than a dynamic phenomenon influenced by political, social and economic contexts (also see Apata, 2019). There is a need to move beyond reductive

[38] TtC is a contested concept but there is a broad set of definitions. Gong and Wang (2013) described it as the degree to which individuals are willing to accept corrupt behaviour. Chang and Kerr (2017) characterised it as the propensity of citizens to reproach political figures involved in corruption. This conceptualisation underscores the importance of understanding TtC not only as an individual moral stance but also as a social norm shaped by culture, political context and shared perceptions (for a further discussion of TtC and its definitions, see Gouvêa 2021).

[39] Tavits (2008) investigates why individuals engage in corruption using survey data from Estonia. The study finds that both public officials and citizens are more likely to engage in corrupt behaviour when they do not define corruption as morally wrong.

stereotypes and engage with evidence-based understandings of corruption tolerance in African contexts.



The baseline survey investigated public tolerance for certain types of unlawful activities. [40] The data revealed that, while a majority remained intolerant, a significant minority of the public considers both serious and minor illegal acts to be acceptable. The most tolerated unlawful behaviours were avoiding paying for public transport and fraudulent social grant claims, while the least acceptable was exchanging in sexual favours to secure employment (i.e., sexual bribery). Despite this variance, the acceptance of one type of illegal behaviour was linked to the acceptance of others. Individuals who, for example, found grant fraud acceptable were also more likely to view bribery as acceptable. It would appear that a common set of social values appears to influence judgments about the acceptability of lawbreaking. In terms of the three behaviours examined focused on corruption, we found a clear majority did not think that these behaviours could always be justified. On the other hand, only a small minority (25%) said that the three could never be justified and many took a middling position on this issue.

Building on the work of the baseline survey, the second-year study also looked at the social acceptability of corruption. During a robust engagement with experts in various forums, a number of different suggestions were made concerning how we could expand on the findings of the baseline study. The suggestions centred on three key aspects. The first concerned the need to look at the social acceptability of a broader range of corrupt actions and the second related to the need to differentiate extortion (i.e., involving duress) in corrupt actions. Experts felt that extortive forms of corrupt behaviour would be seen as more immoral (and, therefore, less acceptable) than non-extortive forms. Finally, there was a need to differentiate between nepotism in the public and private sectors, as there isn't a moral equivalence between the exercise of entrusted public power in the general public interest and the choices made in, for example, a small family business. Based on this feedback, a comprehensive set of actions were explored in the second survey round, and a new (and distinct) focus was placed on extortive forms of corrupt behaviour.

6.2 Tolerance of Different Corrupt Behaviours

As part of the SASAS 2024/25 round, respondents were presented with the following statement: “Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between”. Survey participants were then read a list of seven different types of actions considered corrupt.[41] Responses were captured on a 0-10 scale, with 0 representing ‘never justifiable’

[40] These behaviours were grouped into three categories. The first category concerned defrauding the state and included (i) avoiding paying for public transport; (ii) improper claiming of social grants; and (iii) cheating on your taxes. The second category involved contact crime and included: (i) stealing goods from a shop; and (iii) violence against other people. The final category concerned corrupt behaviour and included: (i) having sex with someone to get a job; (ii) accepting bribes; and (iii) nepotism in the public sector.

[41] The exact wording of these actions is presented as followings: (i) someone demanding a bribe in the course of their duties; (ii) someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties; (iii) demanding sex from someone in exchange for a job; (iv) offering sex to someone in exchange for a job; (v) a shop owner giving a job to a family member instead of someone more qualified; (vi) a public official giving a

and 10 representing 'always justifiable'. For ease of interpretation, each scale was converted into a 0 to 100 range. Mean scores on these scales are presented in Table 6-1 (pg. 63), with the results showing that mean justifiability scores ranged between 14 and 22 out of 100 for the seven unlawful activities. As can be observed in the table, the public does not seem to make a strong distinction between extortive and non-extortive actions.

Table 6-1: Perceived justification scales (0-100) of different corrupt activities

	Mean		[95% Conf. Interval]	
Bribery Behaviour				
Extorting a bribe	17	(0.687)	16	18
Accepting a bribe	17	(0.708)	16	18
Sexual Corrupt Behaviour				
Extorting sex	14	(0.589)	13	15
Offering sex	15	(0.622)	13	16
Nepotistic Behaviour				
Private sector nepotism for jobs	22	(0.890)	20	24
Public sector nepotism for jobs	17	(0.665)	16	19
Public sector nepotism for contracts	16	(0.674)	15	17

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

Statistical testing showed that the different scales represented in Table 6-1 (pg. 63) were very strongly interrelated with one another (the results of these are presented in Section 13.9 on pg. 156). In other words, if a person thought that one corrupt act (e.g., offering a bribe) was acceptable, then they were more likely to think that others (e.g., public sector nepotism) were too. It was apparent, perhaps surprisingly, that viewing extortive corrupt behaviour as acceptable was strongly associated with thinking that non-extortive corrupt behaviour was permissible. This finding confirms that most do not make a substantive moral differentiation between extortive and non-extortive forms of corrupt behaviour. This seems to show that most are using the same social values to judge corrupt behaviour, tending to evaluate the different behaviours put to them by the fieldworkers in quite similar ways.

Individual experiences play a crucial role in shaping social norms around corruption.[42] Accordingly, one would expect that direct encounters with corruption in the public sector would impact attitudes toward such behaviour. Observing public officials engaging in corrupt practices and demanding bribes can erode the moral foundation that typically supports adherence to the law (Barr & Serra, 2010). The act of public officials soliciting bribes can contribute to normalising these corrupt behaviours, thereby weakening society's disapproval of them (also see Gächter & Schulz, 2016). Repeated exposure to bribery effectively communicates that participating in such illegal activities is permissible or even anticipated. Furthermore, corruption experiences may diminish respect for authorities and decrease trust in governmental institutions (Olken, 2009). This erosion of trust can undermine fundamental social values like fairness and justice, which are essential for maintaining a strong moral opposition to corruption.

To investigate this assumption, we analysed the relationship between individuals' recent exposure to bureaucratic corruption (see Section 2, pg. 21, for a discussion of this variable) and the seven social acceptability scales outlined in Table 6-1 (pg. 63). We employed a multivariate analysis approach to account for potential confounding effects of socio-demographic variables. Our analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between recent exposure to bureaucratic corruption and five of the seven social acceptability scales (details on the outcome of this statistical test can be found in Section 13.9 on pg. 155). The strongest association observed was between recent

job to a family member instead of someone more qualified; and (vii) a public official giving a large contract to a political connection instead of someone more qualified.

[42] The experiences that a person has can be a powerful determinant of how social norms form; Scharbatke-Church and Chigas (2019) provide a detailed discussion of how personal experience influences the development of social norms. Past research has shown that everyday life interactions with corrupt behaviour have a strong impact on how citizens evaluate the acceptability of corruption. Lavena (2013), for example, found that permissiveness toward corruption in Latin America is influenced by personal and vicarious experiences with bribery. People who have been directly exposed to or are indirectly aware of bribe requests tend to view corruption as more acceptable (also see Hunady, 2017).

exposure to bureaucratic corruption and the offering sex scale. There was also a robust association between exposure to and the acceptability of accepting a bribe.

It is clear that the effect of recent bureaucratic corruption experiences does not shape acceptance of all corrupt practices. Statistical testing showed that this type of personal experience was not associated with social acceptability of extorting bribes. This may be due to the fact that extorting bribes typically involves more aggressive or coercive behaviour, where individuals are forced to pay against their will or under threat. Recent experiences of bureaucratic corruption were also not associated with acceptance of private sector nepotism. This result could be because such experiences involve public sector officials and not persons from the private sector. Consequently, people do not use this type of personal experience to influence their views of nepotism in the private sector.

6.3 Workplace Contexts and Corruption Attitudes

The baseline study found that there was a disparity between those in employment with regards to the social acceptability of corrupt practices. Building on this initial finding, the second-year study looked at how different types of workers viewed corruption. Mean scores on the seven different scales are portrayed in Table 6-2 (pg. 64), with the results showing variances in mean justifiability scores by whether a person was employed in the public or the private sector. It was apparent that public sector employees were found to have a higher level of tolerance for corrupt activities than those employed in the private sector or the unemployed. The largest degree of difference here is for various types of sexual corruption; public sector workers are far more likely to see this practice as acceptable than their peers outside the sector. The behaviour where there is the lowest level of disparity between these two groups is nepotism.

Table 6-2: Perceived justification scales (0-100) of different corrupt activities by sector of employment

	Public Sector		Private Sector		Unemployed	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Bribery Behaviour						
Extorting a bribe	20	(1.754)	17	(1.783)	16	(1.099)
Accepting a bribe	21	(1.951)	17	(1.709)	16	(1.128)
Sexual Corrupt Behaviour						
Extorting sex	18	(1.797)	15	(1.595)	14	(0.911)
Offering sex	19	(1.862)	14	(1.578)	14	(1.016)
Nepotistic Behaviour						
Private sector nepotism for jobs	22	(1.885)	22	(1.696)	20	(1.252)
Public sector nepotism for jobs	21	(1.996)	17	(1.721)	16	(1.026)
Public sector nepotism for contracts	19	(1.870)	16	(1.452)	15	(1.046)

Notes: 1. Data is restricted to those inside the labour market; and 2. Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

We found that those seeking employment were, in general, less likely to view corrupt acts as acceptable. The unemployed were, in particular, much less inclined to believe that exploitative practices are acceptable. Looking at this matter more closely, we observed that those job seekers who had never worked before were much more likely to accept corruption. Among job seekers who had prior work experience, those who had been employed in the public sector were significantly more inclined to perceive corrupt practices as acceptable compared to their counterparts from the private sector. In addition, we found that people who were students tended to be more accepting of corruption than workers or those actively seeking employment. Looking at the different scales, we discovered that students were also more accepting of nepotistic behaviour than their counterparts. These findings may indicate that those not yet in employment are more prepared to tolerate corruption especially if it assists their efforts to find a job in a very difficult market.

Additional analysis found that attitudes towards corruption amongst workers varied by skill level. Table 6-3 (pg. 65) displays the average scores across seven different scales according to the skill level of the employed person's profession. The data does suggest that more highly-skilled employees differed from

medium- and low-skilled workers on the issue of bribery behaviour.[43] Further research showed that highly skilled workers in the private sector were, in particular, less likely to view corrupt behaviour as acceptable than their public sector counterparts. There was a division between workers on sexual corruption; low-skill workers were somewhat more likely to view offering sexual favours as acceptable than their high- and medium- skilled counterparts. But we identified a division amongst low-skilled workers. with the less skilled component of this group more likely to approve of sexual corruption.[44] Differences between workers were less prominent regarding the social acceptability of nepotistic behaviour. But we did find that medium-skilled workers were less likely than their peers to favour nepotism around public sector contracts.

Table 6-3: Perceived justification scales (0-100) of different corrupt activities by occupational skill

	High Skill		Medium-Skilled		Low skilled	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Bribery Behaviour						
Extorting a bribe	17	(2.507)	19	(2.219)	21	(2.832)
Accepting a bribe	15	(2.151)	17	(2.065)	22	(2.767)
Sexual Corrupt Behaviour						
Extorting sex	15	(2.191)	14	(1.798)	19	(2.589)
Offering sex	14	(1.839)	13	(1.840)	20	(2.701)
Nepotistic Behaviour						
Private sector nepotism for jobs	22	(2.150)	20	(2.246)	22	(2.740)
Public sector nepotism for jobs	18	(1.978)	18	(2.303)	18	(2.670)
Public sector nepotism for contracts	17	(1.853)	14	(1.852)	18	(2.200)

Notes: 1. Data is restricted to those in paid work; and 2. Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

It would seem logical to assume that exposure to occupational corruption would shape whether a person viewed corruption as acceptable. The rationale behind this assumption is that frequent encounters with corrupt behaviours in the workplace may normalise corrupt conduct, altering social norms and individual perceptions regarding what is considered permissible or tolerable. To test this assumption, we examined the correlation between the perceived normality of occupational corruption and the seven social acceptability scales outlined in Table 6-1 (pg. 63). A multivariate analysis was used to take socio-demographic factors into account. Our findings confirmed that there was a robust (and positive) correlation between perceived normality of occupational corruption and the seven scales (details of the outcome of this statistical test can be found in Section 13.9 on pg. 155). The strongest association observed was between perceived occupational corruption and nepotism. This means that individuals who perceive corruption as a common and normalised aspect of their occupational environment are more likely to express acceptance for nepotism.

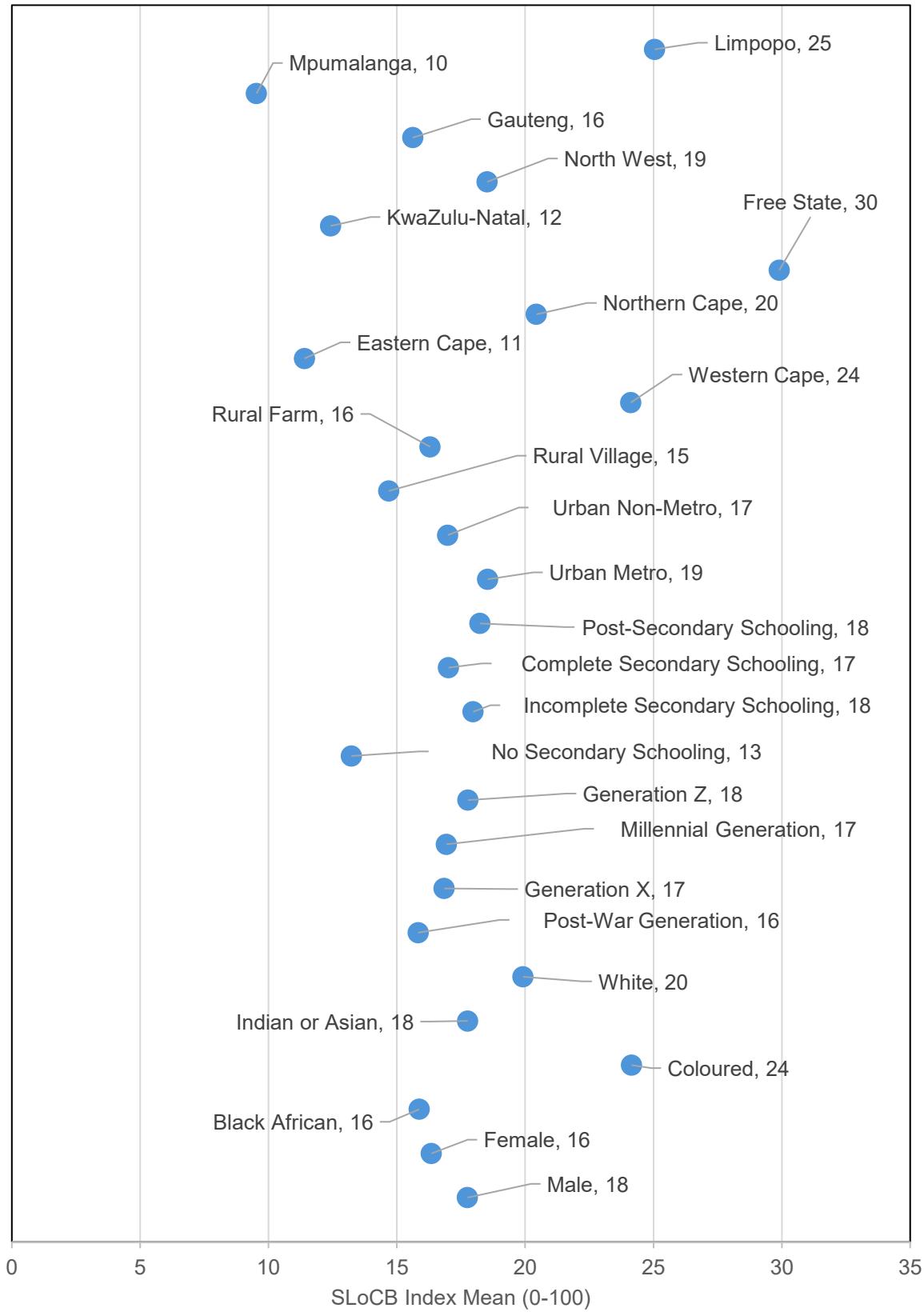
6.4 Measuring Societal Tolerance for Corruption

Based on the statistical testing outlined so far in this section, we explored constructing an index to measure TtC using the seven items in Table 6-1 (pg. 63). Statistical tests confirmed the internal consistency of this set of items and the results suggested that the items could be reliably combined into a single index (the results of these tests are presented in Section 13.9 on pg. 156). An index was created from the selected items and scaled to range between 0 and 100. The higher the value in the index, the greater the tolerance for corruption. The measure was labelled the Social Legitimacy of Corrupt Behaviour (SLoCB) Index. The national mean score on this metric was 17 (SE=0.544) and the population distribution on the index is skewed towards the left.

The national average presented above may obscure distributional differences in how people scored on the SLoCB Index. Only a small proportion (2%) of the adult public scored above 70 on the index and 8% scored above 50. On the other hand, the proportion (27%) who viewed all forms of corrupt behaviour as completely unacceptable was not high. Around a fifth of the general population scored between 1

[43] When it comes to accepting bribes, people working in managerial occupations tended to score lower on this scale (M=13; SE=3.213) than their peers in professional occupations (M=18; SE=3.477).
[44] Employees working as plant and machine operators or assemblers recorded a lower average score (M = 10; SE = 2.791) on the offering sex scale compared to those employed in elementary occupations (M=20; SE = 3.219).

Figure 25: Population distribution on the Social Legitimacy of Corrupt Behaviour (SLoCB) Index by socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

and 10 on the SLoCB Index, while about two-fifths (39%) of the public scored between 10 and 40. This finding indicates that the majoritarian position is that corruption is, at the very least, considered unacceptable most of the time. But it would appear that people think that there are times when a person might feel or be obliged to engaged in corruption, or that involvement might be excusable for some other reason.

Do certain socio-demographic groups in South Africa display greater levels of TtC than others? To answer this question, we conducted a subgroup analysis of mean SLoCB Index scores. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 25 (pg. 66), and it is evident that we did not find substantial levels of subgroup variation. This seems to suggest that we are looking at a cross-cutting social norm here. Nevertheless, there were some important variances between subgroups in the Figure 25 (pg. 66) that should be highlighted. We were able to discern notable differences in SLoCB Index scores by province of residence. Mean index scores were highest in the Free Sate (M=30; SE=2.131), Limpopo (M=25; SE=1.202) and the Western Cape (M=24 SE=1.147). There were moderate urban-rural differences in some provinces. Urban Eastern Cape residents (M=18; SE=1.767) had much higher average index scores than their rural counterparts (M=5; SE=0.923). A similar (albeit less marked) urban-rural disparity was seen in the North West. In Limpopo, interestingly, we found that urban dwellers (M=19; SE=1.773) had lower SLoCB Index scores than their rural peers (M=26; SE=1.553).

Reviewing the data presented in Figure 25 (pg. 66), it was clear there were significant differences in TtC by level of educational attainment. Adults with no secondary education were found to have lower mean scores on the SLoCB Index (M=13; SE=1.064) than other attainment groups. But there does not seem to be meaningful variances between completed secondary (M=17; SE= 0.878) and post-secondary (M=18; SE=1.256) groups. In addition, we learnt that people who were students (M=21; SE=2.558) had higher index scores than the employed (M=18; SE=1.031) or the unemployed (M=16; SE=0.818). Looking at other groups outside the labour market, we discovered that homemakers were the least accepting of corrupt behaviour (M=11; SE=1.902). This group might have less direct exposure to corrupt practices commonly encountered in the labour market, leading to fewer rationalisations or desensitisation toward corruption.

It was apparent that there was no substantial generational dissimilarities in Figure 25 (pg. 66), but we did find a disparity in how the younger part of Generation Z saw the problem of corruption. The teenage cohort (i.e., those aged 16-19) of Generation Z had higher SLoCB Index scores (M=21; SE=1.653) than their peers in their 20s (M=16; SE=0.758).[45] We were also able to observe striking levels of variation by population group in the figure. Black African adults had lower average SLoCB Index scores than Coloured, Indian/Asian and White adults. Of all the race groups listed in the figure, Indian/Asian adults had the highest average index (M=24; SE=1.062) score. Further examination showed that Coloured adults living in the Western Cape had scored, on average, much higher on the index (M=28; SE=1.647) than their counterparts in other provinces (M=18; SE=2.205). There were some minor gender differences on the SLoCB Index with male adults (M=18; SE=0.836) exhibiting somewhat higher mean scores on the index than their female counterparts (M=16; SE=0.706).

6.5 Structural Disadvantage and Socioeconomic Status

Permissive attitudes are not merely moral failings but responses to structural disadvantage and systemic exclusion. Socio-economic factors such as poverty and inequality contribute to permissive attitudes, as vulnerable individuals may rationalise corrupt behaviour as a coping strategy (Gouvêa. 2024). Poverty creates pressures on individuals who struggle to access basic services (such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation) or navigate dysfunctional bureaucracies. When public services are limited and degraded, poor people may perceive bribery or other corrupt acts as essential to securing what would otherwise be unattainable necessities (also see Gatti, 2003). This fosters TtC as a practical survival mechanism rather than a moral choice. In addition, consider that people with higher socio-economic status may view involvement in corruption as carrying a significant risk, such as losing the advantages tied to their position or the respect of their social circle.

[45] The lack of an age effect is notable. Torgler and Valev (2006) analyse the relationship between age and the justifiability of corruption using data from the World Values Survey (1995–1997). Their main finding is a strong and robust age effect; older individuals were significantly less likely than younger people to view corruption as justifiable.

Based on the arguments made above, we hypothesised that a person's economic advantage will be negatively correlated with TtC. In other words, we predicted that the more economically advantaged an individual, the less likely they will be to score high on the SLoCB Index. Economic advantage was measured using the Socio-Economic Status (SES) Index (a description of the index is provided on pg. 146 in Section 13.4) and a multivariate regression was used to test the hypothesis. Our statistical analysis confirmed that there was a negative relationship between the SES Index and the SLoCB Index (the results of this analysis are displayed on pg. 156 in Section 13.9). Even taking a range of demographic factors into account, individuals who were economically advantaged were more inclined to have a higher SLoCB Index score than those who were disadvantaged. This outcome demonstrates that many poor and working class people view corruption as a coping mechanism necessary to navigating South Africa.

The research presented in Section 5 suggests that many people see corrupt practices (such as bribery) as a pragmatic, sometimes inevitable, tool to attain success. Indeed, the results of Section 5 seem to suggest that psychosocial pathways link beliefs about success to TtC. Formal pathways to success may be viewed as inefficient or inaccessible which cultivates a context in which corrupt practices gain legitimacy as mechanisms for success. This thesis aligns with rational choice theory, which proposes that individuals typically evaluate the risk of engaging in illegal activities based on the actions and outcomes they observe in others facing comparable circumstances (Hechter & Kanazawa, 1997). Entrenched beliefs about success and corruption form part of a broader normative system can influence societal acceptance of corrupt practices (also see Dupuy & Neset, 2018). Certainly, there has been past public opinion research that has linked TtC with perceptions of societal success.[46]

In light of the discussion above, we hypothesised that viewing corrupt practices as necessary for success will increase TtC in South Africa. Success perceptions were measured using a specially designed metric that was labelled the Perceived Value of Corruption (PVoC) Scale. This metric gauged the degree to which a person viewed practices like bribery and sexual bribery as essential for getting ahead in life. Multivariate testing found a positive correlation between the PVoC Scale and the SLoCB Index, confirming our hypothesis (test results can be located on pg. 157 in Section 13.9). The more likely a person was to think that corruption results in success in life, the more tolerant they were of corrupt practices. This shows that associating corrupt practices with success erodes the societal norms that censure lawbreaking.

6.6 Impact Perceptions, Social Value and Local Contexts

Public awareness of the impact of corruption on society may substantially influence how people think about corrupt practices. In their study of corruption attitudes in Taiwan, Liu et al. (2023) found that corruption tolerance significantly shapes the way people perceive corruption. A higher tolerance for corruption correlates with a lower perception of corruption severity, indicating that people who are more accepting of corruption tend to downplay how serious it is. These results are consistent with Gong and Wang (2013) who investigated how people in Mainland China and Hong Kong perceive corruption and differ in their tolerance toward it. Looking at students, they found that individuals' perceptions of corruption strongly influence their tolerance levels; people who view corruption more negatively tend to be less tolerant of it and more willing to oppose it. Guo and Tu (2017) examined TtC among China's civil servants using large-scale survey data. They found that awareness and understanding of corruption play a crucial role: those with less knowledge of corruption exhibit greater tolerance.

For us to evaluate the hypothesis outlined above, we employed an index that measured the perceived impact of corruption on the lives of people in the country. Here we used the PIoC Index; a metric that gauged the perceived societal impact of corruption (the details of how this index was generated was offered in Section 4 on pg. 48). A multivariate analysis confirmed the hypothesis and demonstrated that there was a positive association between the PIoC Index and the SLoCB Index (for the results of these tests, see Section 13.9 on pg. 157). Even if we take other factors into account, we find that when an

[46] Plopeanu (2023) investigated how individuals' beliefs about the attributes of success in life influence their perceptions of corruption and their engagement in bribery across post-communist European countries. Those who believe that success depends largely on external factors like connections or corrupt practices are more likely to view bribery as a normal or necessary means to achieve success, leading to higher tolerance and engagement in corrupt behaviours. The study highlights how cultural and societal context in post-communist countries, where economic and institutional transformations have heavily influenced life opportunities, impacts people's normative views on corruption and success.

individual understands the severity of corruption's impact on society, they are less likely to view it as acceptable. In summation, the data demonstrates that when individuals become aware of how corruption affects their own lives and communities, it lowers TtC.

Social conformity is motivated by the wish to meet societal expectations and to evade punishment or disapproval for straying from what is regarded as normal. When people observe corruption as widespread in their local community, they may align their attitudes and actions with these perceived norms, resulting in increased acceptance of corrupt conduct (Kubbe et al., 2024). This occurs because injunctive social norms within a community shape individuals' perception of corruption.[47] Moreover, if individuals believe that others participate in corrupt activities, they might feel their own similar behaviour is justified.[48] A person's beliefs about how common corruption is, in other words, will influence how acceptable they think that corrupt practices are (also see Jackson & Köbis, 2018). Consequently, the normalisation of corruption within an individual's environment can erode ethical standards and contribute to a cycle of misconduct.

Drawing on the discussions above, we can hypothesise that viewing one's local area as corrupt will increase a person's TtC. The PLoLPSC Index was used to test this thesis; the index measured the perceived level of corruption in a person's neighbourhood (the details of how this metric was created were provided on pg. 28 in Section 2). Our statistical analysis confirmed that there was a positive relationship between the PLoLPSC Index and the SLoCB Index (the results of this analysis are displayed on pg. 157 in Section 13.9). Even when taking a range of socio-demographic factors into account, individuals who thought that their local area was corrupt were more likely to have a higher SLoCB Index score than those who did not. It would appear that the perceived prevalence of corruption in one's social environment increased TtC. This outcome demonstrates the significant influence of social learning on how people view corruption. Another reason that the PLoLPSC Index was found to be associated with the SLoCB Index could be personal experience. As outlined in Section 2, people who have personal experiences of corruption tend to have high PLoLPSC Index scores.

6.7 Conclusion

In this section, we discovered that most people in South Africa reject corruption, but the share of the mass public that embrace a zero-tolerance view of corruption is quite low. Although achieving universal zero-tolerance may be unrealistic, the policy focus should be on reducing TtC in line with the goals of the NACS. Based on the evidence presented above, one of the primary ways to achieve this is to reduce bureaucratic corruption. Our data showed that recent personal exposure to public sector corruption significantly increased tolerance for certain corrupt practices. Direct encounters with corrupt officials demanding or accepting bribes tend to erode moral opposition to such acts by undermining trust in authorities and institutions. In addition, efforts to fight TtC should prioritise the public sector. When compared to private sector workers, public sector workers show a higher tolerance for corrupt behaviour. Changing public sector workplace cultures through organisational reforms could be very helpful here.

The results presented in this section also show that economic disadvantage is associated with greater social acceptance of TtC. What is required are pro-poor anti-corruption policies that recognise poverty and inequality as root causes driving permissive attitudes towards corruption. This will mean aligning anti-corruption programmes with social welfare and economic empowerment initiatives to reduce the structural pressures that make corruption a survival strategy. We can implement inclusive planning that

[47] Past research supports the idea that informing people about the low prevalence of corrupt practices via social norms messages can reduce both the perception and incidence of bribery. Köbis et al. (2022) conducted a lab-in-the-field study in a medium-sized South African town to test whether social norm-based nudges on posters could reduce bribery behaviour. People exposed to the posters perceived bribery to be less widespread in their community. As a result of this exposure, individuals were less likely to engage in bribery during subsequent experimental games.

[48] Cheeseman and Peiffer (2022) conducted experimental research in Nigeria, testing the effects of five different anti-corruption messages on individuals' willingness to engage in bribery. Contrary to expectations, several types of anti-corruption messaging not only failed to reduce bribery but, in some cases, actually increased individuals' willingness to pay bribes. The authors concluded that anti-corruption messaging may backfire if that messaging helps people see corruption as too pervasive to combat (also see Abbink et al., 2018). Telling people about how widespread corruption is may inadvertently normalise corrupt behaviour or reinforce fatalistic attitudes.

actively engages marginalised communities, allowing their views and difficulties to guide the design of anti-corruption and development initiatives. In addition, we need to challenge the perception that corruption is necessary for personal or professional advancement. In addition to reforms that demonstrate achievement of success without resorting to corruption, relevant stakeholders should collaborate with media, educational institutions and community leaders to foster narratives that dissociate success from corruption. How this can be achieved was discussed in Section 5 (on pg. 60).

The data suggests that increasing awareness of corruption's harm will reduce TtC through ethical outrage and motivation for change. However, to change TtC via communication campaigns requires carefully created messaging about the harmful nature of corruption. Messages highlighting how widespread corruption is will not be helpful; we found that seeing corrupt behaviour as normative can increase TtC. Effective countermeasures will require developing comprehensive public education campaigns that clearly communicate the real, tangible consequences of corruption on individuals, communities and society. We would suggest using data-driven narratives and personal stories to illustrate how corruption affects people's livelihoods, public services and democratic governance. In addition, use positive framing that emphasises collective efficacy and success stories to motivate anti-corruption behaviour. Before any messaging strategy is employed, it should be tested in local contexts to identify potential unintended effects.

7 THE ROLE OF ROLE MODELS IN SHAPING ANTI-CORRUPTION CULTURE

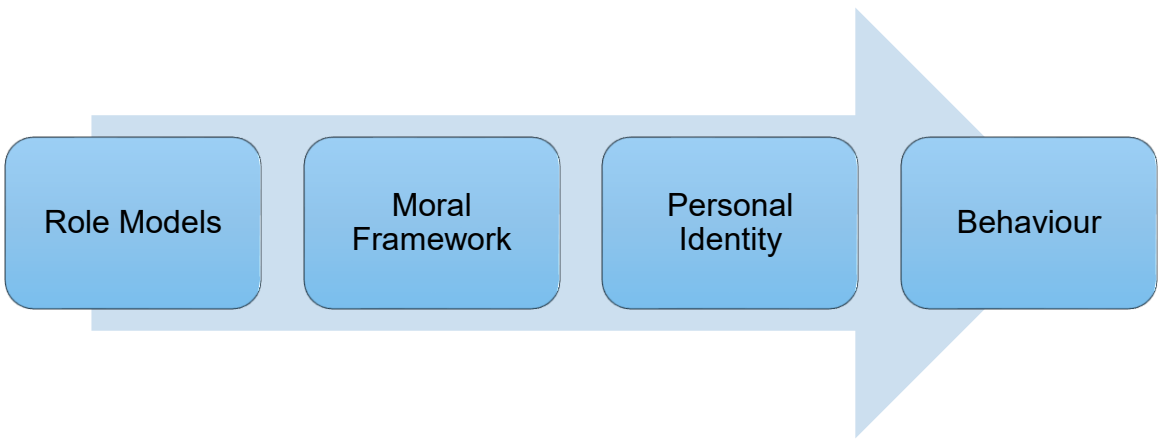
Role models are essential in the exploration of social norms and values because they provide clear, real-life examples of the behaviours, attitudes and principles that a community or group regards as important. Researchers have long recognised that individuals learn what is acceptable and valued within their society by observing and imitating these role models (Bandura, 1977). This process of socialisation plays a significant part in forming an individual's personal identity, moral framework and social conduct (also see Kemper, 1968). Role models often act as protective factors against negative influences by offering consistent examples of resilience, ethical behaviour and responsibility. In scenarios involving ethical challenges, role models can demonstrate the benefits and feasibility of adhering to such values. By performing this function, role models not only help maintain social cohesion but also contribute to social progress by inspiring changes in collective beliefs and practices.

In the context of corruption, role models can encourage and motivate people to embrace behaviours that oppose corruption by highlighting the advantages of values such as honesty and integrity. Role models facilitate anti-corruption behaviour by illustrating how social expectations are practiced in challenging situations (Jackson & Köbis, 2018). Additionally, role models help sustain and evolve culture by either upholding existing norms or introducing new perspectives and behaviours that, over time, may create social values that oppose corruption. In essence, role models are central to creating and sustaining a culture of integrity that is necessary for long-lasting progress in combating corruption (see also Kubbe et al., 2024). This makes them vital agents in both preserving cultural continuity and fostering social progress. If we want to change social norms and values, we need to know who people in South Africa look to as role models.

There is relatively limited prior research exploring who the general population in South Africa identifies as their role models. This gap in knowledge is particularly unfortunate given that role models (such as community leaders or celebrities) can exert significant influence in shaping societal values, norms and behaviours. Given the important impact that such figures can have on collective ethics and conduct, it becomes essential to understand who people look up to as exemplars of positive social values. The decision was made to try to identify those role models that people associated with the social values that were identified in the NACS. These values include honesty, integrity, fairness and accountability. First, we investigated the role models that were associated with these values and then we examined who respondents may turn to for advice if they faced an ethical dilemma involving corruption.

7.1 Identifying Key Role Models for Integrity and Honesty

First fieldworkers asked respondents to think about integrity and honesty, after which they were asked the following question: “Who would you say are your MAIN ROLE MODELS for these values? Who do you admire?” The objective was to pinpoint which role models play a meaningful role in encouraging citizens to uphold ethical standards and to act as a moral compass. Understanding who these influential figures are helps shed light on the social mechanisms that support ethical conduct and can inform efforts to strengthen moral values within communities. Respondents were told that it can be any person, even someone ordinary. The purpose of this inclusive approach was to ensure that respondents felt free to consider a wide range of people who significantly impact their understanding, and practice, of integrity and honesty.



The question was open-ended which allowed respondents to write in anyone; their choices were not dictated by the priorities of the research team. The open-ended nature of the question designed to prompt respondents to think deeply about what honesty and integrity mean to them and who embodies those ideals. This format is particularly valuable because it captures a broader and more authentic range of perspectives, revealing the diversity of role models that resonate with different segments of the population. Most of the general public gave an answer to this question; only 1% said they don't know and 4% refused to answer. Responses to the open-ended question were grouped into broad categories for ease of analysis; the results are portrayed in Table 7-1 (pg. 72).

Table 7-1: Self-identified main role models when thinking about integrity and honesty (multiple-response)

	Mean	Std. Errs.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Family				
Parents	25	(1.360)	23	28
Siblings	5	(0.697)	4	7
Children	2	(0.549)	1	3
Other	6	(0.826)	5	8
Public Figures				
Politician	8	(0.826)	7	10
Celebrity	6	(0.681)	5	8
Community Leader	2	(0.351)	2	3
Other Figures				
Friends	2	(0.533)	1	3
Spouse or Partner	2	(0.348)	2	3
Religion	4	(0.473)	3	5
Public Officials	1	(0.210)	0	1
Other	4	(0.568)	3	5
No Role Models				
None	17	(1.231)	14	19
Myself	8	(0.951)	6	10
Non-Response				
Irrelevant	2	(0.282)	1	2
Uncertain	1	(0.413)	0	2
Refuse	4	(0.490)	3	5

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

When asked to think about integrity and honesty, around a fifth (17%) of the general public said that they did not have any role models. In addition, about a tenth (8%) of the public said that they are their own role model. We did not find age or gender differences in this kind of answer, but there were noteworthy variations by population group. Of the four major population groups, we found that white adults were the most likely to state that they did not have a role model for integrity and honesty. About a third (35%) of this group said that they did not have a role model for these important social values. In addition, we discovered quite a lot of provincial variation on whether or not a person had a role model. Of the nine provinces, adults living in Gauteng (34%) and the North West (39%) were the most likely to state that they did not have a role model.

Looking at how people answered the role model question, the most popular choice was a family member, with 44% of the mass public give this kind of answer. The family member that received the most frequent mention were parents; 25% of adults said that their parents were their role models for integrity and honesty. Interestingly enough, siblings were also a relatively popular choice; 6% of the adult population said that their sibling was a role model for them. These results, overall, show the strong influence that family has in shaping the moral compass of people and guiding their understanding of ethical behaviour. In addition, a comparatively significant proportion (15%) listed public figures of some kind as their main role models. This indicates that many people find inspiration in those they see in the public eye who exemplify strong moral values. Let's now look more closely at those who chose public figures and identify what kinds of people select this group as role models.

7.2 Public Figures as Role Models for Morality and Rectitude

We found that, perhaps unsurprisingly, a notable proportion (8%) of adults mentioned a political figure when asked about role models. Although a few people nominated international politicians (e.g., Barack Obama), most people made reference to local politicians. Of the politicians mentioned, Nelson Mandela was the most popular choice. A subgroup analysis, presented in Table 7-2 (pg. 73), identified group variances in the percentage who put forward politicians as role models. There was a gender dissimilarity when it came to selecting politicians when thinking about integrity and honesty. Male adults (11%) were almost twice as likely to make this selection as female adults (6%). There was also a population group disparity here, with white adults (2%) much less likely to put forward politicians when asked about role models than other groups. When compared to other population groups, Black African adults were the most likely to make this selection, but this disguises crucial differences between linguistic groups amongst this population.[49]

Table 7-2: Percentage who identified politicians and celebrities as role models when thinking about integrity and honesty

	Politicians		Celebrities	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Gender Group				
Male	11	(1.394)	7	(1.000)
Female	6	(0.928)	6	(0.930)
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	11	(2.409)	3	(0.948)
Generation X	10	(2.242)	3	(0.770)
Millennial Generation	9	(1.234)	6	(1.163)
Generation Z	7	(1.400)	12	(1.733)
Race Group				
Black African	10	(1.014)	7	(0.840)
Coloured	6	(1.719)	4	(0.993)
Indian	6	(2.122)	3	(1.314)
White	2	(1.109)	2	(1.134)
Geotype				
Urban Metro	7	(1.395)	5	(1.155)
Urban Non-Metro	9	(1.328)	7	(1.036)
Rural Village	12	(1.506)	8	(1.279)
Rural Farm	9	(3.284)	3	(1.761)
Province				
Western Cape	6	(1.650)	2	(0.571)
Eastern Cape	7	(1.523)	5	(1.298)
Northern Cape	12	(2.942)	4	(1.896)
Free State	4	(1.350)	7	(2.140)
KwaZulu-Natal	8	(1.919)	7	(1.631)
North West	10	(2.394)	17	(2.968)
Gauteng	7	(2.069)	6	(1.715)
Mpumalanga	5	(1.539)	4	(1.510)
Limpopo	25	(3.260)	10	(2.113)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

There were notable provincial variances when it came to this issue. Limpopo residents were, by far, the most likely of all the provincial groups to name politicians; about a quarter (25%) of this group identified politicians as role models. We observed that individuals in that province were more inclined than those in other regions to identify National President Cyril Ramaphosa here. Adults in the Western Cape (2%), the Northern Cape (4%) and Mpumalanga (4%) were, on the other hand, much less likely to give this answer. As anticipated, we observed that some political party supporters were somewhat more inclined than others to identify politicians as role models in this context. Among the main partisan groups,

[49] Focusing specifically on the main Black African language groups, we observed that Pedi adults (18%) were significantly more inclined to identify politicians as role models for integrity and honesty. In contrast, Sesotho-speaking adults were the least likely to choose politicians for this role; only 6% of this group identified politicians.

supporters of the ANC (11%) were the most likely to choose politicians. One of the main reasons that we find this result is that other affiliation groups are less likely to select Nelson Mandela.

We discovered that, perhaps expectedly, a significant share (7%) of adults referred to some type of celebrity. Here there was an interesting mix of domestic (e.g., Zakes Bantwini) and international (e.g., Chris Brown) celebrities. Most of the celebrities that were mentioned were actors and musicians of some kinds. Variances in which socio-demographic groups look to celebrities as role models are depicted in Table 7-2 (pg. 73). There was an age dissimilarity in whether a person would select a celebrity as their main role model for honesty and integrity. Members of Generation Z (12%) were much more likely to put forward this answer than adults in the Post-War Generation (3%), Generation X (3%) or the Millennial Generation (6%). Interestingly, we found that Generation Z adults in their 20s were more likely to make this choice than those in their teens.

When it came to identifying celebrities as role models, significant differences emerged between provinces. Adult residents of North West stood out as the most likely among all provincial groups to identify celebrities as role models. Approximately one in five (17%) people in this group mentioned celebrities. M Black African adults were more likely to put forward celebrities than other population groups. Looking at the major Black African language groups, we found that the Tswana adults (11%) were the most likely to name celebrities and this was followed by Zulu adults (9%). In addition, we found that there were noteworthy differences on this issue by political affiliation. Supporters of the EFF (13%) and the MK Party (13%) were more likely to make this choice than other types of partisans. Supporters of the ANC (4%) and DA (4%) were, conversely, the least inclined to make this choice.

It was interesting to note that religious figures were not a popular choice by the mass public. Less than a twentieth (4%) of the adult population said that their role model was, in some way, connected to their religion. Of the different religious affiliations in the country, we found that Protestants (5%) were more likely than others to put forward a religious figure. Of the major Protestant groups, we found that members of the Zionist Christian Church (2%) were the least likely to give this kind of answer. Looking at the issue more closely we found that those adults who attend religious services weekly (7%) were more likely to provide this answer than those who attended less frequently. Overall, these findings show that religious figures overwhelmingly do not serve as role models even for those who identified as quite religious.

