



Institute for Public Policy Research

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More Namibians Unhappy about the Government's Effort to Fight Graft Despite having Confidence in the Anti-Corruption Commission

Introduction

Efforts aimed at fighting corruption can at times be undermined by perceptions that the government is not doing enough to curb corruption. Such perceptions are accompanied by loss of trust in anti-graft bodies, although this is at times a result of over-exposure of corrupt practices rather than the inefficiency of anti-corruption institutions. In 2006, 48% of surveyed Namibians were of the opinion that the government is performing poorly in fighting corruption, while 50% appraised the government favourably in handling the fight against corruption. Namibia's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) officially assumed duty on 1 January 2006 but only started operating in 2007.

During the fourth round of the Afrobarometer survey in 2008, the proportion of respondents with the view that the government is failing to deal with graft decreased by 7 percentage points to 41%. A marginal increase of 4% was recorded for those who said the government is handling corruption well. Results from Round 5 are by far the most negative concerning how the government is handling corruption, as for the first time more than half (56%) of respondents report that the government is doing a shoddy job in curbing the scourge of corruption. In 2004, Namibia did not have an anti-corruption commission yet more than half (53%) of surveyed Namibians said the government is doing a good job in fighting corruption. Does more exposure lead to 'unwarranted' mistrust of anti-graft bodies and the perception that corruption is out of hand? Or is corruption really growing in Namibia?

About the Afrobarometer

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys, covering up to 35 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). It measures public attitudes on democracy and its alternatives, evaluations of the quality of governance, and economic performance. In addition, the survey assesses the views of the electorate on critical political issues in the surveyed countries. The Afrobarometer also provides comparisons over time, as four rounds of surveys have been held from 1999 to 2008 and Round 5 is currently underway.

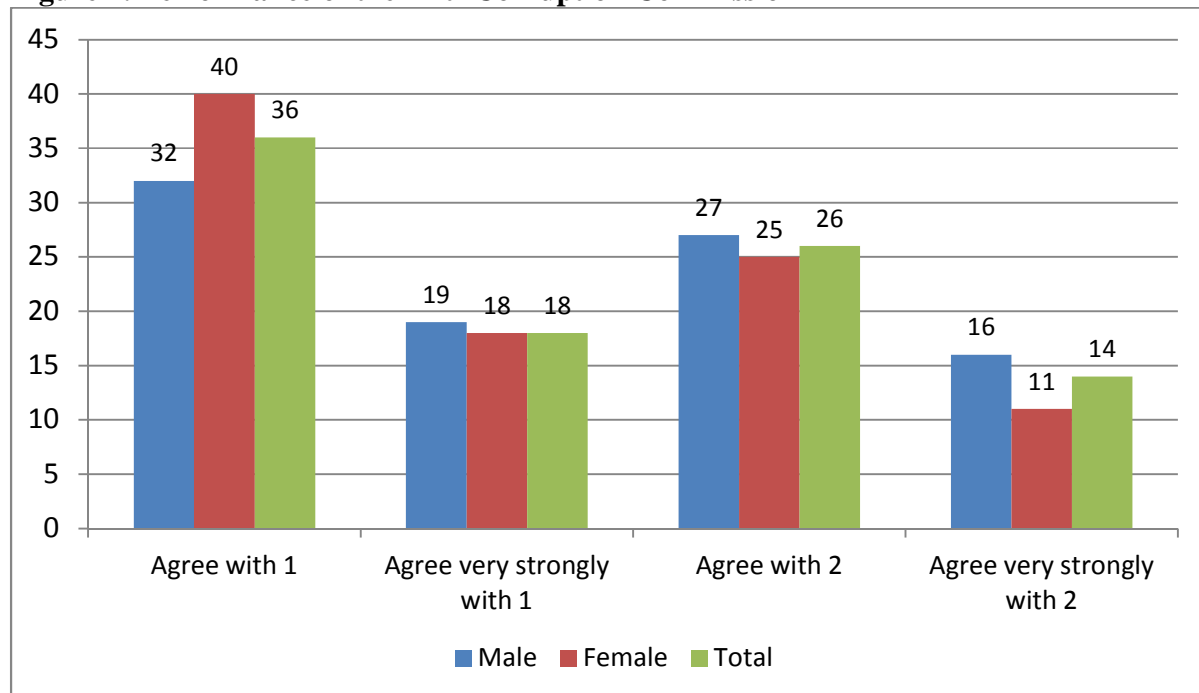
Afrobarometer’s work in Namibia is coordinated by the **Institute for Public Policy Research**. Fieldwork for Round 5 was conducted in Namibia by **Survey Warehouse** from 19 November – 18 December 2012. The survey interviewed 1200 adult Namibians, and a sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level.

