



2020

**Annual Opinion Poll on the Reality
of Corruption and Anti-Corruption
Efforts in Palestine**

Executive Summary

The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity-AMAN conducted a Palestinian public opinion poll in the West Bank (including Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip during the period 8-17 September 2020. The aim is to identify the citizens' perceptions and awareness of the reality of corruption, detect their willingness to engage in fighting it and compare the findings with the previous years. The sample comprised 1320 persons, aged above 18 years old, (792) in the West Bank (including Jerusalem) and (528) in Gaza Strip, with $\pm 3\%$ margin of error, The interviews were held face to face and at houses.

The majority of citizens believe that corruption increased in 2020

For the second consecutive year, 53% of citizens believe that **corruption increased**. The rate of those who believe that corruption increased reached 67% in the West Bank compared with 33% in Gaza.

Despite improving citizen expectations on corruption for next year, they are still pessimistic:

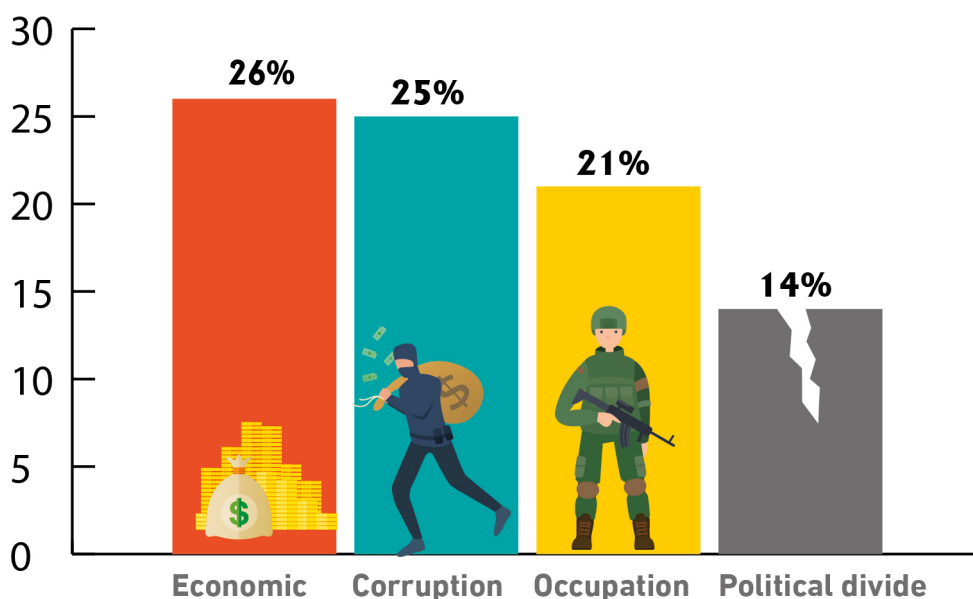
55% of citizens said that they **believe that corruption shall increase, compared with 60% last year**. The rate reached 66% in the West Bank compared to 37% in Gaza. On the other hand, **14% only expected it to decrease** (6% in the West Bank and 26% in Gaza) while 21% indicated that the level of corruption will remain as is (14% in the West Bank, 33% in Gaza).

53%
Corruption increased



The major priority issues

Economic, corruption, occupation and internal political divide continue to constitute the major priority issues (26%, 25%, 21% and 14% consecutively).