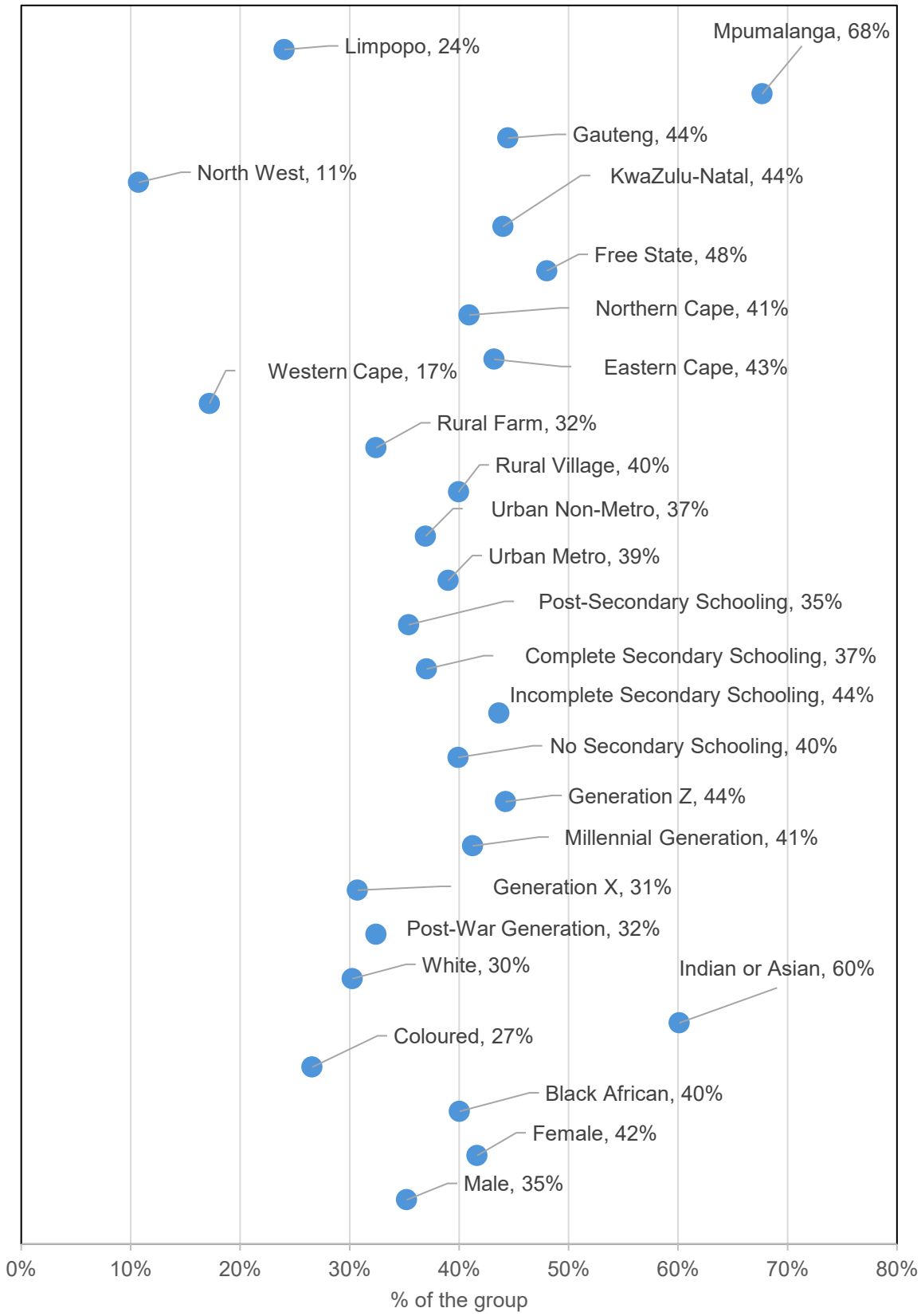
Only a small proportion (2%) of the adult public said that community leaders were key role models for integrity and honesty. There were substantial provincial variances on this kind of answer. Adult residents in the Northern Cape (10%) and the North West (6%) were the most likely to give this kind of response. There was not a significant difference between population groups on this issue, but we did find significant dissimilarities between Black African language groups. Tswana adults (6%) were more likely than other Black African groups, like Zulu (2%) and Pedi (1%) adults, to identify community leaders. These findings suggest that, although community leaders are generally not the primary ethical exemplars for most adults, their influence and perceived importance vary widely depending on geographical and linguistic-cultural contexts.

7.3 Family as a Core Role Model for Morality

One of the most popular options that people selected when asked about their main role models for integrity and honesty was family.[50] It is important to acknowledge, at this stage, a significant feature of South African life, viz., that traditional culture in the country is quite family oriented. Familial kin-based relationships have historically been vital in transmitting cultural values and social norms (Zeihl, 2003). Qualitative research by Madhavan and Crowell (2014) into the role models chosen amongst rural youth in South Africa found, for example, that participants tend to emphasise family. Their research showed that local community figures and even national heroes or celebrities provide examples of success and ethical conduct, but that young people tend to differentiate between aspirational "hero" figures and more practical, attainable familial role models. Family has traditionally also been a source of social cohesion in South Africa, although there have been significant demographic shifts in recent decades which has undermined the functioning of traditional familial kin-based networks (Makiwane et al., 2017).

[50] By family, we are referring to those who identified: (i) parents; (ii) siblings; (iii) children; and other family (uncles, aunts, cousins etc.) members.

Figure 26: Percentage who selected family as self-identified role models when thinking about integrity and honesty by socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

There were significant variances between socio-demographic groups in whether family was a key role model for morality and decency. As we can see in Figure 26 (pg. 75), we found that male adults (35%) were somewhat less likely to select this option than their female peers (42%). Further investigation found that adult males who lived with their parents were more likely to identify family (47%) than those men who lived away from their parents (30%). A similar disparity was not observed for female adults. There was an age gradient here, with younger generations more likely than older generations to identify family as a main role model. Consider, for example, that 44% of all adults in Generation Z named family;[51] 13 percentage points above what we see for the Post-War Generation. In addition, there is a moderate level of variation between educational attainment groups. Adults with lower levels of formal education were more likely to select family than their more educated peers.

There were notable differences between how different population groups responded, as depicted in Figure 26 (pg. 75). White (30%) and Coloured (27%) adults were the least likely to select family. About two-fifths of Black African adults named family as a role model for integrity and honesty, but this obscures important differences between linguistic groups in the Black African population.[52] There were substantial provincial differences in terms of whether a person identified family as a role model. Levels of identification were lowest in the North West (11%) as well as the Western Cape (17%). There was not a large difference between urban and rural dwellers on this issue. However, we did discover that rural farm-dwellers were less likely to identify family than other geotype groups. Interestingly, there was a large urban-rural difference in the Eastern Cape; rural adults in that province were far more likely to select family than their urban counterparts. A similar (albeit less pronounced) divide was observed in KwaZulu-Natal.

Family relationships are built on deep emotional connections and trust. Role models within the family who demonstrate integrity promote a sense of accountability and responsibility, which deters acceptance or adoption of dishonest or corrupt actions. Families often embody and perpetuate cultural norms that emphasise community welfare and moral conduct. Based on this logic, we assumed that identifying family as a role model would be associated with lower levels of social acceptability for corruption. To test this assumption and conduct this analysis, we employed the SLoCB Index (details of this index are presented in Section 6 on pg. 65), applying a multivariate regression technique to control for various socio-demographic factors. Our results revealed a negative association between identifying family as role models and scores on the SLoCB Index, thereby supporting our hypothesis (detailed test outcomes are available on pg. 158 in Section 13.10). In conclusion, our research offers strong evidence that having family members as role models is linked to a lower tolerance for corruption.

[51] There is a notable division between younger and older members of Generation Z. Those adult members who were in the 16-19 age cohort were more likely to identify parents (52%) than their older counterparts in Generation Z (40%).
[52] Of the major Black African language groups, we found that Sesotho (47%) and isiZulu (43%) speaking adults were more likely to identify family as a role model for decency. Setswana-speaking adults (28%) were, on the other hand, were the least likely to identify family.

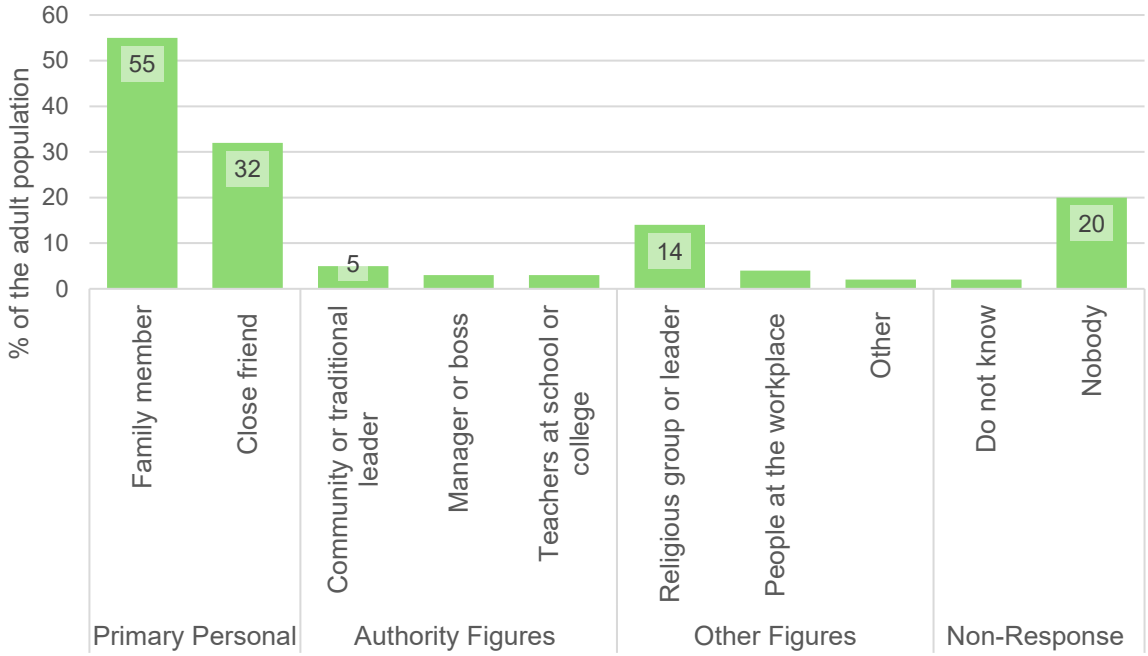
This outcome suggests that ethical values imparted within the family context can fortify individuals against the social pressures that might otherwise lead to acceptance of corruption as socially normative.

7.4 Seeking Moral Guidance in Ethical Dilemmas

As recognised above, people may have aspirational role models that they look up to, and then there are more practical, attainable role models that they can go to for moral or ethical advice. In order to understand who people look to for moral advice, respondents were asked to imagine that they have the chance to make a lot of money, but it requires doing something corrupt (like misuse funds or take bribes). Next, the respondent was asked to imagine that before making a decision on what to do, they wanted to seek advice. They were then read a list of different types of people and asked to think about the person from whom they would be most likely to seek advice. This question was designed to assess who individuals trust or rely on for advice when faced with an ethical dilemma involving corruption. When asked this question, a clear majority of the general public were able to identify at least one type of person in their life from whom they would seek advice. A worryingly large minority (20%) of the public stated that they had nobody to go to, or that they would not approach anybody, when faced with an ethical dilemma, and 2% were not sure of who they would talk to in such a situation.

How the general public answered the question regarding moral or ethical guidance is presented in Figure 27 (on pg. 77). Almost half of the general public (47%) identified one type of person that they would go to for advice when confronted with the temptation or pressure to commit corruption. Nearly a quarter (22%) indicated that they would seek advice from two types of people, and the remainder (8%) would seek counsel from three types or more. About a fifth of the general population said that they would not go to anyone for advice if confronted with an ethical dilemma. Interestingly, we found that people living on rural farms (32%) and in rural villages (26%) were more likely than other groups to list nobody when responding to this question. There was also a significant age group variation here, with those aged 65 years and older being more likely than other age groups to identify ‘nobody’. .

Figure 27: Types of people who a person would seek advice from if confronted with a moral / ethical dilemma involving corruption (multiple-response)



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

One of the most popular answers that people gave when responding to the ethical dilemma question was to seek advice from family. About half (55%) of the adult public gave this type of response. This was a highly favoured option among adults who chose just one type of person for advice; 62% of this group picked a family member. The high level of reliance on family suggests that many adults view their relatives as trusted confidants who provide not only practical advice but also emotional support in navigating complex ethical issues. This finding also reaffirmed, identified in the previous subsection,

the central role that families play as role models for anti-corruption social values like integrity and honesty.

Table 7-3 (pg. 78) presents the share of different subgroups who selected family members when responding to the ethical dilemma question. As can be observed, the family option was popular across a range of groups and there were only minor intergroup differences here. We did find that members of the Post-War Generation (43%; SE=4.336) were less keen on this option than their younger counterparts. Looking at this matter more closely we find that people in this generation who were 65 years and older (37%; SE=6.049) were less likely to select this option than the younger part of the Post-War Generation (52%; SE=5.938). It was notable that adults residing on rural farms were less inclined to choose this option compared to their counterparts living in urban settings or rural villages. People living in certain provinces were found to be particularly likely to select family. Adults residing in Gauteng (64%; SE=3.887) and Mpumalanga (67%; SE=4.033) were more liable to select this option than their peers in other provinces.

Table 7-3: Percentage of people who selected family members as mentors by socio-demographic attributes

	Mean		[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender Group				
Male	55	(2.314)	51	60
Female	55	(2.012)	51	59
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	43	(4.336)	34	51
Generation X	59	(3.448)	52	65
Millennial Generation	56	(2.415)	52	61
Generation Z	58	(2.908)	53	64
Race Group				
Black African	56	(1.793)	53	60
Coloured	54	(3.958)	46	62
Indian	54	(4.412)	45	63
White	49	(4.494)	41	58
Geotype				
Urban Metro	58	(2.635)	53	63
Urban Non-Metro	54	(2.537)	49	59
Rural Village	53	(2.495)	48	58
Rural Farm	45	(6.114)	33	57
Province				
Western Cape	46	(3.663)	39	53
Eastern Cape	37	(3.132)	31	43
Northern Cape	48	(4.511)	39	56
Free State	47	(4.211)	38	55
KwaZulu-Natal	59	(3.074)	53	66
North West	62	(3.742)	54	69
Gauteng	64	(3.887)	56	72
Mpumalanga	67	(4.033)	59	75
Limpopo	43	(3.995)	35	51

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

In the previous subsection, we found that only a small minority (2%) of the mass public said that friends were role models for honesty and integrity. But as illustrated in Figure 27 (pg. 77), a notable share of the public would turn to a close friend when faced with an ethical dilemma. Indeed, we found that roughly one-third (32%) of adults indicated they would turn to close friends for guidance. Among those who chose more than one person to consult for advice, close friends were an especially favoured option, with 75% of respondents including them in their choices. The prominence of close friends as trusted advisers suggests that peer relationships are crucial in shaping how individuals navigate moral dilemmas, including those involving corruption. These social connections often provide a confidential and relatable sounding board where people feel comfortable discussing their concerns and exploring options.

Table 7-4: Percentage of people who selected close friends as mentors by socio-demographic attributes

	Mean		[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender Group				
Male	36	(2.435)	32	41
Female	27	(1.953)	23	31
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	20	(3.098)	14	26
Generation X	36	(3.700)	29	43
Millennial Generation	34	(2.546)	29	39
Generation Z	32	(2.951)	26	37
Race Group				
Black African	32	(1.846)	28	36
Coloured	32	(4.492)	24	41
Indian	27	(3.979)	19	35
White	29	(4.029)	21	36
Geotype				
Urban Metro	39	(2.792)	34	45
Urban Non-Metro	30	(2.489)	25	35
Rural Village	22	(2.015)	18	26
Rural Farm	18	(4.534)	9	27
Province				
Western Cape	32	(3.337)	25	38
Eastern Cape	12	(1.971)	8	16
Northern Cape	25	(3.874)	17	32
Free State	24	(3.445)	17	31
KwaZulu-Natal	23	(2.589)	18	28
North West	30	(3.593)	23	37
Gauteng	49	(4.107)	41	57
Mpumalanga	27	(3.547)	20	34
Limpopo	24	(3.259)	18	31

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

The preference for friends when seeking guidance was widespread across various socio-demographic groups (Table 7-4, pg. 79). However, we found that female adults (27%; SE =1.953) were less likely to turn to close friends for guidance than their male peers (36%; SE=2.435). Interestingly, a lower proportion (20%; SE=3.098) of the Post-War Generation selected friends when asked about who they would seek advice from. This figure is 13 percentage points lower than what we see for those outside this generation. Additionally, it was noteworthy that adults living in rural areas were less likely to select this option than those residing in urban environments. Among the different geographical groups, urban metropolitan residents were particularly inclined to seek advice from close friends, with 39% (SE = 2.792) choosing this approach. Regional differences also emerged in the preference for friends. Adults living in the Eastern Cape were less likely to rely on close friends for advice, with only 12% (SE = 1.971) indicating this choice. This contrasts sharply with Gauteng, where nearly half of the adult population (49%; SE = 4.107) reported that they would consult close friends when confronted with an ethical dilemma involving corruption.[53]

7.5 The Role of Religious and Workplace Mentors

As outlined in the previous subsection, most people did not identify religious leaders or fellow members of their faith community when asked about main role models for honesty and integrity. Only 14% of the general public said that they would seek advice from their religious group or leader. It was interesting to note that religious figures featured more when people were requested to indicate who they would consult for advice when confronted with a moral or ethical issue involving corruption. However, even when considering only those who identified as religious, just a small proportion (15%; SE = 1.448)

[53] This divergence may be explained by ongoing internal migration patterns. Many people (especially rural dwellers) move to Gauteng in search of economic opportunities; these migrants leave behind their families and are forced to be less reliant on them. But further research is needed to understand this interesting finding.

reported that they would seek guidance from such figures. Religious mentors were not a first choice for most people; only 8% of persons who gave one answer to the question selected this option. It was much more popular amongst those who selected multiple options. Consider, for example, that 63% of those adults who chose three or more options when asked this question included religious mentors.

There were significant disparities between different groups of devout people on the question of selecting religious mentors (Table 7-5, pg. 80). Adherents to the Islamic faith (24%; SE=6.402) were more likely to select religious mentors than Roman Catholics (13%; SE=3.728) or Protestants (15%; SE-1.568). Amongst those who belong to the Protestant faith, Methodists (21%; SE=6.554) were the most likely to select a religious mentor. We found that Anglicans (10%; SE=3.931) were one of the religious groups who were the least likely to select religious mentors. Adults who practiced their religion more frequently, perhaps unsurprisingly, tended to be more likely to select religious mentors than those who did not. This implies that stronger religious commitment and involvement enhance the likelihood of looking to religious leaders or figures for guidance and ethical support.

Table 7-5: Percentage of people who selected religious group or leader as mentors by religious attributes

	Mean		[95% Conf. Interval]	
Religious Affiliation				
None	9	(1.445)	6	12
Islam	24	(6.402)	11	36
Hindu	14	(3.674)	7	22
Roman Catholic	13	(3.728)	5	20
Protestant	15	(1.568)	12	18
Religiosity Status				
Low	8	(1.375)	4	9
Lower Middle	12	(2.179)	8	16
Upper Middle	17	(2.480)	12	22
High	20	(2.517)	15	25
Religious Attendance				
Never	5	(1.521)	2	8
About once a year	12	(2.352)	9	16
Monthly	13	(1.794)	8	17
Weekly	20	(2.487)	15	25

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

Religious mentors are part of faith communities where social norms and collective oversight can discourage corruption. Religious teachings often emphasise principles (such as honesty, integrity and fairness), which support good moral conduct (Stark, 2001). Religious mentors typically reinforce these values and provide moral guidance that encourages adherents to reject unethical practices, including corruption. Religion commonly stresses accountability not only to human authorities but also to a higher spiritual power or divine judgment (also see Shariff, 2015). This sense of ultimate accountability can strengthen individuals' resistance to corruption, as they believe their actions will be evaluated morally beyond immediate workplace or societal rewards. As religious individuals often hold stronger moral commitments, we may assume that selecting religious mentors should be associated with lower corruption tolerance and report sterner resistance to corrupt practices.

We measured TtC using the SLoCB Index (an outline of how this index was constructed can be found in Section 6 on pg. 65); and a multivariate regression approach was used to account for socio-demographic characteristics. Contrary to our initial hypothesis, the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant negative correlation between having a religious mentor and tolerance toward corruption (test results can be located on pg. 158 in Section 13.10). In other words, individuals who reported seeking guidance or mentorship from religious leaders or figures were not less tolerant of corrupt behaviours than those without such mentorship. Consequently, we had to reject our hypothesis that religious mentorship would be associated with reduced acceptance of corruption. It would appear that, despite the moral and ethical teachings commonly associated with religion, religious mentorship does not play as strong a role as we may have imagined in shaping moral conduct.

The majority of individuals did not choose colleagues, supervisors or managers at their workplace as the people they would turn to for guidance when facing a moral or ethical dilemma related to corruption. Even if we narrow our focus to only those who were working, only about a tenth (11%; SE=1.549) of the adult population said that these were the kinds of people from whom they would seek help. As can be observed in Table 7-6 (pg. 80), there were significant disparities between different kinds of workers on the question of selecting mentors at the workplace. Public sector employees (21%; SE=3.841) were much more likely to identify workplace mentors than their counterparts in the private sector (7%; SE=1.438). There was also a significant difference between workers based on skill level. High-skilled workers were more likely to select this option (18%; SE=4.194) than their medium- (7%; SE=1.882) and low-skilled (10%; SE=-2.841) counterparts. There were significant disparities between high-[54] and low-[55] skilled workers on this issue.

Table 7-6: Percentage of workers who selected people at the workplace or managers as mentors by labour market attributes

	Mean		[95% Conf. Interval]	
Sectoral Status				
Private	7	(1.438)	5	10
Public	21	(3.841)	13	28
Trade Union				
Member	20	(6.030)	8	31
Non-Member	9	(1.402)	7	12
Geotype				
Urban Metro	12	(2.124)	8	17
Urban Non-Metro	10	(3.402)	3	16
Rural	8	(2.691)	3	13
Skill Status				
High	18	(4.194)	10	27
Medium	7	(1.882)	4	11
Low	10	(2.841)	5	16

Notes: 1. Linearised standard errors in parenthesis; and 2. Data is restricted to persons who are employed.

Having workplace mentors can sometimes increase a person's willingness to accept corruption due to several social and psychological mechanisms related to organisational culture. Research suggests that mentoring relationships can increase employees' willingness to adopt organisational culture (Treviño et al., 2006). When a mentor implicitly or explicitly condones corrupt practices, protégés are likely to learn that such practices are acceptable or necessary to succeed. They adopt the mentor's attitudes and behaviours as normative, especially if those behaviours seem to be rewarded (also see Vorster & van Vuuren, 2022). This aligns with social learning theory, where individuals observe and imitate the behaviours of influential others in their environment. When corrupt practices are part of the organisational culture, protégés may feel either less opposed or even compelled to conform, including accepting corruption, to align with perceived organisational expectations and maintain their mentor's favour.

We hypothesised that having workplace mentors will increase TtC in South Africa. This hypothesis stems from the understanding that mentors play a significant role in shaping employees' attitudes, behaviours and perceptions within organisational contexts. We measured TtC using the SLoCB Index and a multivariate regression approach was employed to account for socio-demographic characteristics. We found a positive correlation between having workplace mentors and the SLoCB Index, confirming our hypothesis (test results can be located on pg. 158 in Section 13.10). In summation, our study provides clear evidence that workplace mentorship is positively linked with tolerance of corruption in South Africa. In South African workplace environments, it would appear that mentors promote greater acceptance of corrupt practices among their mentees.

[54] Workers in professional occupations tended to be more likely to select workplace mentors (24%; SE=6.922) than their peers in managerial occupations (12%; SE=5.430).
[55] Employees working as plant and machine operators or assemblers were more likely to select workplace mentors (20%; SE = 8.688) when compared to those employed in elementary occupations (6%; SE = 2.307).

7.6 Conclusion

The findings presented in this section aimed to build upon earlier research in South Africa by exploring which role models the general population associate with key social values linked to the objectives of the NACS (such as integrity, transparency and accountability). We discovered that many people think about family when they asked to think about honesty and respect for the rule of law. It would appear that family figures (unlike religious ones) play a central role in shaping individuals' perceptions of ethical behaviour and social responsibility. Data analysis showed that certain groups (e.g., North West and the Western Cape residents, as well as Coloured adults) were less likely to identify family as role models than other groups. Religious figures, on the other hand, did not feature as important role models in this section. Only the very devout were likely to seek advice from religious figures when confronted with ethical dilemmas, and people who sought religious advice were *not* more likely to embrace a zero-tolerance view of corruption than those who did not. This suggests that religious institutions are not necessarily the best partners for those seeking alliances for anti-corruption initiatives.

Adults who identified family as their main role model were found to be more likely to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to corruption. This outcome seems to suggest that there is a need to invest in family-based ethics education. This would mean the development of, and support for, programmes that encourage parents and families to openly discuss ethical decision-making, integrity and accountability at home. There is a need to design anti-corruption initiatives that actively involve families (such as family-oriented school-based or other education, workshops and community events) that highlight the role of the family in fostering honesty and integrity. The goal of these initiatives is to empower parents and family members to engage in meaningful conversations about ethical decision-making. By fostering open dialogue and reflection on these values, families can nurture a culture of ethical awareness that children and young adults carry into broader society.

The data presented in this section indicated that employees in the public sector tended to seek guidance from workplace mentors more frequently than other groups when faced with moral or ethical challenges related to corruption. Additionally, the presence of workplace mentors was found to be inversely related to adopting a zero-tolerance stance toward corruption, especially in the public sector. These findings indicate that public sector workplaces are more likely to have an ethically compromised culture in which tolerance for corruption has become relatively more normalised. In response, we need to develop and implement specialised training for workplace leaders and mentors in the public sector that emphasises integrity and anti-corruption values, and the importance of modelling zero-tolerance attitudes to unethical behaviour. This will also require the establishment of systems to assess the content and outcomes of mentoring relationships. There should be a particular focus on the impact of this training on attitudes toward corruption and ethical standards. It would also help if we publicly celebrated cases where mentors have successfully guided staff to take an ethical stand.

8 UNVEILING CODES OF SILENCE: UNDERSTANDING MORAL AVERSION TO "SNITCHING" ON OTHERS

The NACS acknowledges the importance of whistleblowers and encourages the public to come forward with information about corrupt activities. It seeks to foster an environment where individuals feel safe, supported and protected when reporting wrongdoing. However, at the same time, a person may feel a stronger ethical loyalty to friends and family than to legal obligations. They might view exposing the illicit actions of people they know as an act of betrayal or morally wrong. In everyday language, whistleblowing is often labelled with negative terms like "snitching" or being a sellout, which carry strong social stigma. This stigmatisation can lead to a social norm of 'codes of silence' that undermine the rule of law and hinder societal accountability for corruption and criminal behaviour. In fact, without such 'codes of silence,' being involved in organised corruption would be difficult, if not impossible, to sustain.

Almost everyone is part of one social network or another,[56] and these networks are comprised of social network members (SNMs). This term refers to a person's friends, colleagues and kinspersons, and can exist either online or offline. A person may think that reporting the corrupt conduct of SNMs is a *betrayal*, a type of immoral conduct. Indeed, there are well-documented social norms that stigmatise this kind of behaviour. As a euphemism for these social norms, we used the phrase 'codes of silence' (CoS). We believe that CoS norms weaken the rule of law and reduce societal accountability for corrupt and criminal practices. One of the goals of the baseline study was to identify and understand CoS norms. The baseline study provided some of the first nationally representative evidence of CoS norms in South Africa.

If we accept that CoS norms are not in line with the goals of the NACS, then we need to reduce their influence. and to encourage people to prioritise adherence to the law above the need to protect SNMs. But in order to reduce CoS norms, we need to understand them. The current section builds on the baseline study and looks at CoS norms in different contexts. A special focus of this examination will be the world of work, and we will look at whether people think it is wrong to report the corrupt behaviour of work colleagues. Understanding these norms helps identify barriers to transparency and integrity within South African workplaces. We interrogate the major drivers of CoS norms in this section, looking at which factors best predict them. As we explain below, the determinants that were identified as most important included corruption experience and subjective deprivation.

8.1 Norms Surrounding Reporting Crime Within Social Networks

To gauge public attitudes towards the social norms that surround CoS we had to design unique questions for the baseline survey. After careful deliberation, it was decided to ask respondents to indicate if they thought it is morally wrong for a person to report someone they knew personally (e.g., a friend, co-worker, or neighbour) to the authorities if they committed different kinds of crime. Four types of crimes were selected, ranging from petty (e.g., avoiding paying for public transport) to quite serious (e.g., paying a bribe). Data showed that reporting people you know personally to the authorities for unlawful conduct was generally seen as morally wrong by the mass public. Popular opinion did not seem to make much distinction between the different kinds of unlawful behaviour under discussion. Even when asked about quite serious crimes, most people said it was wrong to report their SNMs to the authorities.

The baseline study found that if a person thought that reporting SNMs who committed one type of crime (e.g., avoiding paying for public transport) was acceptable, then they were more likely to think that informing on SNMs for other types of crime (e.g., accepting bribes) was also permissible. We can conclude, therefore, that we have identified a single CoS norm, a social norm that views as immoral informing on others to the authorities. Additional tests confirmed the internal consistency of the items, supporting their combination into a single reliable metric. We then created an index to measure moral opposition to reporting crimes by SNMs. The index ranged from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating stronger moral resistance to reporting such behaviour. The national average score on the index was 69 (SE=1.094) with a significant share of the population skewed towards the right of the distribution.

The popularity of CoS norms in South Africa was not surprising. Research by Camargo (2017) highlights the pivotal role of social networks in perpetuating corruption within developing country contexts. These networks form a fundamental part of social protection and even survival in these parts of the world.

[56] For a more in-depth discussion of social networks, see Putnam (2000).

While social networks provide essential support and resources, they also possess a "dark side" where loyalty to the network can take precedence over the broader collective good (also see Hoffmann & Patel, 2017). This dynamic means that individuals within these networks may feel compelled to prioritise the interests and wellbeing of SNMs over adherence to the rule of law. The social pressure to reciprocate favours in a developing country context, uphold group solidarity and protect one another can create informal obligations that outweigh adherence to formal rules or laws (Scharbatke-Church & Chigas, 2019). In such contexts, corruption becomes embedded in everyday social relations. Failure to support one's network (by, for example, reporting corrupt behaviour) can result in social sanctions including loss of status, ostracisation or worse.

Research on CoS norms is still in its early stages and much remains to be understood about these norms. However, the baseline study provided valuable insights into potential ways to reduce the hold of CoS norms in the country. Fostering a strong sense of civic responsibility and encouraging active participation in civic affairs was found to have a positive impact. The study also learnt that individuals who are more engaged in civic politics are less likely to support CoS norms. Conversely, an unreflective or unquestioning patriotism tends to reinforce CoS norms. The baseline study also identified the harmful effects of ethnocentrism in this regard. Overall, the baseline study concluded that low levels of civic patriotism was one of the reasons that CoS norms are so prevalent in South Africa. It argued that reducing blind patriotism and ethnocentric attitudes would help weaken CoS norms. By contrast, promoting civic patriotism, which involves a thoughtful and critical commitment to one's country and embraces a reflective form of national loyalty, is likely to have a constructive effect.

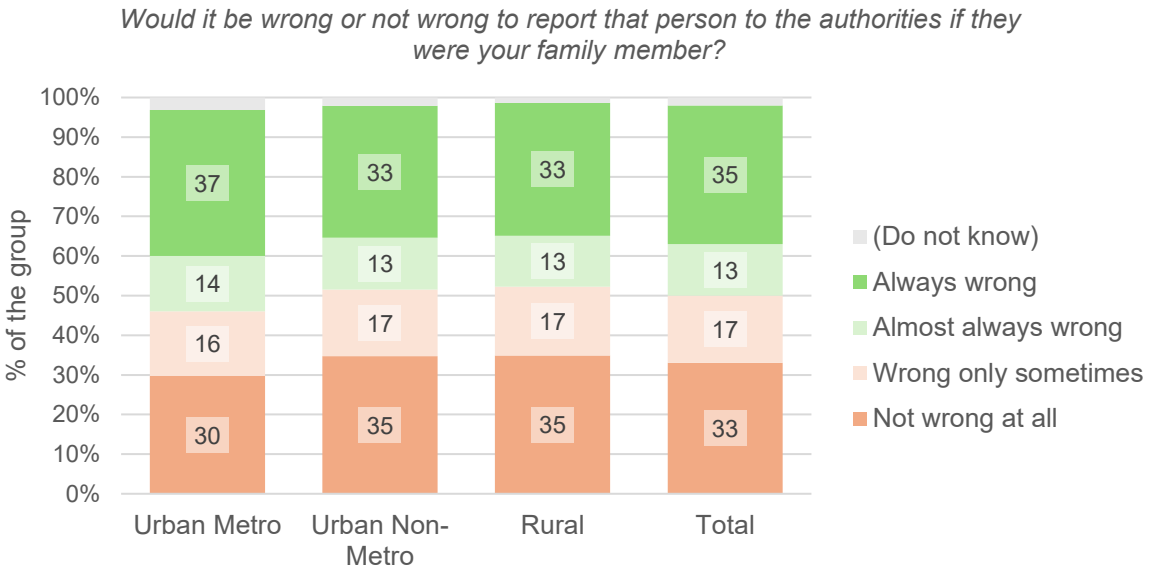
The second-year study aimed to enhance our knowledge of CoS norms. Through in-depth consultations with experts, multiple recommendations were collected to expand and deepen the investigation initiated by the baseline study. These experts suggested that a radius-style approach would yield informative data on the elasticity of CoS norms. The argument is that CoS norms vary not only in intensity (which types of crime should not be reported) but also in its *scope* or *breadth*; that is, the range or "circle" of people or groups toward whom CoS norms are extended. This "radius" represents the extent and depth (or strength) of one's willingness to shield others from the law, from close family and friends (i.e., narrow radius) to neighbours and work colleagues (i.e., wide radius). In addition, it was decided to include a more serious corrupt behaviour when asking about CoS norms. Given the strength of CoS norms detected in the baseline study, it was thought that inclusion of a more egregious crime would be more appropriate for future testing, viz., misuse of funds or demanding a bribe.

8.2 Exploring Codes of Silence Across Social Ties

Based on this approach, during the 2024/25 round of SASAS, participants were asked to imagine that someone they knew personally engaged in corrupt behaviour (like the misuse of funds or requests for bribes). Then participants were requested to indicate whether it would be wrong or not wrong to report that person to the authorities if they were your: (i) family member; (ii) friend; (iii) neighbour; and (iv) work

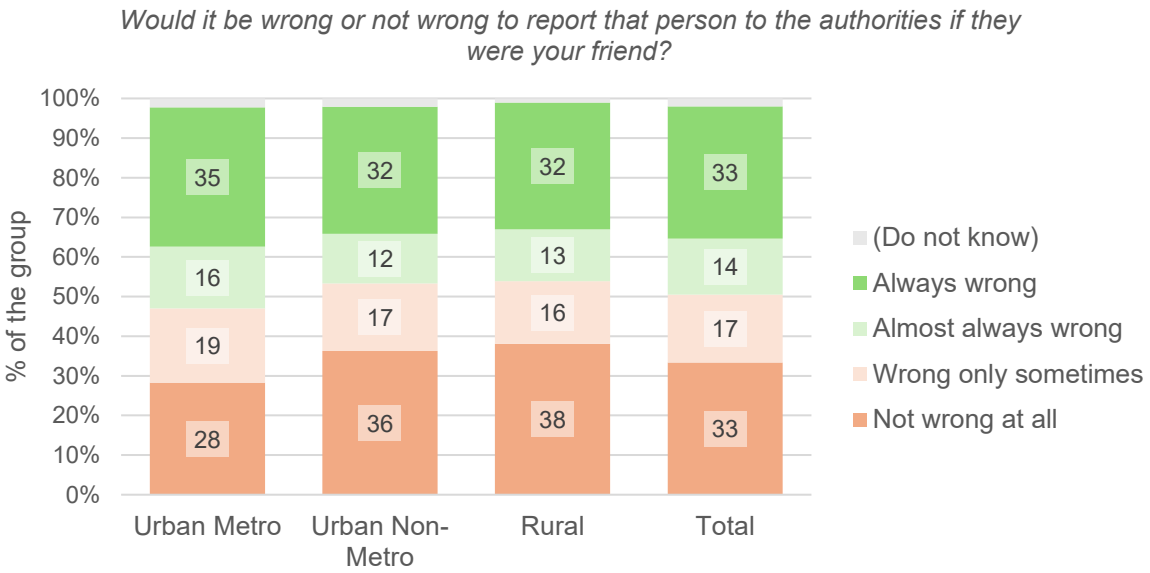
colleague. It is important to note here that the crime presented to the respondent was significantly more serious than the crimes that were explored when CoS norms was first investigated as part of the baseline study. Consequently, there was a moderate expectation that, overall, willingness to report would be greater than what was observed in the baseline study. Now let us look at how people answered the first question about CoS norms around family.

Figure 28: Public endorsement of Codes of Silence norms for family members by geotype status



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Figure 29: Public endorsement of Codes of Silence norms for friends by geotype status



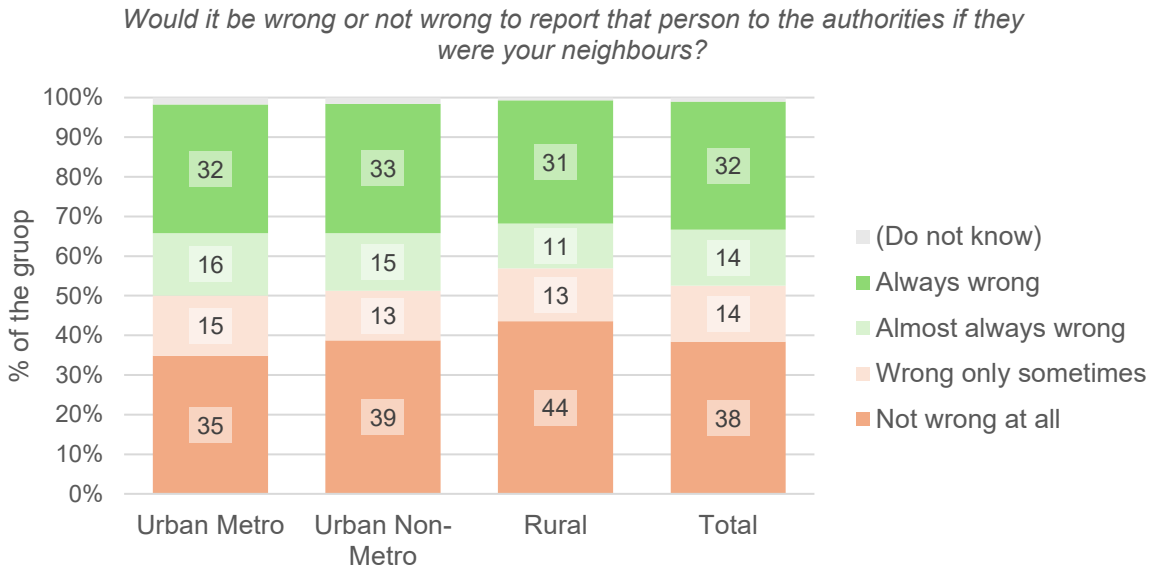
Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Our findings reveal that opinions among adults on the family-related CoS question were fairly evenly split. A notable segment (33%) of adults believed that reporting family members for corruption was not wrong. Around one-third (35%) of the general public felt it was always wrong to report family for corruption. The remainder of the public expressed varying degrees of uncertainty. A small share (13%) indicated that it was almost always wrong and 17% of adults held a more moderate view and said it was wrong only occasionally. We may have anticipated a significant urban-rural divide here with rural adults more likely to prioritise familial loyalty over an adherence to the rule of law. However, when we

look at public responses to the family-related CoS question by geotype group in Figure 28 (pg. 85), we do not see a significant geographic division on this issue.[57]

Turning our attention to the friends-related CoS question, we found that people were also quite divided on this issue. We might have expected a notable difference between urban and rural populations, with individuals in rural areas more inclined to value loyalty to their friends above strict compliance with legal principles. But, as can be observed in Figure 29 (pg. 85), we found that urban dwellers were more likely to view loyalty to friends as more important. Consider, for instance, that nearly two-fifths (38%) of rural dwellers believed that reporting friends for corruption was not wrong at all. This figure was 10 percentage points higher than what was seen for urban metropolitan adults and 2 percentage points higher than was observed for urban non-metropolitan adults. Adult residents of metropoles were, on average, more likely to take a middling position on this issue than their peers living outside major cities. Interestingly, friends-related CoS norms were found to be highest amongst metropolitan adults in Gauteng and the Western Cape and lowest in KwaZulu-Natal.[58]

Figure 30: Public endorsement of Codes of Silence norms for neighbours by geotype status



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Focusing on the neighbour-related CoS question, we found that people were just as divided as they were for the family- and friends-related questions. One might have anticipated a significant contrast between urban and rural populations, with those in rural areas being more likely to prioritise loyalty to their neighbour. However, as illustrated in Figure 30 (pg. 86), the data reveal that urban residents were actually more inclined to regard loyalty to their neighbour as paramount. For example, nearly half (44%) of individuals living in rural areas felt that reporting a neighbour for corruption was not wrong at all. This proportion was 9 percentage points greater than that among adults in urban metropolitan areas and 5 percentage points higher than that among urban non-metropolitan residents. Scrutinising the matter more closely, we found that loyalty to neighbours appeared particularly weak among rural populations in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape.

[57] There was a significant urban-rural divide in certain provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal. Family-related CoS were found to be especially strong amongst residents of rural KwaZulu-Natal; only 20% of rural adults in KwaZulu-Natal said that reporting on family members for corruption was not wrong at all. This figure is 28 percentage points lower than what was observed for urban adults in the province.