FINDINGS

Evaluation of Anti-Corruption Commission

Faith in anti-graft bodies is an important factor shaping opinions about how the country is doing in fighting corruption. Perceptions of corruption always exceed the actual experience of corruption, but the status of corruption fighting agencies is a mitigating factor in public perceptions. Logically, when citizens perceive their anti-corruption institution to be neutral and conducting its affairs without fear or favour – they would appraise the government favourably with regards to fighting corruption.

Figure 1: Performance of the Anti-Corruption Commission



Statement 1: The Anti-Corruption Commission performs its duties as a neutral body and guided only by the law.

Statement 2: The Anti-Corruption Commission makes decisions that favour particular people or political parties

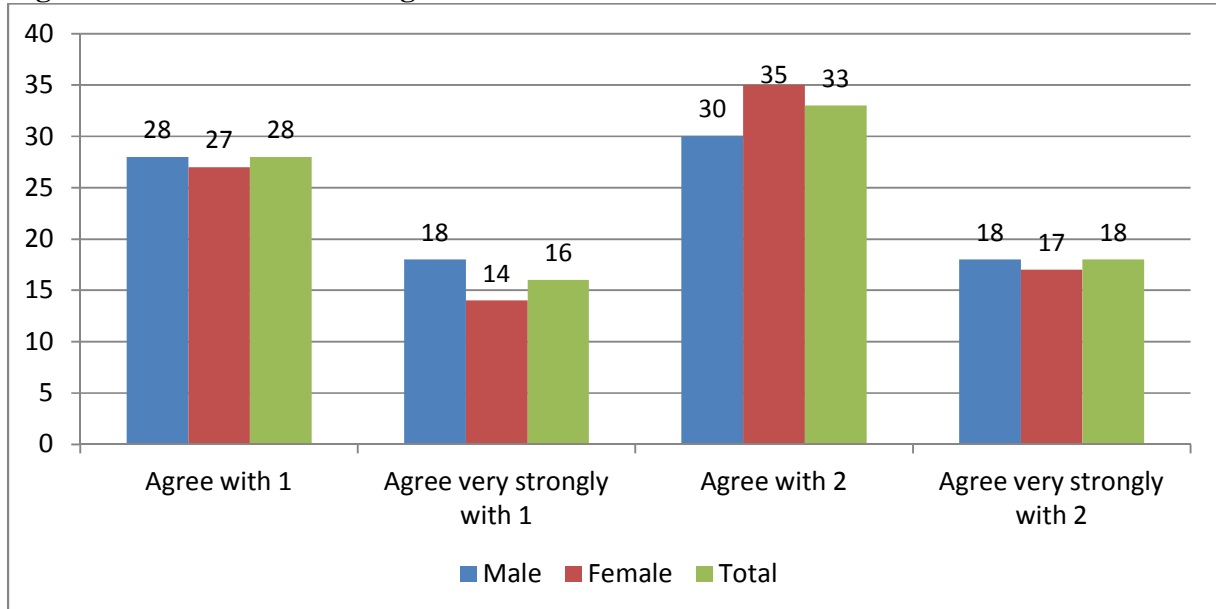
Slightly more than half (54%) of the respondents are of the opinion that the ACC is a neutral body performing its duties solely in the ambits of the law. More female respondents (58%) than male (51%) were supportive of the ACC as a neutral body in their responses. This indicates that the ACC enjoys some institutional legitimacy.

Big fish vs. small fish

By broad strokes, Africa is said to have weak institutions and strong rulers. Institutions created to serve the public often times find their powers usurped by the politically well-connected. This is especially important for horizontal accountability bodies such as the ACC in Namibia. Even

though the ACC enjoys institutional legitimacy, the picture is not all rosy when it comes to the perception of who it mostly goes after.

Figure 2: Who does the ACC go after?



Statement 1: The Anti-Corruption Commission mostly targets petty offenders while avoiding suspects who are politically important and well-connected.

Statement 2: The Anti-Corruption Commission targets all levels of corruption without favouring any particular group.

About 44% Namibians think that the ACC mostly go after petty offenders while avoiding the politically well connected. Conversely, just above half (51%) of the respondents posit that the ACC targets all levels of corruption including suspects who are politically powerful. Such public support keeps the ACC in the accountability game with the popular respect and legitimacy to carry out their mandate. Slightly more male 46% compared to female respondents (41%) maintain that the ACC have a predilection to go after ‘small fish’. However, female respondents are somewhat more inclined to believe that the ACC targets all levels of corruption than males – with 52% compared to 48% respectively. A deeper analysis of corruption perceptions in the survey will follow soon.

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