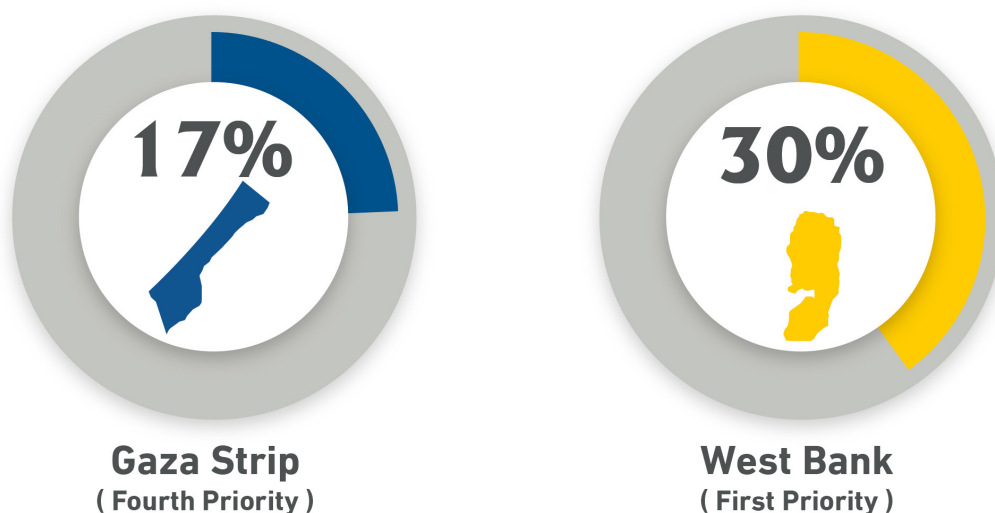


The 2020 findings of AMAN Opinion Poll on the Reality of Corruption and Anti-Corruption Efforts in Palestine were not much different from 2019 findings. Corruption continues to constitute one out of four main challenges facing the Palestinian society in 2020 according to the citizens' perceptions, amid the aggravating economic crisis, the continued oppressive occupation policies against the Palestinian people and the continued internal political divide.

The economic crisis affected the challenges that the Palestinian society faces in 2020, as 26 % indicated that the aggravating economic crisis constituted the major challenge or priority to be resolved (28% of females and 24% of males). This is attributed to the escalating financial crisis resulting from the Israeli occupation measures against the citizens in Gaza Strip and freezing the tax revenues of the Palestinian Government, which weakened its ability to shoulder the economic burdens, compelling it to pay the public employees half their salaries during the second half of 2020. Moreover, Covid-19 pandemic harmed many economic sectors, especially workers in the local market. Wide discrepancies appeared in the citizens' attitudes, opinions and perceptions towards certain issues between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the citizens' opinions reflected some stereotyping towards the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Hamas constituency were more critical of PA in the West Bank, and less critical of the existing authority in Gaza Strip (Hamas authority) in several aspects, such as promotions, appointments, concentration of corruption, the most corrupt groups, reflecting the impact of factionalism in assessing issues. The opinions were milder among the constituency of the ruling faction in the West Bank.

The priority to combat corruption



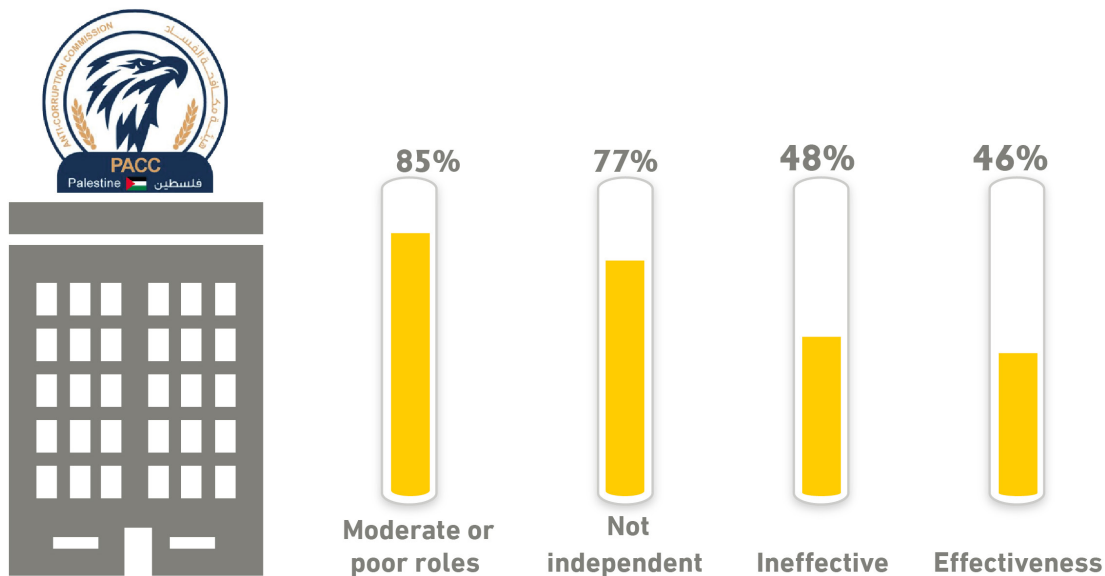
The poll findings reveal differences between the West Bank and Gaza in the citizens' opinions towards the priorities; corruption ranked first in the West Bank, while it ranked fourth in Gaza. Thirty percent in the West Bank identified corruption as a priority challenge to be resolved, compared to 17% in Gaza Strip. Corruption constituted a priority to the youth, reaching 25% among the under-30 years group (30% in the West Bank, 18% in Gaza), and among the public sector employees, compared with other sectors (37% in the West Bank, 23% in Gaza).