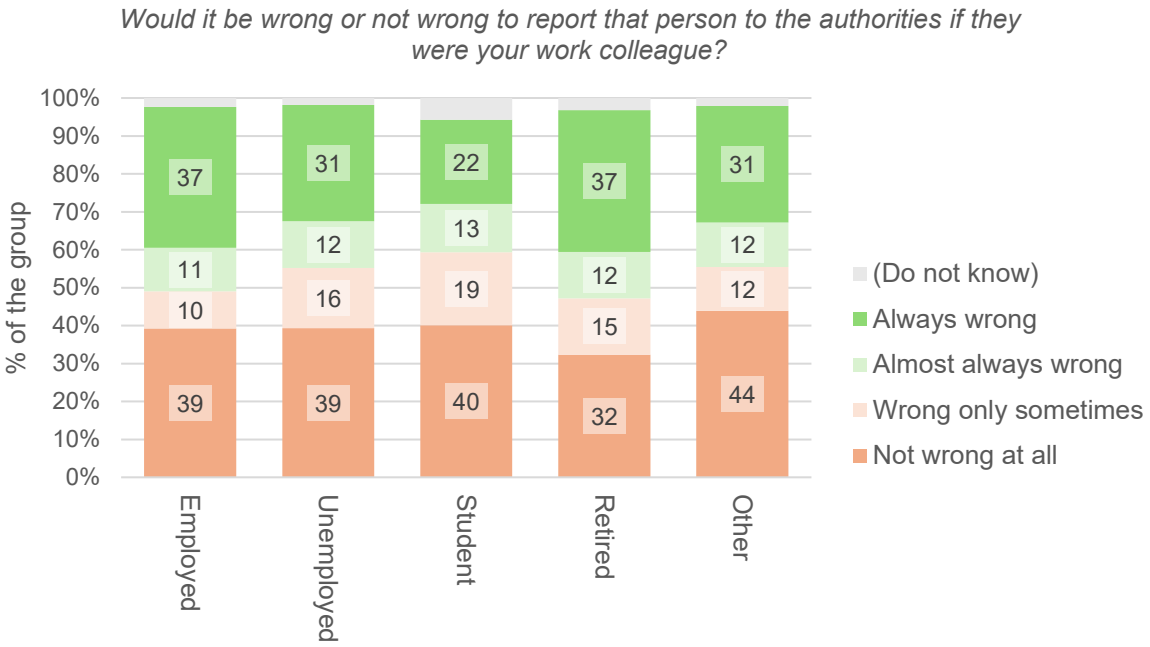
[58] This variance might be attributed to the ongoing internal migration trends in South Africa. Many adults, especially those living in rural areas, move to major urban centres in Gauteng and the Western Cape seeking better economic prospects. In doing so, they often leave their families behind and become less dependent on them. However, additional research is necessary to fully understand this intriguing observation.

8.3 Workplace Codes of Silence

Workplaces are critical sites where many decisions are taken affecting the economy; corruption within these spheres has far-reaching consequences for the nation. Indeed, the NACS identifies the workplace as vital and deserving of special consideration. Studying CoS norms in the workplace is crucial because social pressures to not report wrongdoing within these spaces can seriously undermine efforts to combat corruption and uphold accountability, thereby stifling the country's economic health. These kinds of norms weaken organisational integrity and allow corrupt behaviour to become normalised and entrenched in workplace culture. Given these arguments, it seems worthwhile to give special attention to the workplace-related CoS question. Doing so allows for the identification of specific sectors where such norms are the most prolific and deep-rooted, and where a greater focus is required.

In a manner similar to the previous subsection, we found that the adult public was quite divided on the workplace-related CoS question. While a significant proportion (40%) of all adults said that reporting your work colleague for corruption was not wrong, the remainder was not so sure. About a third (32%) of the general public said it was always wrong and 12% tindicated that it was almost always wrong. A minority (14%) took a middling position and stated that such an action was wrong only sometimes. We were interested in how people who were currently working answered the question on reporting work colleagues for corrupt behaviour. Responses to the question are portrayed across employment status in Figure 31 (pg. 87). Workers were more divided on this question than members of the general public. Comparable percentages of this group indicated that reporting co-workers was either not wrong (40%) or always wrong (38%).

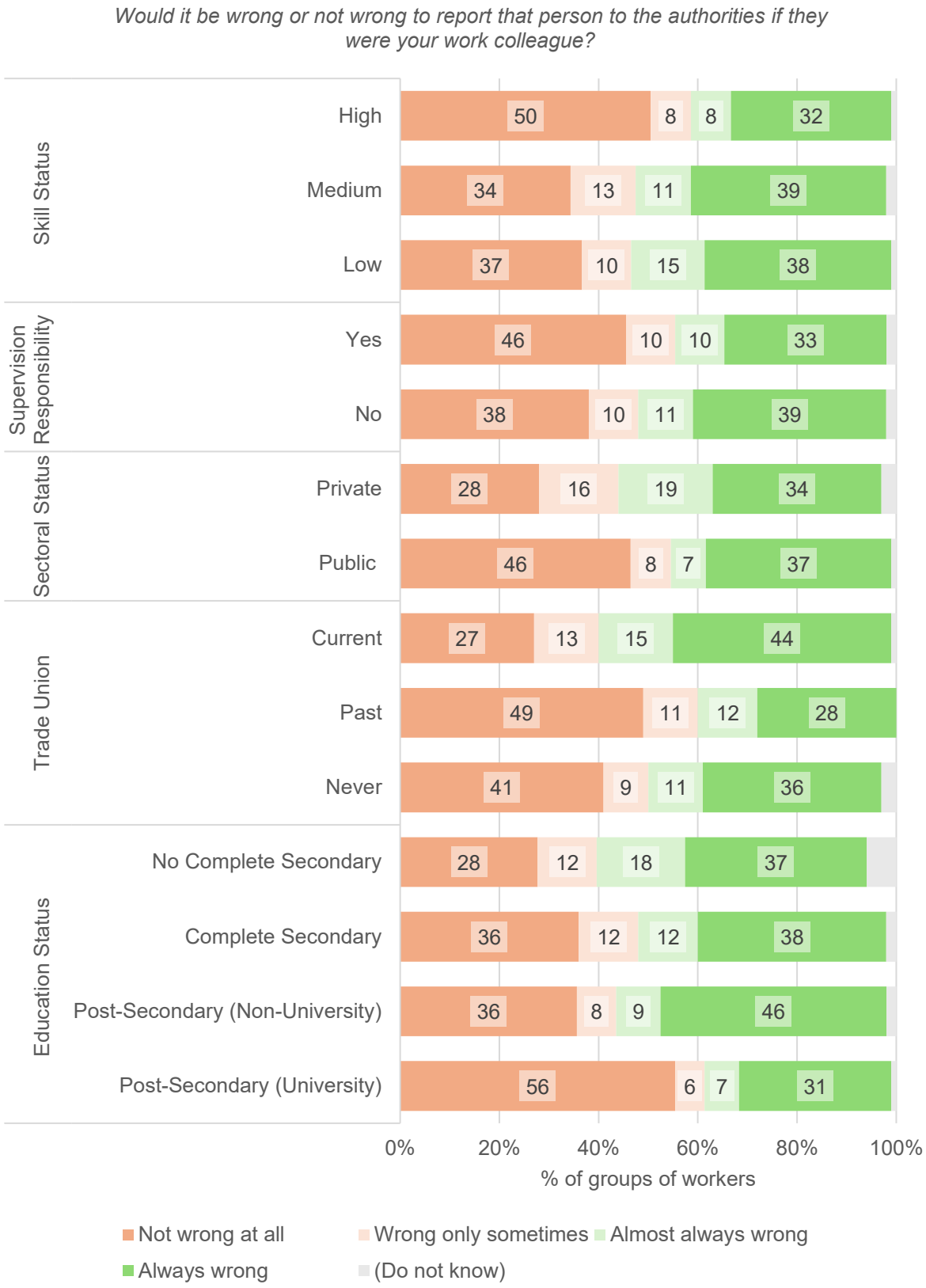
Figure 31: Public endorsement of Codes of Silence norms for work colleagues by employment status



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

People who were not working were less likely to favour workplace CoS norms. Amongst those who were outside the labour market, homemakers were the least likely to endorse workplace CoS norms and this was followed by adults in education. Pensioners, on the other hand, were the most likely to support workplace CoS norms. When it came to the unemployed, we found that those who had never worked were less likely to think it was wrong when compared to those who had worked before. Now let's shift our focus and examine how different kinds of workers responded to the work-related CoS question in Figure 32 (pg. 88). As can be observed in the figure, there were significant disparities between different kinds of workers on this issue. We can see, for instance, that trade union workers are more prone to endorse work-related CoS norms than non-unionised workers, probably indicating an example of union solidarity.

Figure 32: Worker endorsement of Codes of Silence norms for work colleagues by labour market attributes



Note: Data is restricted to persons who are employed.
Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

Self-employed individuals were significantly more inclined than salaried employees to say that reporting on colleagues at work is never wrong. Public sector employees were much less likely to state that reporting on workplace colleagues was never wrong (28%) than their counterparts in the private sector (46%). Indeed, what we see with private sector workers is a greater tendency to adopt a middling position on the work-related CoS question. This discrepancy suggests that attitudes toward whistleblowing are less favourable in the public workplace, implying a workplace culture that is hostile to anti-corruption efforts. High-skilled workers were less likely to support CoS norms at work than their peers in medium- and low- skilled occupations. There were, however, significant disparities between different kinds of medium-skilled workers on this issue.[59] Workers with supervisor responsibility were found to be less willing to endorse CoS norms in the workplace than those without such responsibility.

One of the reasons that high-skilled workers may have low adherence to workplace CoS norms is education. Formal education should promote civic responsibility and ethical awareness, prompting more highly skilled workers to challenge unethical practices rather than conceal them (Dee, 2004). It is often thought that educated workers are generally more likely to recognise the harm caused by workplace corruption and to understand the importance of transparency and accountability in a workplace (also see Truex, 2011). We examined the relationship between formal education and workplace CoS norms and found that nearly half (48%) of adults with post-secondary education said that reporting a work colleague for corruption was not wrong at all (Figure 32, pg. 88). This figure is 9 percentage points above the national average and 18 percentage points higher than those adults with no secondary education. Further analysis showed that those with university education were more likely to reject workplace CoS norms than those adults with post-secondary education but no university.[60]

8.4 Cross-Demographic Patterns in Codes of Silence

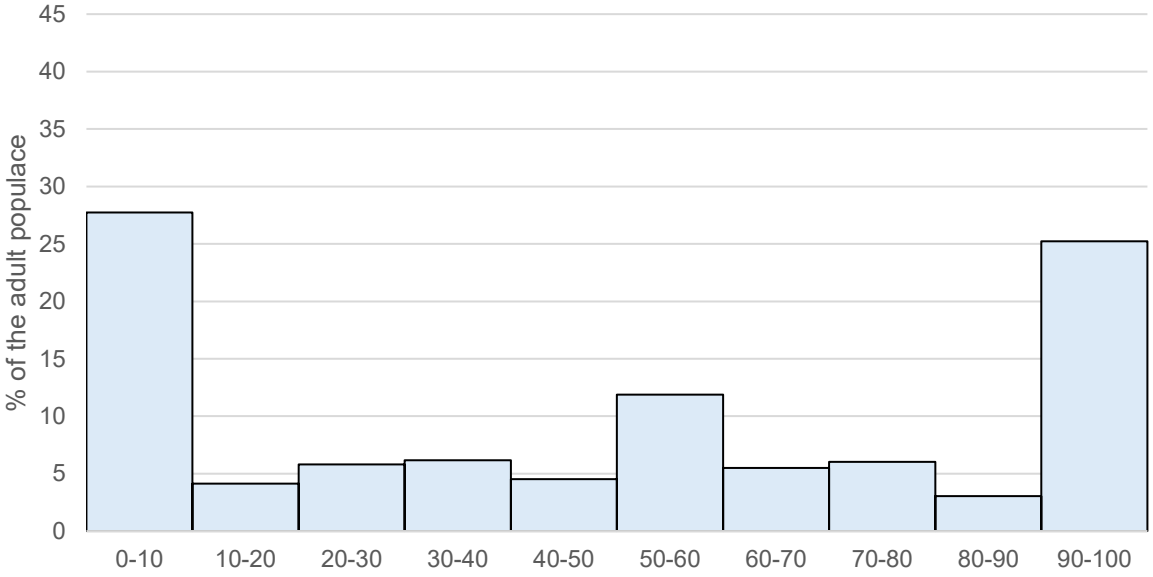
Bivariate tests show that how people answered the CoS questions presented in this section are strongly interrelated with one another. This outcome demonstrates that the perceived morality of reporting on one kind of SNMs was found to be correlated with the morality of reporting on others (the test results are presented in Section 13.11, pg. 159). We can conclude, therefore, that we have identified an interlinked set of CoS norms. Further statistical analyses verified the internal consistency of these items, indicating that they can be reliably aggregated into a single measure (see test results in Section 13.11, pg. 159). Drawing on the statistical analysis, we created an index to evaluate the moral reluctance to

[59] Of the different kinds of medium-skilled workers, members of the craft and related trades occupation were the most likely to support CoS at work. A quarter (25%; SE=6.607) of this group thought that reporting a work colleague was not wrong at all and 45% (SE=11.270) indicated that it was always wrong.

[60] Over half (51%) of adults who have attained a university degree stated that reporting a colleague at work for corruption is completely acceptable. This figure is 7 percentage points higher than that of adults who completed post-secondary education without attending university.

report the offences of SNMs using responses to the CoS questions. The index was designed to have a range from 0 to 100; the higher the value on the index, the greater the perceived moral opposition to reporting the corrupt behaviour of SNMs. The metric was labelled the Radius of Codes of Silence Norms (RoCoSN) Index.

Figure 33: Population distribution on the Radius of Codes of Silence Norm (RoCoSN) Index (histogram)



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

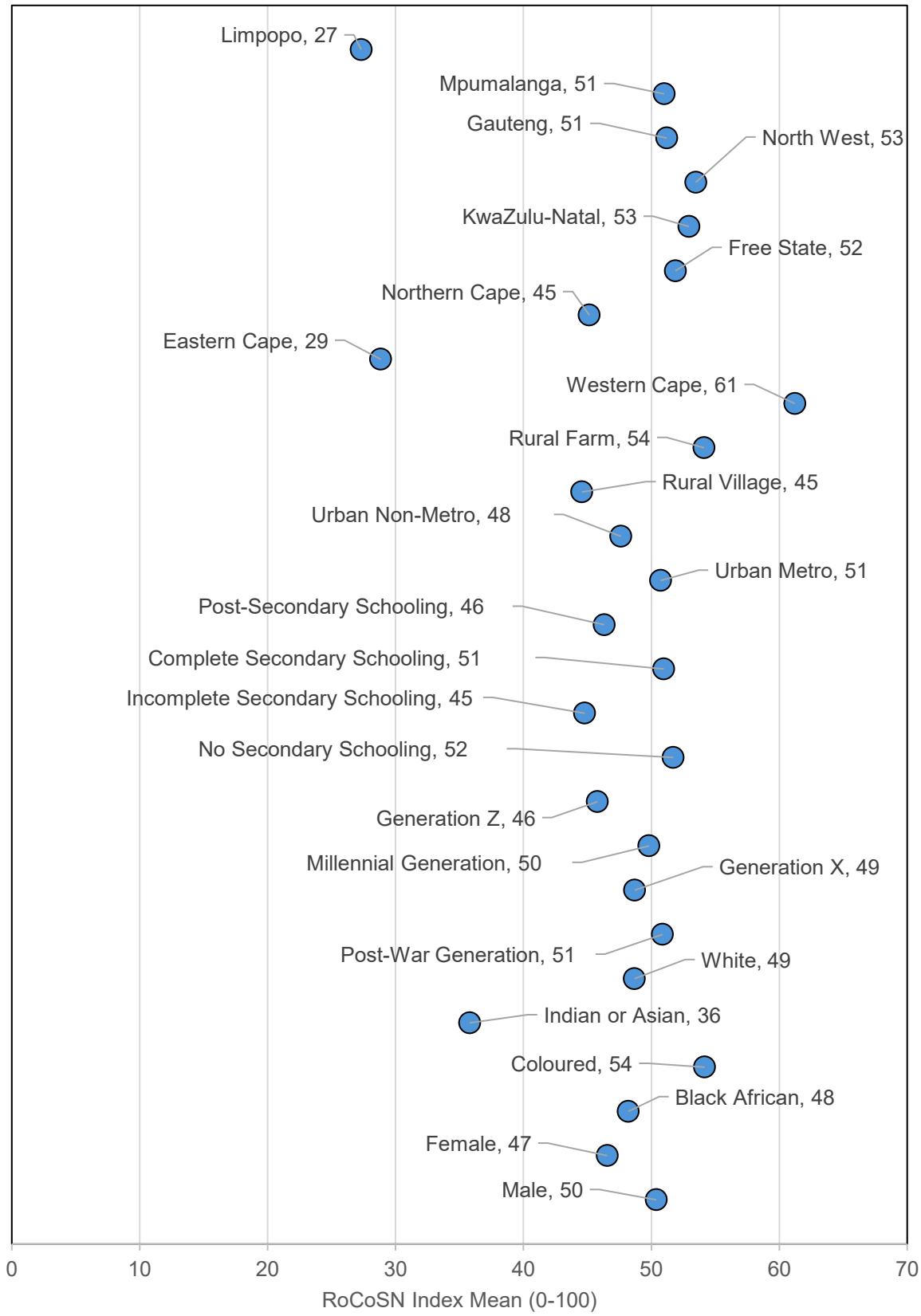
The national mean score on the RoCoSN Index was 48 (SE=1.161); the data distribution on this index was characterised by two distinct peaks (or modes). These two peaks represent two local maxima in the frequency density of the data. As can be observed from Figure 33 (pg. 90), approximately a quarter (24%) of the adult public scored 0 on the RoCoSN Index while 22% of the public scored 100. A small segment (16%) took a middle position scoring between 40 and 60 on the index. The general public is, in other words, divided between two camps; the first represents a strong aversion to reporting on SNMs for corruption and the other rejects this view entirely.

South African society is marked by various forms of division, such as those based on region, age, race, language and class. These divisions are often so entrenched that it can be difficult to imagine any social norm that transcends all of them. However, in every country, some social norms exist that have a unifying influence across these divides. The results of the baseline study showed that CoS norms cut across major socio-demographic groups in the country. The previous study was, of course, looking at a specific kind of CoS norm, focusing on crime severity rather than the social network radius. Examining the SASAS 2024/25 data prompted us to reflect on whether a similar pattern would be observed with the RoCoSN Index. To explore this, we performed a subgroup analysis of the average scores on the index with the findings displayed in Figure 34 (pg. 91).

We did not observe significant differences between subgroups in Figure 34 (pg. 91). No substantial variances were noted, for example, by gender, age or labour market status. There was an educational gradient in the figure that tended to show that more educated persons had, on average, lower index scores (i.e., lower levels support for a CoS norm). However, the education group variances here were not considerable. However, certain variations in RoCoSN Index scores among subgroups were notable and merit attention. Certain population groups were more likely to score high on the RoCoSN Index than others. Coloured adults (M=54; SE=2.469) had a higher average index score than their peers in other groups. When compared to Black African adults, white adults had a similar mean RoCoSN Index score, but this observation obscures significant division between different Black African language groups.[61]

[61] Reviewing how the different major Black African language groups scored on the RoCoSN Index, we discovered that Zulu adults had the highest average score (M=56; SE=2.498).

Figure 34: Mean Radius of Codes of Silence Norm (RoCoSN) Index scores across socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes (SASAS) 2024/25

As can be observed in the figure, there were no clear disparities between urban and rural dwellers, but there were meaningful dissimilarities between different provincial populations. Of the nine provincial adult populations, residents in the Western Cape province (M=61; SE=2.740) scored the highest. Conversely, the provincial populations with the lowest RoCoSN Index scores were the Eastern Cape (M=29; SE=2.030) and Limpopo (M=27; SE=2.417). We uncovered a large urban-rural divide on this issue in KwaZulu-Natal; adults in the province's rural areas tended to have higher index scores (M=68; SE=3.902) than their urban counterparts (M=40; SE=2.819). Interestingly, we found that people who belonged to a religion (M=47; SE=1.277) had a moderately lower RoCoSN Index score than those without a religious affiliation (M=51; SE=2.496). Supplementary analysis found that certain religious groups were less likely than others to have high index scores.[62]

8.5 Solidarity, Personal Experience and Economic Contexts

In many social networks, particularly close-knit ones, solidarity (i.e., the sense of loyalty, mutual support and unity among members) is a core value. This solidarity creates a strong social bond that often governs how individuals interact and respond to each other's behaviour. Reporting the crimes of SNMs to the authorities may be considered a breach of that solidarity. Breaching this solidarity would be less transgressive if the criminal act of the SNMs was perceived as morally repugnant (Hunady, 2017). If individuals view corrupt practices (e.g., bribery or nepotism) as unacceptable, they should be more likely to see the corrupt practices of their SNMs a serious moral breach. Persons with low TtC are, in other words, more triggered by corrupt acts (also see Gouvêa, 2024). They should be highly motivated to challenge corrupt behaviour and would not view silence an appropriate response when faced with SNMs who engaged in corrupt practices.

Based on the rationale provided above, we proposed the following hypothesis: TtC will be positively correlated with endorsement of CoS social norms. An index that measured TtC (i.e., the SLoCB Index) was used to evaluate this thesis (an outline of how this index was constructed can be found in Section 6 on pg. 65). Although statistical testing did discover a positive correlation between the the SLoCB Index and the RoCoSN Index, this association did not achieve statistical significance (test results are provided in Section 13.11 on pg. 159). In essence, we cannot validate the hypothesis and must conclude that there is no significant relationship between these variables. This lack of a statistically significant relationship suggests that other factors beyond their personal tolerance levels may influence whether people uphold silence social norms about corruption. This finding implies that a person might personally disapprove of corruption yet still conform to silence norms due to social pressures or practical considerations.

Individual experiences often serve as a foundation for defining and understanding what constitutes proper moral behaviour. Encounters with corruption can strongly shape one's attitudes, especially in relation to the moral principles connected to criminal activity (Scharbatke-Church & Chigas, 2019). In effect, personal corruption experiences function as a lens through which individuals interpret and engage with social norms concerning illegal conduct (see also Jackson & Köbis, 2018). Previous international research by Gonzalez et al. (2019) demonstrated that personal encounters with corruption affect perceptions of justice. When individuals observe corrupt actions by public officials, it can undermine the moral values that support law-abiding behaviour, diminish respect for authorities and reduce trust in institutions, as well as willingness to cooperate with, the law enforcement system (see also Seligson, 2006).

Building on this reasoning, we hypothesised that recent encounters with corruption in the public sector would reinforce CoS norms. To test this hypothesis, we employed a tool called the 'Recent Corruption Experience' Scale (see Section 2, pg. 21, for a discussion of this scale). Our statistical analyses revealed a moderate yet significant correlation between this measure and the RoCoSN Index (the results of these tests are presented in Section 13.11 on pg. 160). These findings support our hypothesis, suggesting that firsthand experiences of corruption diminish the social stigma attached to misconduct and encourage the formation of CoS norms. Practically, this means that corruption can become self-perpetuating: as more people encounter and tolerate corrupt practices without reporting, these silence

[62] Adult members of the Hindu faith, in particular, (M=34; SE=6.055) had lower RoCoSN Index scores than Muslims (M=44; SE=5.323) or Christians (M=48; SE=1.314). Examining at the Christian majority, we found that Methodists (M=35; SE=6.076) had the lowest index scores. Affiliates of the Pentecostal and Evangelical movement had, by contrast, the highest average scores (M=58; SE=2.872).

norms embed themselves deeper into society. Over time, corruption becomes harder to root out because the collective will (or social pressure) to expose it diminishes.

During the baseline study, we asked experts about the reasons that people may not report those guilty of corruption to the authorities. One of the themes that emerged was that economic hardship may increase the salience of protectiveness within one's community or social group. Individuals with lower socio-economic status often rely more heavily on close-knit social networks for support, survival and access to resources. The social sanctions for betraying SNMs (such as ostracism, distrust or retaliation) can be severe for this group, compounding the personal and material risks individuals face in already precarious situations. For these reasons, the economically disadvantaged may prioritise loyalty to SNMs over abstract moral or legal obligations. The economically advantage, on the other hand, are less reliant on informal safety nets and tend to reside in environments where they are able to access formal institutional support. This security may make them more able to reject CoS norms, seeing less need to shield the corrupt behaviour of their SNMs from scrutiny.

We created the following hypothesis based on the reasoning provided above: higher socio-economic position will be *negatively* associated with CoS norms. We conducted a statistical analysis to determine the relationship between the SES Index and the RoCoSN Index. The results of our analysis showed that CoS norms were not stronger if a person was economically advantaged. This finding may indicate that economically advantaged individuals are just as reliant on tight-knit personal networks for support as their poorer counterparts. Supplementary data analysis revealed that it was *subjective* deprivation that was the real driver of attitudes here and not socio-economic position *per se*. Persons who *felt* that their household income was more than adequate for their needs were less likely to endorse CoS norms (the results of these tests are portrayed in Section 13.11 on pg. 160). This result suggests that, because individuals believe that their basic economic needs are met, they have less to lose by potentially confronting and alienating SNMs involved in corruption. Consequently, they may feel freer to prioritise ethical concerns or civic duties over social loyalty.

8.6 Conclusion

The mass public is quite divided on CoS norms when it comes to serious corrupt practices. A large segment of the general public scored quite high on the RoCoSN Index while another, roughly equivalent, segment scored very low. The persistence and strength of CoS norms around reporting corruption, even in cases of serious offences, highlight the need for multifaceted policy approach to change reduce CoS norms. We can use social norm campaigns to reshape perceptions, highlighting that whistleblowing is a pro-social, valued behaviour rather than disloyalty or "snitching." Only by addressing the social, cultural and psychological underpinnings of CoS can South Africa hope to foster a culture where reporting corruption within social networks is seen as morally acceptable and socially rewarded.

Data presented in this section demonstrates the importance of developing and implementing confidential channels within workplaces for reporting corrupt behaviour, ensuring anonymity and protection against retaliation. To reduce workplace CoS norms, we need to design sector-specific campaigns that address unique workplace challenges and social dynamics influencing CoS norms. This will require recognising the differences between, for example, waged employees, self-employed individuals and union members when crafting engagement strategies, incorporating tailored messaging and support. We need to promote ethics education and civic responsibility training as part of professional development, targeting not only high-skilled workers but also their medium- and low-skilled peers. A special focus should be placed on the public sector, where relatively few employees feel comfortable reporting colleagues, signalling a toxic and controlling, or mutually self-interested and resistant, workplace culture.

Even though reducing TtC is an important goal of the NACS, our data suggests that lowering TtC will not necessarily have a reciprocal effect on CoS norms. Other factors are, in fact, driving support for these kinds of norms. The data shows that frequent personal encounters with public sector corruption may normalise it and promote CoS norms. The findings indicate the necessity of curbing the practice of soliciting bribes and other forms of extortive behaviour by public officials and the importance of fighting bureaucratic corruption. In seeking to reduce CoS norms, we must recognise the role played by subjective deprivation in perpetuating such norms. We need to enhance economic opportunities, social safety nets, poverty alleviation efforts and economic empowerment initiatives so that individuals reliant on close social networks feel less vulnerable to social sanctions when exposing corruption. Until

self-sustaining economic inclusion becomes the norm, this may necessitate integrating income support and livelihood programmes with anti-corruption education targeted at economically disadvantaged groups to reduce coercive dependency on corrupt networks.

9 CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN COMBATING CORRUPTION: DRIVERS OF PUBLIC COOPERATION

A central approach emphasised by the NACS is to motivate ordinary people to come forward and report any corruption they encounter or observe to the relevant authorities. Citizen involvement forms a crucial foundation of the strategy's vision for a society grounded in ethics, transparency and accountability. The NACS anticipates that the public will play an active role in supporting law enforcement efforts and ensuring that those suspected of corrupt conduct, whether individuals or organisations, are held responsible. By exposing corrupt activities, citizens help uphold accountability and promote openness within both public and private sector governance. Regular reporting of corruption by the public can foster a societal culture that rejects corrupt behaviour, discourages potential offenders, and encourages adherence to laws and ethical standards.

When asked in the baseline study about the social values and norms driving corruption, a culture of impunity was frequently identified by a significant proportion of experts. They contended that this impunity culture was deeply entrenched and was perpetuated by a combination of historical and institutional factors. A number of experts indicated that a lack of accountability was damaging for our society, signalling that corrupt practices are tolerated and that justice is selective or inaccessible. The baseline survey also found that a substantial share of the general population thought that a culture of impunity for corruption exists in South Africa. There was a general feeling amongst many respondents that people would not be held accountable by the authorities if they engaged in corrupt activities.

Building upon previous research regarding intentions to report corruption in South Africa, the current section does not aim to assess actual participation in anti-corruption reporting. Instead, it concentrates on the social norms related to fighting corruption. The first part of this section investigates lay attributions for why people in South Africa often do not report corruption. Then we turn our attention to perceptions of law enforcement and their willingness to act on reports of corruption. Finally, the section examines public willingness to work with the authorities to fight corruption, conducting a subgroup analysis of public willingness. Following this, we seek to identify the key factors influencing the intention to combat corruption. These drivers included tolerance for corruption, perceived institutional effectiveness and perceptions of systematic inequality.

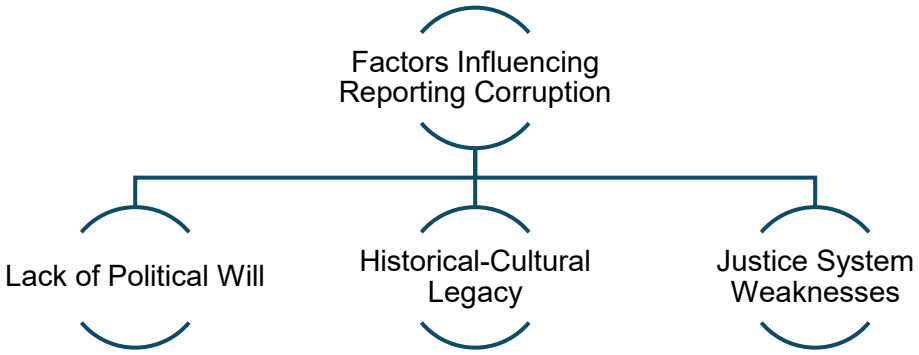
9.1 Public Willingness to Report and Testify Against Corruption

In the last few decades, many researchers have started including questions on anti-corruption behaviours in large public opinion surveys. This shift towards 'what ordinary people can do' and away from 'what government has done' is part of a wider change in public opinion anti-corruption research to focus on proactive behaviour (for a discussion of this shift, see Wysmułek, 2019). Researchers in South Africa are interested in this issue and have looked at public perceptions about fighting corruption. Corruption Watch (2021), for example, conducted a survey to understand public perceptions related to whistleblowing in South Africa. All participants in that study had a positive disposition towards the act of whistleblowing. They believed that whistleblowing is important in order to (i) bring justice to a situation where there was wrongdoing or to the person who was wronged, and (ii) to curb corruption and crime in South Africa.

The baseline study looked at public willingness to report corruption. In particular, it investigated expert opinion on why people in the country often did not report corruption. The consensus among experts pointed to institutional and political shortcomings. Many highlighted the absence of accountability as a primary factor driving the rise in corruption since the post-apartheid era began. They argued that unethical leadership combined with a lack of accountability has nurtured a culture of impunity in South Africa, worsening pre-existing corruption levels. Several experts thought that reporting reluctance was linked to cultural norms that originated in the anti-apartheid struggle. Some talked about how informers in the apartheid-era were seen as "impimpis" (or traitors) who betrayed their communities by collaborating with the state.[63]

[63] Indeed, one of the more interesting findings from the baseline study was the mixed view of whistleblowers that emerged from those experts interviewed. On the one hand, many viewed them as courageous figures who expose corruption, while others expressed scepticism or even hostility towards them for risking personal and family safety for uncertain outcomes.

When experts were interviewed about the causes of non-reporting, a considerable number identified the criminal justice system's weaknesses as a central concern. These experts noted that insufficient and inadequate investigations, and ineffective prosecutions have emboldened corrupt behaviour. In addition, many believed that law enforcement officials have been complicit in corruption. The baseline survey also investigated public attitudes towards a culture of impunity for engaging in corrupt practices. A large proportion of the public appeared to believe that there was general impunity for participating in corruption. More than half (51%) of the population felt that non-elites would not be held accountable for engaging in public sector corruption. In addition to this distressing discovery, we learnt that only a minority (34%) of the adult population thought that elites would be held accountable for partaking in corrupt practices.



The second year of the study sought to gain a deeper insight into how the public perceives the willingness to report corruption. By engaging in extensive discussions with experts across various platforms, a range of suggestions was gathered to broaden and improve the initial investigation on this subject. Many experts suggested that it would be helpful to explore willingness in more detail. It was decided, in particular, to ask people not merely whether they would report corruption, but also if they would be willing to give testimony in a court case involving corruption. Asking a person to give testimony is a more demanding endeavour than just making a report. It is also much riskier, as court witnesses in South Africa face significant risks such as intimidation and threats (Wiener, 2023). Consequently, there was an expectation that people would be less likely to indicate a willingness to participate in this kind of anti-corruption behaviour.

9.2 Public Lay Attributions for Non-Reporting of Corruption

The baseline survey looked at non-expert opinion on why many people in South Africa do not report the corruption that they have witnessed. Scholars have long considered lay attributions to be an important source of information when trying to understand human behaviour.[64] When delineating lay attributions, we made a distinction between the following types: (i) psychological (i.e., internal) and (ii) environmental (i.e., external). Within attribution theory research, internal factors refer to how people explain the causes of events or behaviours based on personal values, qualities or traits of the individual involved. In contrast, external factors are those explanations that point to environmental influences or situational circumstances outside the direct control of a person.[65] Understanding non-expert attitudes to the societal reluctance to report corruption can shed light on the complex interplay of institutional and psychological barriers to reporting this kind of crime.

Participants in SASAS 2023 were requested to provide a rationale for why many people in South Africa do not report corruption. The precise wording of this question was as follows: "Some people say that many incidents of corruption are never reported. Based on your experience, what do you think is the main reason why many people do not report corruption when it occurs?" A variety of different precoded options were read out by fieldworkers and multiple options could be selected. As can be observed from Table 9-1 (pg. 97), most of the general public cited external factors as reasons for not reporting corruption. In SASAS 2023, 86% of adults pointed to issues in the law enforcement system. The leading

[64] People's ability to assign attributions objectively is complicated by the fact that they do not process information in an impartial manner (Kelley, & Michela, 1980). Psychological research has shown that attributions are influenced by group-serving biases (also see Taylor & Doria, 1981).
[65] For a further discussion of the difference between internal and external attribution, see Hewstone (1989).

concerns were lack of punishment for offenders (51%), lack of protection for whistleblowers (49%), and corruption within reporting structures themselves (30%). Over half (55%) mentioned internal factors, such as the normalisation of corruption (27%), lack of knowledge (23%) and loyalty to one's group (21%).

Table 9-1: Percentage who selected main attributions identified for why many people do not report corruption in South Africa (multiple response)

	2023		2024/25	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Psychological Factors				
Corruption is normalised	27	(1.376)	33	(1.486)
People don't know where to report it	23	(1.251)	31	(1.516)
No one wants to betray anyone	21	(1.296)	27	(1.463)
Environmental Factors				
Those responsible will not be punished.	51	(1.584)	52	(1.544)
There is no protection for those who report corruption	49	(1.578)	51	(1.550)
The officials where they would report to are also corrupt	30	(1.438)	43	(1.546)
It is not worth the effort of reporting it	28	(1.415)	31	(1.516)
Other Responses				
Other reason	2	(0.476)	1	(0.148)
Refused	3	(0.586)	5	(0.605)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

The lay attribution question on non-reporting was repeated in SASAS 2024/25 and there was a lot of consistency with the previous SASAS round (Table 9-1, pg. 97). Similar to what was observed in the baseline survey, lack of punishment for the guilty was the most popular (52%; SE=1.544) attribution provided by the mass public. In addition, we found that 43% (SE=1.546) of the public stated that corruption in reporting structures discouraged reporting. This figure was significantly higher than was observed in the baseline survey, possibly indicating a decrease in trust in these institutions. Similar to what we saw in the baseline survey, the most common internal factor selected was the normalisation of corruption (33%; SE=1.486). Similar proportions of the public also selected a lack of knowledge (31%; SE=1.516) and concerns about ingroup loyalty (27%; SE=1.463). Reviewing the data depicted in the table as a whole, it is apparent that environmental factors continue to prevail as the main attribution type put forward to explain the reluctance to report corruption.

People who are less accepting of corruption may be more likely to attribute non-reporting to environmental factors. They may blame bad institutions for the failure to report corruption because they hold stronger moral standards against corrupt behaviour and expect institutions to uphold justice effectively (Alvarez-García et al., 2025). Their low TtC implies that they see corruption as serious wrongdoing that should be confronted, so when corruption is not reported, they attribute this failure to institutional weaknesses (also see Lagos, & Zhang, 2025). To test this thesis, we utilised a multivariate regression analysis to isolate the relationship between TtC and attributing non-reporting to environmental factors. Here we use the SLoCB Index for this test (an outline of how this index was constructed can be found in Section 6 on pg. 65) We found a robust relationship between the two; the higher the score on the index, the lower the odds that a person would attribute non-reporting to environmental factors.[66] A similar relationship did not exist between psychological lay attributions and the SLoCB Index (the results of these tests are portrayed in Section 13.12 on pg. 161).

People who endorse CoS norms should be less likely to blame bad institutions for the failure to report corruption because their adherence to such codes emphasises internal psychological factors such as loyalty to peers and group cohesion over institutional accountability. Since these individuals prioritise protecting their group members, they probably won't blame non-reporting on institutional weaknesses (Camargo, 2017). They may perceive the silence as a voluntary protection mechanism embedded in the group's culture rather than a failure of the institution's structures or of the justice system (also see Scharbatke-Church & Chigas, 2019). To examine this hypothesis, we employed a multivariate

[66] For every one unit change on the SLoCB Index, the chance of selecting environmental factors when asked to explain why many people do not report corruption to the authorities decreased by 1.4%

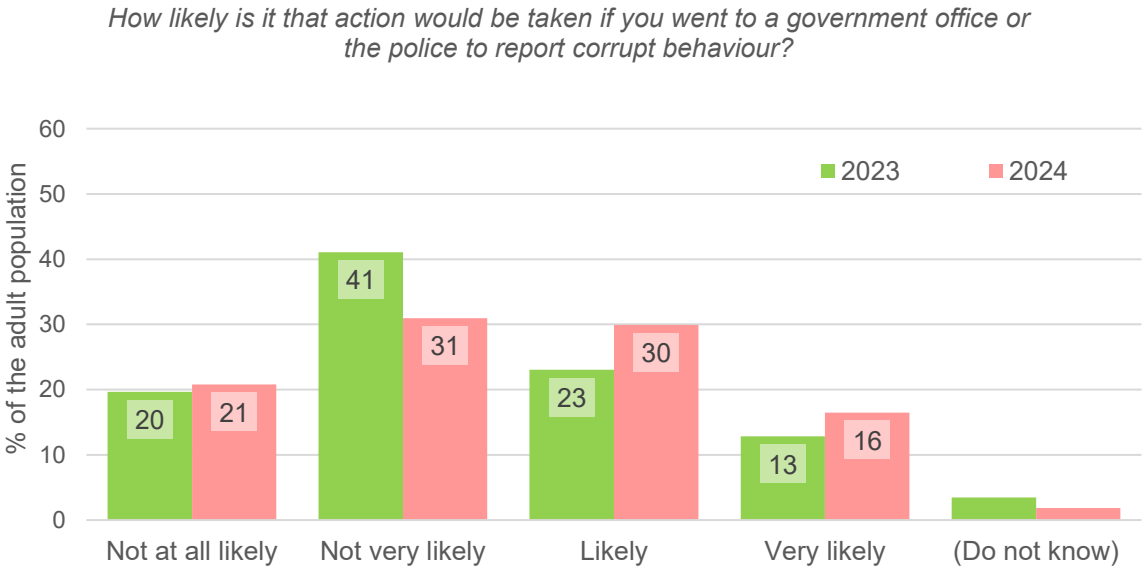
regression analysis to identity the link between CoS norms and the tendency to attribute non-reporting of corruption to external environmental factors. For this analysis, we utilised the RoCoSN Index (details on its construction are provided in Section 8, pg. 89). Our findings revealed a strong association: individuals scoring higher on this index were less likely to ascribe non-reporting to environmental causes.[67] In contrast, no comparable association was found between psychological lay attributions and the RoCoSN Index (the outcomes of these tests are presented in Section 13.12 on pg. 162).

A person who was quite knowledgeable about corruption may be more willing to blame bad institutions for the failure to report corruption. This may be due to the fact that their knowledge helps them understand how institutional weaknesses create an environment where corruption goes unreported[68]. To evaluate this hypothesis, we conducted a multivariate regression analysis to distinguish the relationship between awareness and the inclination to attribute non-reporting to external environmental factors. This analysis made use of the PIoC Index (further details on its development can be found in Section 4, pg. 48). Our results demonstrated a significant link: those with higher scores on the index were more prone to explain non-reporting through environmental reasons.[69] Conversely, no similar connection was observed between psychological lay attributions and the PIoC Index (the findings of these tests are shown in Section 13.12 on pg. 162).

9.3 Public Confidence in Anti-Corruption Reporting Structures

If a person reported a case of corruption to South African law enforcement, they should be confident that the authorities will act. But during the baseline survey we found that a clear majority of the adult population thought that anti-corruption reporting structures were ineffective. The data suggest that a majority of the mass public believed that the authorities would not act if they reported a case of corruption. A fifth said that such action was not at all likely while 41% stated that it was not very likely. These findings draw our attention to a persistent legitimacy challenge for law enforcement. It represents a clear failure of the justice system to convince the public of its effectiveness and is a major obstacle to the creation of a zero-tolerance environment for corruption, which is a key NACS aim.

Figure 35: Perceived likelihood that action would be taken if corruption was reported to a government office or the police, 2023 and 2024/25



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

[67] For each one-point increase on the RoCoSN Index, the likelihood of attributing the non-reporting of corruption to environmental factors declined by 0.5%.

[68] Greater awareness of corruption and its impact may help ordinary people think more like experts. Certainly, the baseline study found that experts overwhelmingly favoured environmental factors (e.g., ineffective law enforcement) to explain why people would not report corruption. Only a few put forward explanations that specifically focused on psychological factors.

[69] For every one-unit increase in the PIoC Index, the probability of explaining corruption non-reporting via environmental attributions grew by 1.3%.

