



# Namibians see increased corruption; business executives now top list of 'most corrupt'

## Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 7 | Ellison Tjirera

### Summary

Corruption has yet to gain prominence as a public policy issue in Namibia. Most respondents to the 2014 Afrobarometer survey in Namibia do not rank corruption among the top priorities that the government needs to address.

Other surveys rank Namibia relatively high in the fight against corruption. Namibia improved in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index, from 57th in 2013 to 55th out of 175 countries. Tied with Lesotho, Namibia ranks ahead of South Africa (67th) and trails Botswana (31st) and Mauritius (47th).

Nonetheless, almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents in Afrobarometer's 2014 survey say that corruption has increased in Namibia over the past year, and a majority (56%) say the government is doing a poor job of combating corruption.

For the first time since 2003, government officials and police are not perceived to be the most corrupt entities in the country, as business executives now top the list. Citizens say that the news media is effective in revealing corruption but that ordinary Namibians can also contribute by reporting corruption when it occurs.

The survey suggests that corruption requires a vigorous approach to prevent it from becoming endemic in Namibia.

### Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Namibia, led by the Institute for Public Policy Research, interviewed 1,200 adult Namibians in August-September 2014. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Namibia in 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2012.

### Key findings

- Six in 10 respondents (63%) say the level of corruption in Namibia has increased "a lot" or "somewhat" over the past year.
- Business executives are perceived to be the most corrupt. More than four in 10 respondents (44%) say "most" or "all" business executives are corrupt.
- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents perceive the news media as "somewhat effective" or "very effective" in exposing government mistakes and corruption.

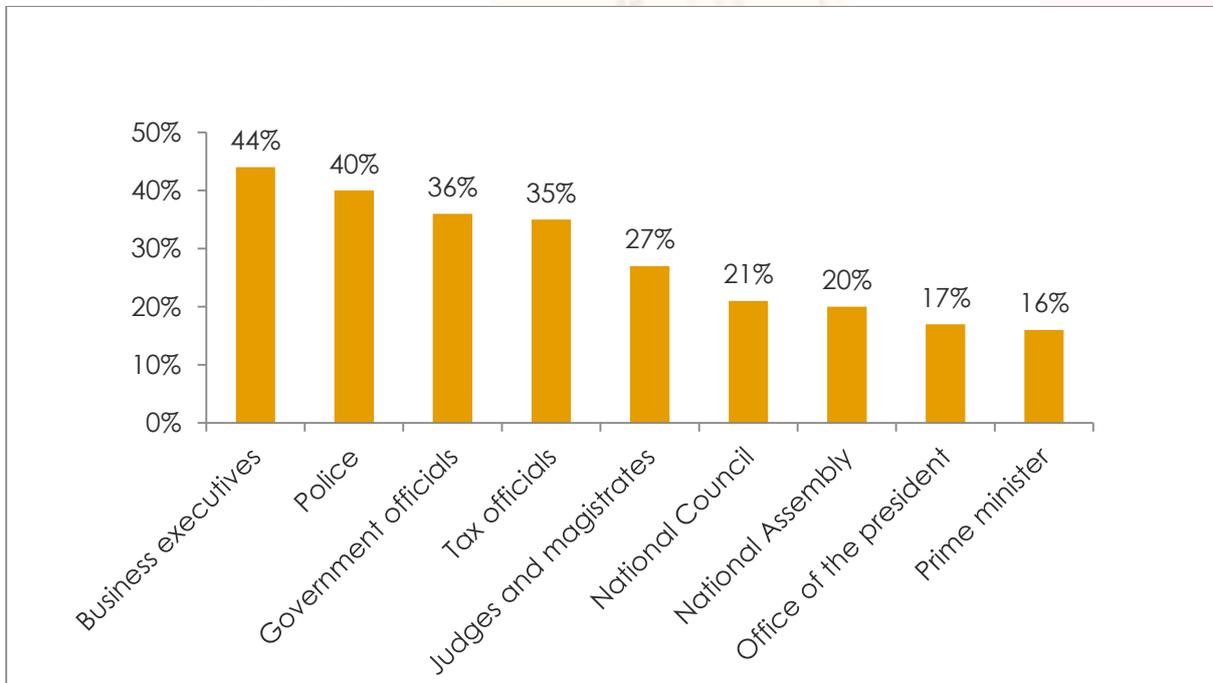
- Conversely, the government gets increasingly negative ratings on tackling corruption, as almost two thirds (65%) of respondents say the government is performing “very badly” or “fairly badly.”