The findings also reflected a higher degree of sensitivity among Gaza citizens towards the impact of internal political divide, as 23% considered it the first priority that must be resolved, while a low rate of citizens considered it a priority in the West Bank (8%).

The citizens are still not convinced that the efforts to combat corruption are serious or adequate

The citizens are still not convinced that the efforts to combat corruption in the West Bank and Gaza are serious or adequate, are doubtful of the independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) and believe that it is under the influence of the Executive Authority

A high rate of citizens are dissatisfied with anti-corruption efforts, and not confident of PACC independence because of the Executive interference in and influence on its work.



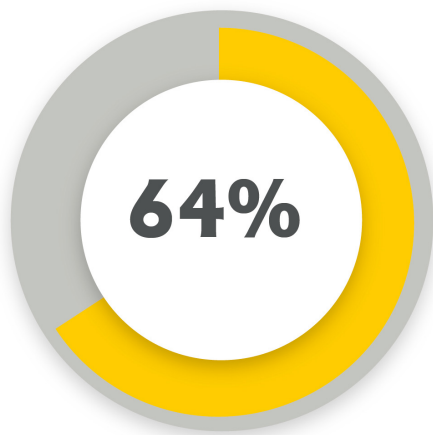
The findings revealed a deterioration in the citizens’ evaluation of PACC effectiveness (effective and moderately effective) despite its efforts during the past two years to become more open and visible to the public and its partnership with civil society organizations in developing the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for integrity and combating Corruption. The 2020 poll revealed a three-point decrease in its evaluation in comparison with 2019 poll (49% compared with 46%). On the other hand, 48 % considered it ineffective compared with 44%, an increase of four points. 85% of West Bank citizens considered its effectiveness in combatting corruption either moderate or poor.

The findings explained the deterioration in the citizens’ perception of PACC effectiveness as such: 32% said that the **main reason for PACC ineffectiveness is that citizens have not seen senior corrupt persons held accountable seriously**, while 30% said that it is **not serious in holding the corrupt accountable**. 17% said that **they do not publish information about discovered and prosecuted corruption cases**.

Seventy seven percent of the citizens in the West Bank said that PACC is not autonomous in exercising its powers, a 7-point increase in comparison with last year (70%). The rate is higher among males (80%) than females (73%), and 79% among the youth under 30 years old. It increases to 85% among the NGOs employees, compared with 83% among the private sector and 78% among the public sector employees.

Regarding the party that interferes most in PACC work, 37% replied the Presidency, 24% the Cabinet and the ministers, 23% the security services, followed by the party leaders (9%) governors and mayors (8%).

The youth and public sector employees are most pessimistic towards seriousness of anti-corruption efforts



The poll findings revealed that 84% of the citizens in Gaza Strip consider the effectiveness of the competent authorities in combatting corruption (Anti-Corruption and Financial Crimes Prosecution) moderate to poor (63% moderate and 21% poor).

Fifty nine percent of Gaza citizens believe that those parties are not autonomous, a decrease of 9 points from last year (68%). The rate was higher among public sector employees (62%) compared to the private sector (59%) and NGOs (52%). It was also higher among the over forty years age (65%) while it reached 59% among the youth.

In Gaza, **49% believe that the security services and the faction leaders interfere the most in the work of the Anti-Corruption and Financial Crimes Prosecution** (25% for the security services and 24% for party leaders).

