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CORRUPTION ASSESSMENT TOOLBOX

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Corruption Surveys
Topic Guide

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What are corruption surveys?

A corruption survey is a tool for measuring the experiences, perceptions, and/or attitudes of a specific population regarding the nature and extent of corruption in a given context. Surveys are normally based on a representative sample of a defined group in order to make statistical inferences about that group as a whole.

Corruption surveys may cover multiple countries, a single country or a sub-region within a country and may be directed at the general population, or at specific demographic groups. This guide focuses largely on surveys of the general population. Surveys of public officials, service providers/users, and representatives of the business community are covered in more depth in the education, health & water guide, the social accountability guide, and the private sector guide.

Purpose and context of corruption surveys

Most corruption surveys tend to fall under one or more of the following three categories:

- Corruption experience surveys aim to gather experience-based data on the direct impact of corruption on people's everyday lives. A typical experience survey gathers reported data on the frequency (and size) of bribes paid in general or when interacting with specific public institutions and services. The focus of experience surveys tends to be on petty corruption given that this is the form of corruption the general public most often encounters.
- Corruption perception surveys aim to gather more subjective data on people's views on the nature and extent corruption, as well as on their assessment of the effectiveness of existing anti-corruption measures. Whilst they are not able to generate evidence-based data, they can provide more insight into the general views of the respondent group regarding high-level/political corruption within a country.
- Attitudinal surveys aim to gather information on people's personal opinion regarding both what constitutes corruption and what can be done to tackle it. They can thus act as a barometer of people's willingness and readiness to engage in anti-corruption activities and can help to identify entry points for civil society engagement.

Survey approaches

The different approaches to conducting corruption surveys can be defined according to their scope and format:

Scope

- <u>Multi-country surveys</u> allow for a comparison of corruption issues across borders. They can either be limited to a specific region[1] or take a global perspective[2]. The advantage of this approach is that it can generate comparative data that can support advocacy efforts by applying pressure on national governments to strengthen their anti-corruption efforts. However, given that multi-country surveys have to be applicable across a range of settings, the questions asked are often quite general in nature. Moreover, the translation of survey questions (both linguistically and culturally) requires particular attention to ensure that respondents in all countries are assessing the same variables.
- <u>Single country / sub-national surveys</u>[3] in contrast allow for more context specific questions and can thus provide a more detailed picture of the corruption situation in a given country. Nevertheless, many national surveys also include questions of a more general nature so that data can be compared to the results of multi-country datasets.
- <u>Surveys amongst a subpopulation</u>[4] allow for tailor-made questionnaires for a specific subpopulation, including vulnerable groups, different age groups, groups who may be the target of specific anti-corruption activities or simply subpopulations whose corruption experiences might be different from the rest of the population. The advantage of this approach is that it can better support evaluations of the impact of efforts to tackle corruption and help inform the design of interventions that are targeted to specific groups[5].
- <u>Longitudinal studies</u>[6] are particularly valuable in that they allow for monitoring changes in corruption perceptions and experiences over time. They can, for

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[1] e.g. EC - Eurobarometer; UNODC - Corruption in the Western Balkans: Bribery as Experienced by the Population; TI Kenya - East African Bribery Index; Vanderbilt University - Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)

[2] e.g. TI - Global Corruption Barometer; UNICRI/UNODC International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS)

[3] e.g. GII - The Voice of the People Survey – Ghana; UNODC - Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims; CRCC - Armenia Corruption Survey; TLACC - Corruption Perception Survey 2011: Timor Leste; IACC-NSW - Community Attitudes to Corruption and the ICAC

[4] e.g. TI - Youth Integrity Surveys; AB - Arab Barometer; Proetica - National Corruption Survey Peru; IWA - Afghan Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption. A national survey; UNODC - Corruption in the Western Balkans: Bribery as Experienced by the Population; TI - Corruption in South Asia: Insights & Benchmarks from Citizen Feedback Surveys in Five Countries; CMS/TI India - India Corruption Study; National Household Surveys on Corruption in Bangladesh

[5] Whilst such surveys can capture people's experiences and perceptions, they cannot directly attribute these responses to particular policy or programme interventions. It is therefore recommended to use such survey to complement other more intervention-specific M&E data