**Business executives most corrupt**

For the first time, the Afrobarometer 2014 survey asked respondents about their perceptions of corruption in the private sector. “Business executives” immediately shot to the top of the list of institutions and groups perceived as corrupt, with 44% of Namibians saying that “most of them” or “all of them” are involved in corruption (Figure 1). This finding is perhaps unsurprising given recent controversies about “tenderpreneurs” (a South African term for people in government who abuse their influence to secure government tenders and contracts). In a related finding, 80% of survey respondents support reforming the tender process to remove nepotism and favouritism (Afrobarometer, 2014), an indication of the extent of public concern about business practices in the country. Other corruption controversies in the news media have focused on multinational companies in mining and fishing, Chinese businesses competing with local small businesses, big national companies, and South African chain stores in the retail sector (Goamab II, 2011; Hartman, 2013; Malakia & Malakia, 2011).

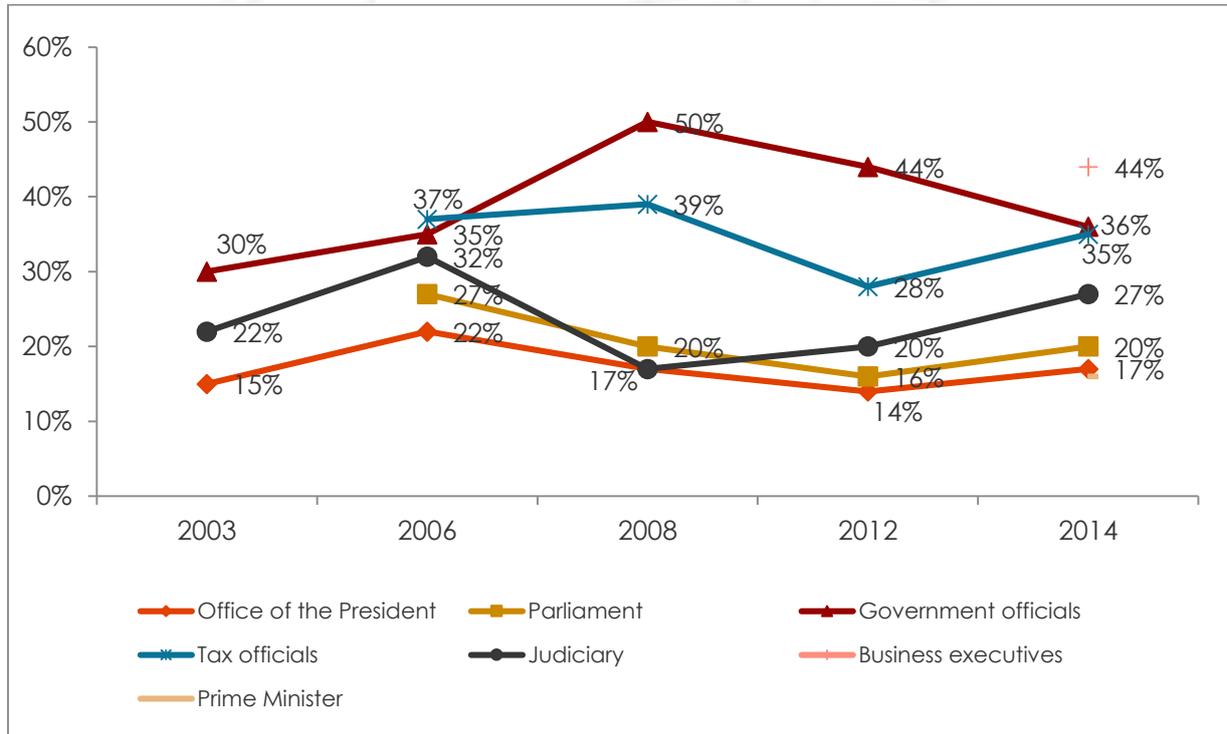
The police, government officials, and tax officials are also perceived as prone to significant corruption, with more than one-third of Namibians saying that most or all of them are corrupt. Over-time comparisons reveal these as the most problematic institutions in Namibia, in line with Afrobarometer findings in other countries (Richmond & Alpin, 2013). Public perceptions of corruption have increased since the 2012 survey with regard to the office of the president, Parliament, tax officials, and judges and magistrates (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Perceived corruption among institutions and groups | Namibia | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