As part of the study's second year, the question on the confidence that the authorities would act if the respondent went to a government office or the police to report corrupt behaviour was repeated. Nearly a fifth (16%) of the general public said that it was not at all likely that action would be taken while 30% felt that it was not very likely that action would be taken (Figure 35, pg. 98). Nearly a third (31%) of the mass public believed that it was likely that the authorities would take action if they reported corrupt behaviour and 21% stated that it was very likely. A small minority (2%) were unsure and did not answer the question. When compared to what was seen in SASAS 2023, this is a noteworthy (if not substantial) improvement in sentiment over the last year. It might be that a small segment of the general public is responding positively to the recent government changes that may signal stronger efforts to fight to corruption.

Between first and second survey rounds in this study; there was a 10 percentage point increase in the share of the general public who thought that action would be taken if they went to the authorities to report corruption. But if we take a closer look at the data then it is possible to observe that certain subgroups experienced greater levels of attitudinal change during this period than others. Table 9-2 (pg. 99) presents the percentage of various socio-demographic categories who indicated in SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25 that action would likely be taken if they went to report corruption. Male adults, for example, experienced a lower degree of attitudinal change than their female counterparts. Female adults experienced a 13 percentage point increase, 4 points more than male adults. If we turn our attention to generational groups, we find that all generational groups experienced a positive change during the period under review, but the Post-War Generation as well as the Millennial Generation experienced the most positive change.

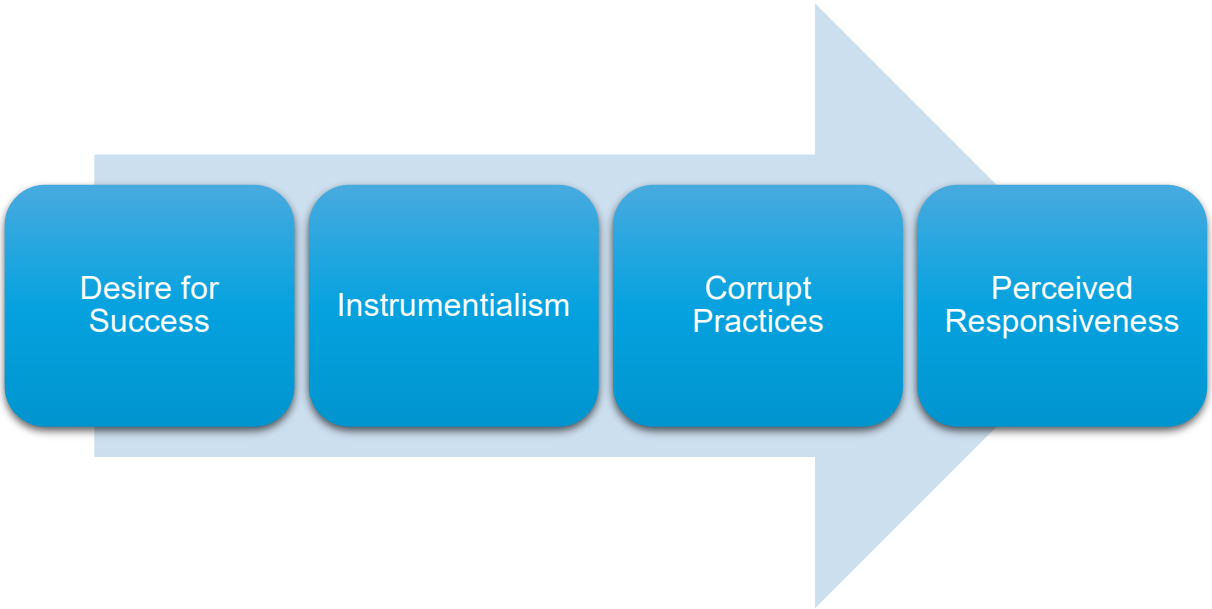
Table 9-2: Proportion of different socio-demographic groups that action would likely be taken if they went to report corruption to the police or a government office, 2023 and 2024/25

	2023		2024/25	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Gender Group				
Male	38	(2.310)	46	(2.350)
Female	34	(1.891)	47	(2.039)
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	34	(3.329)	49	(4.275)
Generation X	37	(2.948)	43	(3.429)
Millennial Generation	36	(2.419)	49	(2.461)
Generation Z	35	(3.336)	44	(3.001)
Race Group				
Black African	34	(1.657)	45	(1.820)
Coloured	44	(3.906)	51	(4.041)
Indian	42	(8.290)	41	(4.377)
White	37	(5.982)	59	(4.417)
Geotype				
Urban Metro	40	(2.695)	47	(2.722)
Urban Non-Metro	38	(2.373)	49	(2.547)
Rural Village	28	(2.368)	43	(2.493)
Rural Farm	29	(5.089)	42	(6.098)
Province				
Western Cape	41	(5.313)	49	(3.715)
Eastern Cape	49	(3.296)	40	(3.138)
Northern Cape	27	(3.824)	61	(4.420)
Free State	38	(4.205)	55	(4.181)
KwaZulu-Natal	29	(2.845)	47	(3.167)
North West	34	(3.935)	69	(3.529)
Gauteng	40	(3.570)	47	(4.101)
Mpumalanga	25	(3.798)	36	(3.945)
Limpopo	25	(3.711)	31	(3.716)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

Notable shifts were recorded among the country's three main racial minority groups between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25. Among these groups, White adults experienced the most substantial change. The proportion of white adults who believed that reporting corruption would lead to action increased from 37% (SE=5.982) at the beginning of the period to 59% (SE=4.417) by the end. As can be observed from Table 9-2 (pg. 99), there were also noteworthy changes by geotype group. People living in rural areas experienced more positive change than their counterparts in urban areas. This geographic disparity was especially true of those residing in metropolitan cities.[70] There was a considerable degree of provincial variance in how people responded to the efficacy question. Of all the provincial populations, the North West (69%; SE=3.529) and the Northern Cape (61%; SE=4.420) reported the highest perceived efficacy. There was a large improvement in the share of residents who said that action would be taken if they reported corruption in these two provinces. Residents in Limpopo (31%; SE=3.716) and Mpumalanga (36%; SE=3.945) were much less likely than residents of other provinces to believe that action would be taken.

Additional analysis demonstrated that efficacy perceptions were shared widely across South Africa's political landscape. We found that ANC supporters had similar average perceptions of the effectiveness of anti-corruption reporting as members of the DA and the EFF. But we did find that MK partisans were out of step with their counterparts in the other major parties. We found that 38% (SE=5.119) of MK supporters said that action would be taken if they went to the authorities to report corruption; a figure that is 10 percentage points lower than the national average. The pessimism of MK supporters could be a reflection of the election campaign initiated by the MK leadership during the 2024 NPE, which condemned the former ANC-led government for corruption and disparaged the anti-corruption efforts of that government.



Perceiving corruption as important for success in life is likely to be associated with thinking that action would not be taken if corruption is reported to the authorities. If individuals see corruption as a key means to achieve success, they may perceive the law enforcement institutions as inherently corrupt or complicit (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). This makes them doubt the willingness or ability of authorities to effectively address or punish corruption. Within such a worldview, reporting corruption seems futile because it challenges a norm viewed as essential to getting ahead, implying that institutions either tolerate, are powerless against or actively participate in corrupt practices (also see Lagos, & Zhang, 2025). This thesis aligns with broader research on corruption perceptions and institutional trust, which shows that people's expectations about institutional effectiveness strongly shape their willingness to report wrongdoing and believe in accountability mechanisms (for a discussion of this research, see Liu et al., 2023).

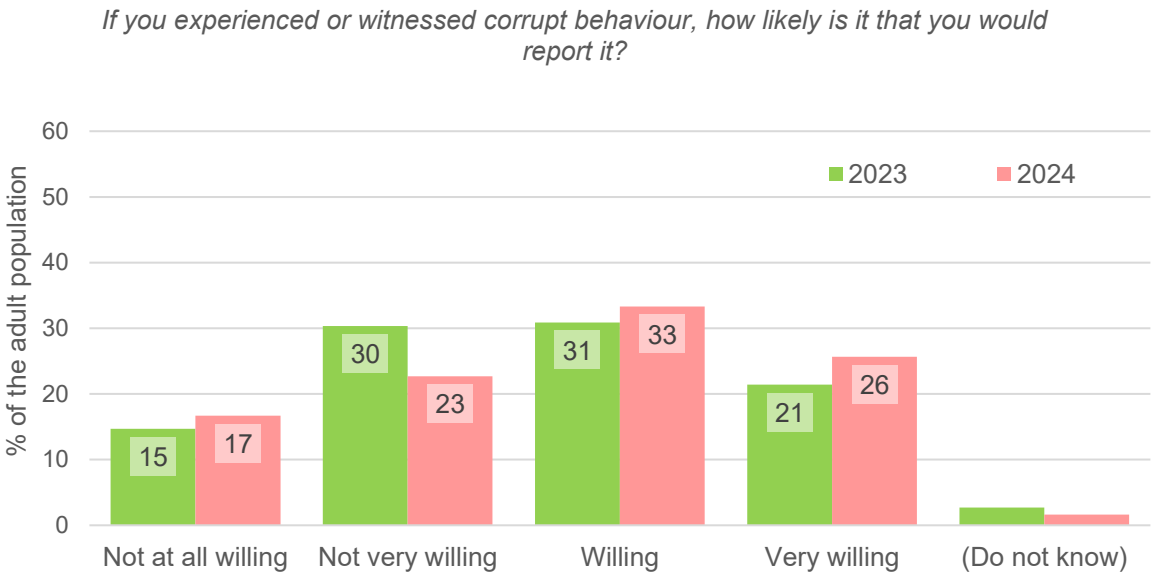
[70] Amongst metropolitan populations in the country, the perceived likelihood of a response when reporting corruption to the authorities was highest in Cape Town and lowest in eThekwini.

For us to evaluate the hypothesis outlined above, we considered the perceived instrumentalism of two corrupt practices: (i) paying bribes; and (ii) doing sexual favours (Section 5 outlines the details of these two instrumentalist measures). A multivariate analysis confirmed the hypothesis and demonstrated that an instrumentalist view of corruption was associated with thinking that reporting corruption as an ineffective activity. Even if we take other factors into account, we find that the more a person views corruption as key to success, the lower the odds that they will think that reporting is effective (the outcomes of these tests are presented in Section 13.12 on pg. 162). In short, when corruption is seen as integral to success, it fosters a lack of confidence that authorities will act on reports, as the whole system is perceived as compromised or ineffective in combating corruption. This creates a cycle where people expect no action from authorities, which discourages reporting and undermines the enforcement of anti-corruption measures.

9.4 Public Willingness to Report Corruption in South Africa

Fieldworkers in SASAS 2024/25 first asked respondents to imagine that they had experienced or witnessed corrupt behaviour (like the misuse of funds or requests for bribes). Then they asked respondents how likely it would be that they would report the corrupt behaviour that they had experienced or witnessed. Roughly speaking, three-fifths of adults said that they would be either likely (33%) or very likely (26%) to report. A lower proportion of the public reported that they would report corruption if they experienced or witnessed it (Figure 36, pg. 101). More or less two-fifths of adults stated that they were not willing to report, with 17% indicating that they were not at all willing and 23% that they were not willing. This proportion was somewhat lower than what was observed in SASAS 2023. In that survey round, approximately half of the general public indicated they would be either unlikely (30%) or very unlikely (15%) to report.

Figure 36: Perceived willingness of the general public to report if they experienced or witnessed corrupt behaviour, 2023 and 2024/25



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

There was an overall increase of 7 percentage points between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25 in the proportion of the general public who stated they would report corruption if they witnessed it. A detailed examination of the data revealed that some subgroups showed greater shifts in attitudes than others during this timeframe. This indicates that certain groups reacted more favourably to broader societal changes. Table 9-3 (pg. 102) illustrates the percentages of various socio-demographic categories indicating their willingness to report corruption during the first- and second-year survey. While some groups exhibited minimal change, others demonstrated a notable shift. For instance, male adults showed less attitudinal change than females. Looking at generational cohorts, the Millennial Generation showed the most significant positive change within this short period and the Generation Z showed the least.

Table 9-3: Proportion of different socio-demographic groups that stated that they would be likely to report corruption if they witnessed or experienced it, 2023 and 2024/25

	2023		2024/25	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Gender Group				
Male	54	(2.410)	59	(2.362)
Female	51	(2.055)	59	(2.001)
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	55	(3.797)	60	(4.060)
Generation X	51	(3.111)	57	(3.605)
Millennial Generation	48	(2.508)	59	(2.449)
Generation Z	58	(3.480)	59	(2.906)
Race Group				
Black African	50	(1.755)	57	(1.824)
Coloured	53	(3.768)	61	(3.765)
Indian	68	(5.624)	65	(4.635)
White	68	(5.724)	76	(3.643)
Geotype				
Urban Metro	56	(2.778)	57	(2.706)
Urban Non-Metro	53	(2.479)	66	(2.462)
Rural Village	47	(2.697)	56	(2.481)
Rural Farm	42	(5.746)	53	(6.205)
Province				
Western Cape	61	(4.980)	59	(3.609)
Eastern Cape	63	(3.084)	67	(3.113)
Northern Cape	46	(4.529)	68	(4.233)
Free State	61	(4.534)	70	(3.742)
KwaZulu-Natal	49	(3.288)	57	(3.133)
North West	63	(4.125)	75	(3.576)
Gauteng	52	(3.717)	57	(4.086)
Mpumalanga	39	(4.328)	52	(4.169)
Limpopo	35	(3.893)	46	(4.019)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

The change in attitudes observed between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25 was found to be greatest outside metropolitan urban areas. Consider, for example, that in SASAS 2024/25, 66% (SE=2.462) of non-metropolitan urban adults said that they would report corruption. This figure is 13 percentage points higher than what was observed for the same group in SASAS 2023. There was a notable variation across provinces in people's responses to the question about the likelihood of reporting corruption. Among all provincial populations, the Free State (70%; SE=3.742) and Northern Cape (75%; SE=3.576) showed the highest readiness to report. In contrast, residents of Limpopo (46%; SE=4.019) demonstrated a significantly lower willingness to report. Regarding shifts in attitudes, adults residing in the Northern Cape experienced the most substantial change on this matter.[71]

It might have been assumed that individuals who are religious would be more inclined to report corruption to the authorities if they witnessed or experienced it. This expectation could stem from the belief that religious teachings often emphasise moral values such as honesty, integrity and accountability. However, we found that religious people expressed a similar likelihood of reporting (59%; SE=1.743) in SASAS 2024/25 as their non-religious counterparts (58%; SE=3.191). We discovered that people who were working were, on average, not less likely to exhibit a willingness to report corruption than those who were not working, but there was a distinct division between different kinds of workers. We discovered that workers who supervised others (77%; SE=4.492) were more likely to indicate a willingness to report than those who did not (57%; SE=3.221). In addition, we discerned that high-skilled workers were much more liable (76%; SE=4.009) to state that they would report corruption if they

[71] The proportion of the adult population in the Northern Cape who said that they would report corruption if they witnessed it increased from 46% (SE=4.529) in SASAS 2023 to 68% (SE=4.233) in SASAS 2024/25.

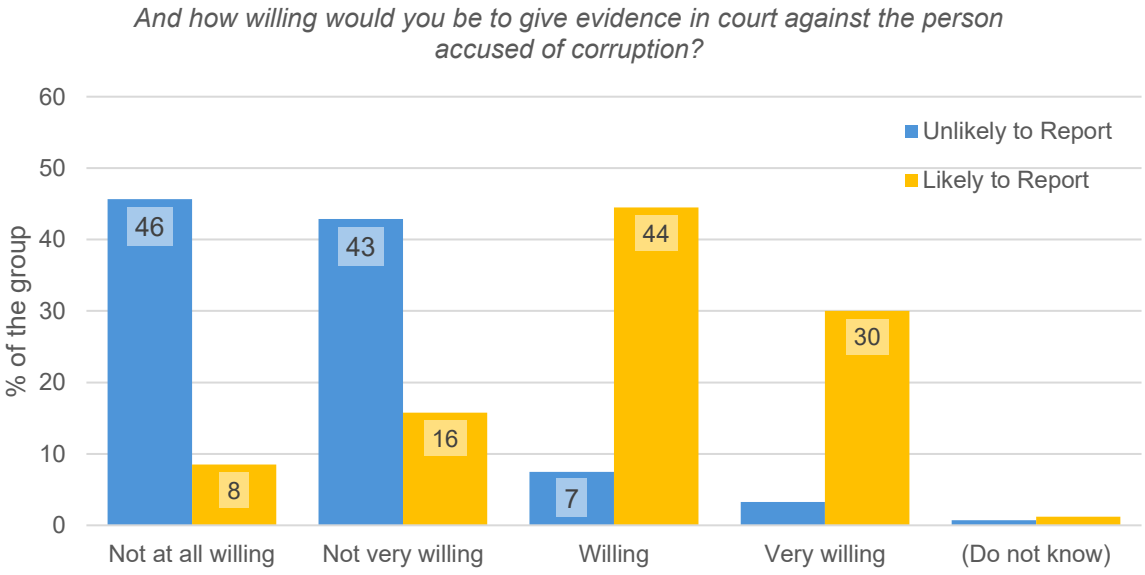
witnessed it than their peers in medium- (57%; SE=4.618) and low-skilled (54%; SE=5.668) occupations.[72]

9.5 Willingness to Testify in Court Against Corruption

An important aspect of fighting corruption is willingness to give testimony in court. Experts we talked to during the baseline study noted that witness testimony in court can play a crucial role in combating corruption because it often provides the essential evidence needed to prove corrupt acts. Corruption cases typically involve complex interactions and motives that require firsthand accounts from those who observed or participated in the transactions to clarify intent and expose wrongdoing. Depending on the circumstances, witness testimony can be pivotal in securing convictions, as many corruption cases rely heavily on the cooperation of insiders or intermediaries who can detail the relevant dealings. Without their accounts, it is challenging for law enforcement to build a strong case to present in court.

SASAS respondents in 2024/25 were asked to imagine that they had experienced or witnessed corrupt behaviour and were then requested to state how willing they would be to give evidence in court against the person accused of corruption. Just about half of the mass public said that they would not give evidence, with 23% stating that they were not at all willing and 26% that they were just not willing. A smaller share of the public reported that they would testify against a person accused of corruption in court. More than a quarter (29%) said that it was very likely that they would give testimony and 19% stated that it was just likely. The remainder (2%) were uncertain and did not answer the question. From a comparative perspective, it is apparent that participants are less willing to testify against someone accused of corruption than they are to report this crime to the authorities.

Figure 37: Perceived willingness of the general public to give testimony in court in a corruption case by willingness and unwillingness to report witnessed corruption

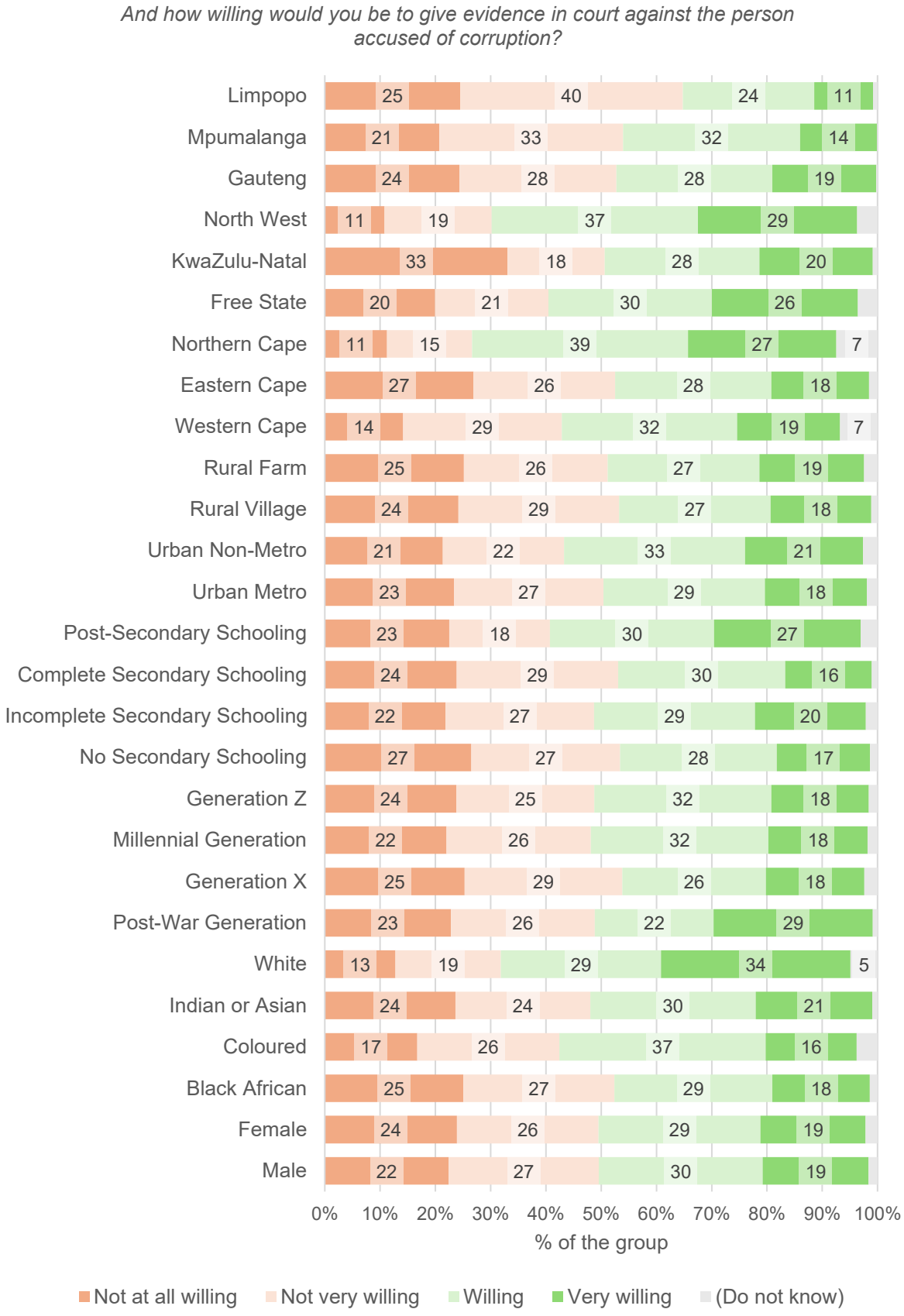


Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

There appeared to be a relationship between how people answered the testimony question and how they responded to the reporting question discussed in the previous subsection. The strength of this apparent association can be observed in Figure 37 (pg. 103); bivariate tests confirmed that there was a robust connection between these two variables. This outcome demonstrated that willingness to report corruption was found to be correlated with willingness to testify against someone accused of corruption, albeit in smaller numbers (test findings are reported in Section 13.12, pg. 163). It appears that individuals who feel morally or socially compelled to expose corruption are also prepared to take the next step of providing testimony. This relationship likely reflects common psychological and social

[72] There was a notable disparity between certain types of high-skilled workers. People who were managers (92%; SE=2.900) were much more likely to state that they would report corruption than those who were high skill professionals (72%; SE=5.878).

Figure 38: Perceived willingness of the general public to give testimony in court in a corruption case by socio-demographic attributes



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

factors (such as trust in the justice system, perceived legitimacy of authorities, personal integrity, and social norms that encourage or discourage whistleblowing) that drive both activities.

It is logical to anticipate that a person's response to the testimony question would vary notably according to their socio-demographic background. To investigate this proposition, we analysed the answers to the testimony question across diverse demographic groups. The distribution of responses among these groups is depicted in Figure 38 (pg. 104). Among South Africa's racial groups, white adults showed the greatest readiness to provide testimony in court. Approximately two-thirds of white adults indicated they were either willing (29%) or very willing (34%) to testify. Additionally, willingness to testify differed markedly across generational cohorts, with the Post-War Generation demonstrating a higher propensity to give testimony compared to younger generations. In addition, we found that more educated persons were more likely to state that they would testify in court. Nearly three-fifths (56%) of those with post-secondary education said that they would testify; this figure is 11 percentage points greater than what was observed for those without secondary education.

Of the nine provinces, Limpopo residents reported the lowest willingness to give testimony in court. About a third of adults in the province said that they would be willing (24%) or very willing (11%) to do so. Residents in the North West and the Northern Cape were, in contrast, much more likely to state that they would give testimony. People living in non-metropolitan areas were found to be more willing to give testimony than their peers in large cities or rural areas. Urban dwellers in Mpumalanga were, in particular, more liable to state they would give testimony. Workers were discovered to show a greater propensity to give testimony than adults who were not working. Consistent with what we saw in the last subsection, we found that high-skilled workers were more likely to state they would give evidence in court than other types of workers. Consider that more than three-fifths (61%) of this group of workers said that they would be willing to give evidence; this figure is 12 percentage points higher than medium-skilled workers and 17 percentage points higher than low-skilled workers.

9.6 Why Do People Fight Corruption?

One could contend (as we have above) that repeated exposure to corruption in the public sector weakens the social expectation to report misconduct to the authorities. When individuals observe public officials engaging in corrupt activities and demanding bribes, their motivation to adhere to the law may diminish (Liu et al., 2023). Furthermore, this situation can reduce respect for those in power and erode trust in the institutions that are part of the criminal justice system. Research on public opinion by Seligson (2006) in Latin America revealed that experiencing corruption damages confidence in democratic governance. This may occur because such experiences undermine core social principles like fairness, justice and equality before the law. Additionally, frequent exposure to bribery can harm injunctive social norms against illegal actions by normalising corrupt behaviour and lessening societal disapproval (see also Cheeseman & Peiffer, 2022).

Based on the reasoning outlined above, we proposed that residing in an environment characterised by corruption would diminish the motivation to combat corruption. To test this proposition, we utilised the PLoLPSC Index, which measures the perceived level of corruption in a person's local area (details on how this index was developed are provided on pg. 28, Section 2). Statistical analysis revealed that living in a corrupt neighbourhood or village was not associated with the intention to resist corruption (the corresponding statistical results are available in Section 13.12 on pg. 163). This lack of association suggests that factors beyond the immediate perceived prevalence of corruption in one's community might play a more critical role in shaping intentions to resist corruption. Let's now look at some of these other factors.

Views about a person's capacity to utilise reporting systems can influence societal attitudes toward legal adherence. Research on public opinion conducted by Boateng (2018) in Ghana indicates that trust in police effectiveness strengthens a person's sense of their ethical responsibility to report criminal acts. This study argued that when individuals perceive reporting channels as responsive to their concerns, they are more inclined to accept the moral imperative to report wrongdoing (see also Asomah et al. 2024). Conversely, if these reporting mechanisms are regarded as ineffective in meeting their needs, it may undermine the ethical obligation to disclose corrupt behaviour. As outlined in the baseline study, one key reason experts identified for why individuals refrain from reporting corruption to the authorities is public scepticism regarding reporting systems. When people perceive these systems as unresponsive or not designed for individuals like themselves, they are less likely to trust that their complaints will be acknowledged and addressed by the relevant officials.

Considering the arguments made above, we examined the hypothesis that the perceived effectiveness of reporting mechanisms significantly influences an individual's intention to report corruption they have witnessed or encountered. To evaluate this postulation, we employed the 'Perceived Reporting Efficiency' Scale, a tool designed to assess the perceived probability that reporting a corruption case to the police would yield tangible results. Statistical analysis confirmed that this scale had an association with public willingness to fight corruption (details of these analyses can be found in Section 13.12 on pg. 163). The more effective a person thought that reporting structures were, the more likely they were to indicate a willingness to fight corruption. This finding is consistent with expert opinion gathered in the baseline survey and demonstrates that the institutional reputation of law enforcement is key here.

People who perceive society as systemically unfair may be less willing to fight corruption. Perceptions of systemic inequality could lead to a sense of powerlessness or resignation. When social systems are seen as rigged or biased, individuals may believe that corruption is an entrenched and unavoidable part of how society functions (Uslaner, 2008). In addition, it can foster a belief that the system inherently benefits a powerful few, making resistance seem futile or personally risky. Consequently, individuals may feel that any effort to resist or report corruption is unlikely to succeed or lead to meaningful change (also see Hoffmann, & Patel, 2017). This thesis is consistent with research which shows that entrenched inequality discourages social empowerment and individual agency to fight corruption.

In view of the research discussed above, we tested the thesis that perceptions of systemic inequality affected the intention to fight corruption. To conduct this test, we utilised the PLoSI Index; this metric gauged the degree to which a person feels that South African society is systemically unfair (the details of how this index was developed are exhibited in Section 5 on pg. 58). A significant (and negative) association was found between intention to fight corruption and perceived inequality (analytical outputs are depicted in Section 13.12 on pg. 164). The greater the perceived level of inequality, the more unlikely an individual would be to fight corruption if they had witnessed it. In other words, as people's sense that the system is rigged or inherently unjust increased, their inclination to intervene or challenge corrupt behaviour decreased.

When corruption is seen as unacceptable or intolerable, people should be more likely to take action against it, including reporting corrupt practices or actively resisting it. Such responses are grounded in a heightened sensitivity to the moral and social harms caused by corruption, which fuels a commitment to uphold fairness, transparency and integrity (Gouvêa, 2021). Persons with low TtC possess strong ethical standards and moral intelligence that encourages them to combat corrupt practices (also see Gong, & Wang, 2013). This moral stance motivates anti-corruption behaviour since low TtC reduces the inclination to rationalise or accept corruption as normal. Moreover, low TtC often correlates with a greater sense of personal responsibility and accountability (Lagos & Zhang, 2025). Such individuals may experience stronger feelings of guilt or shame at the prospect of ignoring or enabling corruption, which further drives their commitment to act ethically (also see Dupuy & Neset, 2018).

To test the hypothesis outlined above, we employed the SLoCB Index (details of this index are presented in Section 6 on pg. 65). Our testing discovered that the Index had a negative association with a person's intention to fight corruption (test results are displayed in Section 13.12 on pg. 164). If a person had low TtC, then they would be more likely to state they would fight corruption. Reviewing the data, it would appear that the SLoCB Index had a stronger effect on the intention to report corruption to the authorities than it did on willingness to testify in court. This differential impact could be explained by the varying levels of perceived risk, personal cost and social pressures associated with giving court evidence versus making a report, especially as the latter can be made anonymously in some circumstances. Reporting corruption may be seen as a more accessible and less intimidating action, whereas participating in legal proceedings can involve greater effort on the part of the participant as well as greater risk of retaliation.

9.7 Conclusion

The SASAS 2024/25 findings reveal a cautiously optimistic trend in willingness to report corruption but a clear gap in readiness to testify in court. The effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts depends heavily on witness testimony, yet data reveals significant reluctance on this issue. We need to design interventions that would encourage people to fight corruption. This will include fostering collective moral responsibility and personal integrity through campaigns that build ethical commitment, as well as social support for reporting corrupt practices and testifying in corruption cases in court. Such campaigns could

use media and school curricula to instil values of integrity and collective responsibility that morally compel individuals to fight corruption. Messaging campaigns should be tailored to those groups that showed a lower willingness to fight corruption.

To improve public willingness to fight corruption, we need to improve public perceptions of the effectiveness of reporting. However, the data presented in this section shows that a significant proportion of the general public is worried that if they make a report then it will not be acted upon. We need to address such public perceptions by ensuring timely, transparent, and visible investigations and prosecutions of corruption cases. It will be necessary to address regional disparities by collaborating with provincial and local authorities, especially in certain provinces (e.g., Limpopo and Mpumalanga), to improve perceptions. Dialogue and inclusion in anti-corruption efforts tailored to these groups may help reduce their scepticism. In addition, we need to develop messaging that dissuades people from adopting an instrumentalist view of corruption. Instrumentalist views of this kind are linked to perceptions that reporting corruption to the authorities is ineffective. Section 5 (on pg. 60) outlined steps that can be taken to reduce instrumentalist views of corrupt practices in South Africa.

TtC was discovered to be linked (negatively) with intention to fight corruption. In light of this finding, we need to launch sustained, evidence-based public awareness initiatives that reduce TtC in South Africa. Section 6 (on pg. 69) detailed various measures that could be implemented to lower TtC across the country. Given that individuals with low TtC are more willing to make reports but less likely to give court evidence, it will be essential to provide support structures (e.g., legal advice and legal aid, counselling, witness protection, etc.) to help reporters progress to formal testimonial roles. In addition, we need to prioritise legal reforms to provide greater protections for whistleblowers (including anonymity options and safeguards against harassment or retaliation). We need to recognise that perceptions of systemic unfairness undermine motivation to fight corruption. As a result, we should support inclusive interventions aimed at reducing structural inequalities, which can help to restore faith in institutions.

10 OVERCOMING FEAR AND BUILDING TRUST: THE ROLE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION HOTLINES

All individuals in South Africa should have the ability to report corruption without fearing any form of retaliation. It is the duty of the relevant authorities to protect and support those who bravely come forward as whistleblowers. However, many potential whistleblowers fear that the reality falls short of this ideal. Research in South Africa by Wiener (2023) validated such fears and documented numerous cases where whistleblowers endured severe backlash, including violent attacks. Her work showed that whistleblowers frequently face serious adverse consequences (such as losing their jobs or even suffering physical violence). The threat of negative repercussions for whistleblowers can have a deterrent effect on individuals, dissuading them from reporting corrupt activities, thereby allowing unethical and illegal practices to continue unchecked. When people are intimidated into silence, corruption flourishes because wrongdoers can act with impunity, confident that their misconduct will remain concealed.

In a context of fear, anti-corruption hotlines are essential tools in the fight against corruption because they can provide a confidential, accessible and anonymous channel for individuals to report corrupt activities without fear of retaliation. Hotlines help to overcome barriers associated with corruption reporting (such as fear of victimisation or social stigma) by allowing confidential or anonymous disclosures. Anti-corruption hotlines also contribute to building a culture of integrity by signalling that corruption will not be tolerated and that governmental (and non-governmental) institutions are committed to addressing it. They form part of a broader anti-corruption infrastructure that includes legislation and enforcement mechanisms. In the right circumstances, hotlines can serve as accessible (for example, toll-free) platforms for whistleblowers to provide credible information to law enforcement and oversight agencies. Even though anti-corruption hotlines can enhance transparency and accountability, we know less than we should about what people think about such hotlines in South Africa.

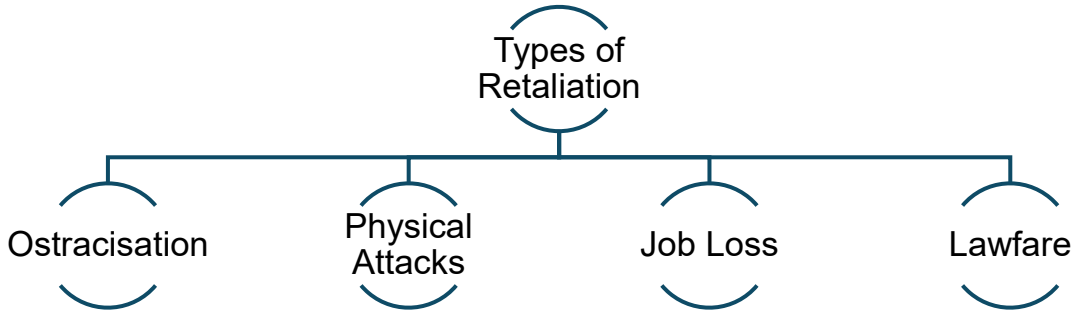
The present section builds on the research in the previous section which considered some of the main reasons people do not report corruption. The section is comprised of two parts. The first looks at fear of retaliation and who lives in communities where you face reprisals if you speak out against corruption. In addition, this subsection will demonstrate that people who live and work in spaces where corrupt practices are common, are more worried about retaliation. We then turn our attention to the subject of anti-corruption hotlines, exploring public attitudes towards nine major hotlines in South Africa. Here we are primarily interested in public awareness of, and trust in, these different hotlines. The data reveals an explicit linkage between trust in hotlines and the willingness to report corruption.

10.1 Fear of Retaliation

One of the obstacles to fighting corruption in South Africa, as identified in the baseline study, is fear of retaliation. The risk of retaliation is compounded by weak or inadequate whistleblower protection mechanisms. Many experts we talked to worried about a pervasive culture of fear in which the perceived risks and costs of reporting corruption outweigh the potential benefits. This fear has reportedly increased in recent years due to the rise of more organised and professional criminal groups involved in corruption. The baseline study was consistent with broader research showing that, across many African countries, a large majority of people believe reporting corruption carries real risks of retaliation and other negative consequences.[73] In addition, surveys of public and private sector employees confirm that fear of retaliation and job insecurity are the top reasons for silence on witnessed corruption.[74]

[73] This result aligns with earlier public opinion research by Patel and Govindasamy (2021) regarding the ability of citizens to report corruption without fear. Analysing 2021 Afrobarometer data, their study revealed that approximately one-fifth (21%) of adults believed they lived in a country where regular citizens could report corruption cases without fearing repercussions.

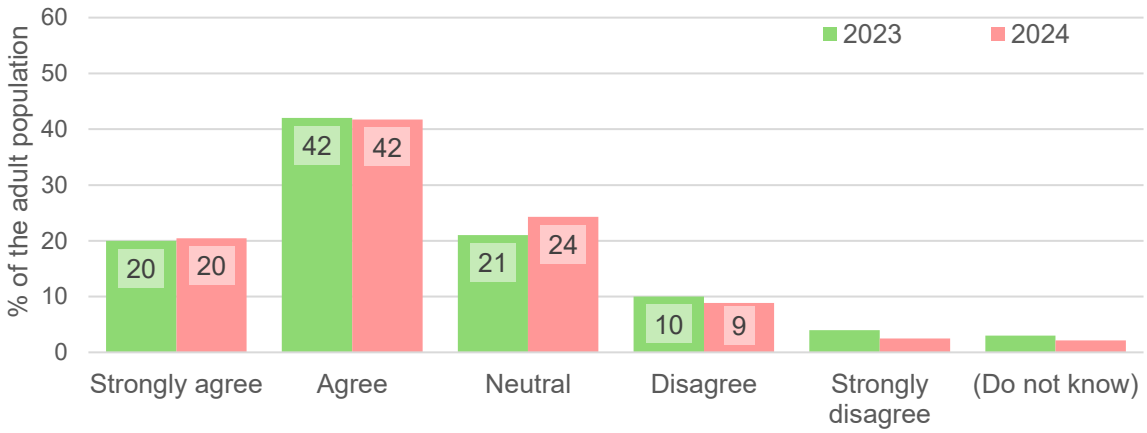
[74] A largescale survey of public sector employees was conducted by The Ethics Institute (2025). This survey highlighted 'fear of speaking up' as one of the leading ethical culture concerns among employees. It identified fear of retaliation as the primary reason many employees refrained from reporting corruption that they witnessed to the appropriate authorities. Similar findings have been observed in surveys of private sector firms conducted by The Ethics Institute (2024).



SASAS respondents were requested to indicate if they agreed with the statement: “In this community, people risk revenge if they speak out against corruption”. Roughly three-fifths of the adult population either agreed (42%) or strongly agreed (20%) that those who reported corruption in their community risk revenge. Only a minority (14%) said that they lived in communities where people could report corruption without fear of retaliation. The remainder of the population either gave a neutral response to this question (21%) or said that they were uncertain of how to answer it (3%). Taken as a whole, our data showed that a majority of adults feel that they live in communities where people cannot safely report corruption. During the second year of the study, participants were asked the baseline question about retaliation again, but some examples of retaliation were provided (i.e., losing friends, losing work, or violence). As can be observed in Figure 39 (pg. 109), the outcomes of that survey round are largely consistent with what we saw in SASAS 2023.

Figure 39: Perceived fear of retaliation against reporting on corruption in a person’s community, 2023 and 2024/25

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “In this community, people risk negative consequences if they speak out against corruption?”



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

Between SASAS 2023 and SASAS 2024/25, there was minimal overall change in the proportion of the general public who believed that individuals in their community faced the risk of retaliation when reporting corruption to the authorities. However, a closer examination of the data revealed that some specific subgroups showed notable shifts in attitudes during this time. This would suggest that certain groups have responded to micro-level changes in their communities. Table 10-1 (pg. 110) presents the percentage of various socio-demographic categories who agreed that people face reprisal if they speak out. For certain groups we can observe little change, but for others there was a significant degree of shift. Most geotype groups did not experience a notable change in the share feeling that they risked revenge, but adults living on commercial farms did, in fact, experience an increase in agreement; the share amongst this group that agreed grew from 51% (SE=5.979) at the start of the period to 67% (SE=5.778) at the end.

Table 10-1: Proportion of different socio-demographic groups that stated that they agreed that people in their community would face retaliation if they reported corruption, 2023 and 2024/25

	2023		2024/25	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Gender Group				
Male	63	(2.442)	62	(2.281)
Female	62	(1.994)	62	(1.978)
Generation Group				
Post-War Generation	64	(3.866)	65	(3.942)
Generation X	64	(2.891)	59	(3.516)
Millennial Generation	64	(2.362)	63	(2.395)
Generation Z	59	(3.771)	63	(2.827)
Race Group				
Black African	64	(1.646)	62	(1.781)
Coloured	54	(3.896)	62	(3.730)
Indian	78	(4.074)	62	(4.495)
White	50	(7.154)	66	(4.164)
Geotype				
Urban Metro	63	(2.894)	62	(2.646)
Urban Non-Metro	65	(2.257)	64	(2.465)
Rural Village	60	(2.593)	61	(2.406)
Rural Farm	51	(5.979)	67	(5.778)
Province				
Western Cape	42	(5.275)	59	(3.644)
Eastern Cape	65	(3.019)	67	(3.045)
Northern Cape	51	(4.552)	53	(4.505)
Free State	75	(3.369)	70	(3.950)
KwaZulu-Natal	64	(3.070)	69	(2.845)
North West	67	(4.190)	61	(3.862)
Gauteng	71	(3.398)	62	(3.995)
Mpumalanga	58	(4.629)	68	(3.702)
Limpopo	54	(3.862)	41	(3.933)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.
Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2023 and 2024/25

As can be observed in Table 10-1 (pg. 110), we found some striking changes over time in certain provinces on attitudes towards reprisals for speaking out against corruption. There was a noteworthy increase in concern about reprisals in the Western Cape and Mpumalanga. During SASAS 2024/25, the provinces with the populations most worried about reprisals for speaking out were the KwaZulu-Natal (69%; SE=2.845), the Free State (70%; SE=3.950). In addition, there were some interesting changes in attitudes by population group over time. Unlike other groups, white adults were more likely to agree with the statement in SASAS 2024/25 than they were in SASAS 2023. Further investigation shows that this change was due to a growth in fears of retaliation by white adults in Gauteng during this brief period. Black African adults in the province were much less worried about retaliation; we found that 59% (SE=4.786) of this group agreed with the statement in SASAS 2024/25. Indeed, agreement with the statement in the province declined overall, falling from 71% (SE=3.398) at the start of the period to 62% (SE=3.995) at the end.