The findings reveal that the opinions about the low level of autonomy and effectiveness of the parties competent on corruption issues (PACC in the West Bank and the Anti-Corruption and Financial Crimes Prosecution in Gaza Strip), are convergent. Those authorities face much interference and influence from the different parties, such as the Presidency in the West Bank, and the security services and factions leaders (especially Hamas) in Gaza, which may undermine the citizens' trust in the competent authorities in corruption cases in the West Bank and Gaza alike

The scale of corruption in the Palestinian Authority's institutions



58% Of citizens believe that the scale of corruption in the PA's institutions is still large

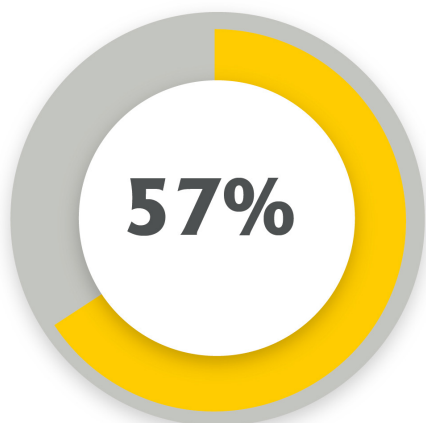
Fifty eight percent of citizens believe that the scale of corruption in the Palestinian Authority's institutions is still large

This year, the rate of citizens who believe that the scale of corruption is large decreased by 5 points (58%) compared with 2019 (63%). The rate was 72% in the West Bank and 37% in Gaza Strip. The rate is highest in villages (73%), compared with 59% in the refugee camps and 50% in the cities. The rate is also higher, at 63% among the private sector employees (71% in the West Bank and 45% in Gaza), and 61 % among the public sector employees (80% in the West Bank and 39% in Gaza), while it is lower (50%) among NGOs employees (62% in the West Bank and 31% in Gaza).

No change in the corruption map

The majority of citizens believe that corruption is concentrated among the senior public sector employees, particularly in the executive public institutions (the ministries, the Presidency and the security services).

The citizens continue to believe that the perpetrators of corruption are senior employees (89% in the West Bank and 72% in Gaza), compared to those who believe they are junior employees (28% in Gaza and 11% in the West Bank).



57% of citizens believe that the government institutions are the most susceptible to corruption

There were obvious discrepancies between the responses of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Although the government institutions were considered the most susceptible to corruption, there was an obvious discrepancy of 24 points: 67% in the West Bank compared with 43% in Gaza. Furthermore, 21% in Gaza consider NGOs and charitable associations the most corrupt, compared to 9% only in the West Bank. Nineteen percent in Gaza perceive the private sector as the most corrupt, compared with 11% in the West Bank.

According to 27% of the citizens, the ministries and public institutions are the most corrupt (35% in the West Bank and 15% in Gaza), followed by the Presidency at 23% (19% in the West bank and 29% in Gaza). The security services ranked third at 19 % (21% in the West Bank and 17 % in Gaza).

The responses revealed discrepancies between the West Bank and Gaza Strip about the party most susceptible to corruption. 35% in the West Bank, said the public institutions and commissions, which ranked first, compared with 15% in Gaza, hence ranking third. On the other hand, 29% of the citizens in Gaza considered the Presidency most susceptible to corruption, while it ranked third in the West Bank (19%).

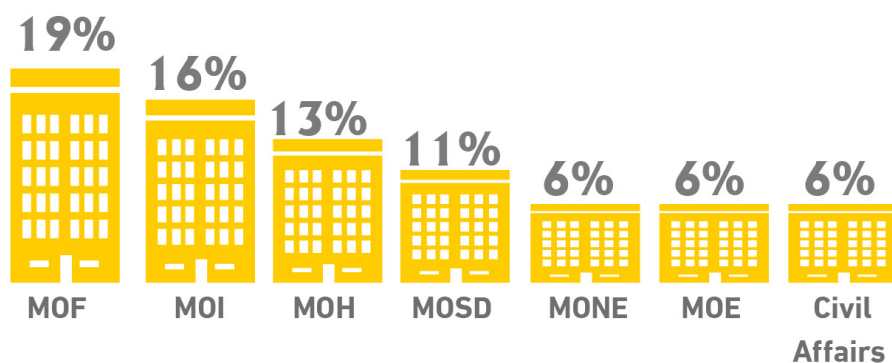
It is worth noting that no change occurred in the opinion of Gazan citizens towards the Presidency, as it was the most susceptible to corruption during the past three years. This is attributed to their continuous feeling that it was the President who took the decision in 2018 to impose sanctions on PA employees in Gaza Strip.