**Figure 2: Corruption perceptions over time | Namibia | 2003-2014**



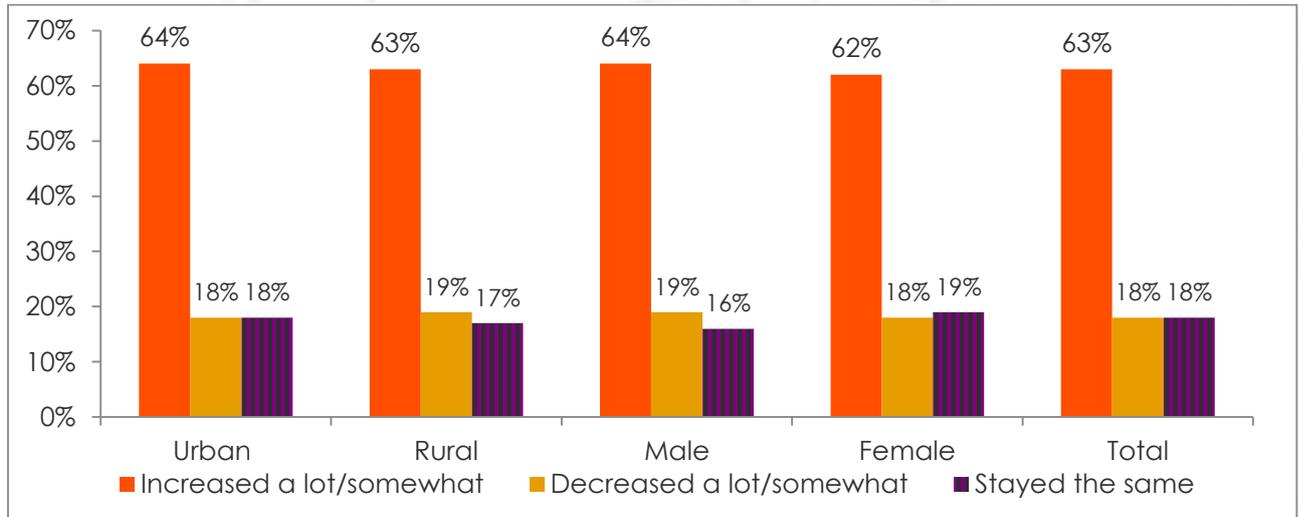
**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

The consistently high levels of perceived corruption among the police and government officials may also reflect a relationship between corruption perceptions and the nature of offices or institutions. Institutions with which the public interacts most may be more likely to be perceived as corrupt. It could be safely argued that while bad service can sometimes go hand in hand with corruption, it can also easily be confused for corruption. High visibility of corruption cases in the media can also influence public perceptions. As a case in point, a study by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) revealed that the Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF) was perceived to be the most corrupt institution in the country (Anti-Corruption Commission, 2011). The study was undertaken around the time when the media was abuzz about more than N\$600 million squandered in bad deals by the GIPF.