Those who feel strongly affected by corruption often have direct or close experience witnessing corrupt acts and their consequences. This awareness may increase their sensitivity to the potential dangers of speaking out since they know firsthand the involved parties who may retaliate to protect their interests. To investigate this thesis, we employed a multivariate regression analysis to isolate the link between awareness and the tendency to agree with the statement presented in Figure 39 (pg. 109). Here we utilise the PIoC Index; a measure that assessed the perceived societal impact of corruption (the details of how this index was generated were offered in Section 4 on pg. 48).. Our findings revealed a strong association between the two variables; individuals scoring higher on this Index were more likely to agree with the statement (the outcomes of these tests are presented in Section 13.13 on pg. 165). In summation, awareness of the impact of corruption is associated with greater awareness of the real dangers and social dynamics that punish anti-corruption whistleblowing in the community.

In communities where public sector corruption is widespread, people often witness or are aware of corrupt officials misusing power and authority. This corrupt environment tends to breed fear because those involved may use intimidation tactics to protect their interests and silence dissent. In addition, high levels of perceived public sector corruption tend to undermine trust in institutions meant to protect whistleblowers or public reporters (Seligson, 2006). To examine this hypothesis, we employed a multivariate regression analysis to clarify the connection between fear and perceptions of corruption within the local public sector. For this analysis, we utilised the PLoLPSC Index; the details of how this metric was created were provided on pg. 28 in Section 2. Our findings indicated a significant correlation between the two; people with higher scores on the index tended to have a greater likelihood of fearing retaliation (detailed results of these analyses can be found in Section 13.13 on pg. 165). It would seem that localised public sector corruption goes hand in hand with fear of retaliation.

Corrupt occupations often foster a culture of fear and silence, where employees feel pressured to conform and avoid exposing wrongdoing. People working in such occupations often witness (or, at least, hear about) retaliation against whistleblowers firsthand. This (direct) knowledge makes workers more aware of the dangers involved in reporting corruption. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a multivariate regression analysis to explore the relationship between fear and occupational corruption perceptions. For this purpose, we applied the PNoOC Index which quantifies the perceived level of corruption within an individual's occupation (in Section 3 on pg. 37 details were provided on how this metric was constructed Our data analysis showed a strong relationship between the two (comprehensive results of the analysis can be found in 13.13, pg. 165). We discovered that elevated scores on the Index were linked to a greater probability of experiencing fear of retaliation. This result confirms that people working in environments dense with corruption have heightened awareness of the negative costs associated with whistleblowing or speaking out.

10.2 Development and Role of Anti-Corruption Hotlines

Since the National Anti-Corruption Summit held in April 1999, a number of major anti-corruption hotlines have been established in South Africa. Key national hotlines include the Public Service Commission National Anti-Corruption Hotline, which specifically targets corruption within the public service. Another key example is the Special Investigating Unit Whistle-blower Hotline, which specifically targets corruption within government departments and entities. The Presidential Hotline and the Public Protector Hotline offer additional avenues for reporting unresolved service delivery issues, and maladministration and improper conduct, respectively. . Beyond government-run hotlines, civil society organisations like Corruption Watch and the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) operate their own reporting lines, offering alternative channels for whistleblowers. The diversity and specialisation of these hotlines reflect stakeholders' efforts to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling corruption by facilitating reporting across multiple levels and sectors.

If we want the anti-corruption hotlines outlined above to work, it is important to make sure that the public is both aware of, and confident in, them. In spite of the proliferation of different hotlines to combat corruption in recent years, there has been little research on whether the general public is aware of these hotlines. Without sufficient knowledge of hotlines, potential whistleblowers may remain silent, limiting the flow of critical information needed to detect and address corrupt practices. Studies have shown that even in countries with active anti-corruption efforts, public awareness of hotlines can be surprisingly low due to a range of different barriers (Fagan & Keller-Herzog, 2009). Raising awareness is a vital first

step to unlocking the power of hotlines in the fight against corruption and to help promote a more transparent and accountable society (also see Koranteng, 2013).

When anti-corruption hotlines in South Africa were launched, they were often linked to independent institutions or civil society organisations. It was hoped that the reputations of these respected external bodies would reassure the public that calls made to these hotlines would be taken seriously and handled without bias or political interference. Confidence in anti-corruption hotlines plays a critical role in determining whether individuals are willing to use these channels to report corrupt activities. When people doubt that their reports will be treated with confidentiality and will result in concrete outcomes, they become reluctant to come forward (Adelopo & Rufai, 2020). Trust is essential not only in any anti-corruption initiative's ability to protect whistleblowers from retaliation but also in its impartiality and professionalism. A lack of trust can lead to widespread silence, allowing corrupt practices to persist unchallenged (also see Persson et al. 2013).

As part of the second-year study, we chose to examine public attitudes toward anti-corruption hotlines in South Africa, recognising them as key tools for reporting corruption and promoting accountability. After conducting a thorough review of the numerous hotlines operating across the country, we identified nine of the most prominent and widely recognised to include. Our initial focus was to assess the level of public awareness regarding these nine hotlines. Thereafter, we explored the extent to which the public has confidence in these hotlines (i.e., whether people believe that they can trust them). This dual approach was designed to provide a comprehensive picture of how these anti-corruption mechanisms are perceived by the general public.

10.3 Public Awareness and Trust in South Africa's Anti-Corruption Hotlines

Participants in SASAS 2024/25 were queried on whether they had heard about different anti-corruption hotlines in South Africa. First, they were told that there are several such hotlines where anyone can make an anonymous report or tip-off about corrupt behaviour that they are aware of or have witnessed. Respondents were then read a list of nine prominent hotlines and invited to identify those which they were aware of. A majority (60%) of the general public were able to identify at least one hotline. Approximately a fifth (19%) of the public were aware of one hotline and 41% identified two or more. Only a tiny fraction (1%) of the adult public said that they were aware of all nine hotlines on the list. The number of hotlines that the public was aware of, on average, was two; indicating that awareness of anti-corruption hotlines was not very high.

Table 10-2: Percentage of adults who said that they were aware of, and confident in, the pertinent anti-corruption hotline

	Awareness		Confidence	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Government				
The Presidential	17	(1.276)	10	(1.027)
Special Investigating Unit	15	(1.047)	12	(0.997)
Constitutional institutions				
South African Human Rights Commission	32	(1.503)	23	(1.412)
Public Protector of South Africa	31	(1.434)	24	(1.302)
Auditor-General of South Africa	14	(1.091)	10	(0.879)
Public Service Commission National Anti-Corruption	12	(0.900)	7	(0.709)
Civil Society				
Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing	22	(1.356)	17	(1.281)
OUTA Whistle-Blowing	9	(0.912)	7	(0.868)
amaBhungane Tip-Off	4	(0.659)	4	(0.705)
Non-Response				
None	35	(1.449)	41	(1.495)
Refused	5	(0.584)	1	(0.293)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

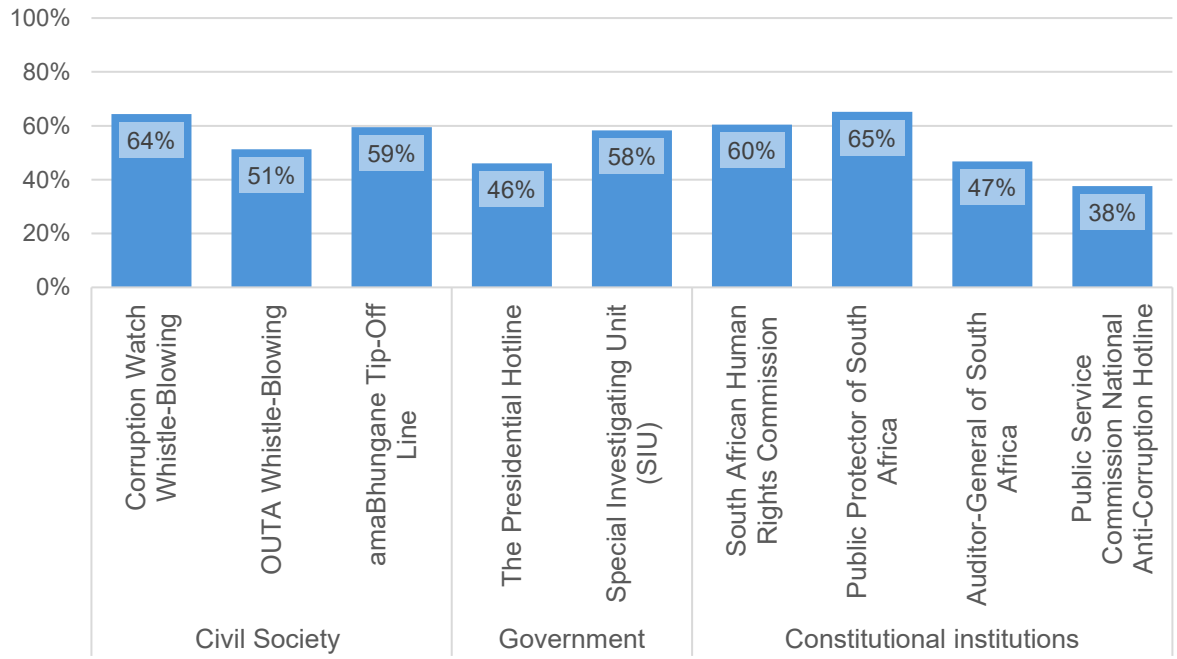
The two hotlines that received the most frequent mentions from the general public were the Public Protector of South Africa (PPSA) and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). About a third of the public said that they were aware of these two hotlines. This outcome is, perhaps, unsurprising; these are two quite important constitutional institutions in the country and have repeatedly

featured in the news media. As can be observed from Table 10-2 (pg. 112), the Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing hotline also emerged as relatively well-known, 22% of the adult population were aware of it. The least known anti-corruption hotline was the amaBhungane Tip-Off Line; only around a twentieth (4%) of the public was familiar with it. It was interesting that such a small fraction (12%) of the public was aware of the Public Service Commission (PSC) National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH). Even though, as discussed in Section 2, the mass public is very concerned about corruption in the public sector, most are unaware of the hotline designed to report suspected acts of corruption in the public service.

Fieldworkers asked SASAS 2024/25 respondents whether they thought they could trust any of the nine anti-corruption hotlines on the list. This question was restricted to those members of the general public who said they were aware of any of the nine hotlines. Two-fifths of the public did not answer the question because they were not aware of any anti-corruption hotlines, while 1% declined to respond and another 1% stated that they did not trust any of the hotlines on the list. More or less a third (31%) of the adult public said that they trusted one hotline and only a tiny fraction (1%) of the public said that they trusted all nine hotlines on the list (Table 10-2, pg. 112). The number of hotlines that the public trusted was, on average, one; it was two if we considered only persons who were aware of anti-corruption hotlines. These results indicate that trust in the anti-corruption hotlines amongst the public was generally quite low.

Of the nine anti-corruption hotlines under review, the most trusted was the PPSA hotline. More or less a fifth (21%) of the mass public said that they trusted this hotline. If we focus on those who were aware of this hotline, then we found that two-thirds (65%) of this group trusted it. The Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing hotline also emerged as relatively trusted by those persons who were aware of it. We found that nearly two-thirds (64%) of those who were aware of this hotline said that they trusted it. The SAHRC hotline was another relatively trusted hotline; again, focusing only on those who knew about the hotline, we see that 60% of this group had confidence in it (Figure 40, pg. 113). Trusted institutions like the PPSA and the SAHRC benefit from their visibility, constitutional status and reputations, which likely encourage more citizens to trust them.

Figure 40: Proportion of those who were aware of the pertinent anti-corruption hotline who also trusted the relevant anti-corruption hotline



Source: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2024/25

Less than a tenth (7%) of the general public were confident in the PSC NACH. Indeed, and perhaps quite unexpectedly, we found that only about a third (38%) of those who were aware of this hotline said that they trusted it. Overall, our data demonstrated that the PSC hotline was not seen as a trustworthy anti-corruption tool even by those persons who were aware of it. This outcome is troubling given the

high level of popular concern about public sector corruption and points to serious problems with the public image of the PSC. There was also a notable awareness-trust deficit for the Presidential Hotline as well as the OUTA Whistle-Blowing hotline. Less than half of those who had heard of these two hotlines said that they trusted them (Figure 40, pg. 113); this discrepancy could undermine these hotlines' effectiveness as a tool to combat corruption.

10.4 Geographic and Socio-Demographic Influences on Awareness and Trust

We investigated whether awareness of anti-corruption hotlines was shaped by demographic factors. We found little evidence that factors like age, gender or population group were driving awareness on this issue, but we did discover geographic dissimilarities. Awareness was found to be higher in urban areas and lower in rural areas. Awareness was particularly weak in rural villages where half of all adults had never heard of any of the country's major anti-corruption hotlines.[75] There was also substantial provincial variation in levels of awareness. We discerned that awareness was lowest in the Eastern Cape; 56% of adults in this province had never heard of any of the hotlines. Awareness was, on the other hand, highest in Gauteng; only 27% of provincial adults had never heard of any of the hotlines.[76]

Awareness of anti-corruption hotlines was, to a certain extent, shaped by a person's level of formal education. We found that, on average, a person with a post-secondary education was more aware of these kinds of hotlines than their counterparts with less formal education. Consider, for instance, that only about a quarter (24%) of adults with a post-secondary education had never heard of any the nine major anti-corruption hotlines. Nearly a fifth (17%) of this group had heard of five or more hotlines. On the other hand, we discovered that roughly two-thirds (66%) of those without secondary education had never heard about one of the country's major anti-corruption hotlines.[77] People inside the labour market were twice as likely to have heard about anti-corruption hotlines than their peers outside the labour market, although there was a significant degree of variance between different kinds of workers. We found that high-skilled workers were more likely to have heard about anti-corruption hotlines than medium- and low- skilled workers.

As outlined in the previous subsection, there is a link between awareness of and confidence in anti-corruption hotlines. Consequently, it is not surprising that the factors that shape awareness are also the ones that are associated with confidence. Better-educated people are, for example, more likely to trust anti-corruption hotlines than their peers with less formal education. Working adults, predictably, tended to trust anti-corruption hotlines more than those who were not working. Certain hotlines were particularly popular with employed adults. This group was, in particular, more liable to have confidence in the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) hotline than those who were not working. Employed respondents (16%) almost three times as likely to trust this hotline as their unemployed peers (6%) or those outside the labour market (9%). A similar disparity was not seen for all anti-corruption hotlines under consideration.[78]

Adults who showed an intention to fight corruption were more likely to be aware of, and express trust in, major anti-corruption hotlines in South Africa. As can be observed in Table 10-3 (pg. 115), this group of people were found, in particular, to show an affinity for the Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing hotline as well as the PSC NACH. In addition, data analysis showed that people with a propensity to fight corruption showed a special affinity for the AGSA. This trust likely reflects confidence in the Auditor-General's capacity to hold public officials accountable and ensure transparency. The data displayed in the Table 10-3 (pg. 115) indicated that intention to report corruption was not strongly linked to trust in the amaBhungane Tip-Off hotline as well as the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) hotline. The lower levels of trust with these platforms amongst this group might be attributable to perceptions of their effectiveness or accessibility.

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[75] Awareness of the Presidential hotline as well as the Public Protector of South Africa hotline were found to be particularly low in rural villages.

[76] We found that awareness of the Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing hotline was especially high in the province. Nearly a third (31%) of adults in that province were aware of this hotline; this figure is 13 percentage points higher than what we see in other provinces.

[77] More educated persons were more liable to have heard of the Public Protector of South Africa as well as the Auditor-General of South Africa than those with less education.

[78] Workers were, in particular, not much more likely to trust the Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing hotline than adults outside the labour market. Less than a fifth (19%) of workers trusted this hotline, only 2 percentage points higher than the national average.

Table 10-3: Percentage of adults who said that they trusted different anti-corruption hotline by willingness to report witnessed corruption

	Unlikely to Report		Likely to Report	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Government				
The Presidential	9	(1.624)	11	(1.357)
Special Investigating Unit	10	(1.603)	12	(0.997)
Constitutional institutions				
South African Human Rights Commission	21	(2.275)	26	(1.840)
Public Protector of South Africa	21	(2.212)	26	(1.643)
Auditor-General of South Africa	5	(0.861)	13	(1.347)
Public Service Commission National Anti-Corruption	4	(0.711)	9	(1.090)
Civil Society				
Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing	13	(1.790)	20	(1.784)
OUTA Whistle-Blowing	5	(1.159)	9	(1.244)
amaBhungane Tip-Off	2	(0.806)	5	(1.062)
Non-Response				
None	47	(2.539)	35	(1.807)
Refused	1	(0.387)	1	(0.423)

Note: Linearised standard errors in parenthesis.

Confidence in the effectiveness of reporting corruption was found to be associated with trust in anti-corruption hotlines from the following institutions: (i) PPSA; (ii) AGSA; and (iii) Corruption Watch. Let's turn our attention to those who agreed that people in their community faced reprisals if they spoke out against corruption. When compared to their counterparts, this group was more likely to trust the Presidential anti-corruption hotline. We discovered that 12% of this group trusted this hotline, which is 8 percentage points higher than those who were not worried about reprisals in their community. This difference suggests that people who perceive the risk of revenge for whistleblowing might view the Presidential hotline as a safer or more authoritative channel for reporting corruption. This group also showed an affinity for hotlines from the AGSA, the SIU and amaBhungane (albeit to a lesser degree).

10.5 Conclusion

The data presented in this section has shown that fear of retaliation for speaking out against corruption is widespread. This kind of fear is particularly a problem in those communities and occupations where corrupt practices are prevalent. Practical steps need to be taken to reduce the fear of reprisals and revenge. This requires sensitising communities and workplaces to the benefits of reporting corruption and the protections available (such as anonymity), as well as urgently strengthening a range of protections Also needed are efforts tailored for those vulnerable groups or areas where fear of revenge is more pronounced (such as rural and farm communities and provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Western Cape). This will also require further empowering independent institutions (such as the Public Protector and the Human Rights Commission and NACAC's proposed new anti-corruption agency, provisionally named the Office of Public Integrity) to respond to and investigate whistleblower reports (for more detail on this issue, see NACAC, 2025). Trust must also be built by ensuring that these bodies have the resources and independence necessary to conduct thorough investigations without political interference, that the risk of reprisals is significantly reduced and that accountability is more consistently upheld.

Anti-corruption hotlines can help break through a climate of fear, providing evidence necessary to fight against corruption, but awareness of major anti-corruption hotlines in South Africa is quite low. Sustained, well-funded campaigns, using diverse media (TV, radio, social media, etc.) are necessary to increase awareness and trust. Consideration should be given to the development of radio programmes, print materials and social media content in local languages tailored to less educated audiences. This should help increase accessibility and understanding for those groups that tend to be less aware of anti-corruption hotlines. Such efforts need to include rural villages and provinces (like Eastern Cape) where over half of adults have never heard of any of the major hotlines. One way to address trust deficits is to support media in highlighting positive stories where hotline reports have led to corrective action and accountability, which can build public confidence. Another is to communicate

clearly about anonymity and whistleblower protections, particularly emphasising these safeguards to groups with high levels of fear of reprisals[79]. In order to ensure that these efforts are achieving results, it will be necessary to regularly track public awareness of, and trust in, hotlines in the medium and longer term.

Careful consideration should also be given to the recommendations made by NACAC and the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa (PPLAAF) in a joint conference report *Strengthening Whistleblower Protection Mechanisms In South Africa* (2025). The report proposes establishing a single independent Whistleblowing Authority. Further consideration should be given to possibly locating this Authority in the proposed new dedicated anti-corruption agency, the Office for Public Integrity (OPI). The report suggests that the Authority would serve as a central repository for whistleblowers from both the private and public sectors, operating independently of other reporting and investigative bodies such as the Auditor General and Public Protector, who would continue to be responsible for receiving, investigating, and resolving disclosures. According to the report, in addition to 'protecting and encouraging whistleblowers, the myriad benefits of such an Authority include an increase in public trust', ensuring that South Africa's envisaged new strengthened legal framework 'is compliant with international standards, the prevention of and remedial response to retaliation, and [avoiding] the duplication of efforts by both independent and state agencies.

[79] Since higher-skilled workers tend to have more awareness and trust, we need to target sectors with low-skilled workers.

11 ENGAGING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

To further the study's research objectives, a qualitative component was included. The goal of this component was to invite youth perspectives into the social values and norms that encourage and discourage corrupt behaviours in South Africa. The methodological approach selected for this analysis was focus group discussions (FGDs). This design enabled us to explore how young people understand and negotiate social norms around corruption, adding a vital dimension to the overall research by integrating voices that are often marginalised in our society. The FGD approach takes account of the SASAS module data, but participants were not told about the SASAS component so as not to influence their engagement with our objectives. By engaging youth through FGDs, the study seeks to capture their unique viewpoints and lived experiences related to corruption, offering rich qualitative insights that help contextualise broader societal attitudes discussed elsewhere in this report.

The primary aim of this qualitative component of the study is to identify social values and norms that encourage and discourage corruption in South Africa. Here we are interested in the factors that enable as well as prevent corruption. The qualitative component has five primary objectives: (1) to explore how youth define and understand corruption; (2) to discover social values and norms that may encourage or discourage tolerance of specific types of corruption (such as sexual extortion or paying monetary bribes); (3) to identify specific incentives and disincentives for tolerance of, or participation in, corrupt behaviours; (4) to ascertain incentives and disincentives for resisting, or reporting, corrupt behaviours; and (5) to find ways to engage more extensively with the public, particularly youth, to support the implementation of the NACS.

The current section provides a detailed qualitative analysis of the data gathered from the FGDs. It covers youths' definitions and perceptions of corruption, exploring its various forms including public sector bribery and sexual corruption. Adult youth are the emerging workforce and future leaders of our society. Understanding this group's experiences and perspectives provides key insights into the persistence and potential transformation of corrupt practices in the country. The section examines youth opinion on the drivers of corruption (such as greed, poverty, weak leadership and institutional failure) as well as the historical legacy of apartheid and colonialism shaping entitlement and normalised corrupt practices. To contextualise youth experiences within broader debates, comparisons were made (where possible) with the expert opinions gathered during the baseline study.

11.1 Research Design

Qualitative FGDs offer several important advantages that make it a highly valuable research tool for exploring complex human behaviour in depth. Unlike quantitative survey research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, the qualitative approach prioritises rich narrative descriptions. The FGDs helped us capture the thoughts, feelings and experiences of participants in their own words, allowing researchers to uncover nuances and meanings that may be glossed over or hidden by quantitative data. This depth enables researchers to provide richer context and explanation than statistical correlations alone. Moreover, by valuing participants' voices and subjective experiences, this approach helps reveal stories and viewpoints that bring rich insight into the themes explored in the quantitative sections of this report.

When trying to understand corruption in a country like South Africa, studying the post-apartheid adult youth (i.e., individuals aged approximately 18 to 35 years) is crucial. This demographic represents a pivotal transitional phase in society in which values, behaviours and social norms are actively formed and consolidated. It is important for older readers to remember that adult youth are navigating critical life stages (such as completing studies and entering the labour market), seeking social mobility and establishing their identities. These pressures can affect their vulnerability to corrupt practices or, conversely, their resistance to them. By studying adult youth, researchers can explore how economic precarity, aspirations and social networks interact to influence attitudes to and participation in corruption.

Specific scenarios were presented to participants, with these scenarios illustrating moral dilemmas and social norms influencing participation or resistance to corruption. Participants were read vignettes that were designed to provoke responses around themes that are relevant to the qualitative component's five objectives, and participants were then asked to discuss them. The vignette method is particularly effective for eliciting subjective evaluations and illuminating the diversity of responses to social

phenomena.[80] As researchers were interested in constructing vignettes about the motivations about why a person may, or not, participate in corrupt activities. We were especially interested in how study participants differentiated between need and greed when it came to corruption[81]. In constructing our vignettes, we used scenarios that would be accessible to non-elites and did not make reference to those types of corrupt practices which are typically found in elite circles (e.g., embezzlement).

When selecting research participants, the researchers deliberately chose to focus on Black African youth. This demographic represents one of the largest and most significant (in economic, social and political terms) population groups in South Africa. In spite of their numerical and strategic importance, this group has historically been underrepresented or overlooked in prior research. Although there have been attempts to reverse past research practices, there remains a tendency amongst researchers to favour the voices of those from minority (particularly white) populations. Given this group's critical role as a dynamic and transformative force within South African society, this is an injustice. Their voices and experiences are essential if we want to address broader issues of societal significance like corruption. Ensuring their representation in research contributes to more comprehensive and relevant findings that have policy relevance.

FGD participants were purposively sampled from university institutions, the HSRC, as well as civil society organisations focusing on youth empowerment and from the public sector. The specified age range of the FGD participants was between 18 and 35 years. Our purposive sampling was guided by a desire to engage with diverse genders, geographic origins and socio-economic backgrounds. All the study participants are based in Gauteng; and all FGDs were conducted in the HSRC office in Pretoria. Using a pre-screening questionnaire,[82] FGDs of 6-10 participants were allocated by gender, by level of educational attainment, by geographic origin and by employment status. All FGDs were conducted in person, and each was facilitated by four staff members from the HSRC.[83] All data in the form of transcriptions of FGDs and field notes was coded for analysis by the study investigators in line with the study's objectives, using a constant comparison technique.

Table 11-1: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) specifications

No.	Date	Sample Type	No. of participants	% Female	Average Age
1	29/07/2025	General	12	42%	26
2	31/07/2025	Postgraduate	7	29%	28
3	31/07/2025	Undergraduate	8	63%	27
4	5/08/2025	HSRC Employee	7	43%	31
5	08/08/2025	Rural	7	29%	24
6	08/08/2025	Male	7	0%	24
7	12/08/2025	Female	7	100%	29
8	15/08/2025	Public Sector Employee	7	57%	31
Total			61	46%	25

[80] Sampson and Johannessen (2020) discuss the benefits of the vignette technique and comment on how it can be used to uncover respondents' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about social situations. The technique enables researchers to explore complex social norms and values by presenting respondents with concrete, relatable examples, which helps bypass direct questioning that might lead to socially desirable responses or discomfort.

[81] Bauhr (2017) develops a distinction between two types of corruption: (i) greed and (ii) need. The latter form is thought to elicits more public condemnation and collective action efforts. The former, on the other hand, tends to be concealed and this leads to less direct public engagement. The study argues that these two forms of corruption have different motivational dynamics when it comes to collective action against corruption.

[82] The initial pre-screening recruitment email was sent out by the HSRC recruiters. Prospective participants who were interested and eligible were asked to complete a short questionnaire (in the body of the email or a Word document attachment) that was then used by recruiters to follow up for scheduling of FGDs.

[83] The division of labour entailed one person facilitating, another taking notes and the other recording the interviews in real time. A fourth staff member was on standby to implement the distress protocol should the need for it arise.

A deliberate attempt was made to recruit FGD participants from different walks of life. The specifications of the different FGDs are presented in Table 11-1 (pg. 118). One focus group was conducted with youth working in the public sector and two others with youth who were still in education and training. Most FGDs contained a mix of genders but two FGDs were designed to be single sex. This was done to aid participants to have an open and honest discussion about sexual corruption. In total, sixty-one participants took part in the study, with an average age of 25, comprising 33 males and 28 females. No attempt was made to attain linguistic diversity in the composition of the FGDs, but participants did come from a diverse set of ethnolinguistic backgrounds.

11.2 Our Definitions of Success

At the start of each FGD, participants were asked what success meant to them. The motive behind this question was to gain a nuanced understanding of what success represents in post-apartheid society. Across seven of the eight FGDs, participants closely linked success to money or wealth. This finding is consistent with expert opinion from the baseline study in which experts were asked about whether South Africa was a materialistic society. Approximately three-quarters of experts interviewed during the baseline study said that they believed South African society places significant personal value on material wealth. Moreover, experts noted that materialism has increased significantly between the beginning of the post-apartheid period and the present day.

When asked to provide a definition of success, most FGD participants responded to the question of what success means with the single word “money” or “wealth,” underscoring the central role that financial gain plays in shaping their conception of success. One participant from FGD 8 (i.e., the public sector employees) said that success to her was “[t]o be able to buy whatever I want at any time and not be limited due to financial constraints”. Another participant in the same group told us that “[f]or me, success is basically being able to afford what I want, the lifestyle I want to live.” This strong association between success and money reflects a common societal trend where monetary wealth is viewed as the primary indicator of achievement. Beyond money and wealth, the word "achievement" was the second most frequently cited by participants, with at least four individuals linking success to accomplishing personal goals. When probed further, some participants related achievement to tangible milestones (such as buying a car, owning a house, and wearing nice clothes) which are all material markers dependent on financial means.

An interesting contrast emerged in FGD 3 (i.e., the undergraduate group) with a male participant who uniquely described success as the “ability to help people around me.” This response stands out as the only one to associate success with social contribution rather than individual financial gain, presenting a less materialistic and more community-oriented perspective. This materialistic sentiment was shared in some of the other FGDs. One participant from FGD 7 (i.e., the all women group), for instance, concluded that:

> "Money can never be enough. It can never be enough... you upgrade your lifestyle... Money is never enough. So…. So that excuse is, I know."

But other participants saw corruption as an easy avenue for success. An FGD 4 (i.e. the HSRC employees) participant told us that:

> “People see corruption as the way to success. So once the victim has what they wanted, they'd be like, OK, so it's not bad after all because I was able to get 1, 2 and 3.And you find people … that participated in the corruption advising other people to say rather do it, you would definitely get there because... it is now the norm or the culture that if you want to succeed or reach a certain level in life, you need to give it.”

This statement is a powerful testament to how young people think that corruption has become normalised and even recommended as a strategy for advancement. Indeed, a number of participants identified that this type of pragmatic calculation means that, sometimes, participating in corruption is the most rational choice for success.

The data gathered from the FGDs, in general, revealed that materialism largely dominates young people’s views of success, with wealth and personal achievement strongly prioritised, while altruistic or collective definitions remain comparatively rare. These findings are consistent with what was found in the baseline study in SASAS 2023 when we looked at the level of materialism within the general public. The baseline survey showed that a majority of the general public venerated material wealth as a key marker of success. Nearly three-fifths (58%) of adults said that they admired people who own expensive

homes, cars and clothes, and 73% agreed that buying things brings them pleasure. This finding reinforces the idea that material acquisition is a significant aspiration for a substantial portion of South Africans.

11.3 How We Define Corruption

A key part of each FGD was to clarify what participants thought that corruption means. FGD facilitators asked participants the following question: "When you hear the word 'corruption', what do you think about?" Across the eight FGDs, several common themes emerged when participants answered this question. Overall, corruption was consistently associated with unethical behaviours such as fraud, bribery and nepotism, which many groups linked directly to abuse of power and illegal activities. The notion of greed featured prominently in nearly all groups, often described as the driving force behind corrupt acts. Many participants contended that corruption resulted in harm to public trust and service delivery. This is consistent with what we have observed in the quantitative sections of this report.

For FGD participants, corruption is widely perceived as manifest in different types of behaviour including contract manipulation, money laundering, bribery, nepotism, fraud and abuse of power. These practices are viewed as systemic ethical failures that undermine fairness, equality and institutional integrity at both personal and organisational levels. FGD 8 participants (public sector employees) specifically highlighted the violation of constitutional principles and collusion within government institutions, signalling deep-rooted legal and ethical breaches. Overall, corruption is understood to be entrenched, multifaceted and disruptive to social and governance structures. Even though there were similarities across the eight FGDs, there were also some differences between them. Participants in FGD 2 (i.e., the postgraduates), for example, added more contextual specifics and indicated a nuanced understanding of how corruption impacts broader societal divisions. One participant of that group said that:

> "Corruption is based on the division of the people, and it is based on abusing your power, and also it is a betrayal of the poor. Right now, the government is taking money, and most of us are left with nothing. That is why we have crime. Crime is happening because people do not have adequate money, and we are seeing crime everywhere. Blacks are stealing from Blacks; Whites are stealing from Whites."

This statement reflects a view that corruption is both a symptom and consequence of entrenched poverty, inequality and fractured social trust within South African society in general and in communities. It speaks to youth perceptions of the causes of corruption which will be touched on later in this subsection.

During the FGDs, several participants courageously shared their personal encounters with corruption. They talked about the tangible and distressing impact of these encounters on their everyday lives. One participant from FGD 2, for example, recounted a particularly traumatic experience involving identity theft:

> "Last year, I went to Home Affairs and found out someone had stolen my identity from a job I had taken a test for, and when I went to the place the next day, I found the other lady there, and she was saying she was me. I was so traumatised. Corruption has gotten out of hand in South Africa. Corruption is real".

This participant's story demonstrates that corrupt practices are particularly evident in those parts of the public sector that deal with documentation and licensing. Such firsthand accounts provide stark evidence of the human cost of corruption. In other cases, participants (mostly women) felt comfortable enough to share stories where those with power had tried to extort sex from them. These results are consistent with the quantitative research component which showed that many people in South Africa have encountered corrupt practices either directly or indirectly.

The qualitative data gathered from the FGDs can be compared to expert opinion gathered during the first baseline study. During the previous round of the study, experts were asked to reflect on what the notion of corruption evokes and how they would define it. The FGDs and expert responses show substantial overlap in their understanding of corruption, with both groups viewing corruption as the abuse of power for personal gain, involving unethical and illegal activities (such as fraud, bribery or nepotism). Experts did seem to bring additional nuance by noting corruption's occurrence in "grey areas" beyond strictly illegal acts, capturing unethical behaviours that may not always be legally

punishable.[84] When compared to expert opinion, FGD participants tended to give more concrete examples based on lived and observed experiences. FGDs 2 and 8, in particular, emphasised the societal and institutional impacts of corruption (such as its effects on deepening poverty and undermining service delivery quality). This aligned with experts' focus on governance failures and its detrimental consequences for vulnerable populations.

11.4 A Case of Grand Corruption

On the 6th of July 2025, Lieutenant-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi of the KwaZulu-Natal South African Police Service (SAPS) accused Police Minister Sizwe Mchunu of having a corrupt relationship with Vusimuzi Matlala, a prominent businessman with links to senior-ranking ANC officials (such as Former Minister of Police Bheki Cele). In the same briefing, Mkhwanazi then labelled Deputy National Commissioner for Crime Detection, Shadrack Sibiya, as a criminal who is allegedly also in the pockets of drug cartels and compromised business individuals like Vusumuzi Matlala, who is currently on trial for allegedly plotting to kill his former partner, Tebogo Thobejane.[85] The Ramaphosa Administration responded to these allegations by establishing the Madlanga Judicial Commission of Inquiry to investigate them; the commission is chaired by recently retired constitutional court judge Mbuyiseli Russel Madlanga.[86] A parliamentary ad hoc committee has also been established to probe the allegations.

Upon recognising the relevance of the recent corruption scandal for our research, we decided to ask all FGDs for their views and opinions on this matter. The first question we asked of the FGDs about this recent scandal was whether participants believed that the allegations made by Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi were true. Then a follow-up question was posed to on national President Cyril Rampahosa's reaction to the allegations and his establishment of a commission of inquiry. Together, these questions were designed to obtain insight into broader social attitudes about grand corruption, leadership integrity as well as institutional effectiveness. We wanted to gather participants' perspectives on a highly relevant and unfolding corruption scandal that touches directly on issues (e.g., integrity, accountability and governance) of relevance to this study.

When asked about the allegations made by Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi, a majority of FGD participants expressed trust in him and said that he was the only one who is serious about fighting crime. The participants shared similar views on whether Mkhwanazi was telling the truth. One participant from FGD 6 (i.e., the all-male group) stated:

> "I think there is corruption in SAPS, and judging by what is in the media and how people are reacting, it looks like he is telling the truth. I think from the information he gave, he must be protected".

Another participant from the same group agreed, commenting that:

> "He hates corruption. He does not care who you are or where you are; he will fight it. He just wants to see corruption being tackled. They should be supporting him, but they are trying to sabotage him. I see myself as a minister of police one day".

A participant from FGD 5 (i.e., the rural group) shared this assessment. He stated that:

> "It is true. Mkhwanazi is telling the truth. Irrespective of language and race, people are aware. There is an accountability deficit".

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[84] Experts further underscored corruption's political dimensions, a theme partially echoed in FGDs when participants talk about corruption amongst politicians and public sector officials.

[85] Central to Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi's allegations is the disbanding of the Political Killings Task Team, which had been shut down by then Minister of Police Senzo Mchunu. This occurred despite the task team making progress in their investigations of a series of high-profile murder cases. A good example would be the execution-style murder of a Pretoria–based entertainer and businessman popularly known as Oupa Sefoka (aka DJ Sumbody) in November 2022.

[86] Other actions that were taken in response to the briefing by Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi included: (i) the suspension of then Minister of Police Senzo Mchunu; (ii) the suspension of SAPS Deputy National Commissioner Shadrack Sibiya; as well as (iii) the arrest of three murder suspects, including businessman Katiso KT Molefe, who is believed to have executed the hit on Oupa Sefoka and two of his bodyguards.

There was a general concern about whether a person could trust public institutions in South Africa. Participants from FGD 1 (i.e., the general group), in particular, expressed concern about the circulating rumours about important government departments like SAPS. A participant from that group said:

> "How can we actually trust the police force when we hear that it is actually run by a syndicate? And the minister is implicated in the syndicate".

It is quite clear that the scandal involving Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi has struck a chord with some of the participants in our FGDs. He appears to serve as a symbol of resistance against entrenched corruption for some. In other words, it seems that there are FGD participants who see Mkhwanazi as a rare figure of integrity within a compromised system. It could be argued that some FGD participants are desperate for a hero to rescue them from an ongoing cycle of corruption and impunity.

There were a few study participants who took a more critical view of Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi. They tend did not seen him as a symbol of accountability in an otherwise compromised system. A participant in FGD 2, for example, argued that Mkhwanazi is only speaking up against corruption because he did not get the tender he had wanted. That participant went on to say that:

> "It's evident that they are all involved in corruption because they know how the system works. Mkhwanazi himself wanted a tender, but he did not get it, and now he is threatening to spill the beans"

Similarly, a participant from FGD 5 was sceptical about Mkhwanazi, remarking that:

> "There are accusations against Mkhwanazi himself. They are playing hide and seek, but they know the truth. He is also protecting himself".

It would appear there was a minority of study participants who viewed Mkhwanazi with suspicion, believing his anti-corruption stance may be motivated by personal interests rather than pure integrity. Some suggested that these latest allegations were just a part of ongoing rivalries between elites. This perspective reflects broader scepticism about the purity of motives among high-profile figures involved in corruption controversies. It also highlights the complex and politicised nature of accountability efforts within South Africa's criminal justice system.

In contrast to the predominant attitude towards Lieutenant-General Mkhwanazi, FGD participants were generally critical of President Ramaphosa's response. They tended to describe his announcement of the government's response, as it was emerging during the period when the FGDs were carried out, as uninspiring and inadequate. To drive home this sentiment, a participant from FGD 4 said of the President's televised press briefing held on the 13th of July 2025 about the allegations made by Mkhwanazi: "[t]hat was the biggest 30-minute waste of my time". Participants felt that the President's address lacked urgency and clear action plans, and it failed to inspire confidence that the government was effectively tackling systemic corruption. One participant from FGD 8 remarked that:

> "What becomes a challenge with the President is reacting when it's seen as beneficial to him, or him looking at who he must deal with and protecting whom he cannot deal with."

Some participants in FGD 4 shared this view; one participant from this group stated that:

> "So, I feel like the President, as I said, doesn't have a backbone and then he's not really leading South Africa the way South Africans want, regardless of the party."

This sense of disappointment speaks to a broader distrust among youth about political leadership and responsiveness in times of crisis, evidenced both in the FGDs and in data from annual SASAS rounds. This pessimism contrasts sharply with the personal credibility that Mkhwanazi seems to have earned among many study participants.

11.5 Perceived Drivers of Corruption

During the baseline survey, we explored popular beliefs about why ordinary people engage in corruption. The findings from that survey revealed that most of the general public were able to identify drivers for corruption, with only a small minority expressing uncertainty or denying the existence of corruption among non-elite individuals. Psychological explanations (i.e., based on internal motivations) were prevalent across the public in the baseline survey, with 82% of the public attributing non-elite

corruption to psychological factors.[87] In contrast, only a minority (27%) viewed weak law enforcement (i.e., an external or environmental contributing factor) as a primary cause of corruption in the lower social strata. Building on these findings, we included in the FGDs a question on motives that encourage one to get involved, or participate, in corruption. Participants were requested to respond to the following question: "Based on your experiences or observations, what are the main reasons people participate in corruption?" We discuss below how our youth participants responded to this question.

The responses received from the FGDs on the drivers of corruption significantly mirrored what was seen in the baseline survey. Although systemic shortcomings were mentioned, the reasons given for why people engage in corruption tended to reflect individual internal motivations. A participant from FGD 7, for instance, said that “I'd say it's greed. It's greed." A participant from FGD 3 likewise commented that:

> “People always want to be the rich… And we've seen that mostly those who are rich, they are engaged in corruption activities.”

Indeed, greed emerged as a dominant explanation, with many FGD participants expressing the view that those in positions of power are driven by selfish desires to accumulate wealth and resources unfairly. An FGD 1 participant said:

> “Human beings in general, just our psychology. Human beings by their very nature are greedy, so the corruption is sometimes caused by the fact that, as human beings, we are greedy."

This sense of personal enrichment at the expense of others was seen as a fundamental driver that fosters corrupt behaviour. Another participant in FGD 1 had a more dualistic view; this participant argued that corruption is caused by both poverty and greed. He thought that the two were not mutually exclusive. The participant went on to say:

> “I think the main thing is greed. Wanting to attain a lot of money. But at the same time, it can also be a situation of poverty, whereby they come from nothing and then get opportunities to get more than what they have, and then they think about their families, and they want to help more of their family members”.

This dualistic perspective acknowledges that while greed drives some to engage in corruption for material gain, others may be compelled by poverty and the need to support their families, based on a sense of obligation or compassion. This statement reflects the complex and intertwined causes behind corrupt practices; we will return to the subject of poverty later in this subsection.

A number of FGD participants blamed the economic system for corruption. A participant from FGD 4 asserted that:

> “It is difficult not to be corrupt because of the capitalist form of governance. Because capitalism says I can just bid for a tender and get so much money and spend less on whatever service I’m providing.”