The security services ranked third as the most susceptible to corruption for the second consecutive year, according to the poll findings. While they ranked first in 2018, they dropped to third in 2019 and 2020.

The most ministries susceptible to corruption

The ministries that directly provide services (Finance, Interior, Health, Social Development, Economy and Education) were the most susceptible to corruption according to the citizens' perceptions, in addition to the General Authority of Civil Affairs, especially in Gaza.

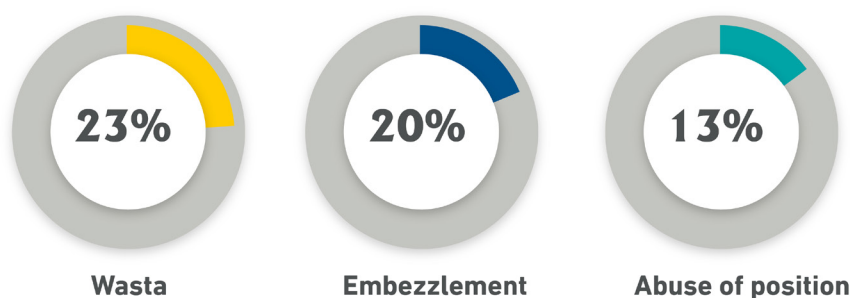
The **Ministry of Finance (MOF)** ranked first in this poll. According to 19% of the citizens, it is the most susceptible to corruption (21% in the West Bank, 15% in Gaza), compared to last year, in which the **Ministry of Health (MOH)** ranked first. **The Ministry of Interior (MOI)**, ranked second according to 16% (17% in Gaza, 15% in the West Bank), followed by MOH (13%). **The Ministry of Social Development (MOSD)** ranked fourth (11%) and the **Ministry of National Economy (MONE)**, **The Ministry of Education (MOE)** and the **General Authority of Civil Affairs** ranked fifth (received 6% each).



The citizens' perceptions in the West Bank and Gaza revealed discrepancies in the ranking of the ministries most susceptible to corruption. While in the West Bank they were MOF, followed by MOI, MOH and then MOSD, in Gaza Strip MOI ranked first, followed by MOF, MOH and the General Authority of Civil Affairs.

Forms of corruption

The crimes of Wasta and nepotism, embezzlement of public funds, abuse of position, bribery, and money laundering and trading in influence were the most common forms of corruption.



For the second consecutive year, 23% of the citizens considered Wasta and nepotism the most common form of corruption in Palestine, with 12 points higher in the West Bank than in Gaza (28% in the West Bank, 16% in Gaza). In terms of sex, 27% of females indicated that Wasta and nepotism are the most common form of corruption (33% in the West bank, 17 % in Gaza), compared with 19 % of males (22% in the West Bank, 14% in Gaza).

Embezzlement of public funds ranked second at 20% (17% in the West Bank, 25% in Gaza). Abuse of position, bribery in return for public services or unrightfully obtaining a privilege, ranked fourth at 13% each, followed by laundering corruption crime proceeds, breach of trust, trading in influence and non-disclosure of conflict of interests (6-8% each).

The poll findings also revealed discrepancies between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in ranking the most common forms of corruption. In the West Bank, Wasta and nepotism ranked first, followed by embezzlement of public funds, abuse of position, then bribery. However, in Gaza, embezzlement of public funds ranked first, followed by Wasta and nepotism, laundering corruption crime proceeds, then bribery.