### Perception of increased corruption

Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents say that corruption in Namibia has increased over the past year. Men and women are equally likely to hold this view, as are urban and rural residents (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Perceptions of corruption over the past year | Namibia | 2014**

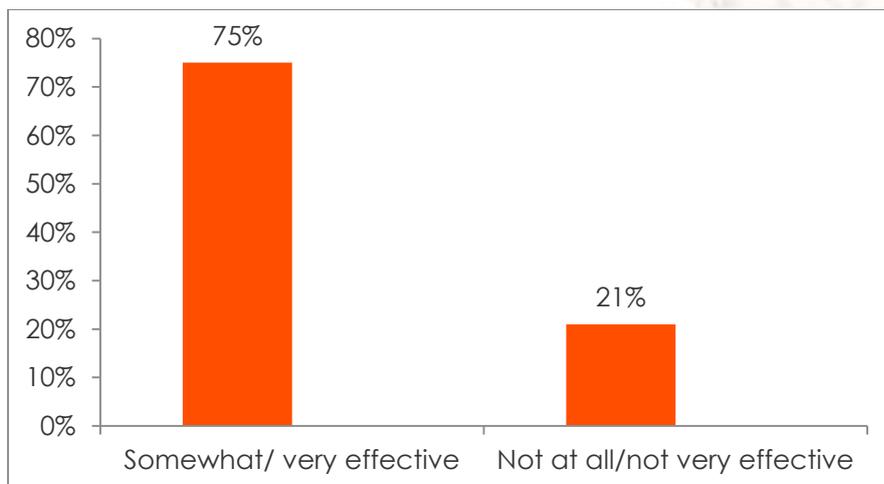


**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?*

### Media gets kudos for revealing government mistakes and corruption

Three-fourths (75%) of respondents say the news media is effective in revealing government mistakes and corruption (Figure 4), indicating that news outlets can be a potent tool in the fight against corruption in Namibia. Even though Namibia dropped three places in the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index (from No. 19 in 2013 to No. 22 in 2014), it remains the freest country for the press in Africa. The news media covers all of Namibia, whereas the ACC, which started operating in 2006, has only four offices countrywide. Since distance to a reporting place is one of the reasons why citizens do not report cases of corruption to the ACC, according to the ACC's 2011 national corruption perceptions survey report (ACC, 2011), the issue of reach might make citizens more likely to report allegations of corruption to the media than to the ACC.