However, a participant in FGD 1 had an alternative view on why people commit corruption. The participant said:

> “I think also it's just a plan for the government to privatise everything. For example, your medical aid, which you pay for, because public health care has collapsed, meaning that you will be taxed more for a service you do not even get to use.”

In addition to the above, poor leadership and a lack of accountability were frequently cited as critical enablers of corruption. One participant from FGD 5 asserted that people engage in corruption “because they have power... they will be in higher positions so they can do whatever they want." Participants remarked that ineffective or complacent leadership creates an environment where corrupt acts go unchecked, as mechanisms to hold individuals responsible are weak or absent.[88] A number of FGD participants stated that some people commit corruption and continue to do so because the anti-corruption framework has many holes that people can exploit. This was thought to be particular driver

[87] The most commonly cited explanation was greed and the pursuit of quick financial gain, mentioned by half of the adult public as one of the main reasons for non-elite corruption.

[88] One participant int FGD 2 powerfully framed South Africa as a "food chain" where those at the top (e.g., government officials) hoard all resources, leaving "ordinary citizens at the bottom with nothing." Withing this group there was a profound sense that the nation's moral fabric is “rotting”.

for those currently working in the public sector. The absence of consequence management (i.e., the failure to enforce penalties or sanctions for corrupt behaviour) was viewed as a significant factor that allows corruption to persist, signalling to perpetrators that they can act with impunity.[89]

One of the reasons that people engage in corruption is that people don't try to report it to the authorities. One participant from FGD 8 expressed a deeply entrenched perception of corruption within their environment, stating:

> "Corruption is the norm for us. It has become the norm for us. If you come in trying to do good, you are going to be treated like a snitch, and snitches get stitches".

A participant from FGD 7 said that "people around us, they are enablers. They are enablers of corruption." It reflects an atmosphere where corrupt practices are accepted as standard and attempts to uphold honesty are seen as acts of betrayal rather than courage. The participant conveyed a sense of fear and social pressure that deters individuals from acting with integrity or reporting corrupt behaviour, as doing so risks ostracism or retaliation.[90] Talking about reporting corruption, a participant from FGD 1 explained the fear component:

> "I think we have witness protection, but we have never seen it work in South Africa. Like, there was an instance of someone getting shot, only to find out that it was not the right person. This goes to show that witness protection does not work".

The presence of violence in the South African criminal justice system has instilled a strong fear of retaliation even within institutions of the state. To expound on these fears, a participant from FGD 2 said:

> "Some of the witnesses are genuinely afraid. If they see that you are the one acting against corruption, they try and kill you."

This concern is also reflected in how other FGDs talked about corruption. This sentiment demonstrates how challenging it is to combat corruption in contexts where it is not only widespread but actively defended by social norms and peer enforcement.

Poverty was also mentioned as a powerful motivator, particularly in FGDs with participants from more vulnerable populations. In these FGDs, corruption was perceived as a survival strategy or a way to get ahead economically in the face of limited opportunities and a dysfunctional economic system. For instance, a participant in FGD 5 said that "[n]umber one, the unemployment in our country, and number two, our price of living." Some FGD participants seem to believe that those who commit corruption may do so due to their exposure to poverty, and thus, the motives behind committing acts of corruption are rooted in their previous or current exposure to poverty and desire to accumulate resources as a means of shielding themselves from poverty.[91] Finally, a lack of capacity within the state, whether in terms of resources, skills or institutional strength, was identified as undermining the government's ability to prevent, detect and respond effectively to corruption. Together, these reasons illustrate how the youth think that corruption is enabled and sustained by an interplay of structural weaknesses and governance deficits.

The qualitative information collected from the FGDs can be compared with the perspectives provided by experts during the baseline study. Experts in the baseline study commented that corruption is often justified as a means to navigate inefficient public services and gain access to scarce resources, making corrupt practices appear necessary for survival or advancement. Many experts talked about institutional dishonesty that forces people (particularly economically active persons like small business-owners) to

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[89] This was a particularly popular theme in FGD 8. One participant said that elite corruption sets a bad example for others. The participant commented that "they are being rewarded for non-performance... that becomes the main reason as to why they don't see anything wrong with them taking."

[90] This powerful statement demonstrates how corruption has become normalised and ingrained in the public service. It is important to remember that participants in the FGD 8 were part of the state machinery and can provide valuable insight into what happens behind closed doors in the public sector.

[91] Interestingly, one participant blamed the education system. A FGD 2 participant said that a failing education system ("30% pass rate") produces graduates without the skills to compete fairly, making corrupt shortcuts more tempting.

engage in bribery to overcome institutional inefficiencies.[92] Experts also attributed corruption to inefficient governance (particularly by traditional authorities in rural areas) and limited development opportunities. Poverty was seen by some experts as a factor that restricts the scale of corruption due to fewer available resources. There were a few themes that were mentioned by experts but not by FGD participants. For example, several experts thought that strong social networks and traditions can both inhibit and enable corruption in South Africa, particularly through patronage and kinship systems that normalise nepotism and favouritism. A number of experts believed that alienation and isolation from mainstream political and economic life foster a sense of entitlement and reduce accountability (particularly in rural communities).

11.6 The Legacy of History

South Africa's complex history of apartheid, economic inequality and political struggle deeply affects how people view authority, fairness and governance. This history can influence whether corruption is seen as an inevitable part of the system or as something that can be challenged. But how do the youth in our FGDs view the role of history in the perpetuation of corruption in the country? As part of the FGDs, participants were asked whether they thought that the history of South Africa may influence the way people think about different forms of corruption. Responses from the FGDs on this question provided crucial insight into how young people of different backgrounds think about the legacy of white settler colonialism.

FGD participants cautiously acknowledged that the country's history influences how people in South Africa think about corruption. This was particularly evident in FGD 1; one participant from that group stated that:

> “Corruption probably did exist back in the days during apartheid times. But they did not label it as corruption, but now it's viewed in a different manner because it's mostly done by black people."

Participants in that group focused on how economic disparity and systemic racism caused by white settler colonialism has shaped post-apartheid corruption. A participant from that group asserted that:

> "Corruption is a byproduct of oppression. Especially in black people, when it comes to economic corruption, we don't really have a choice when it comes to what we do when we get something that we've never had."

FGD 2 participants also recognised that apartheid's injustices have created a damaging mentality where those previously disadvantaged now feel entitled to "take their turn" at the trough, leading to a cycle of so-called ‘revenge corruption’. FGD 1 participants shared this view. Participants of that group said that black communities were historically excluded from power and resources, leading to a “catch-up” mentality that sometimes manifests as corruption. Participants of FGD 8 talked about the narrative of a sense of entitlement among some in power to enjoy the "spoils" of liberation. One participant from that group said that:

> “Those people who fought, yeah they have this entitlement, ’We come first. We are the ones who are going to believe it more than anyone else...’ But for how long we are going to pay for it?".

It was suggested by some participants in FGD 7 that the economic deprivation of apartheid made black South Africans "more greedy" as a reaction to past injustices. This ‘greed’ was actually a ‘need’ that was described as a desperate desire to secure resources and never return to poverty.

Participants in FGD 4 explicitly linked corruption to race and privilege, noting that white citizens often navigate systems without facing the same demands for bribes. One participant from that group stated that:

> “In South Africa we have a majority of blacks… even when you look at the presidency, it’s blacks. But the way we are so at zero and the white are at 10 is… maybe it's also something that needs to be looked into.”

They also connected the history of settler colonialism to a broader crisis of accountability and poor service delivery. Participants in FGD 7 shared personal anecdotes of racial nepotism in Indian-owned businesses (where management positions were reserved for Indians) and explicit racism from white

[92] Experts thought that urban residents, in particular, frequently experienced institutional alienation and a lack of trust in democratic systems, which reinforces a culture in which corrupt behaviour is normalised.

educators. This points to a perception that corruption can be racialised, with in-groups protecting their own and excluding others. Participants in FGD 5 talked about how, while black people are often the visible face of corruption, white people engage in more sophisticated, "generational corruption". These whites are thought to be shielded from criticism or prosecution.

Some FGD participants were less willing to blame the past for the problems of the present. One participant in FGD 3 expressed the view that, during apartheid, "the system was working", noting that while there might have been corruption, things functioned more effectively. Some participants contrasted apartheid society positively with the present "mess"; they spoke to a narrative where historical injustice is weighed against contemporary governance failures. A common assertion in FGD 5, for example, was the belief that corruption is "worse now". Participants of the FGD 8 think that a public service ethos has been lost since the end of apartheid. One participant from that group said that:

> "We have lost what is called a patriotism... we no longer see the public sector as servicing the people, we see public sector as a platform wherein when I get in, my plan is to get rich."

FGD debates on this issue were tense, indicating this is a sensitive and deeply felt issue. Indeed, many FGD participants were quite cynical about the post-apartheid period. There is a general sense of pessimism about the current post-apartheid system and a feeling that it is not working well. Some FGD participants called for national reconciliation to overcome the divisive "us vs. them" mindset rooted in apartheid and to build a shared identity grounded in Ubuntu. There was a powerful yearning in some FGDs to move beyond the past and build a system where success is based on merit rather than connections.

Responses from the FGDs can be compared with the expert opinion data gathered during the baseline study. Experts also tended to think that corruption in South Africa has deep historical roots in colonialism and apartheid. They widely agree that these systems entrenched economic disparities and established patronage networks that normalised corrupt practices as survival strategies. Apartheid, described by some experts as "corruption at its best," institutionalised grand-scale corruption linked to elite power and military spending. The legacy of apartheid persists in economic structures that limit competition and perpetuate inequality, driving corruption. Psychological scars from dehumanisation and a survivalist mentality reinforce corrupt behaviours. Yet a minority of experts caution against attributing corruption solely to historical factors, citing similar challenges globally. A few said that the history of oppression was sometimes used as a)dishonest) justification for corruption as redress.

11.7 Navigating Public Sector Bribery

As part of the FGDs, participants were read the following vignette about a person named John who was applying for a driver's license. He is requested by the driving school to submit a purported 'fee' to expedite the procedure, which he complies with. The driving school then forwards the majority of the payment to an official in a government department, keeping a small portion for themselves. The official subsequently issues John his license. Participants were asked for their opinions on John's behaviour. They were also asked what they thought about the driving school and the officials in the department.[93] This vignette-based question serves as a qualitative tool to probe social attitudes, ethical reasoning and the social acceptability of corruption in a specific public sector setting common in South Africa.

The discussion from the eight FGDs revealed a complex, and frequently divisive, issue of who was to blame in the vignette. Let us start with John, the person who paid the monetary bribe. Many FGD participants perceived John primarily as a victim of an entrenched corrupt system where paying bribes has become a necessary step to obtain a driver's license and secure employment. For example, a participant from FGD 1 stated:

> "John is a victim. He did not have any choice. He just wants to start working, and at the end of the day, had he chosen to take action [against the demand for a bribe], he would have lost his job because they were never going to give him a license".

Similarly, a participant from the FGD 2 noted:

[93] The exact wording of the vignette is as follows: "John is applying for his driver's license, which he needs for work. He is asked by the driving school to pay a so-called fee to facilitate the process, which he does. The driving school then pays most of the money to a government department official after taking a small cut. The official gives John his license."

"John is doing what he has to do. He just wants to get his license and start working. Even when you try to do the right thing, you get penalised."

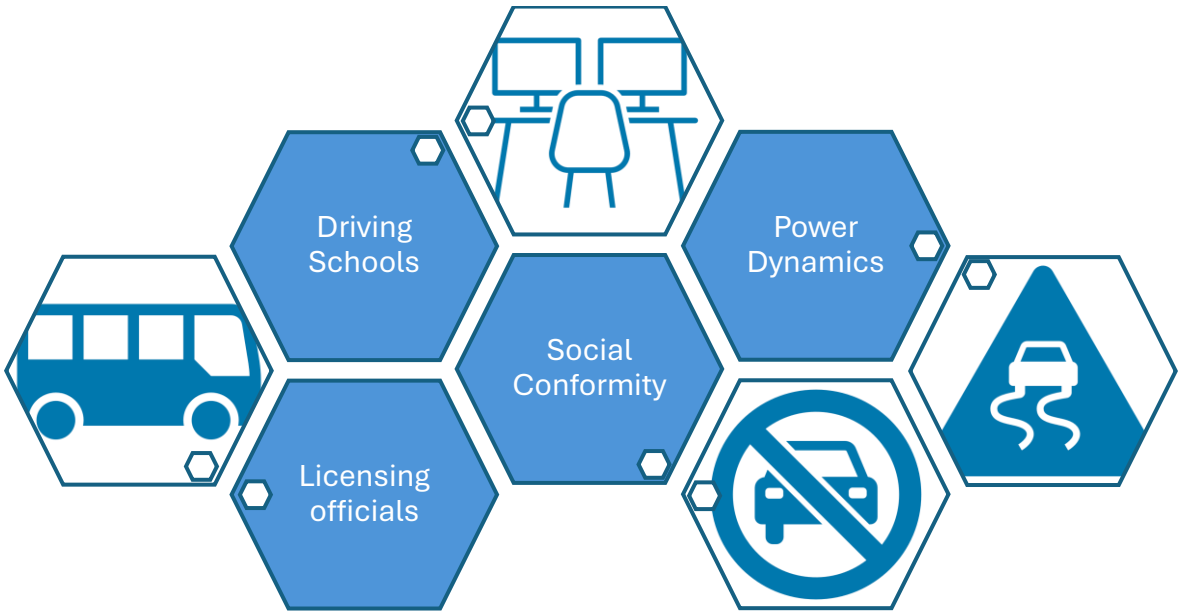
Another member from that group said that:

"The system is failing us... It's obvious... As long as you have money, you can bribe anything."

Only a minority of participants in the FGDs suggested John had any recourse when confronted with this scenario. Some participants from FGD 2 held John accountable for his actions and suggested that he was complicit in perpetuating corruption. A participant from that FGD bluntly stated: "John is definitely committing corruption" while another participant in that group contended that "John is wrong, regardless of the reasons put forward. He is wrong." A participant FGD 3 had similar views; she said that:

"John is in the wrong, but his hands are tied because he needs the job. They make it a prerequisite for you to pay the bribe."

The debate over whether John is to blame or not highlights the moral ambiguity surrounding John's choices, where compliance may be seen as both survival and wrongdoing.



Needs-based corruption happens when an individual engages in corruption out of necessity or to access basic public services and avoid harm from state power. This type of corruption is driven by survival needs or urgent demand for essential services that are otherwise inaccessible through formal means. For most of the FGD participants, John was being faced by needs-based corruption, paying the bribe was a survivalist strategy that he was being forced to take rather than as action he was taking to acquire illicit privileges and wealth beyond what is necessary. John was, in other words, widely seen as a victim of an entrenched corrupt system that makes paying bribes a necessary step to obtain a license and secure employment.

There were a few FGD participants who thought that John should report the corrupt practice at the licensing office to the authorities. One participant from FGD 1, for instance, said that reporting was an option and remarked: "John should have reported the matter. He does have an option to report." But for most participants, there was a general sense that they would not act to stop corruption at the licensing office. A participant from FGD 8, suggested that people do not respond because they prefer to conform and avoid disrupting the status quo. Some participants in FGD 1 had analogous views; they said that there is no incentive for people who report and act on corruption. To this point, one participant in that group went further and stated:

"We are just surviving; we are not looking to help someone else. What happens to the next person is not my business. We have lost Ubuntu, that is why we are unable to act against corruption".

A participant in FGD 2 shared similar sentiments, saying it is easy to look away because it is simply not their business. The participant further went on to say:

> “I would not report because it is not my business. I am not involved in it. Ultimately, I am not involved”.

These were issues which were also present when FGD participants were talking about the drivers of corruption. This reflects a broader social challenge where apathy or a sense of lack of agency dissuades individual or collective action against corrupt practices. It demonstrates a cynical view amongst our participants on whether it is even possible to fight corruption at all.

The driving schools were viewed ambivalently as both victims and perpetrators in the corrupt system. But most FGD participants saw them as, at least, facilitators of corruption, motivated by a desire for profit and survival within the system. The driving schools were described as profit-driven intermediaries; a participant from FGD 7 accused them of being "greedy" and "making money out of people's desperation." One participant from FGD 5 went even further and stated that “[t]hey are corrupt to the core” and another said that “[t]hey are manipulating John into paying a bribe”. But others were more sympathetic to the schools and blamed systemic forces for their behaviour. A FGD 1 participant, for example, explained that driving schools "are also victims because they have to pay bribes just to ensure they can operate in the business." Another participant from that group argued that:

> "If it means corruption is how they get more business, then they will pay, but that also means they, too, are victims."

The schools help people navigate a corrupt ecosystem; without them the system would be harder for ordinary people like John to navigate. Some FGD 8 participants blamed the wider economic system. A participant from FGD 8 contended that “[t]he driving school people are taking advantage because we live in a capitalist system”. The schools were, in other words, trapped by the incentives characteristic of the system itself.

Licensing officials were seen by many FGD participants as most to blame, powerful individuals benefiting from bribes and exploiting vulnerable people. Participants criticised the officials for creating an environment where bribery is necessary and for failing to meet their public service obligations. A participant from FGD 4, for example, said that “[t]hey are selfish and oppressive people”. Some participants in FGD 2 also described them as self-interested, demanding bribes to facilitate faster processes, which contributes to higher turnover and increased profits. The focus is on personal greed rather than systemic pressures. Licensing officials received the strongest criticism, frequently described as the root cause of corruption. A participant from FGD 4 talked about a culture of normalised corruption, stating:

> "They have normalised corruption, and if an official tries to get rid of corruption... you end up not only looking away, but you also join the corruption."

Others were more sympathetic. A participant from FGD 1 pointed to structural issues, noting that "[o]fficials are not paid enough, which means they are incentivised to engage in corruption." Several participants stressed the lack of accountability and oversight when talking about this issue. FGD 8 participants, in particular, recognised senior officials as the root cause of corruption, enabled by lack of oversight and absence of consequences. One participant from that FGD said:

> "It is also a lack of consequence management. Nothing is being done to ensure that there is accountability."

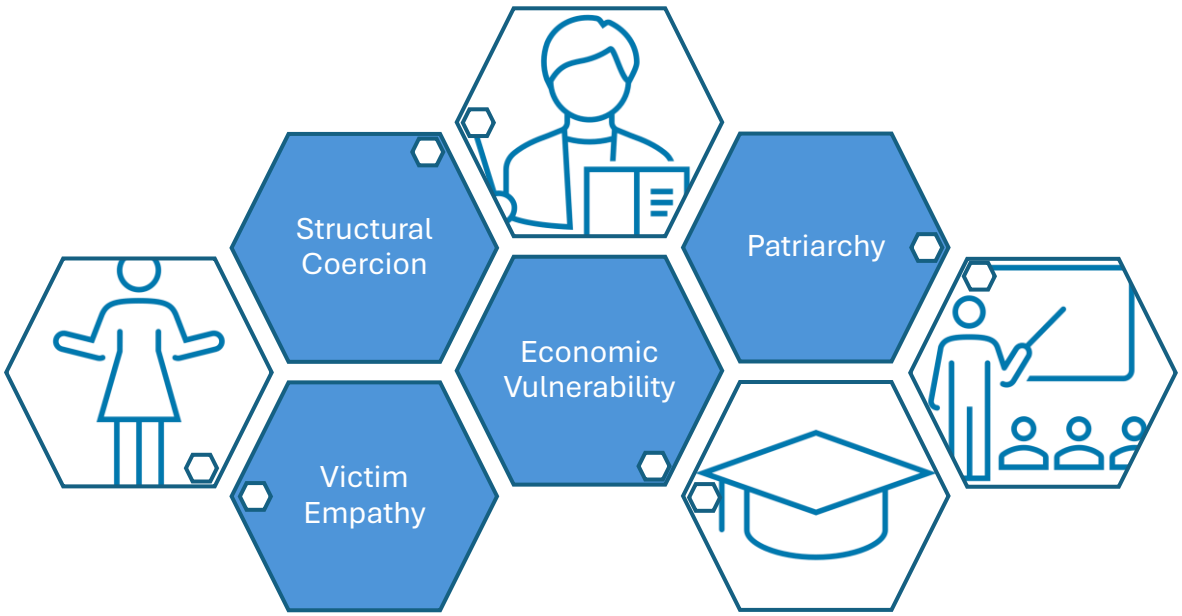
Leadership failures were also noted, with a FGD 1 participant remarking that our leaders are failing citizens. A number of participants mentioned the risks faced by honest officials who try to combat corruption. This theme will be explored in more detail later in this section.

Greed-based corruption is driven by personal profit, or the pursuit of illicit privileges and wealth beyond what is necessary. It involves corruption for gain or enrichment at the expense of public resources and fairness, often characterised by opportunistic abuse of public or entrusted power. For most of the FGD participants, John was not engaging in greed-corruption but needs-based corruption. Licensing officials were creating the conditions for that type of corrupt to take place. As a result, this group received the strongest condemnation from FGD participants. They are seen as the primary drivers of corruption, motivated by personal greed, and responsible for creating a system where bribery is normalised and necessary. When compared to the licensing officials, the driving schools occupy an ambivalent position. Some participants saw them as motivated by covetousness and, therefore, denounced them. Others were more sympathetic to the driving schools and described their corruption as needs-based.

The responses provided by the FGD participants were consistent with how experts interviewed during the baseline study thought about corruption in the public sector. Experts widely agreed that corruption is pervasive within the public sector, often taking place even at junior levels, fuelled by weak management and law enforcement, low staff morale and complex regulations that few can navigate except those seeking to exploit the system. This group tended to blame political interference,(especially through cadre deployment) for the entrenchment of corrupt values in the sector. They thought that interference fosters patronage politics, stifles transparency and demoralises honest employees. But a few tended to be a little more sympathetic towards public servants than our FGD participants. They said that public officials face pressure to join corrupt networks as a means of survival, normalising unethical behaviour that distances officials from the impacts of corrupt practices on citizens.

11.8 Navigating Sexual Corruption

FGD participants were presented with a vignette about sexual corruption. Participants were told a story about a woman named Lerato. She is the first in her family to attend university and finds the transition from public high school difficult. Her professor invites her to his office to address her poor performance. When she arrives, he closes the door, remarks on her beauty and she nervously thanks him. He then says they can work on a plan to boost her grade and suggests she meet him at a nearby hotel the next evening if she's committed to improving. FGD participants were asked what they think Lerato will do and what are their thoughts about the professor's actions.[94] This helps reveal social norms, attitudes toward power dynamics and consent, and participants' own beliefs about appropriate conduct in educational settings. The questions encourage discussion about ethics, vulnerability and possible risks in such situations.



Most participants in FGDs empathised with the Lerato's difficult position, noting the dire consequences of rejecting such advances. They viewed the student Lerato as being in a vulnerable situation (i.e., as being a first-time university attendee from a poor background) and that this increased her susceptibility to coercion. FGD 5 participants, in particular, noted the *power imbalance* and said the professor controlled whether students passed or failed. A participant from FGD 2 described that professor as compromised by "lust" and is a predator who exploits vulnerable students. One participant in FGD 7 commented on the professor's abuse of power, stating that "[t]he professor is taking advantage of a

[94] The exact wording of the vignette is as follows: "Lerato is the first person in her family to attend university. The jump from her public high school to university has been challenging. Her professor invites her to his office to discuss her struggles, as she is on the verge of failing. When she gets there, he closes the door and comments on her beauty. She feels nervous but thanks him for the compliment. He reassures her that he is sure they can come up with a plan to improve her grade and tells her that she can find him at a nearby hotel the following evening if she is serious about her studies".

situation... abusing sexually". FGD 4 participants had comparable views; one participant from that group told us that the professor was:

> "…taking advantage of the power dynamics present because he knows Lerato is in need because she's struggling."

Even amongst FGD 6, there was a clear consensus that the professor is behaving inappropriately, preying on Lerato's situation. One participant described him as a "pervert" who was using his position of authority to manipulate her. In summation, most participants across the eight FGDs were concerned about the professor's abuse of power and his sexual objectification of the student.

FGD participants were divided on what Lerato should do. Participants in FGD 3 were particularly split, reflecting the dilemma between integrity and desperation that students similar to them may face. Some participants believed the pressure of being a first-generation student, the high cost of university, as well as the risk of failing, would lead her to comply out of desperation. A participant from FGD 3 stated that it is not possible to bypass the power hierarchy. The participant went on to say:

> "Fear of reporting is due to the fact that it will be someone in a higher position. Who would believe a student over a professor who has been teaching more than a thousand women, and here comes Lerato, who is just a first-year student? No one will believe her, so [the professor] is the one with the reputation and power."

Others believed she "won't demean herself" and would "rather fail" than compromise her morals, even for a major subject. There was pity for Lerato's struggle, but also a firm belief that succumbing to the professor's demands is a short-term solution with long-term damage. They argued it devalues education, leaves the student without real knowledge, and perpetuates the cycle of sexual corruption. Some participants in FGD 4 argued a "desperate" person with no other options might agree. Others felt that if she had friends or used mental health services, she might resist.

The responses from the FGDs to Lerato's story can be compared to expert opinion from the baseline survey on sextortion. The experts interviewed for that study identified three main drivers of this type of sexual corruption: (i) patriarchy and power imbalances; (ii) disrespect for the rule of law; and (iii) economic dependence and vulnerability. Experts noted that entrenched patriarchal values create power dynamics where men exploit women, often normalising sexual corruption of various kinds. Experts contended that, despite government efforts, patriarchy remains a significant part of how socio-economic power is structured. This is compounded by weak law enforcement and institutional distrust, which allow perpetrators to act with impunity while victims face barriers to justice. Economic hardship increases vulnerability, forcing many (especially economically disadvantaged women) into exploitative exchanges of sexual favours for survival or advancement.

Building on the vignette about Lerato and the professor, participants in the FGD were asked to imagine a continuation of the story. Lerato is too nervous to go to the hotel, and her professor ignores her in class while giving attention to Maria, a struggling classmate from her hometown. At term's end, Lerato fails and must retake the course, but Maria passes despite receiving worse marks for her assignments. When Lerato confronts her, Maria admits she slept with the professor. Lerato knows about a hotline to report misconduct but hesitates, understanding Maria's situation and not wanting to harm her.[95] Participants were then asked what they think Lerato will do and what their thoughts are about the professor's actions. These questions are asked to gauge participants' views on Lerato's potential options for recourse and helps uncover social attitudes towards victim responses as well as the dynamics of complicity or resistance.

Many FGD participants understood why Maria would comply with the demands of the professor. Participants in FGD 7, in particular, adopted this perspective. Participants of this group noted that the

[95] The exact wording of the vignette is as follows: "Lerato is too nervous to go to the hotel the next evening and her professor says nothing the next time she goes to class. In fact, he ignores her completely. However, she notices he is giving attention to a classmate from her hometown, Maria, who has also been struggling. At the end of the term, she fails and is told she needs to take the course again, but Maria passes, even though Lerato knows she did even worse than her in the assignments. She confronts Maria, who confirms her suspicions that she slept with the professor. Lerato knows there is a hotline where staff who break policies can be reported but also understands Maria's situation and doesn't want to harm her."

pressure to succeed, the importance of a clean academic record for future employment and the fear of failure were seen as powerful coercive factors. The FGD participants viewed Maria's decision as needs-based corruption. The system is perceived as not being able to protect victims, and a FGD participant made references to a real-world case where a rapist was freed from police custody after a bribe. While some participants criticised Maria for perpetuating corruption, most framed her decision in terms of survival. A participant in FGD 1 contended that "[s]eeing that Maria made it through… Lerato might take up the offer and just keep quiet." Some participants in FGD 1 stated that Maria's complicity made reporting nearly impossible. If Lerato reported, Maria might deny it to protect herself. One member of that group said: "[Because] they both benefited from it… who's gonna now snitch on each other?" Here, Maria's vulnerability turns into silence: protecting herself means shielding the professor too, which undermines any chance at redress.[96]

Most FGDs were divided on whether Lerato should report the situation. Again, participants seemed to view Maria's decision as part of needs-based corruption and, therefore, excusable. Some participants in FGD 6 said that Lerato was jealous, but other participants defended her. One member of the group said:

> "She's not jealous... she was just nervous... she sees Maria. Maria doesn't seem to be having any consequences... So now she sees... it worked for her. Now let me try it."

Some participants in FGD 2 (postgraduates) felt that she should "break the chain" and report the professor to the Vice-Chancellor. Others in this group emphasised the personal risk and potential harm to her, suggesting Lerato should instead focus on having her own work re-marked through formal channels to prove her capability. Some in this group argued she should report it anonymously to protect herself and stop the professor from victimising others. Some participants in FGD 7 suggested that exposure on social media (e.g., TikTok) could be a powerful modern tool for justice, as public shaming can sometimes force authorities to act where traditional channels fail.

Many FGD participants did not believe that Lerato should report Maria to the authorities. Participants in FGD 8 were, in particular, dismissive of the idea that reporting Maria would have any impact. A participant of that group said that: "The system itself does not protect victims in any way". The university environment was described by group participants as unsafe, with a lack of effective sexual harassment policies and reporting mechanisms. Management was seen as male-dominated and often complicit or protective of perpetrators. Victims are frequently not believed, silenced, or re-victimised by the system. Concerns were raised about retaliation and stigma that would be attached to Lerato if people thought she had reported. Many participants in FGD 3 felt she would not report it out of solidarity. They believed that Lerato would not want to "harm" Maria, who was from her hometown (thereby suggesting that social networks might play some role in decisions whether or not to confront corruption). Some participants in FGD 4 felt that given Lerato's moral character (i.e., she didn't want to harm Maria) and the potential fallout (e.g., destroying her friendship or being disbelieved) would lead her to stay silent.

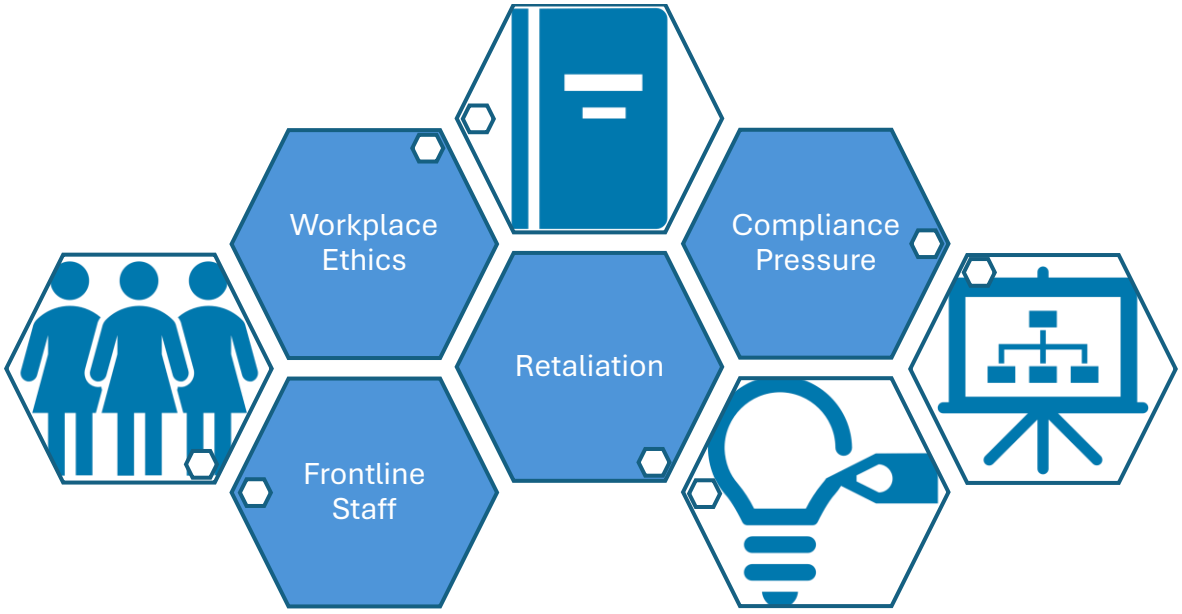
Ultimately, most FGD participants seem to recognise Maria and Lerato as victims of structural coercion than as perpetrators of corruption. Indeed, many participants seem to understand Maria's decision to comply as survival in a dysfunctional and cruel system. In FGDs 5 and 6 there was an acknowledgement that this type of predatory behaviour is not isolated to a university setting. Some participants felt it was a widespread problem whereby people in positions of power take advantage of younger, more vulnerable individuals, sometimes driven by desperation on the part of the victims. One participant in FGD 6 said that "they're looking for young, fresh blood." Overall, FGD participants tended to view situations where sex is demanded in exchange for resources or access as a serious form of corruption intertwined with sexual harassment. Participants expressed both condemnation of the perpetrator and empathy for victims caught in coercive situations driven by power imbalances and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

11.9 Navigating Whistleblowing

FGD participants were presented with a vignette about Mary who works in a licensing office and her responsibility is to report corruption when she witnesses it. Mary, a new manager trained in ethics, wants to do well. However, her frontline staff insist on taking bribes, called "facilitation fees", before

[96] A similar sentiment was shared in FGD 5. Participants in this group felt that the potential for Maria to deny everything and the lack of institutional support left participants believing Lerato's only choice was to "let it go" and accept her failure, reinforcing a sense of hopelessness.

issuing licenses. They split the weekly proceeds, justifying it as normal due to being underpaid and overworked.[97] Participants are then asked what they thought Mary's options were and why. Here, participants were being asked to think through the difficult balance Mary must navigate between upholding principles and managing real-world challenges within the workplace. The Mary scenario sparked reflections for participants in the FGDs on how hard it is for honest individuals to change corrupt systems. The discussion in these groups often centred on the complex choice between absolute adherence to ethical principles and practice, and navigating real-world public sector workplaces.



There were FGD participants who thought that Mary should actively fight corruption. For example, some FGD 2 participants felt that she must not compromise, and she should report the staff and clean house. She should do this even if it means firing everyone and starting anew with ethical people. But even those who believed that she should fight corruption thought it would be very challenging for her to do so. A participant from FGD 8 told us that:

> "I think her option is to stay ethical, but it will be very difficult for her, because in this instance, they will try to accuse her of things she did not do. Just to get rid of her quickly. Or even try to frame her for things she did not do, just to frame her because she is ruining their plans".

Others in that FGD disagreed and stated that she first must address the staff's legitimate grievances (i.e., being underpaid and overworked) by taking them to senior management. Ignoring these root causes would make her an ineffective leader. A few from FGD 4 thought that Mary should take ethical action here, arguing that she, as the manager, has the formal power and responsibility to stop the corruption and fire the staff. Some FGD 1 participants had a similar view and argued that Mary should try to implement new systems. One participant of that group said that:

> "As a manager, it's her job to actually bring in brand new sets of… beliefs or systems. And if the frontline workers don't agree with that, then they can leave."

The notion that Mary should take action to fight corruption was particularly evident in FGD 8 (public sector) where group participants felt that new managers like Mary are supposed to be supported to do the right thing, and that those in power must be the first to uphold ethics to create a "conducive environment" for honesty. A participant in that same group remarked that

> "The managers are the ones who must protect those who have been delegates powers to perform their work accordingly, and to speak [up] and to be ethical."

[97] The exact wording is as follows: "Mary is a new manager at the licensing office. She was trained to act ethically and wants to do a good job. However, her frontline staff in the office have made it clear that they expect to be paid bribes, which they call 'facilitation fees' before they provide licenses. They share the proceeds each week, which is what they say is always done as they are underpaid and overworked."

Numerous FGD participants talked about the risks that Mary would run if she reported. A participant from FGD 7 noted May's likely fear of being branded as a troublemaker or falsely accused of spreading rumours if she reports the abuse of power by her staff. His concern was that "[s]he becomes that person who falsely reports the stuff." FGD 2 (postgraduate) participants noted the fear of being ostracised and of being labelled a "snitch" or "informant". Talking about fear, a participant from the same group mentioned personal safety (i.e., "they can send a hitman") and many in the public sector feel the pressure to "fit in" with a corrupt culture. Participants of FGD 8 (public sector) were unanimous in their opinion that those who report corruption are viewed negatively. One participant in that group said:

> "They're going to even try to accuse her of things that she doesn't do. Or even try to frame her [for] things she didn't do just to get rid of her because she's going to cause a problem for them."

Participants in FGD 1 also believed the system is stacked against honest people, enforcing compliance and punishing resistance.[98] Talking about the matter during that FGD, participants said that people who reported corruption were labelled as "snitches," thought of as "thinking they are better than others" and are ostracised. Participants in that group cited real-world examples of whistleblowers and officials being killed, kidnapped or threatened. Several participants suggested that corruption is normalised, so resisting it is both socially and professionally risky. There was generally a feeling that Mary had limited options when it comes to reporting her co-workers for corruption. Participants from FGD 3 said that "if they [i.e., whistleblowers] do report, nothing would actually happen". Participants in FGD 4 commented that whistleblowers are often victimised or killed and the political system is entirely captured. One participant in that group led with a memorable phrase: "innocent until proven killed".

Several FGD participants were sceptical that Mary would be able to report others for corruption. There was acknowledgment of the existence of reporting channels like hotlines, but scepticism about their effectiveness and fears that reporting could harm the victim more than the perpetrator. A participant from FGD 3, for example, said that the reporting structures themselves were compromised. She said there was a concern that "the person I'm reporting to is also "corrupt, leading to no action or worse, retaliation". Amongst participants in FGD 7 there was an overwhelming belief that the system is too powerful and self-sustaining for any individual to challenge it safely. Participants in FGD 1 note the race and gender dynamics at play. They said that white officials were perceived as less corrupt or better at hiding corruption. In addition, a female manager was seen as vulnerable to resistance or sabotage if she tried to enforce ethics. A male participant in that group said:

> "People aren't going to try that with another man. Like, let's say I'm a manager and I say we're going to stop corruption. You told me no… catch me outside the office, bro."

This statement illustrates a culture of informal masculine aggressive enforcement of anti-corruption rules outside formal settings. This seems to reflect a lack of trust in official structures and systems. It suggests that a man can more easily resort to personal intimidation rather than relying on official, transparent mechanisms to address corruption.

When discussing the Mary scenario, most FGD participants displayed a lack of faith in institutions. Many FGD participants were quite cynical about the public service. One from FGD 8 asserted that:

> "We no longer see the public sector as an institution that serves the needs of people. We view it as an institution that will help me accumulate resources and get rich. They are being promoted and rewarded for non-performance, which is why they do not see anything wrong with them plundering resources and committing corruption as a last resort, and even going so far as saying 'we are looting one last time', because they know that their time in office is coming to an end".

A number of FGD participants believed that Mary would not receive support from others in the public sector if she decided to report. They identified several key reasons including the view that making a report makes the reporter "the one in trouble now" and that their "safety is compromised". A participant from FGD 5 contended that:

> "Even if you want to do the right thing, you may be pressurised into not doing the right thing in order to fit in."

[98] Some participants in FGD 1 warned that Mary could face retaliation if she tried to stop corruption. One member of that group said Mary's co-workers "will literally make false allegations about her, saying maybe she's the one who's taking bribes". Another stated: "I can just say, you know what, I want Mary to have a car accident, cut the brakes and then die so we can all make … money. That's not something far-fetched if you're taking food out of my mouth."

Another from the same group said that “she won’t survive because no one is on her side.” This sentiment was also evident in FGD 8. Participants of that group noted the complete breakdown of trust in government officials and institutions like the police, who are seen as "the biggest protectors of criminals."[99]

Many FGD participants felt that Mary had a responsibility not to report. One participant from FGD 4 said that "[s]he is a breadwinner” and she has a responsibility to her family rather than to abstract notions of ethics. These participants also recognised that people may feel compelled to ignore corrupt practices out of desperation or fear of failure. An analogous opinion was voiced by participants in FGD 5. Participants in that group explicitly mentioned fear for her life and her family's safety if she tries to fight the system. Thinking about Mary’s predicament, one asked “what about your kids?". A participant from FGD 5 stated, "morality and wealth don't go along [together]” and argued that to keep her job and be safe, Mary must abandon her ethics and join the corruption. FGD participants talked about the example of powerful figures in the country who face no consequences for their corrupt behaviour. Participants from FGD 2 noted how corrupt ministers are simply "circulated" between departments rather than fired. In many FGDs there was a deep-seated belief that individual ethics are powerless against entrenched systemic corruption.

A segment of the FGD participants seem to suggest that Mary should join the corrupt enterprise. A participant from FGD 8, for example, argued that it would be nearly impossible for Mary to fight corruption because of how entrenched it has become in the public sector. In that FGD, it was evident that there was a profound belief that "you can never win," making silence the safest and most pragmatic option. Most participants of FGD 8 believed Mary would have to comply to survive. As in other FGDs, they argued that the entire staff would "gang up against her," frame her, or get her fired. The advice was, "if you can't beat the system, join it." The participant went on to assert that:

> “So, for peace's sake, just leave it because it is all so difficult. It starts at the very top with the managers, and by the time it gets to you, they have captured the system and there is nothing you can do.”

One participant of that group said that the officials only engaged in corrupt behaviour because their salaries were ‘inadequate’ [to meet their aspirations]. The participant asserted that:

> “Their salary that they have is not matching the lifestyle that they are living. So they tend to go that route of getting the extra income because they have to sustain their lifestyle."

Participants from FGD 3 also believed Mary had "no options" and that "the system itself is corrupt"; a participant from this group said that "the system will just absorb her to be the same as everyone else." Even though FGD 3 participants knew that the staff in the vignette were morally wrong, they saw no viable way for Mary to change the culture without being ostracised or becoming ineffective. Many FGD 4 participants had analogous views; the majority in this group argued that, in reality, Mary has no real power. They believed the corruption certainly went higher up the chain. Comparable to other FGDs, the prevailing sentiment was that survival depends on conforming. This was powerfully summarised by the phrase from one participant: "It's about who you know."