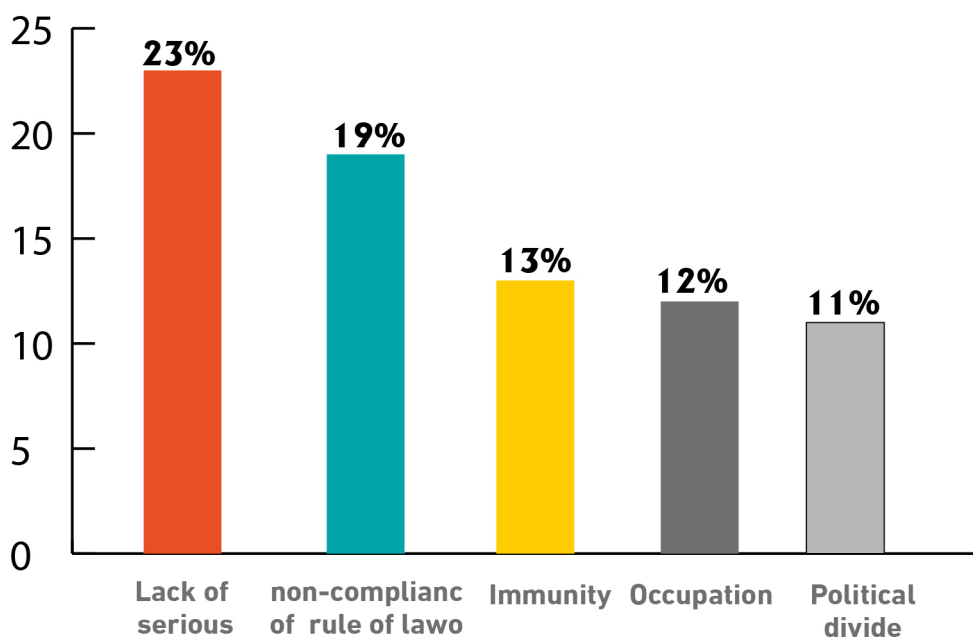
Differences also appeared among the youth (under 30 years old) responses according to their place of residence. **In the West Bank**, the forms of corruption were ranked in the following order: Wasta and nepotism 30%, abuse of position 22%, embezzlement of public funds 15% and bribery 12%. However, **in Gaza**, the order was as follows: embezzlement of public funds 27%, Wasta and nepotism 15% and abuse of position 10%

The Seriously of combating corruption

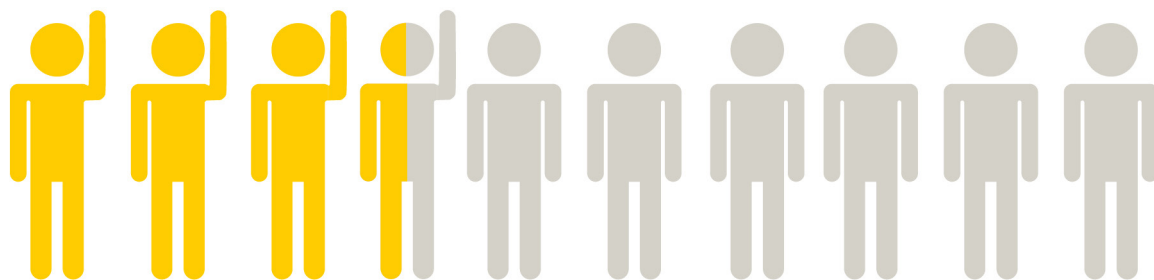
The citizens consider the efforts to combat corruption of senior officials not serious, as they believe that some enjoy immunity. Moreover, the absence of the rule of law, occupation, internal political divide, absence of an active Legislative Council and weak role of the civil society institutions have all contributed to spreading corruption in Palestine.

The citizens indicated that the main reasons for the spread of corruption are the **lack of serious efforts to hold accountable senior corrupt officials**, 23% (26% in the West Bank compared to 19% in Gaza); non-compliance with the principle of the rule of law, 19% (27% in the West Bank compared with 6% in Gaza); the immunity of certain figures, 13%; Israeli occupation measures and its role in creating an enabling environment for corruption, 12% (8% in the West Bank compared with 18% in Gaza), and the internal political divide between the West Bank and Gaza, 11% (9% in the West Bank compared with 14% in Gaza). Less than 9% responded by each of the weak role of the civil society institutions, lack of citizens' awareness about the forms of corruption and the absence of an active Legislative Council and control bodies.

Citizens believe that provision of some services does not enjoy a high degree of integrity, especially in **appointments to senior positions, distribution of humanitarian aid, health services, and the services of the General Authority of Civil Affairs in Gaza Strip**. Around one third of the citizens (31%) believe that the promotions and appointments in senior positions service has the highest potential for corruption (42% in the West Bank compared with 16% in Gaza). The citizens continue to believe that the processes of promotions and appointments in senior positions have the highest potential for corruption in the West Bank, followed by distribution of humanitarian and social in-kind aid and health services. While in Gaza, the services of the General Authority of Civil Affairs in Gaza Strip ranked first at 20%, followed by distribution of humanitarian and social in-kind aid ranking second, then promotions and appointments in senior positions.