**Figure 4: Effectiveness of news media in revealing government mistakes and corruption | Namibia | 2014**

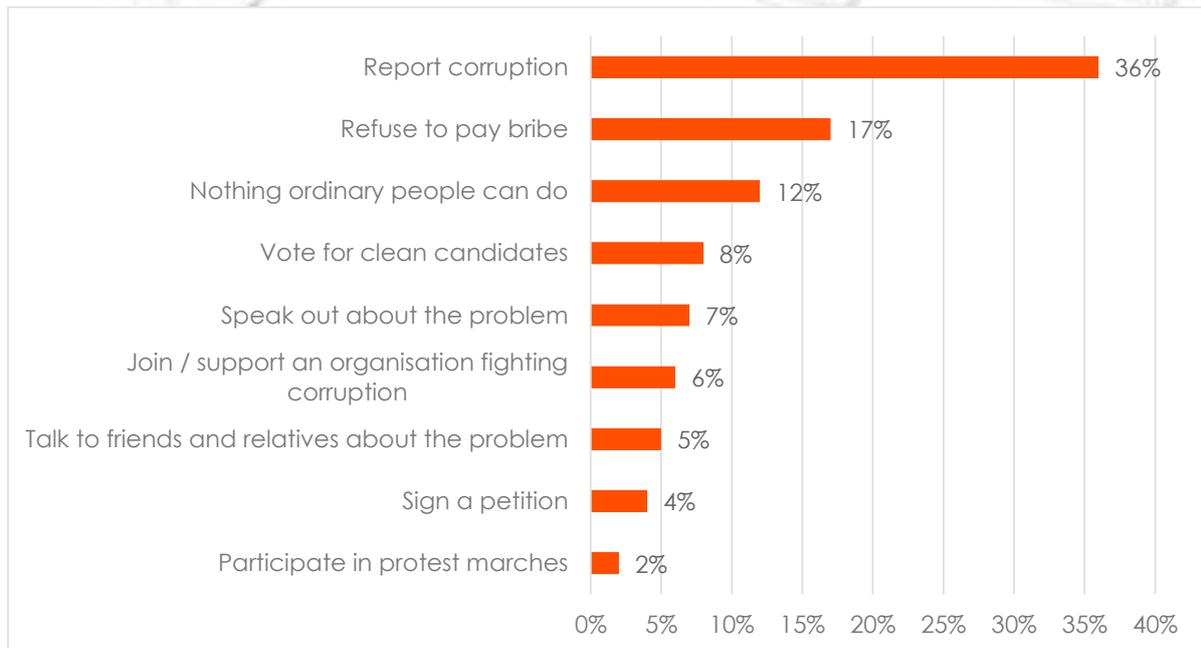


**Respondents were asked:** *In this country, how effective is the news media in revealing government mistakes and corruption?*

### Reporting corruption is the most effective way of combating corruption

More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents believe that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption. As for the most effective way to do so, the most frequent response (cited by 36% of respondents) is reporting corruption when it happens, followed by refusing to pay bribes (17%) (Figure 5). One in 10 (12%) say that ordinary Namibian citizens can do nothing to combat corruption.

**Figure 5: Most effective way to combat corruption | Namibia | 2014**

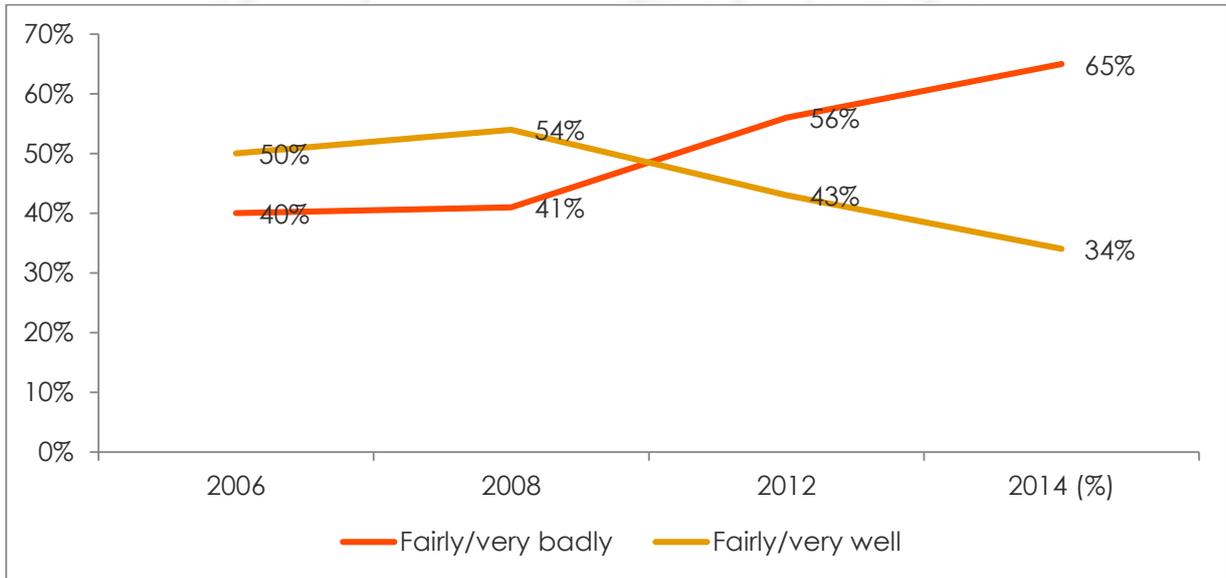


**Respondents were asked:** *What is the most effective thing that an ordinary person like you can do to help combat corruption in this country?*

### Government gets negative evaluation for anti-corruption efforts

Two-thirds (65%) of citizens say the government of Namibia is performing “fairly badly” or “very badly” in the fight against corruption. This reflects a sharp increase in negative public perceptions, from 41% in 2008 and 56% in 2012 (Figure 6). Namibia typically falls in the middle among countries in Afrobarometer surveys, very close to the group average (Richmond & Alpin, 2013).

**Figure 6: Government's handling of the fight against corruption | Namibia | 2006-2014**



**Respondents were asked:** How well has the government managed the following, or don't you know enough to say: Fight against corruption in the government?

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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