FGD perspectives on whistleblowing can be compared to expert opinion captured during the baseline study. Experts identify four main social and institutional reasons why witnesses hesitate to report corruption in South Africa: (i) pervasive fear of retaliation; (ii) institutional distrust; (iii) ineffective law enforcement; and (iv) cultural or social stigma. Experts thought that fear of retaliation is intensified by weak whistleblower protections, risks of job loss, reputational damage and even physical danger. They believed that institutional distrust arises from widespread corruption within law enforcement and judicial

[99] Participants in FGD 8 expressed a degree of understanding, though not justification, for why police officers might take bribes. One participant said that "[f]or example, looking at the police... you are a police [officer] and you are in [earning] R30,000... and you are expected to arrest a drug dealer who bribes you with... R50,000... Do you say no when you have three children?... You don't have a choice." Another participant told us that "[i]f maybe police were just getting paid enough... I think this is enough for me... I don't need to gamble with my job. But if you're getting paid like that... you think... I can make [an] extra R500." Corruption within the police force begins at the point of entry. Becoming an officer requires a bribe, meaning the institution is corrupted from its foundation. One participant said that "[f]or you to get a job [as a police officer], you have to pay some money... It's normalised."

bodies, creating a belief that reporting will lead to no meaningful action or protection. Slow judicial processes, insufficient legal safeguards and a lack of accountability were thought to further discourage reporting. These factors collectively generate a climate of fear, futility and cynicism that inhibits the reporting of corruption despite widespread awareness of its harms. It is clear that many of the themes identified by the experts during the baseline study were also present in the eight FGDs.

11.10 Where Can We Find Solutions?

Young people understand best how to communicate with and mobilise their peers. For this reason, participants in the FGDs were asked what they think would be the best way to engage young people to proactively work against corruption. This question aimed to explore practical strategies and ideas that resonate with youth themselves about motivating and empowering their peers to take an active stance in fighting corruption. The question encourages youth to think about their role in anti-corruption efforts, fostering a sense of ownership, agency and motivation to participate actively rather than remaining passive observers. Hearing from youth provides insights into personal realities as well as potential challenges around this issue. The solutions suggested by FGD participants seemed to be motivated by their understanding of corruption as morally condemnable.

Most FGD participants indicated that they opposed corruption. But their responses to the 'solutions' question was characterised by a profound sense of pragmatic resignation. Participants in most FGDs repeatedly stressed that corruption is not about individual failings but an entrenched system that allowed corrupt people to behave with impunity. In our vignettes, ordinary citizens (i.e., John, Maria and Lerato) were viewed mainly as victims. Even people in those vignettes with ostensive power (i.e., Mary) were not seen as able to change the system. Corruption was seen as "the way things work", making resistance by people like Mary or Lerato futile and often dangerous. Reporting corruption was considered risky and unlikely to succeed, since those involved often protect themselves and each other. A number of participants were sceptical about being able to address corruption. Participants of our FGDs tended to think that the problem is too vast and entrenched for youth to combat. One participant of FGD 3, for example, said "there's no beating corruption, not anytime soon". While there was hope that the youth could drive change, some participants in FGD 8 feared they are being co-opted into the same corrupt systems.

Solutions proposed by the FGDs included awareness campaigns, empowering citizens (especially the youth) through education on policies and their rights. Ethics education was mentioned as important in a number of FGDs, with educators expected to teach learners to be intolerant of corruption. FGD 2 participants, for example, argued for anti-corruption education and the need to cultivate a culture of ethics from an early age. Participants in FGD 4 had comparable views; one participant from that group asserted that:

> "We can teach our kids, our siblings, to remain [faithful to] life principles, but there will come a time… Such can be achieved through watching [and instilling] fear [of consequences] to the young ones to say, 'You see, this one is corrupt. We caught him and this is what we are doing to him.' Then that way we the young ones are going to grow up knowing that once you do 1,2,3, you are going to face the same charges… not just the mere dismissal, for example, [but] like a serious repercussion."

Another participant from the same group told us that:

> "…there's a problem of accountability. But youth are not given that power to do a lot of things to show that they are the future of the country."

FGD 1 participants had similar views; one participant from that group concluded that:

> "We should change the education system. We're still learning history but not teaching our kids [about] the present or solutions. If we start from early education, politics might interest young people more."

A participant from FGD 3 noted it's a "generational thing," implying that long-term change requires educating both the youth and the older generations who currently enable the system. This sentiment denoted a perceived lack of empowerment among youth to actively combat corruption and suggested that demonstrating clear, serious repercussions for corrupt behaviour would instil a deterrent - "fear" - and promote integrity among younger generations. This sentiment is consistent with a more general desire for accountability noted in many FGDs and reflects a call for both stronger enforcement of consequences and sanctions, and youth involvement in fostering a culture of anti-corruption.

Many participants wanted to support people who report corruption and have effective whistleblower protections. FGD 3 participants (i.e., the undergraduates), in particular, suggested anonymous hotlines and even a "reward system" to incentivise reporting. Others wanted strict consequence management, with stronger action against those who have committed corruption. A participant from FGD 1 said that: "We need to focus on severe consequences for even the smallest corruption like bribes on the road." FGD 8 participants suggested that a living wage would make public servants less vulnerable to temptation and more likely to value their stable employment over a risky bribe. FGD 5 participants had similar suggestions that focused on employment opportunities and removing nepotism. Participants in FGD 4 were more radical and wanted changes to the economic structure of the country. For them any solution, in their view, would require a complete overhaul of the system's incentives and accountability mechanisms, starting from the household level all the way to the highest offices of government. Their feelings are characterised by a deep sense of resignation, frustration and cynicism.

How FGD participants answered the ‘solutions’ question can be contrasted with how experts answered a similar question in the baseline study. When asked about the most effective ways to fight corruption, a diverse range of responses was proposed by experts. Key recommendations included public education on the social and economic harms of corruption (particularly through schools and media), strengthening anti-corruption agencies to ensure independence as well as faster prosecutions for offenders. Experts also argued for stronger whistleblower protections, stating that this would encourage reporting. They called for civic engagement through civil society and active citizenship and thought that people should vote for political parties with an anti-corruption agenda and support collective community efforts that have strength in numbers. Some stressed decolonisation as vital to dismantling structural economic disparities linked to corruption.

11.11 Discussion

The qualitative data presented in the current section provided valuable insights into how young people thought about corruption. The youth we interviewed perceive corruption as a normalised and systemic issue, deeply entrenched in society. They defined it primarily as the abuse of power for personal gain and driven by factors like greed, poverty and weak leadership. Materialistic values heavily influence youth perspectives, with success widely equated with wealth and financial gain. Although people still stated that they morally condemned corrupt behaviour, it was perceived as necessary to navigate a dishonest system. This environment fosters a pragmatic tolerance for corruption, which is often seen as a necessary strategy for advancement and survival within a broken system. This pragmatism may be one of the reasons that TtC (Tolerance towards Corruption) is higher than expected in South Africa.

FGD participants tended to sympathise with the persons in the vignettes who decided to participate in corrupt behaviour. The overwhelming feeling is that participating in corruption is a better option than sticking to a moral position (albeit commendable). When participants were asked to place themselves in the shoes of an individual within a corrupt system (like John, Mary or Lerato) in any of the vignettes, they often justify or accept the corrupt action as a necessary survival strategy. These individuals were often seen, in other words, as engaging in needs-based corruption. But the FGD participants did seem to have a uniformly negative view of the professor in the second vignette who abused his authority to attempt sexual extortion. Participants believed that corruption is driven top-down and that those with power abuse the economically disadvantaged. The FGD data revealed a young South African generation that is acutely aware of the difference between needs-based and greed-based corruption.

The importance of socio-economic status and economic imbalances were mentioned repeatedly in the qualitative research data gathered during the FGDs. The significance placed on socio-economic status by FGD participants is consistent with what we see in the public opinion survey; the quantitative data showed that poverty exacerbated the odds of being exposed to corrupt practices. The FGD data demonstrated that it was not merely that poor people encounter corruption more often; it is also that systemic economic exclusion makes them more vulnerable targets who can more readily be pressured into becoming participants. The economically disadvantaged are, in other words, often forced to partake in needs-based corruption. Socio-economic position is not a peripheral factor but is central to the corruption ecosystem; it determines one's vulnerability, influencing one's choices. Corruption is priced into the cost of navigating a system that fails to provide equitable access to services for non-elites.

FGD participants tended to portray public officials as the primary enablers and perpetrators of corruption, often acting with impunity. They are described as being motivated by greed and a desire for

personal enrichment, creating systems where bribery is normalised and unavoidable. Participants identified a profound lack of accountability in the public sector, where corrupt acts go unpunished due to weak oversight, ineffective consequence management and political protection. FGD participants noted that even honest officials within the system are faced with immense social pressure in the workplace, including ostracism and even threats. They thought this made it dangerous for officials to resist or report corruption. This portrayal of public officials corresponds with findings from the quantitative survey results which identified troubling trends amongst adults who worked in the public sector. This group tended to be more likely to tolerate corrupt behaviour, perceive widespread corrupt practices in their workplace and show a lower willingness to want to report colleagues for taking part in corrupt activities.

There were a significant number of young respondents who seemed to want a 'hero' figure like Lieutenant-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi to fight corruption at the elite level. But one of the more troubling aspects of the qualitative data was the lack of optimism amongst the FGD participants. We detected a profound sense of resignation and cynicism regarding the possibility of change. The youth we interviewed almost uniformly believed that corruption was too big a problem to tackle. They cited, as reasons for their pessimism, extreme risks for whistleblowers, a lack of consequences for perpetrators and a deep institutional distrust. It could be argued that these young people lived through the highly publicised Zondo Commission, and their views may have been shaped by a general concern that the Commission did *not* result in more high-profile prosecutions. This would be consistent with past research on attitudes towards the pace and effectiveness of the Zondo Commission[100],.

The pessimism that emerged from the FGD could be interpreted as part of a general erosion of the social contract in post-apartheid South Africa that has been observed in the public opinion research on political trust. It could be argued that there has been a general erosion of where expectations of state responsibility, fairness and accountability. There was a strong consensus that ethical leadership and systemic overhaul, rather than individual action, were essential for progress. There was also significant evidence of CoS norms in the qualitative data, with FGD participants making frequent negative references to “snitches”. This is consistent with what we have observed in the public opinion survey data; there is a moral aversion to reporting people in your social networks to the authorities. Overall, this finding demonstrates the destructive power of CoS norms and how they undermine the collective fight against corrupt practices.

The qualitative research component, as with all qualitative research of this type, was not designed to be representative of the adult population. Instead, it looked at vital demographic of special interest. The valuable findings provided have showcased the nuanced dynamics that this group faces. Given how the captured experiences of this group finds resonance in the mainline findings of this report, it is believed that these findings are applicable to other socio-demographic groups in the country. In addition, it was interesting to note that the opinions of the FGD participants had significant resonance with the views of the expert interviewed during the baseline study. That being said, future research may find it valuable to conduct qualitative research of this kind with a wider selection of different socio-demographic groups. Given the class dynamics that emerged strongly in this study, it could be valuable for future research to focus more closely on socio-economic diversity.

11.12 Conclusion

The qualitative component of this study is not a competitor to the quantitative component but is, instead, a vital companion piece. It provides rigorous qualitative evidence that confirms the quantitative component's diagnosis of corruption as a systemic problem in the country. It puts a human face on some of the prior research findings, illustrating the real-life dilemmas, fears and social pressures that citizens face. Moreover, the data presented here helps us move beyond the abstract language of quantitative research language. The findings presented added crucial nuance to our understanding of the public’s views by demonstrating the significant social barriers that hinder reporting and anti-

[100] Roberts & Mchunu (2023) provide an outline of a largescale multi-year research study on public attitudes towards the Zondo Commission. The study highlighted widespread public concern that the Commission did not lead to a greater number of high-profile prosecutions during the research period (i.e., 2021-2023). Much of the mass public felt that, despite the Commission's extensive investigations and findings, the expected legal actions against prominent figures were limited. This seem to reinforce a perception that elites face little accountability if they engage in corrupt practices.

corruption activity. It identifies major implementation challenges which must be overcome if the NACS is to succeed.

Overall, the qualitative research component's findings demonstrate the complex dimensions shaping Black African youth attitudes. The qualitative data revealed that young people view corruption as a pervasive and normalised problem deeply embedded in society. While morally condemned, corruption is often pragmatically tolerated as a necessary means to navigate a broken system. Focus group participants showed empathy for those engaging in corruption out of need, distinguishing this from greed-driven corruption. Socio-economic status was highlighted as central to vulnerability, with the poor more frequently targeted and pressured into corrupt acts. Public officials were seen as main perpetrators who act with impunity due to lack of accountability and social pressures that discourage whistleblowing. The data also underscored the harmful influence of CoS norms which undermine collective efforts to fight corruption. Despite a desire among some youth for heroic anti-corruption leadership, there was widespread cynicism about meaningful change due to institutional distrust and perceived systemic failure to hold perpetrators accountable.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION

When outlining what is needed to fight corruption in South Africa, the NACS identifies six strategic objectives. These encompass the encouragement of engaged citizen participation as well as the strengthening of governance, oversight, transparency and accountability across all sectors. The strategy emphasises the need for a collective effort against corruption that transcends political, socio-economic and ideological boundaries. The purpose of this report is to supply pertinent data that may support the implementation of the NACS. We have explored the prevalence of public sector corruption at local level, the normalisation of occupational corruption as well as the mass public's awareness and trust in anti-corruption mechanisms. We have also emphasised the critical barriers posed by fear of retaliation and societal codes of silence. This section provides a summary of the key findings of this report.

We examined how the adult population in South Africa experiences corruption. Overall, we found that most people in the country have experienced, and feel affected by, corruption. In Section 2 of this report we focused on understanding perceptions of public sector corruption at the local (or micro-) level. We discovered that a relatively small segment (32%) of the public believed that they lived in areas free of public sector corruption. Our data revealed that many South Africans are aware of various forms of public sector corruption within their communities. This awareness often clusters in specific geographies, with residents of Limpopo, Free State and rural farms being more exposed to this kind of corruption. In addition, the report highlighted that economically disadvantaged communities are more likely to live in areas where corruption is common. This finding implies that poverty exacerbates the odds of being exposed to corrupt practices. The role of socio-economic status in perpetuating corruption was also a feature of the qualitative research component.

In the baseline study, we examined public attitudes towards sexual corruption in South African public sector. A significant majority (59%) of the general population said that they thought that public officials demand sexual favours from individuals at least from time to time. The second-year study built on this earlier work and Section 2 looked at the public's indirect experience of sextortion in both the public and private sectors. Our research showed a higher level of indirect experience of sexual corruption in the public sector than in the private sector. Economic hardship was identified as a factor that increased the odds of being indirectly exposed to sexual corruption. We found that people who lived in areas where other types of corruption (e.g., bribery or nepotism) were common, were also more likely to have indirect experience of sexual corruption. The influence of socio-economic inequality in sustaining sexual corruption was also highlighted in the qualitative research component.

Section 3 contains the study's finding that a significant normalisation of corruption within workplaces across South Africa. We learnt that only a minority (39%) of workers were in occupations that they believed were free of corruption. This tendency was found to be more pronounced in the public sector than in the private sector. Socio-economic disparities influence perceptions of occupational corruption, with poorer individuals in low-skilled professions more exposed to corrupt practices. This data demonstrates the need for initiatives aimed at creating corruption-free work environments through professionalisation and culture change, education, mentoring, and robust transparency and accountability mechanisms. This will require implementing and enforcing disciplinary measures as well as providing continuous ethics training and leadership development. We also need to enhance whistleblower protections and confidential reporting channels, especially in the public sector. Data provided in this report can be used to support the development of targeted anti-corruption programmes focused on occupational corruption.

The baseline study discovered a widespread belief amongst the general public that corruption has had a significant economic impact on the country. This belief was found to be associated with perceptions of political corruption. Building on this work, the second-year study looked at the public's awareness of corruption's impact at the micro-, meso- and macro- levels. The data, presented in Section 4, revealed widespread awareness of corruption's impact at these different levels. Interestingly, people were found to be equally concerned about the corrupt activities of large corporations as they were with the corrupt practices of government officials. Levels of perceived impact varied significantly among demographic groups and geographic regions. The data suggested that, because general awareness is already high, further awareness campaigns may have limited additional benefit. Instead, resources might be better directed toward practical measures like governance improvements, stronger enforcement and greater transparency. There is a need to balance education with interventions that foster tangible change.

We explored attitudes toward corruption as a means of social advancement in Section 5. We found that, although a majority of the mass public reject corrupt practices like bribery, a minority perceive such practices as instrumental to success. This found resonance in our qualitative data, the youth focus groups noted how a primary desire for wealth made people more accepting of corrupt behaviour. This wealth-first orientation drives some to see corruption pragmatically, as a rational if morally ambivalent strategy to overcome systemic barriers and navigate an entrenched corrupt environment. Instrumentalist attitudes toward corruption were linked to distrust in authorities and the lack of efficacy of reporting corruption. Dedicated programmes should be designed and rolled out to address such instrumentalist views. Given that public sector employees are more likely to view corruption as a tool for advancement, reforms are needed to change institutional cultures and workplace norms. Workplace ethics programmes, professionalisation, ethical leadership promotion, as well as addressing systemic inequality are necessary to shift beliefs and restore faith in meritocracy.

The baseline study looked at public acceptance of a range of dishonest-illegal behaviours. We found that a noteworthy segment of the general public viewed such behaviours as acceptable. In other words, the mass public is much more tolerant of unlawful behaviour than we may have expected. These results show the urgent need for interventions to promote social values and norms that encourage compliance with the law amongst the general public. The second-year study expanded on the work of the first year and utilised a more inclusive set of items to measure the social acceptability of corruption. Most South Africans had low levels of TtC but only a small proportion (27%) of the adult public had a zero-tolerance view. The goal of the NACS is zero-tolerance for corruption, and it is evident that we need interventions that can reduce the social acceptance of corrupt practices in the country. The qualitative research revealed that tolerance for corruption was shaped by a pragmatic resignation. While corruption is morally condemned, many young participants perceive it as a necessary strategy for survival and advancement in a context marked by economic precarity and inadequate law enforcement.

We discovered in Section 6 that certain groups (e.g., public sector workers) tend to be much more accepting of corruption than others. We found that economic disadvantage also correlates with higher tolerance of corrupt practices. Our findings indicate the need for pro-poor policies linked to social welfare and economic empowerment. Programmes that redress existing economic injustices will have a long-term beneficial impact on weakening the social acceptability of corrupt practices. The data indicated that raising awareness of corruption's harm can lower tolerance for corrupt behaviour by sparking ethical outrage and driving change. We need to design social norm campaigns that stress corruption’s detrimental impact while avoiding messages that suggest corruption is common. This calls for thorough public education efforts that clearly convey corruption’s practical negative impacts on individuals and communities. In addition, instrumentalist views of corrupt practices were (positively) linked to TtC. In light of this, we need to reduce perceived benefits of corruption through enhanced and consistent enforcement, and equitable application, of laws.

The results presented in multiple sections (especially Section 6) of this report show that exposure bureaucratic corruption has an unwanted effect on those social values and norms that inform corruption in South Africa. One mechanism to reduce public experiences of bureaucratic corruption in the country is the successful implementation of the Framework for the Professionalisation of the Public Sector. This policy aims to build a capable, ethical and accountable public service committed to serving the public interest. It seeks to eradicate a culture of impunity, irregularities and mismanagement of state resources by holding public servants accountable, promoting merit-based recruitment and selection as well as enhancing integrity through training and continuous professional development. The framework emphasises non-partisanship, consequence management, and a built-in culture of good governance to reduce the factors enabling corruption in the public sector. The successful implementation of the framework would reduce improve public exposure to bureaucratic corruption by creating a professional public service that upholds honesty, ethics and integrity as priorities in service delivery.

In an effort to help us understand how social values and social norms are created and maintained in South Africa, Section 7 investigated social role models linked to ethical values. We discovered that family figures play a central role in shaping attitudes toward honesty and corruption intolerance. Investing in family-based ethics education, along with school curricula and family-oriented community programmes, could foster integrity from an early age. We found that certain workers, such as public sector employees, tend to turn to workplace mentors for ethical guidance, but the data shows that such practices are associated with higher levels of TtC. Addressing this problem this would require

specialised training for leaders and mentors in the public sector that emphasise professionalism and anti-corruption values. It may be useful to identify successful ethical interventions in the private sector and replicate them in the public sector.

People sometimes create CoS norms to protect their social network members. Put differently, they develop a moral reluctance to inform authorities about the unlawful actions of members within their social networks, especially when individuals are deeply dependent on these networks. These kinds of norms were first identified in the baseline study, which investigated how CoS norms differed little according to the severity of the crime involved. The second-year study built on that prior work by looking at the radius, or variable social reach, of these norms. Using this new radius-centred measure of CoS norms, discussed in Section 8, we identified the factors that encourage the formation of these norms. Special attention was paid to workplace CoS norms. This was evident in the qualitative component; participants in the focus groups noted that snitches face retaliation, including threats, social exclusion, and even violence. They though that this created a powerful deterrent against reporting corrupt behaviour; people wanted to avoid being labelled as "snitches" to protect their safety and social standing.

Our research showed that tackling CoS norms requires multifaceted policies, including legal protection, norm change policy programmes, as well as community engagement. The qualitative data shows that public sector employees often face distinctive pressures and social dynamics that make them both key enablers and victims of corruption. Sector-specific interventions tailored to different categories of worker, with a focus on the public sector, were also identified as important here. In addition, our data showed that addressing underlying poverty and social dependency through integrated welfare and anti-corruption efforts helps mitigate CoS norms by reducing fears of social sanctions. Indeed, the qualitative data seem to suggest that by alleviating economic pressures through coordinated social support and targeted economic empowerment, individuals may feel less compelled to turn a blind eye to corrupt behaviour.

The findings presented in Section 9 revealed cautious optimism about willingness to report corruption amongst the general public. Following the 2024 NPE, there appeared to have been an upswing in public willingness to fight corruption. However, the proportion (59%) who said that they would report corruption is still quite low, and less than half the mass public said that they would be prepared to give evidence in a corruption court. Increasing public confidence in the effectiveness of reporting processes and fostering collective responsibility through ethical messaging in media and education are crucial to improving popular willingness to fight corruption. We suggest tailored interventions for those groups we identified as having lower levels of willingness. Supporting whistleblowers through anonymity and with legal aid, counselling, witness protection as well as legal protections against reprisals are important here. Viewing corruption as socially acceptable was found to have a negative association with a person’s willingness to combat corruption. Therefore, it is essential to implement ongoing, research-driven public education campaigns aimed at decreasing tolerance for corruption in South Africa.

Finally, Section 10 investigated widespread fear of retaliation as a key barrier to reporting corruption, especially in communities and occupations where corruption is entrenched. Overcoming this requires the urgent and substantial strengthening of protections for whistleblowers, as well as community and workplace sensitisation to the benefits of whistleblowing. Our data suggests that efforts should focus on vulnerable populations in certain provinces (e.g., Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape) as well as in rural areas. Strengthening independent institutions with resources and autonomy to investigate and act is vital. Section 10 also looked at public attitudes towards major anti-corruption hotlines. We revealed that awareness of anti-corruption hotlines is low overall, necessitating well-funded, multi-faceted campaigns targeting those groups (e.g., the less well-educated, low-skilled workers, rural villagers) who displayed low levels of awareness. Low levels of confidence in the hotlines were another problem. Showcasing successful outcomes and leveraging trusted institutions’ reputations are key to building trust. Continuous monitoring of public awareness and trust will allow dynamic strategy adjustments, ensuring anti-corruption efforts effectively reach and empower all South Africans.

In conclusion, the comprehensive findings from this study underscore that while South Africans are widely aware of corruption and its harmful effects, significant challenges remain in transforming this awareness into effective anti-corruption action. Persistent fears of retaliation, varying levels of trust and awareness about reporting mechanisms as well as entrenched social and workplace norms continue to

inhibit transparent reporting and accountability. To move forward, anti-corruption efforts must adopt a multifaceted, targeted approach that simultaneously addresses these fears, strengthens institutional protections and enforcement as well as fosters culture change through education and community engagement. By prioritising practical governance improvements, empowering vulnerable populations and enhancing the accessibility and credibility of reporting channels, South Africa can build a more resilient, inclusive and integrity-driven society where citizens are supported and motivated to stand against corruption without fear.

13 APPENDIX A: METHODS AND SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS

13.1 Baseline Expert Survey

As part of the baseline study, a specialised expert opinion survey was developed and implemented. The goal was to capture expert views and generate policy-relevant insights regarding the social values and norms that either promote or deter corrupt practices in South Africa. This survey was designed to complement the public opinion research outlined in previous sections. Its purpose was to invite a diverse range of experts to complete a questionnaire crafted to address the project's aims and key research questions. Experts were purposively selected from a broad spectrum of academic fields, professional bodies, civil society groups, as well as government departments and agencies. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via the SurveyMonkey platform, with individual experts receiving a direct weblink.

A total of 170 experts were identified through the sampling process. These individuals were recognised authorities in their respective domains, often having published in peer-reviewed outlets, participated in relevant public discourse, or held senior roles within their organisations. The research team received responses from 67 experts, while the remainder either did not respond or declined participation. Respondents represented a variety of institutions including universities, research centres, and non-governmental organisations. Participants reported expertise across multiple disciplines, with governance and public administration cited most frequently (70%), followed by political science (40%), law (37%), and social policy (25%). Of those who took part, 61 completed the questionnaire in full, while six submissions were partially completed. Some respondents opted for anonymity and were assigned random numeric codes, whereas others consented to have their names and affiliations published in the baseline report.

13.2 Subgroup Glossary

Term	Definition
Metropolitan.	A metropolitan municipality (or metro) is a local government entity that performs all municipal functions for a large city or urban agglomeration. All large cities in South Africa are governed by a metropolitan municipality.
Rural villagers.	People who live in rural villages in South Africa reside in traditional authority areas. This refers to a geographical region governed by recognised traditional leaders who exercise customary law and authority over local communities
Farm dwellers.	Many people in South Africa still reside on large commercial farms. These are agricultural enterprises primarily engaged in the production of crops and livestock for sale
Generations.	Even though generational cohorts can be defined in various ways, the following classifications have become widely accepted: Post-War Generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennial Generation (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2009).
Province	Province of residence refers to one of the nine official administrative regions where a person lives.
Employed	Persons are those who have a job or are engaged in work for pay or profit, including those working for an employer or self-employed, regardless of the number of hours worked.
Unemployed.	Individuals who have actively sought employment or self-employment in the recent past but remain without a job.
Skilled workers.	Workers are classified based skill level; to perform this classification we use the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) codes.
Outside labour market.	Those who are not employed and are neither actively seeking nor available for work. This group includes as students, homemakers, retirees, and those unable to work.
Race group	The race (or population) group categories referenced in this report follow current South African demographic classifications. Population group is identified in the survey. The authors do not endorse the concept of 'race' as a biological reality.
Years of formal education.	The total number of full academic years an individual has successfully finished within the formal schooling system, from primary through secondary and including any post-secondary education.

13.3 Statistical Glossary

Term	Definition
Mean	Often called the average, is a measure of central tendency that represents the sum of all values in a dataset divided by the number of values. It provides a single value that summarises the overall level or typical value of the data, helping to understand the general trend within a set of numbers.
Standard error	Standard error (SE) is a statistical measure that indicates how accurately a sample mean represents the true population mean. It reflects the variability or dispersion of sample means if multiple samples were drawn from the same population.
95% Conf. Interval	A 95% confidence interval is a range of values calculated from sample data that is believed to contain the true population parameter (such as a mean) with 95% certainty. This means that if the same sampling process were repeated many times, approximately 95% of the calculated intervals would include the actual population value.
Bivariate	Bivariate analysis is a statistical method that examines the relationship between two variables to determine if and how they are connected. It involves analysing paired data—often called X (independent variable) and Y (dependent variable)—to explore patterns, associations, or predictions between them.
Multivariate	Multivariate regression in statistics is a technique used to analyse the relationship between multiple dependent (outcome) variables and one or more independent (predictor) variables simultaneously. It helps understand how several outcome measures are influenced by a set of predictors within a single model.
Ordinal logistic regression	Ordinal logistic regression is a statistical method used to model the relationship between one or more independent variables and an ordinal dependent variable—one that has ordered categories. It estimates the odds of the response variable falling at or below a certain category, assuming the effect of predictors is consistent across the ordered levels.
Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression	Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression is a statistical method used to estimate the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables by finding the best-fitting linear equation that minimises the sum of squared differences between the observed and predicted values.
Pairwise correlation	A statistical technique used to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables at a time. It quantifies how closely the values of one variable move in relation to another, typically represented by a correlation coefficient ranging from -1 to 1, where values near 0 indicate little or no relationship, and values near ±1 indicate strong positive or negative relationships.
Cronbach alpha	Cronbach's alpha (α) is a statistical measure used to assess the internal consistency or reliability of a set of scale or test items, indicating how closely related the items are as a group. It ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values (typically ≥0.7) suggesting stronger consistency among items in measuring the same underlying construct.
Item-rest correlation	This shows the correlation between each individual item and the total score (sum of all items). Higher values (closer to 1) indicate that the item is strongly related to the overall scale. A low value (e.g., < 0.3) may suggest the item doesn't fit well with the rest of the scale.
Item-test correlation	This is the correlation between an individual item and the sum of the remaining items, excluding that item. It's similar to Item-Test Correlation but removes the item from the total score to avoid inflating the correlation. Again, higher values are better, and low values could indicate that an item is not consistent with the others.
Average interitem covariance	This is the average of all pairwise covariances between items on the scale. It gives a sense of how much items move together. Higher average covariance usually indicates better internal consistency. However, if it's too high, it could also suggest redundancy among items.

13.4 Methodology for the South African Social Attitudes Survey

A second module on the social values and norms that inform corruption was included in the 2024-2025 round of SASAS. The exact wording of the module is provided in Appendix B. This short section outlines

the sampling framework, data collection protocols, and fieldwork procedures employed in SASAS. The survey targeted a nationally representative sample of 3,500 South African adults aged 16 and older across all nine provinces, excluding institutional settings. Sampling followed a three-stage design: (1) 500 small area layers (SALs) were selected as primary sampling units, stratified by province, geography and population group using updated 2011 census data; (2) seven dwelling units per SAL were randomly chosen as secondary sampling units; and (3) one eligible individual (aged 16+, residing in the household for at least 15 of the last 30 days) was selected per household. Fieldwork was conducted from February to March 2025. As can be observed in **Table 13-1**, the achieved sample size was 3,087 interviews (88% of the target)[101].

Table 13-1: Sample Realisation for South African Social Attitudes Survey, 2024/25

Province	Number of SALs	Ideal Sample (N)	Realised Sample (N)	Realisation Rate (%)
Western Cape	65	455	365	80%
Eastern Cape	65	455	419	92%
Northern Cape	37	259	212	82%
Free State	38	266	234	88%
KwaZulu-Natal	93	651	607	93%
North West	37	259	242	93%
Gauteng	83	581	474	82%
Mpumalanga	38	266	261	98%
Limpopo	44	308	273	89%
Total	500	3500	3087	88%

Data collection adhered to strict ethical guidelines approved by the HSRC Research Ethics Committee (REC). Informed consent was obtained digitally for adults (18+), while minors (16–17) required additional parental/guardian consent. Confidentiality was maintained by removing personal identifiers and storing data securely. Fieldworkers notified local authorities (e.g., traditional leaders, police, or ward councillors) before commencing surveys to ensure legitimacy and safety. Training covered sampling methods, multilingual questionnaires, and tablet-based data collection, with supervisors conducting spot checks and backchecks to verify compliance. The achieved sample size was 3,087 interviews (88% of the target). Final person weights benchmarked the data against Statistics South Africa's mid-year population estimates for province, population group, gender and age. All data presented in this study is weighted unless otherwise stated.

Table 13-2: Descriptive summary statistics for the background control variables

	N	Min	Max
Gender Group			
Male	1466	0	1
Female	1628	0	1
Age	3095	16	95
Race Group			
Black African	1851	0	1
Coloured	527	0	1
Indian	356	0	1
White	345	0	1
Years of Formal Education	3080	0	23
Job Status			
Employed	1068	0	1
Unemployed	1075	0	1
Outside Labour Market	946	0	1
Geotype			
Urban Metro	1287	0	1
Urban Non-Metro	1066	0	1
Rural Village	577	0	1
Rural Farm	165	0	1
Province			

[101] Oversampling occurred in 33 SALs, which was corrected through adjusted weighting.

Western Cape	367	0	1
Eastern Cape	419	0	1
Northern Cape	212	0	1
Free State	236	0	1
KwaZulu-Natal	608	0	1
North West	243	0	1
Gauteng	475	0	1
Mpumalanga	261	0	1
Limpopo	274	0	1

Note: Unweighted data.

To incorporate respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, a set of standard demographic variables was created for the analysis. These dummy variables included gender, racial group, level of education, province of residence, and political affiliation. In addition, we a special effort to provide a generational analysis of the data. To represent social status, three objective indicators were used as proxies: (i) geographic location; (ii) educational attainment measured by years of formal schooling completed; and (iii) employment or labour market status. Descriptive summary statistics for these variables are provided in Table 13-2.

Socio-Economic Status (SES) Index'

Using SASAS data, a household asset index was developed to assess a person's economic status. The index incorporated questions on asset ownership, type of housing, and access to essential services (e.g., piped water, indoor plumbing, and electricity). The measure's validity and reliability were confirmed through a Cronbach's alpha test ($\alpha = 0.904$). The index was labelled the Socio-Economic Status (SES) Index; it was scored from 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest socio-economic status and 0 the lowest.

13.5 Statistical Analysis for Section 2

Several multivariate regression models were developed for this study. Unless stated otherwise, all models presented in this section control for these standard demographic variables. The data presented in this subsection utilise data from SASAS 2024/25.

Indirect Public Sector Sexual Extortion Experience (IPSEE) Scale

To measure indirect experience of sexual extortion in the public sector, we employed the following survey question: "How often have you heard about an official making requests of a sexual nature from someone you know in exchange for a government service or benefit in the last 5 years?" Responses ranged from 1'Never' to 5'Very often'. 'Don't know' responses were coded as missing. This variable was termed the Indirect Public Sector Sexual Extortion Experience (IPSEE) Scale.

Recent Corruption Experience (RCE) Scale

To construct a variable to measure corruption exposure, we used answers to the following question: "In the last five years, how often have you or a member of your immediate family come across a public official who hinted they wanted, or asked for, a bribe or favour in return for a service?" Responses were captured on a 1'Never' to 5'Very often' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. This variable was labelled the Recent Corruption Experience (RCE) Scale.

The first analysis concerned predictors of the IPSEE Scale; an ordered logistic regression was employed to examine two different indicators. The first model investigated the relationship between the SES Index and the IPSEE Scale (details on how the SES Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146). The second model introduced the RCE Scale into the model. Both models accounted for socio-demographic characteristics; the results of these models are presented in Table 13-3.

Table 13-3: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the SES Index and the RCE Scale correlates with the IPSEE Scale

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
SES Index	-0.111	(0.041)	**	-0.086	(0.040)	*
RCE Scale				0.829	(0.055)	***
N			2999			2959

Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-0.160	(0.396)		1.211	(0.380)	
/cut2	0.618	(0.397)		2.194	(0.385)	
/cut3	1.670	(0.399)		3.459	(0.395)	
/cut4	3.099	(0.454)		5.002	(0.460)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the IPSEE Scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Prevalence Public Sector Local Sexual Corruption (PPSLSC) Scale

To construct a variable to measure corruption exposure, we used answers to the following question: "How often have you heard about public officials making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a government service or benefit in your area?" Responses were captured on a 1'Never' to 5'Very often' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. This variable was labelled the Prevalence Public Sector Local Sexual Corruption (PPSLSC) Scale.

An ordered logistic regression was utilised to investigate how experiences of corruption affect the perceived pervasiveness of the sexual corruption in the local public sector. The first model investigates the association the PPSLSC Scale and the RCE Scale. The second model replaced the RCE Scale with the IPSEE Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-4.

Table 13-4: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the IPSEE Scale and the RCE Scale correlates with the PPSLSC Scale

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
RCE Scale	0.582	(0.048)	***			
IPSEE Scale				1.078	(0.064)	***
N			2916			2921
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	0.255	(0.355)		1.290	(0.389)	
/cut2	1.156	(0.354)		2.349	(0.394)	
/cut3	2.227	(0.358)		3.622	(0.4121)	
/cut4	3.703	(0.393)		5.319	(0.460	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PPSLSC Scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption Index

Respondents were asked three questions on how often three different types of activities occurred in the area where they lived. Responses were captured on a categorical scale that ranged from 1' Never' to 5 'Very often'. 'Don't know' responses were treated as missing. The legend for each of these actions is presented in Table 13-5.

Table 13-5: Exact wording of the three questions about the prevalence of local corruption

B1	People in your area have to pay a bribe to, give a gift to, or do a favour for, public officials and civil servants
B2	Public officials in your area given jobs and contracts to unqualified friends and family
B3	Public officials making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a government service or benefit in your area

A pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix analysis was conducted to examine the associations among the four items mentioned earlier. The results are presented in Table 13-6; all values shown in the table were above 0.300 and this implies a robust degree of intercorrelation between the different items. In fact, all three items were robustly intercorrelated and had coefficients that were close to or above 0.600.

Table 13-6: Pairwise correlation for the three questions about the prevalence of local corruption

	B1	B2
B2	0.599	
B3	0.634	0.619

A Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to evaluate whether the items depicted in Table 13-5 loaded well together. The results of this test are shown in Table 13-7; the table depicts the results for item-test correlation, item-rest correlation, average inter-item covariance, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The test scale shows a high Cronbach's alpha value (α=0.837) which indicated strong internal consistency among items B1-B3. It can be concluded that these items reliably reflect the same core construct and can be merged into one composite index; this metric was labelled the Perceived Level of Local Public Sector Corruption (PLoLPSC) Index.

Table 13-7: Interitem correlations (covariances) and Cronbach's alpha for the three questions about the prevalence of local corruption

	Observations	Item-Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Interitem Covariance	Alpha
B1	2,967	0.866	0.701	1.10	0.771
B2	2.939	0.877	0.690	1.01	0.785
B3	2,978	0.870	0.705	1.09	0.766
Test Scale				1.07	0.837

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the SES Index and the PLoLPSC Index. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-8.

Table 13-8: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the SES Index correlates with the PLoLPSC Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.			β	Coeff.			β
SES Index	-1.340	(0.036)	***	-0.109	-2.058	(0.640)	**	-0.166
Background variables			No				Yes	
N			3033				3006	
Prob>F			0.000				0.000	
R^2			0.012				0.095	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PLoLPSC Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

Frequency of Private Sector Local Sexual Corruption (FPSLSC) Scale

To construct a variable to measure corruption exposure, we used answers to the following question: "In the last five years, how often have you heard about someone from the private sector in your area making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a job or benefit (such as a salary increase or promotion) or a service?" Responses were captured on a 1'Never' to 5'Very often' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. This variable was labelled the Frequency of Private Sector Local Sexual Corruption (FPSLSC) Scale.

An ordered logistic regression was employed to examine how perceptions about corruption affect scores on the FPSLSC Scale. The first model explores the association the FPSLSC Scale and the IPSEE Scale. The second model replaced the IPSEE Scale with the PLoLPSC Index. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-9.

Table 13-9: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the IPSEE Scale and the PLoLPSC Index correlates with the FPSLSC Scale

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
IPSEE Scale	1.078	(0.069)	***			
PLoLPSC Index				0.055	(0.003)	***
N			2945			2954

Prob>F			0.000		0.000
/cut1	1.598	(0.730)	0.666	(0.619)	
/cut2	2.660	(0.738)	1.823	(0.630)	
/cut3	4.164	(0.775)	3.399	(0.648)	
/cut4	5.877	(0.754)	5.185	(0.671)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the FPSLSC Scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.6 Statistical Analysis for Section 3

Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption (PNoOC) Index

Respondents were asked four questions on how often they thought that different kind of corruption occurred in their occupation. Responses were captured on a categorical scale that ranged from 1'Never' to 5'Very often'. 'Don't know' responses as well as 'not applicable' answers were treated as missing. The legend for each type of corruption is presented in Table 13-10.

Table 13-10: Exact wording of the four occupational corruption questions

C1	Bend the rules of their job to help friends and family
C2	Bend the rules of their job to make extra money or obtain a promotion
C3	Pay bribes in the course of their duties
C4	Demand bribes in the course of their duties

A pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix analysis was carried out to investigate the interrelationships among the four items described above. 'The results are presented in Table 13-11; all values shown in the table were above 0.500 and this implies a robust degree of intercorrelation between the different items. In fact, all three items were robustly intercorrelated and had coefficients that were above 0.700.

Table 13-11: Pairwise correlation for the four occupational corruption questions

	C1	C2	C3
C2	0.813		
C3	0.740	0.782	
C4	0.703	0.773	0.823

A Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed to assess the degree to which the four items cohesively grouped together. The results of this test are shown in Table 13-12; the table provides the results for item-test correlation, item-rest correlation, average inter-item covariance, and Cronbach's alpha. The test scale shows a high Cronbach's alpha value (α=0.920) which indicated strong internal consistency among items C1-C4. We can therefore determine that these items consistently assess the same fundamental concept and can be consolidated into a single index. This metric was labelled the Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption (PNoOC) Index.

Table 13-12: Interitem correlations (covariances) and Cronbach's alpha for the four occupational corruption questions

	Observations	Item-Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Interitem Covariance	Alpha
C1	2,666	0.876	0.774	1.53	0.909
C2	2,657	0.911	0.834	1.44	0.890
C3	2,642	0.912	0.836	1.42	0.889
C4	2,659	0.900	0.812	1.46	0.897
Test Scale				1.46	0.920

The first analysis concerned predictors of the PNoOC Index; a linear (OLS) regression was employed to examine two different indicators. The first model investigated the relationship between the SES Index and the PNoOC Index (details on how the SES Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146). The second model introduced the RCE Scale into the model (details on how the REC Sale was constructed are provide in Section 13.5 on pg. 146). Both models accounted for socio-demographic characteristics; the results of these models are presented in Table 13-13.

Table 13-13: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the SES Index correlates with the PNoOC Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.			β	Coeff.			β
SES Index	-2.173	(0.693)	**	-0.157	-1.694	(0.657)	*	-0.122
RCE Scale					5.855	(0.676)	***	0.264
N				2696				2696
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.098				0.165

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PNoOC Index; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A linear (OLS) regression approach was employed to examine how indirect experiences of sexual corruption affect scores on the PNoOC Index. The first model explores the association the PNoOC Index and the IPSEE Scale (details on how this scale was constructed are provide in Section 13.5 on pg. 146). The second model replaced the PNoOC Index with the FPSLSC Scale (details on how this scale was constructed are provide in Section 13.5 on pg. 148). Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-14.

Table 13-14: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the IPSEE Scale and the FPSLSC Scale correlates with the PNoOC Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.			β	Coeff.			β
IPSEE Scale	10.544	(0.845)	***	0.371				
FPSLSC Scale					12.838	(0.809)	***	0.442
N				2659				2644
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.215				0.266

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PNoOC Index; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the PNoOC Index and the PLoLPSC Index. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-15.