Citizens continue to perceive Wasta as utilized means to access public services



35%

Of the citizens who went to public institutions and sought a public service had to resort to Wasta to obtain a public service

The findings revealed that 35% of the citizens who went to public institutions and sought a public service during 2020 had to resort to Wasta to obtain a public service (34% in the West Bank, 36% in Gaza).

It is worth noting that 37% of the citizens said that **they went to public institutions during 2020 to obtain a public service** (32% in the West Bank, 45% in Gaza).

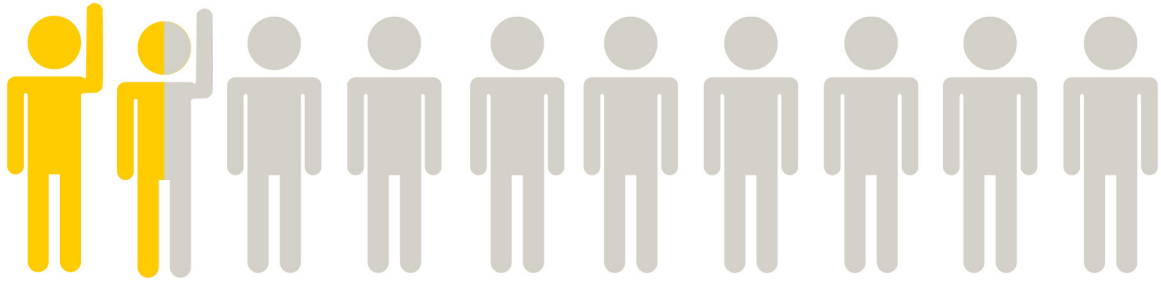
Concern over not being able to obtain the service because of limited opportunities, lack of trust in officials' integrity and avoiding bureaucracy (saving time) were the main reasons for resorting to Wasta in the West Bank and Gaza.

The citizens gave several reasons for resorting to Wasta, including concern over not being able to obtain the service because of limited opportunities (23%), lack of trust in officials' integrity (22%) concern that another ineligible person shall take the service because of corruption (18%), while 16 % attributed that to saving time by avoiding bureaucratic measures.

Decrease in the belief that bribery is common especially in cities

The rate of those who indicated that bribery is the most common form of corruption they had seen during the past years dropped to 13% only (compared with 14% in 2019), and had reached 24% and 26% during 2018 and 2017 consecutively. The rate of the respondents who said that "bribery is the most common form of corruption" increased to 19% among the village inhabitants and 14% among refugee camp inhabitants, compared with 10 % among city inhabitants.

Nevertheless, the rate of bribe payers is becoming more serious because of the lack of resources, increasing need, limited opportunities to obtain services and lack of accountability of senior officials, thus encouraging some workers in the service sectors to ask for bribes.



17% have previously paid a bribe or given gifts to obtaining a public service

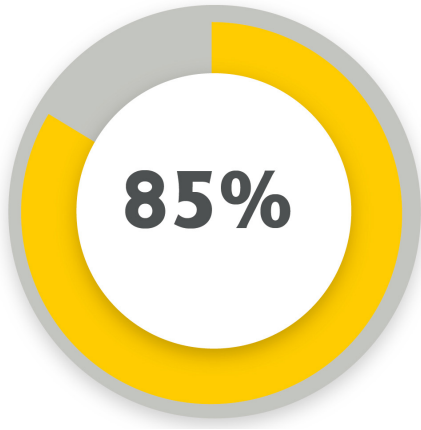
Seventeen percent of citizens have previously paid a bribe or given gifts to a public employee in return for obtaining a public service. The rate of those who paid bribes or gave gifts to a public employee in return for obtaining a public service has largely increased in Gaza Strip, compared with the West Bank (28% in Gaza, 10% in the West Bank). It increased among males to 19 % (29% in Gaza, 12% in the West Bank), and the rate of those who gave bribes or gifts increased as the income decreased (20% among the persons whose income is below 2500 ILS, compared with 17% among those whose income is above 2500 ILS). On the other hand, the rate is lower by two points, 15%, among women (28% in Gaza Strip 8% in the West Bank).

It is worth noting that the question included giving bribes and gifts, which mostly led to an increase in the rate of those who answered yes.