Table 13-15: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the PLoLPSC Index affects the PNoOC Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.			β	Coeff.			β
PLoLPSC Index	0.662	(0.029)	***	0.580	0.634	(0.030)	**	0.556
Background variables				No				Yes
N				2688				2663
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.337				0.370

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PNoOC Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.7 Statistical Analysis for Section 4

Perceived Personal Impact of Corruption (PPIoC) Scale

To measure indirect experience of sexual extortion in the public sector, we employed the following survey question: "Do you think that corruption has had a small or large impact on you and your family life?" Responses ranged from 1 'Very small' to 5 'Very large'. 'Don't know' responses were coded as missing. This variable was termed the Perceived Personal Impact of Corruption (PPIoC) Scale.

An ordered logistic regression method was conducted to examine the link between the PPIoC Scale and recent experiences of corruption. Experience was measured using the REC Scale; details on how the REC Sale was constructed were provided in Section 13.5 on pg. 146. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-16.

Table 13-16: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the REC Scale affects the PPIoC Scale

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
REC Scale	0.150	(0.037)	***	0.192	(0.040)	***
Background variables						
N			2964			2939
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-2.490	(0.134)		-1.589	(0.411)	
/cut2	-1.180	(0.105)		-0.254	(0.397)	
/cut3	-0.163	(0.102)		0.823	(0.402)	
/cut4	0.968	(0.103)		2.058	(0.406)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PPIoC Scale; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

Perceived Impact of Corruption (PIoC) Index

Respondents were asked four questions on whether they thought corruption has had a small or large impact. Responses were captured on a categorical scale that ranged from 1 'Very small' to 5 'Very large'. The legend for these four questions is presented in Table 13-17. 'Don't know' responses were treated as missing.

Table 13-17: Exact wording of the four impact assessment questions

A1	Corruption has had a small or large impact on you and your family life.
A2	Corruption has had a small or large impact on the area (e.g., town, village, suburb or township) where you live.
A3	Corruption by large companies (like banks or construction companies) has a small or large impact on the country's economy.
A4	Corruption by government officials has a small or large impact on the country's economy.

A pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the four items mentioned above. The results are presented in Table 13-18; all values shown in the table were above 0.300 and this implies a robust degree of intercorrelation between the different items. Of the four items, A3 and A4 in Table 13-18 had the strongest association while A2 and A4 had the weakest.

Table 13-18: Pairwise correlation for the four impact assessment questions

	A1	A2	A3
A2	0.527		
A3	0.327	0.497	
A4	0.320	0.470	0.639

A Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to evaluate whether the four items loaded well together. The results of this test are shown in Table 13-19; the table presents the findings for item-test correlation, item-rest correlation, average inter-item covariance, and Cronbach's alpha. The test scale exhibited a high Cronbach's alpha value (α=0.788), indicating strong internal consistency among items A1 through A4. It can be concluded that these items reliably assess the same underlying concept and can be aggregated into a single index.

Table 13-19: Interitem correlations (covariances) and Cronbach's alpha for the four impact assessment questions

	Observations	Item-Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Interitem Covariance	Alpha

A1	3,020	0.774	0.529	0.561	0.781
A2	3,022	0.836	0.674	0.497	0.694
A3	3,038	0.795	0.635	0.575	0.720
A4	3,058	0.747	0.572	0.639	0.749
Test Scale				0.568	0.788

13.8 Statistical Analysis for Section 5

Perceived Instrumentalism of Sexual Corruption (PIoSC) Scale

To construct a variable to measure the perceived instrumentalism of sexual extortion, we used answers to the following question: " How important is doing sexual favours for powerful people for getting ahead in life?" Responses were captured on a 1' Essential' to 5' Not important at all' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. The direct of the scale was reversed for ease of interpretation; this variable was labelled the Perceived Instrumentalism of Sexual Corruption (PIoSC) Scale.

An ordered logistic regression was utilised to investigate how indirect experiences affect the perceived instrumentalism of sexual corruption. The first model investigates the association the IPSEE Scale and the PIoSC Scale. A brief overview of the IPSEE Scale and how it was constructed was presented in Section 13.5 on pg. 146. The second model replaced the IPSEE Scale with the FPSLSC Scale; a concise description of the PPSLSC Scale was provided in Section 13.5 on pg. 148. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-20.

Table 13-20: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the IPSEE Scale and the PPSLSC Scale correlates with the PIoSC Scale

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
IPSEE Scale	0.289	(0.057)	***			
FPSLSC Scale				0.292	(0.051)	***
N			2968			2946
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	2.939	(0.494)		2.964	(0.490)	
/cut2	1.503	(0.445)		1.523	(0.439)	
/cut3	0.427	(0.435)		0.460	(0.430)	
/cut4	-0.708	(0.436)		-0.676	(0.429)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PIoSC Scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Perceived Instrumentalism of Bribery (PIoB) Scale

To create a variable to measure the perceived instrumentalism of bribery, we relied on responses to the question: "How important is giving bribes for advancing in life?" Participants rated this on a scale from 1 ('Essential') to 5 ('Not important at all'). Responses marked as 'Don't know' were excluded from the analysis. For easier interpretation, the scale's direction was reversed. This variable was named the Perceived Instrumentalism of Bribery (PIoB) Scale.

An ordered logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the SES Index and the perceived instrumentalism of corrupt practices (details on how the SES Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146). The first model investigates the association the PIoB Scale and the SES Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the SES Index and the PIoSC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-21.

Table 13-21: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the SES Index correlates with the PIoB Scale and the PIoSC Scale

	Model I PIoB Scale			Model II PIoSC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
SES Index	-0.028	(0.045)		-0.028	(0.049)	
N			3028			3028
Prob>F			0.000			0.000

/cut1	-1.245	(0.340)		-1.274	(0.404)
/cut2	-0.219	(0.336)		-0.170	(0.398)
/cut3	0.720	(0.334)		0.885	(0.403)
/cut4	2.185	(0.353)		2.320	(0.435)

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the PNoOC Index and the perceived instrumentalism of corrupt practices (details on how the PNoOC Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.6 on pg. 149). The first model investigates the association the PIoB Scale and the PNoOC Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the PNoOC Index and the PIoSC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-22.

Table 13-22: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the PNoOC Index correlates with the PIoB Scale and the PIoSC Scale

	Model I PIoB Scale			Model II PIoSC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PNoOC Index	0.010	(0.002)	***	0.006	(0.002)	**
N			2673			2667
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-0.931	(0.359)		-1.323	(0.426)	
/cut2	0.126	(0.358)		-0.233	(0.425)	
/cut3	1.070	(0.359)		0.793	(0.436)	
/cut4	2.549	(0.401)		2.249	(0.500)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Perceived Level of Systemic Inequality (PLoSI) Index

Respondents were asked four questions about opportunities for getting ahead in South Africa. The questions required respondents to indicate how important four different traits were for getting ahead in life. Responses were captured on a categorical scale that ranged from 1' Essential' to 5' Not important at all'. Don't know' responses were treated as missing. The legend for each different action or trait is presented in Table 13-23. '

Table 13-23: Exact wording of the four questions about getting ahead in life

E1	Having political connections
E2	Being born white
E3	Coming from a wealthy family
E4	Being born a man

An analysis using a pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix was carried out to investigate the connections among the four items described above. The results are presented in Table 13-24; most of the values shown in the table were below 0.500 and this implies only a moderate degree of intercorrelation between the different items.

Table 13-24: Pairwise correlation for the four questions about getting ahead in life

	E1	E2	E3
E2	0.378		
E3	0.415	0.507	
E4	0.282	0.380	0.417

A Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed to determine if the items listed in Table 13-25 collectively exhibited strong coherence. The outcomes of this assessment are presented in Table 8, which includes metrics such as item-test correlation, item-rest correlation, average inter-item covariance, and the

Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The scale yielded a relatively good Cronbach's alpha value (α = 0.688), suggesting acceptable internal consistency among items E1 through E4. Based on these results, we can infer that the items consistently measure the same underlying concept and are appropriate to combine into a single composite index. This metric was designated as the Perceived Level of Systemic Inequality (PLoSI) Index.

Table 13-25: Interitem correlations (covariances) and Cronbach's alpha for the four questions about getting ahead in life

	Observations	Item-Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Interitem Covariance	Alpha
E1	3,048	0.666	0.384	0.710	0.675
E2	3,020	0.725	0.493	0.615	0.609
E3	3,057	0.787	0.559	0.500	0.560
E4	3,034	0.699	0.443	0.656	0.640
Test Scale				0.620	0.688

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the SES Index and the PLoSI Index (details on how the SES Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-26.

Table 13-26: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the SES Index affects the PLoSI Index

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.		β	Coeff.		β
SES Index	0.358	(0.441)	0.033	0.750	(0.650)	0.068
Background variables			No			Yes
N			3078			3006
Prob>F			0.417			0.000
R^2			0.001			0.095

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PLoSI Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression was utilised to investigate how the PLoSI Index affected the perceived instrumentalism of corruption. The first model investigates the association the PIoB Scale and the PLoSI Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the PLoSI Index and the PIoSC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-27.

Table 13-27: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the PLoSI Index correlates with the PIoB Scale and the PIoSC Scale

	Model I PIoB Scale			Model II PIoSC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PLoSI Index	0.047	(0.003)	***	0.047	(0.003)	***
N			3026			3018
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	0.532	(0.352)		0.436	(0.413)	
/cut2	1.846	(0.360)		1.804	(0.415)	
/cut3	3.021	(0.370)		3.066	(0.425)	
/cut4	4.687	(0.394)		4.666	(0.443)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.9 Statistical Analysis for Section 6

Respondents were read a list of eight different actions. They were then asked whether they thought these actions can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between. Survey participants

were instructed to use a scale from that ranged from 0 'Never Justifiable' to 10 'Always Justifiable'. 'Don't know' responses to these eight items were considered as missing data. The legend for each of these actions is presented in Table 13-28.

Table 13-28: Exact wording of the seven descriptive social norm items

D1	Someone demanding a bribe in the course of their duties.
D2	Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties.
D3	Demanding sex from someone in exchange for a job.
D4	Offering sex to someone in exchange for a job.
D5	A shop owner giving a job to a family member instead of someone more qualified.
D6	A public official giving a job to a family member instead of someone more qualified.
D7	A public official giving a large contract to a political connection instead of someone more qualified.

A linear (OLS) regression approach was employed to examine how recent exposure to bureaucratic corruption was associated with the seven items depicted in Table 13-28. Each model explores the association the RCE Scale (details on how the REC Sale was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146) and relevant scale. All models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-30.

Table 13-29: Linear (OLS) Regression between the REC Scale and the seven descriptive social norm scales and the RCE Scale

		Coeff.		β		N.	Prob>F	R^2
Model I	D1	0.812	(0.496)	0.047		2984	0.000	0.106
Model II	D2	1.560	(0.519)	0.089	***	2987	0.000	0.092
Model III	D3	1.265	(0.422)	0.077	**	2986	0.000	0.103
Model IV	D4	1.689	(0.442)	0.099	***	2983	0.000	0.104
Model V	D5	0.907	(0.646)	0.044		2984	0.000	0.044
Model VI	D6	1.122	(0.477)	0.064	*	2987	0.000	0.097
Model VII	D7	1.191	(0.495)	0.070	*	2988	0.000	0.092

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A linear (OLS) regression approach was employed to examine how the perceived normality of occupation corruption was associated with the seven items depicted in Table 13-28. Each model explores the association the PNoOC Index and relevant scale (details on how this index was constructed are provide in Section 13.6 on pg. 149). All models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-30.

Table 13-30: Linear (OLS) Regression between the and the seven descriptive social norm scales and the Perceived Normality of Occupational Corruption (PNoOC) Index

		Coeff.		β		N.	Prob>F	R^2
Model I	D1	0.083	(0.024)	0.115	**	2682	0.000	0.109
Model II	D2	0.076	(0.027)	0.103	**	2686	0.000	0.080
Model III	D3	0.067	(0.020)	0.096	**	2684	0.000	0.100
Model IV	D4	0.077	(0.020)	0.107	***	2782	0.000	0.108
Model V	D5	0.182	(0.034)	0.210	***	2685	0.000	0.084
Model VI	D6	0.083	(0.022)	0.114	***	2686	0.000	0.098
Model VII	D7	0.104	(0.025)	0.147	***	2686	0.000	0.099

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Social Legitimacy of Corrupt Behaviour (SLoCB) Index

A pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix analysis was performed to explore the relationships between the eight items outlined above. The results are presented in Table 13-31; all values shown in the table were above 0.300 and this implies a robust degree of intercorrelation between the different

items. From a comparative perspective, D4 had the weakest associations with the other items listed in the table whereas D7 exhibited the strongest.

Table 13-31: Pairwise correlation for the seven descriptive social norm items

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D2	0.769					
D3	0.672	0.706				
D4	0.597	0.672	0.823			
D5	0.393	0.462	0.450	0.479		
D6	0.570	0.601	0.672	0.667	0.633	
D7	0.634	0.689	0.687	0.677	0.551	0.751

A Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed to assess whether these eight items reliably grouped together. The results of this test are shown in Table 13-32; the table displays results for item-test correlation, item-rest correlation, average interitem covariance as well as the Cronbach's alpha. The test scale shows a high Cronbach's alpha value (α=0.925) which indicated strong internal consistency among items D1-D7. We can conclude that these items consistently measure the same underlying construct and can be combined into a single index; this metric was labelled the Social Legitimacy of Corrupt Behaviour (SLoCB) Index.

Table 13-32: Interitem correlations (covariances) and Cronbach's alpha for the seven descriptive social norm items

	Observations	Item-Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Interitem Covariance	Alpha
D1	3,071	0.802	0.729	3.89	0.916
D2	3,077	0.851	0.791	3.78	0.911
D3	3,075	0.874	0.825	3.75	0.907
D4	3,072	0.871	0.819	3.73	0.908
D5	3,073	0.731	0.616	3.91	0.931
D6	3,076	0.850	0.788	3.73	0.911
D7	3,077	0.871	0.821	3.75	0.908
Test Scale				3.79	0.925

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the SES Index and the SLoCB Index (details on how the SES Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-33.

Table 13-33: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the SES Index affects the SLoCB Index

	Model I			Model II			
	Coeff.		β	Coeff.		β	
SES Index	0.082	(0.230)	0.010	-1.115	(0.380)	-0.131	**
Background variables	No			Yes			
N	3081			3053			
Prob>F	0.721			0.000			
R^2	0.000			0.115			

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

'Perceived Value of Corruption (PVoC) Scale

Survey participants were queried on whether to indicate how important they thought each of the following was for getting ahead in life: (i) giving bribes; and (ii) doing sexual favours for powerful people. Responses were captured on a categorical scale that ranged from 1' Essential' to 5 'Not at all important'. The measure's validity and reliability were evaluated through a Cronbach's alpha test (α = 0.904). Although the test suggested less than robust intercorrelation, it was decided that the result was strong enough to justify the creation of a composite indicator. The resultant measure was labelled the 'Perceived Value of Corruption (PVoC) Scale; it was scored from 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest perceived value and 0 the lowest.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the PVoC Scale and the SLoCB Index. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-34.

Table 13-34: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the PVoC Scale affects the SLoCB Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.		β		Coeff.		β	
PVoC Scale	0.113	(0.025)	0.151	***	0.114	(0.024)	0.151	***
Background variables				No				Yes
N				3081				3039
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.023				0.127

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the PIoC Index and the SLoCB Index (the details of how the PIoC Index was generated is offered in Section 13.7 on pg. 151). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-35.

Table 13-35: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the PIoC Index affects the SLoCB Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.		β		Coeff.		β	
PIoC Index	-0.226	(0.027)	-0.236	***	-0.173	(0.029)	-0.180	***
Background variables				No				Yes
N				3081				3039
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.023				0.127

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the PLoLPSC Index and the SLoCB Index (the details of how the PLoLPSC Index was generated is offered in Section 13.5 on pg. 147). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-36.

Table 13-36: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the PLoLPSC Index affects the SLoCB Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.		β		Coeff.		β	
PLoLPSC Index	0.092	(0.197)	0.134	***	0.056	(0.200)	0.081	***
Background variables				No				Yes
N				3029				3039
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.018				0.127

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

A model containing the following independent variables was constructed for comparative purposes: (i) SES Index; (ii) PVoC Scale; (iii) PIoC Index; and (iv) PLoLPSC Index. The model contains controls for socio-demographic attributes, and the outcomes of this fully specified model are presented in Table 13-37.

Table 13-37: Fully Specified Linear (OLS) Regression for the SLoCB Index

	Coeff.		β	
SES Index	-0.104	(0.407)	-0.121	*
PVoC Scale	0.084	(0.023)	0.112	***
PIoC Index	-0.165	(0.030)	-0.172	***
PLoLPSC Index	0.053	(0.020)	0.077	***
N				2987
Prob>F				0.000
R^2				0.164

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.10 Statistical Analysis for Section 7

A dichotomous variable was created that noted whether a person identified parents as role models when thinking about integrity and honesty. This variable was labelled 'Parent Role Model'. Then we created a dichotomous variable which denoted whether a person identified a family member that not their parent. This variable was denoted 'Other Family Role Model'.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the 'Family Role Model variable and the SLoCB Index (details on how the index was constructed are provide in Section 13.9 on pg. 156). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-38.

Table 13-38: Linear (OLS) Regression on how role model designations affects the SLoCB Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.			β	Coeff.			β
Parent Role Model	-2.965	(1.267)	*	-0.066	-3.871	(1.316)	**	-0.086
Other Family Role Model					-4.610	(1.568)	**	-0.081
N	3053				3053			
Prob>F	0.000				0.000			
R^2	0.111				0.117			

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

A binary variable was developed to indicate whether an individual would turn to someone at their workplace (such as work colleagues or a manager/boss) for advice when faced with a moral or ethical dilemma related to corruption. This variable was designated as 'Workplace Advice'.

The first analysis concerned predictors of the SLoCB Index; a linear (OLS) regression was employed to examine two different indicators. The first model investigates the association the index and the Workplace Advice measure. The second model replaced the Workplace Advice variable with the Religious Advice variable. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-39.

Table 13-39: Linear (OLS) Regression on how advice seeking affects the SLoCB Index

	Model I				Model II		
	Coeff.		β		Coeff.		β
Workplace Advice	10.055	(2.303)	0.124	***			
Religious Advice					0.420	(1.573)	0.007
N	3053				3053		
Prob>F	0.000				0.000		
R^2	0.122				0.108		

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the SLoCB Index; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.11 Statistical Analysis for Section 8

Radius of Codes of Silence Norms (RoCoSN) Index

Respondents were asked four questions on whether they thought it was wrong or not wrong to report on different types of people they knew for corruption. Responses were captured on a categorical scale that ranged from 1 'Not wrong at all' to 5 'Always wrong'. 'Don't know' responses were treated as missing. The legend for each type of person is presented in Table 13-40.

Table 13-40: Exact wording to the four questions on reporting on social network members

F1	Family Member
F2	Friend
F3	Neighbour
F4	Work Colleague

An analysis using a pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix was carried out to investigate the connections among the four items described above. The results are presented in Table 13-41; all values shown in the table were above 0.500 and this implies a robust degree of intercorrelation between the different items. Of the four items, F3 and F4 had the strongest association while F1 and F4 had the weakest.

Table 13-41: Pairwise correlation for the four questions on reporting on social network members

	F1	F2	F3
F2	0.748		
F3	0.648	0.807	
F4	0.595	0.758	0.838

A Cronbach's alpha test was carried out to determine if the four items demonstrated strong internal consistency. The results of this test are shown in Table 13-42; the table shows the outcomes for item-test correlation, item-rest correlation, average inter-item covariance, and Cronbach's alpha. The test scale shows a high Cronbach's alpha value (α=0.932) which indicated strong internal consistency among items F1-F4. It can be inferred that these items consistently capture the same fundamental concept and may be integrated into a unified index; this index was labelled the Radius of Codes of Silence Norms (RoCoSN) Index.

Table 13-42: Interitem correlations (covariances) and Cronbach's alpha for the four questions on reporting on social network members

	Observations	Item-Test Correlation	Item-Rest Correlation	Average Interitem Covariance	Alpha
F1	3,008	0.867	0.764	1.37	0.935
F2	3,023	0.930	0.873	1.25	0.900
F3	3,036	0.932	0.874	1.23	0.899
F4	3,013	0.915	0.843	1.26	0.909
Test Scale				1.28	0.932

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the RoCoSN Index and the SLoCB Index (the details of how the SLoCB Index was generated is offered in Section 13.9 on pg. 155). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-43.

Table 13-43: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the SLoCB Index effects the RoCoSN Index

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.		β	Coeff.		β
SLoCB Index	0.020	(0.055)	0.010	0.026	(0.057)	0.013
Background variables	No			Yes		

N	3042	3016
Prob>F	0.714	0.000
R^2	0.000	0.089

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the RoCoSN Index; ; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine the link between the RCE Scale and the RoCoSN Index (details on how the REC Sale was constructed are provide in Section 13.5 on pg. 146). To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-44.

Table 13-44: Linear (OLS) Regression on how the RCE Scale effects the RoCoSN Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.		β		Coeff.		β	
RCE Scale	3.260	(0.866)	0.114	***	3.099	(0.843)	0.109	***
Background variables				No				Yes
N				2996				2970
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.013				0.102

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the RoCoSN Index; ; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Subjective Deprivation Scale

Respondents were first asked what monthly income level they would consider to be minimal for your household (i.e. your household could not make ends meet with less). Then respondents were requested to indicate if their total monthly income of your household higher, lower or more or less the same as this figure. Responses were captured on a 1' Much higher' to 5'Much lower' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. This variable was labelled the Subjective Deprivation Scale.

A linear regression using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method was conducted to examine how socio-economic attributes were linked with the RoCoSN Index. The first model looked at the relationship between the RoCoSN Index and the SES Index (details on how the SES Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.4 on pg. 146). The second model introduced the subjective deprivation measure. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-45.

Table 13-45: Linear (OLS) Regression on how socio-economic status effects the RoCoSN Index

	Model I				Model II			
	Coeff.		β		Coeff.		β	
SES Index	0.336	(0.692)	0.020		0.905	(0.710)	0.151	
Subjective Deprivation Scale					6.656	(1.153)	0.175	***
N				3020				2881
Prob>F				0.000				0.000
R^2				0.089				0.115

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the RoCoSN Index; ; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A model containing the following independent variables was constructed for comparative purposes: (i) SES Index; (ii) Subjective Deprivation Scale; (iii) SLoCB Index; and (iv) RCE Scale. The model contains controls for socio-demographic attributes, and the outcomes of this fully specified model are presented in Table 13-46.

Table 13-46: Fully Specified Linear (OLS) Regression for the RoCoSN Index

	Coeff.		β	
SES Index	1.210	(0.729)	0.072	
Subjective Deprivation Scale	6.510	(1.182)	0.171	***
SLoCB Index	0.041	(0.062)	0.021	
RCE Scale	2.994	(0.858)	0.105	***
N				2838
Prob>F				0.000
R^2				0.128

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the RoCoSN Index; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.12 Statistical Analysis for Section 9

Environmental Lay Attributions for Non-Reporting

A dichotomous variable was created that noted whether a person identified environmental factors as main reasons that people did not report corruption in South Africa[102]. This variable was labelled 'Environmental Lay Attributions for Non-Reporting' (ELAfNR).

Psychological Lay Attributions for Non-Reporting

A dichotomous variable was created that noted whether a person identified psychological factors as main reasons that people did not report corruption in South Africa[103]. This variable was labelled 'Psychological Lay Attributions for Non-Reporting' (PLAfNR).

A logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the SLoCB Index and lay attributions for non-reporting (the details of how the SLoCB Index was generated is offered in Section 13.9 on pg. 155). The first model investigates the association the PLAfNR binary variable and the SLoCB Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the SLoCB Index and the ELAfNR variable. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-47.

Table 13-47: Logistic Regression on how the RoCoSN Index correlates with PLAfNR and ELAfNR

	Model I PLAfNR			Model II ELAfNR		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
SLoCB Index	-0.004	(0.003)		-0.012	(0.004)	**
N			3053			3053
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
Pseudo R^2			0.028			0.132

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant dichotomous variable; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the RoCoSN Index and lay attributions for non-reporting (the details of how the RoCoSN Index was generated is offered in Section 13.11 on pg. 159). The first model investigates the association the PLAfNR binary variable and the RoCoSN Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the RoCoSN Index and the ELAfNR variable. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-48.

[102] The following were identified as environmental attributions: (i) Those responsible will not be punished; (ii) There is no protection for those who report corruption; (iii) The officials where they would report to are also corrupt; and (iv) It is not worth the effort of reporting it.

[103] The following were identified as psychological attributions: (i) corruption is normalised; (ii) people don't know where to report it; and (iii) no one wants to betray anyone.

Table 13-48: Logistic Regression on how the RoCoSN Index correlates with PLAfNR and ELAfNR

	Model I PLAfNR			Model II ELAfNR		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
RoCoSN Index	0.004	(0.003)		-0.008	(0.003)	**
N			3020			3020
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
Pseudo R^2			0.027			0.118

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant dichotomous variable; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

A logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the PIoC Index and lay attributions for non-reporting (the details of how the PIoC Index was generated is offered in Section 13.7 on pg. 151). The first model investigates the association the PLAfNR binary variable and the PIoC Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the PIoC Index and the ELAfNR variable. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-49.

Table 13-49: Logistic Regression on how the PIoC Index correlates with PLAfNR and ELAfNR

	Model I PLAfNR			Model II ELAfNR		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PIoC Index	0.001	(0.003)		0.014	(0.003)	***
N			3054			3054
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
Pseudo R^2			0.027			0.131

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant dichotomous variable; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Perceived Reporting Efficiency (PRE) Scale

To create a variable to gauge perceived efficiency of reporting structures, we utilised responses to the following question: “How likely is it that action would be taken if you went to a government office or the police to report corrupt behaviour? Responses were recorded on a scale ranging from 1'Not at all likely' to 5'Very likely'. 'Don't know' responses for this question were considered missing data. This variable was labelled the Perceived Reporting Efficiency (PRE) Scale.

An ordered logistic regression was utilised to investigate how instrumentalist views of corruption affect assessments of reporting structures. The first model investigates the association the PIoB Scale (details on how the PIoB Scale was constructed are provide in Section 13.8 on pg. 152) and the PRE Scale. The second model replaced the RCE Scale with the PIoSC Scale (a brief overview of the PIoSC Scale and how it was constructed was presented in Section 13.8 on pg. 152). Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-50.

Table 13-50: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the PIoB Scale and the PIoSC Scale correlates with the PRE Scale

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PIoB Scale	-0.196	(0.049)	***			
PIoSC Scale				-0.197	(0.055)	***
N			2976			2967
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-0.615	(0.416)		-0.572	(0.387)	
/cut2	0.871	(0.418)		0.904	(0.389)	
/cut3	2.462	(0.418)		2.502	(0.383)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PRE Scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

Likelihood of Reporting Corruption (LoRC) Scale

To construct a variable to measure corruption exposure, we used answers to the following question: " If you experienced or witnessed corrupt behaviour, how likely is it that you would report it?" Responses were captured on a 1' Not at all likely' to 4'Very likely' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. This variable was labelled the Likelihood of Reporting Corruption (LoRC) Scale.

Likelihood of Testifying in Court (LoTiC) Scale

To construct a variable to measure corruption exposure, we used answers to the following question: "how willing would you be to give evidence in court against the person accused of corruption?" Responses were captured on a 1' Not at all likely' to 4'Very likely' scale. 'Don't know' answers to this item were treated as missing. This variable was labelled the Likelihood of Testifying in Court (LoTiC) Scale.

A pairwise correlation (or covariance) matrix analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the LoRC Scale and the LoTiC Scale. The resultant correlation coefficient ($r(3008) = 0.639$, $p<0.001$) indicates a moderate positive linear relationship between two variables. In the quantitative social sciences, this is considered a substantial and meaningful association.

An ordered logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the PLoLPSC Index and self-reported willingness to fight corruption (in Section 13.5 pg. 147 the details of how the PLoLPSC Index was generated). The first model investigates the association the LoRC Scale and the PLoLPSC Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the PLoLPSC Index and the LoTiC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-51.

Table 13-51: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the PLoLPSC Index correlates with the LoRC Scale and the LoGTC Scale

	Model I LoRC Scale			Model II LoTiC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PLoLPSC Index	0.000	(0.002)		-0.002	(0.002)	
N			2973			2963
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-1.010	(0.378)		-1.067	(0.382)	
/cut2	0.216	(0.377)		0.165	(0.379)	
/cut3	1.723	(0.382)		1.637	(0.381)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the PRE Scale and self-reported willingness to fight corruption. The first model investigates the association the LoRC Scale and the PRE Scale. The second model looks at the relationship between the PRE Scale and the LoTiC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-52.

Table 13-52: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the PRE Scale correlates with the LoRC Scale and the LoGTC Scale

	Model I LoRC Scale			Model II LoGTC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PRE Scale	1.525	(0.086)	***	1.516	(0.079)	***
N			2983			2964
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	2.073	(0.413)		2.245	(0.404)	

/cut2	3.817	(0.428)		4.003	(0.418)
/cut3	5.923	(0.463)		6.039	(0.452)

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the PLoSI Index and self-reported willingness to fight corruption (details on how the the PLoSI Index was constructed were provided in Section 13.8 on pg. 153). The first model investigates the association the LoRC Scale and the PLoSI Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the PLoSI Index and the LoTiC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-53.

Table 13-53: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the PLoSI Index correlates with the LoRC Scale and the LoGTC Scale

	Model I LoRC Scale			Model II LoTiC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PLoSI Index	-0.005	(0.002)	*	-0.005	(0.002)	*
N			3008			2996
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-1.268	(0.407)		-1.222	(0.394)	
/cut2	-0.039	(0.401)		0.016	(0.390)	
/cut3	1.478	(0.404)		1.488	(0.391)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression was conducted to examine the link between the SLoCB Index and self-reported willingness to fight corruption (the details of how the SLoCB Index was generated is offered in Section 13.9 on pg. 155). The first model investigates the association the LoRC Scale and the SLoCB Index. The second model looks at the relationship between the SLoCB Index and the LoTiC Scale. Both models controlled for socio-demographic attributes; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-54.

Table 13-54: Ordered Logistic Regression on how the SLoCB Index correlates with the LoRC Scale and the LoGTC Scale

	Model I LoRC Scale			Model II LoGTC Scale		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
SLoCB Index	-0.010	(0.003)	***	-0.007	(0.003)	*
N			3011			2999
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-1.264	(0.387)		-1.159	(0.391)	
/cut2	-0.034	(0.385)		0.079	(0.387)	
/cut3	1.478	(0.389)		1.555	(0.385)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the relevant scale; 2. Each model controls for the standard set of background variables; and 3. Standard error in parenthesis.

13.13 Statistical Analysis for Section 10

Perceived Community Retaliation (PCR) Scale

To create a measure that gauged fear of retaliation for reporting corruption, we used the following survey question: "Do you agree or disagree that in this community, people risk revenge if they speak out against corruption?" Responses were recorded on a scale from 1 ('Strongly agree') to 5 ('Strongly disagree'). 'Don't know' answers to this question were placed at the midpoint. So that a higher score

indicated a stronger belief in community retaliation, the scale was reversed. This variable was labelled the Perceived Community Retaliation Scale.

An ordered logistic regression method was conducted to examine the link between the PRC Scale and the perceived awareness of corruption. Awareness was measured using the PIoC Index; the details of how the PIoC Index was generated is offered in Section 13.7 on pg. 151. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-55.

Table 13-55: Ordered Logistic Regression for the PCR Scale and the PIoC Index

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PIoC Index	0.014	(0.002)	***	0.015	(0.002)	***
Background variables			No			Yes
N			3006			2980
Prob>F			0.000			0.000
/cut1	-2.608	(0.216)		-2.506	(0.376)	
/cut2	-0.986	(0.184)		-0.925	(0.370)	
/cut3	0.505	(0.186)		0.616	(0.367)	
/cut4	2.433	(0.194)		2.598	(0.369)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05
Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PRC Scale; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression method was conducted to examine the link between the PRC Scale and the perceived level of local corruption. Here we use the PLoLPSC Index; in Section 13.5 on pg. 147 the details of how the PLoLPSC Index was generated. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-55.

Table 13-56: Ordered Logistic Regression for the PCR Scale and the PLoLPSC Index

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PLoLPSC Index	0.003	(0.002)		0.006	(0.002)	**
Background variables			No			Yes
N			2971			2944
Prob>F			0.084			0.000
/cut1	-3.546	(0.159)		-3.162	(0.354)	
/cut2	-1.930	(0.115)		-1.587	(0.350)	
/cut3	-0.459	(0.094)		-0.060	(0.343)	
/cut4	1.435	(0.094)		1.900	(0.342)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05
Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PRC Scale; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

An ordered logistic regression method was conducted to examine the link between the PRC Scale and the perceived level of occupational corruption. Here we use the PNoOC Index; details on how the PNoOC Index was constructed are provide in Section 13.6 on pg. 149. To provide a more detailed perspective, the first model examines this relationship without considering background factors, whereas the second model incorporates these background variables; model outcomes are displayed in Table 13-55.

Table 13-57: Ordered Logistic Regression for the PCR Scale and the PNoOC Index

	Model I			Model II		
	Coeff.			Coeff.		
PNoOC Index	0.004	(0.002)		0.005	(0.002)	*
Background variables			No			Yes
N			2668			2643

Prob>F			0.050		0.000
/cut1	-3.586	(0.172)	-3.371	(0.378)	
/cut2	-1.965	(0.128)	-1.802	(0.374)	
/cut3	-0.438	(0.095)	-0.222	(0.363)	
/cut4	1.490	(0.096)	1.769	(0.364)	

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01,* p<0.05

Notes: 1. Model coefficients denote the estimated effect of a one unit positive change on the PRC Scale; and 2. Standard error in parenthesis.

APPENDIX B: SOCIAL VALUES AND NORMS OF CORRUPTION MODULE

Now I am going to ask you some questions about another topic.

Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. Please answer using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'Never Justifiable' and 10 means 'Always Justifiable'.

		Never Justifiable										Always Justifiable	(Don't know)
1.	Someone demanding a bribe in the course of their duties.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88
2.	Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88
3.	Demanding sex from someone in exchange for a job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88
4.	Offering sex to someone in exchange for a job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88
5.	A shop owner giving a job to a family member instead of someone more qualified.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88
6.	A public official giving a job to a family member instead of someone more qualified.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88
7.	A public official giving a large contract to a political connection instead of someone more qualified.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	88

I would now like to ask you some questions of a sensitive nature. Please be as honest as possible. Imagine that someone you know personally engaged in corrupt behaviour (like the misuse of funds or requests for bribes). Would it be wrong or not wrong to report that person to the authorities if they were your…

		Not wrong at all	Wrong only sometimes	Almost always wrong	Always wrong	(Do not know)
8.	Family member	1	2	3	4	8
9.	Friend	1	2	3	4	8
10.	Neighbour	1	2	3	4	8
11.	Work colleague	1	2	3	4	8

Now we are going to questions about opportunities for getting ahead in South Africa. How important do you think each of the following is for getting ahead in life? How important is…

		Essential	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not important at all	(Can't choose)
12.	… having political connections?	1	2	3	4	5	8
13.	… giving bribes?	1	2	3	4	5	8
14.	… being born white?	1	2	3	4	5	8
15.	… coming from a wealthy family?	1	2	3	4	5	8
16.	… doing sexual favours for powerful people?	1	2	3	4	5	8
17.	… is being born a man?	1	2	3	4	5	8

Think about your most recent occupation. An occupation is a person's profession or type of work that they regularly do (e.g., plumber, lawyer or farmer). If you are not working, then think about the occupation you used to work in or trained/studied to work in. In your experience, how often do workers in your occupation do the following?

INTERVIEWER: IF THE RESPONDENT HAS NEVER WORKED BEFORE AND HAS NOT STUDIED OR TRAINED FOR AN OCCUPATION, PLEASE CIRCLE CODE 9 (NOT APPLICABLE) BELOW.

		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Quite often	Very often	(Do not know)	(Not applicable)
18.	Bend the rules of their job to help friends and family?	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
19.	Bend the rules of their job to make extra money or obtain a promotion?	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
20.	Pay bribes in the course of their duties?	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
21.	Demand bribes in the course of their duties?	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

Do you think that corruption has had a small or large impact on the following…?

		Very small	Small	Neither small nor large	Large	Very large	(Do not know)
22.	You and your family life.	1	2	3	4	5	8
23.	The area (e.g., town, village, suburb or township) where you live.	1	2	3	4	5	8

24. Do you think that corruption by large companies (like banks or construction companies) has a small or large impact on the country's economy?

Very small	1
Small	2
Neither small nor large	3
Large	4
Very large	5
(Do not know)	8

25. Do you think that corruption by government officials has a small or large impact on the country's economy?

Very small	1
Small	2
Neither small nor large	3
Large	4
Very large	5
(Do not know)	8

26. In the last five years, how often have you or a member of your immediate family come across a public official who hinted they wanted, or asked for, a bribe or favour in return for a service?

Never	1
Seldom	2
Occasionally	3
Quite often	4
Very often	5
(Do not know)	8

Sometimes people will ask for sexual favours in exchange for something (like a job, a government service or to avoid a fine). Sexual favours could include sexual intercourse, inappropriate touching, or posing for sexual photos.

27. In the last 5 years, how often have you heard about a public official making requests of a sexual nature from someone you know in exchange for a government service or benefit?

Never	1
Seldom	2
Occasionally	3
Quite often	4
Very often	5
(Do not know)	8

We want to know about public officials and civil servants in the area where you live (i.e., your village, township, suburb or town).

28. How often do you think people in your area have to pay a bribe to, give a gift to, or do a favour for, public officials and civil servants? Does it happen…

Never	1
Seldom	2
Occasionally	3
Quite often	4
Very often	5
(Do not know)	8

29. How often have public officials in your area given jobs and contracts to unqualified friends and family?

Never	1
Seldom	2
Occasionally	3
Quite often	4
Very often	5
(Do not know)	8

30. How often have you heard about public officials making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a government service or benefit in your area?

Never	1
Seldom	2
Occasionally	3
Quite often	4
Very often	5
(Do not know)	8

The private sector consists of companies and organisations not controlled by government. Private sector companies and organisations can be very small (e.g., a spaza shop) or very big (e.g., a cellphone company or a bank).

31. In the last five years, how often have you heard about someone from the private sector in your area making requests of a sexual nature in exchange for a job or benefit (such as a salary increase or promotion) or a service?

Never	1
Seldom	2
Occasionally	3
Quite often	4
Very often	5
(Do not know)	8

Now some questions about what you would do if you experienced or witnessed corrupt behaviour (like the misuse of funds or requests for bribes).

32. If you experienced or witnessed corrupt behaviour, how likely is it that you would report it?

Not at all likely	1
Not very likely	2
Likely	3
Very likely	4
(Do not know)	8

33. How likely is it that action would be taken if you went to a government office or the police to report corrupt behaviour?

Not at all likely	1
Not very likely	2
Likely	3
Very likely	4
(Do not know)	8

34. And how willing would you be to give evidence in court against the person accused of corruption?

Not at all willing	1
Not very willing	2
Willing	3
Very willing	4
(Do not know)	8

35. There are several anti-corruption hotlines where anyone can make an anonymous report or tip-off about corrupt behaviour that they are aware of or have witnessed. Please tell us which of the following you are aware of?

INTERVIEWER: MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

a.	The Presidential Hotline	1	Ask Q.36
b.	Public Protector of South Africa	2	Ask Q.36
c.	Auditor-General of South Africa	3	Ask Q.36
d.	South African Human Rights Commission	4	Ask Q.36
e.	Public Service Commission: National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH)	5	Ask Q.36
f.	Special Investigating Unit (SIU) Hotline	6	Ask Q.36
g.	Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing	7	Ask Q.36
h.	OUTA Whistle-Blowing	8	Ask Q.36
i.	amaBhungane Tip-Off Line	9	Ask Q.36
j.	I have not heard of any of these hotlines	88	Skip to Q.37
k.	(Refuse)	99	Skip to Q.37

36. Think about the anti-corruption hotlines where anyone can make an anonymous report or tip-off about corrupt behaviour that they are aware of or have witnessed. Please tell us which of the following you think you can trust.

INTERVIEWER: MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

a.	The Presidential Hotline	1
b.	Public Protector of South Africa	2
c.	Auditor-General of South Africa	3
d.	South African Human Rights Commission	4
e.	Public Service Commission: National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH)	5
f.	Special Investigating Unit (SIU) Hotline	6
g.	Corruption Watch Whistle-Blowing	7
h.	OUTA Whistle-Blowing	8
i.	amaBhungane Tip-Off Line	9
j.	I do not trust any of these hotlines	88
k.	(Refuse)	99

37. Some people say that many incidents of corruption are never reported. Based on your experience, what do you think are the main reasons why many people do not report corruption when it occurs?

INTERVIEWER: MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

a.	Those responsible will not be punished	1
b.	People don't know where to report it	2
c.	No one bothers because corruption is normal, and everyone does it	3
d.	It is not worth the effort of reporting it	4
e.	There is no protection for those who report corruption	5
f.	No one wants to betray anyone	6
g.	The officials where they would report corruption are also corrupt	7
h.	Other (please specify)	8
i.	(Refuse)	9

38. Think about integrity and honesty. Who would you say are your MAIN ROLE MODELS for these values? Who do you admire? It can be any person, even an ordinary person.

INTERVIEWER: OPEN-ENDED QUESTION. PLEASE WRITE THE RESPONDENT'S ANSWER IN HIS / HER / THEIR OWN WORDS IN THE SPACE PROVIDED BELOW.

39. Imagine you have the chance to make a lot of money, but it requires you to do something corrupt (like misuse funds or take bribes). Before making a decision on what to do, you want to seek advice. Which of the following people are you most likely to seek advice from?

INTERVIEWER: MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

a.	My religious group or leader	01
b.	A close friend	02
c.	Family members	03
d.	Community or traditional leader	04
e.	People at my workplace	05
f.	My manager or boss	06
g.	Teachers at my school or college	07
h.	Other (specify)	08
i.	(Do not know)	88
j.	(Nobody -no one influences my choices)	99

40. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "In this community, people risk negative consequences (such as losing friends, losing work, or violence) if they speak out against corruption?" [SHOWCARD 1]

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5
(Do not know)	8

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