Bribery is most common in health services, permits and travel authorizations

The citizens' opinions varied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip about the services and the areas in which bribery is most common. While health services ranked first in the West Bank at 29%, followed by travel at the border crossings 22%, then permits and travel authorizations 21%, in Gaza bribes were most common in travel at the border crossings 31%, followed by permits and travel authorizations, 30% then other services at close rates.

Role of the Palestinian media



Eighty five percent of the citizens perceive the role of the Palestinian media as poor or moderately effective in unveiling corruption cases in 2020

The citizens indicated that the role of the media is between poor and moderate in unveiling corruption cases. 45% of the citizens indicated that the role of the media is poor, while 40% indicated it is moderately effective, and 14% said it is effective

On the other hand, two thirds of the citizens perceive the social media as the most effective media tool to unveil and shed the light on corruption cases in 2020.

Two thirds of the citizens believe there is corruption in the Judiciary

Sixty nine percent of the citizens in the West Bank and Gaza Strip indicate that there is corruption in the courts and prosecutions, and the rate reaches 76% in the West Bank compared with 58% in Gaza. The rate increases among older persons (over 40 years of age) to 72% (80% in the West Bank and 57% in Gaza), 72% among the public sector employees (85% in the west Bank and 57% in Gaza), and 74% among the private sector employees (79% in the West Bank compared with 62% in Gaza). It reaches 76% among village inhabitants, 73% in refugee camps and 64% in cities.



69% Indicate that there is corruption in the courts and prosecutions

79% of the citizens believe the penalties against corruption crimes are not deterrent

The poll findings revealed that 79% of citizens believe that the penalties against corruption crimes are not deterrent (84% in the West Bank, 70% in Gaza), while 17% only believe they are deterrent (10% in the West Bank, 28% in Gaza).

Report corruption



60% Do not usually report corruption

Despite the adoption of the Whistle-blower Protection Regulation, most citizens refrain from reporting corruption. The reasons are “fear from retribution”, the lack of sufficient protection to whistle-blowers and witnesses, “the lack of sufficient awareness about corruption and its forms”, and the lack of conviction in the feasibility of reporting as no measures will be taken against the corrupt.

Sixty percent of the citizens believe that the citizens do not usually report corruption, an increase of 6 points compared with last year (54%), while 32% believe **that the citizens usually report corruption that they observe, with the rate rising to 38% in Gaza, and dropping to 28% in the West Bank.**

Sixty percent said they would report corruption as witnesses, a drop of 7 points from 67% last year. The rate of those who expressed their willingness to report corruption if they were victims also dropped by 6 points (71% from 77%).

Upon comparing the poll findings with those of last year, a slight relapse is noted in the citizens’ opinions and trends towards reporting corruption. The rate of those who believe that the citizens usually report corruption reached 32% in 2020 compared with 36% in 2019 (a 4-point decrease).

Anti-corruption Efforts



80% Anti-corruption efforts are insufficient

The citizens indicated that the reasons they consider anti-corruption efforts insufficient are that the citizens do not see senior corrupt officials held accountable (32%), lack of seriousness in holding the corrupt accountable (30%) and not publishing information about discovered and prosecuted corruption cases (17%). It increases among males to 84% (88% in the West Bank and 78% in Gaza), compared with 75% among females (80% in the west Bank and 68% in Gaza). It is also increases to 85% among village inhabitants, followed by 80% in the refugee camps and 77% in cities. It increases to 92% among NGOs employees (100% in the West Bank and 85% in Gaza), 83% among public sector employees (85% in the West Bank and 80% in Gaza), and 82 % among the private sector employees (88% in the west Bank and 70% in Gaza).

A high rate of citizens believe that the reason for spoiled food and drug is the lack of deterrent sentences in the Penal Code and interferences and Wasta to help the perpetrators, especially large traders and suppliers.

Fifty nine percent of the citizens believe that the spoiled food and drugs crimes have increased in 2020, 6 points less than 2019 (59% compared with 65%), with 38% attributing such increase to the “**lack of accountability and prosecution of the perpetrators of those crimes**” (45% in the West Bank, 25% in Gaza), 24% to the “**the lack of deterrent penalties**” (23% in the West Bank, 26% in Gaza), and 19% to “**Wasta and nepotism regardless of the crimes**”.