[6] e.g. CRRC - Armenia Corruption Survey; Transparencia Mexicana - Indice Nacional de Corrupcion y Buen Gobierno; UNDP - Corruption Benchmarking in Serbia; Asia Foundation - Mongolia Corruption Benchmarking Survey; TI Pakistan - Pakistan National Corruption Perception Survey; IACC-NSW - Community Attitudes to Corruption and the ICAC; Transparency Rwanda - Rwanda Bribery Index; IDRA - Corruption in Albania Survey: Perception and Experience

example, be useful to support analysis of the relationship between the development of anti-corruption policies and changes in public perceptions of corruption.[7]

Format

- Face-to-face surveys[8] generally receive the highest response rates and allow for the inclusion of interviewer observations into the analysis, although this runs the danger of interviewer bias. Furthermore, longer interviews are much more likely to be tolerated and survey questions can be more complex since graphic elements (e.g. show cards) can support the interviewer.
- Phone surveys[9] enable the use of a large sample at relatively low costs and within a relatively small amount of time although drop-out rates tend to be higher. The use of telephone surveys also very much depends on the country context (e.g whether home phones or mobile phones are more used and the availability and quality of up to date directories.).
- Online surveys[10] can be a useful tool in countries with a high rate of internet coverage and internet literacy. Given the sensitivity of corruption, the anonymous nature of online surveys also means that respondents are more likely to provide honest answers. However, it is more difficult to achieve a representative sample and avoid survey fraud.

Data sources

Given that surveys rely on questionnaires for data collection, the content and design of the questionnaire is critical to ensuring that findings are relevant. In most cases, questions are developed either on the basis of existing literature and research or through preliminary interviews or focus group discussions. Increasingly questionnaires are also based on previous surveys, which has the added advantage that findings are more likely to be comparable[11]. Ideally, the questionnaire is tested at least once before the entire survey is implemented in order to identify problems with regard to comprehensibility and interpretation of the questions.

Key issues and challenges

- Perceptions vs experience: Probably the most widely debated issue with regards to corruption surveys is the relative value/reliability of perception-based vs experience-based data. Whilst there is far from a consensus on the issue, experience surveys are usually considered more reliable measures of petty corruption whilst perception surveys are deemed more appropriate for shedding light on the prevalence of grand corruption (policy capture, nepotism etc.). Furthermore, whilst there is some good

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[7] Longitudinal studies can take various forms depending on the objective of the research. Although beyond the scope of this guide, a useful summary of the different approaches is provided in: Lynn (2012) Methodology of Longitudinal Studies

[8] Doyle JK (n.d.) Face to Face Surveys

[9] Pew Research Centre (n.d.) Cell Phone Surveys

[10] Pew Research Centre (n.d.) Internet Surveys

[11] For example, the Ghana Integrity Initiative's Voice of the People Survey and UNDP's Corruption Benchmarking in Serbia survey are both based on TI's Global Corruption Barometer, while the Namibia Institute for Democracy's Namibia Youth Integrity Survey is based on TI's Youth Integrity Survey.

evidence of a strong correlation between corruption experience and perception[12], this trend is uneven across countries. There may, in some cases, be increased levels of tolerance towards (and hence more favourable perceptions of) corruption in areas where corruption experience is high, or conversely, heightened awareness of (and hence less favourable perceptions of) corruption in areas where there is a greater focus on tackling corruption by authorities. Other factors which may affect the perception of the level of corruption in a country, regardless of actual experience, include economic development, trust in government institutions, press freedom, population size, education, age, employment status, or the business environment[13]. The key issue to bear in mind, therefore, is that the two approaches ultimately measure different facets of the corruption problem and hence we would not necessarily expect them to be consistent.

- Measuring changes over time: It is widely acknowledged that longitudinal surveys, which allow for comparisons of corruption levels over time, are extremely valuable in the fight against corruption. Nevertheless, from a methodological perspective, conducting such surveys is not without its own challenges. The principle challenges relate to changes in questions/coverage and timing of the survey, all of which may affect the extent to which findings are comparable from year to year:
  - Whilst keeping the same questions allows for better comparability, there may be a trade off in terms of making improvements to the survey questionnaire (e.g. addressing emerging trends in corruption, adding in new questions which have proven useful in other surveys).
  - Changes in country coverage, meanwhile, are often based on more practical considerations (e.g escalating conflict, budget constraints), and may therefore be largely inevitable.
  - Finally, the timing of the survey may have an unintended effect on the results. For example, events immediately prior to implementation (breaking corruption scandal, change in government etc.) may influence people's perception of corruption at that time, but not accurately capture changes over a longer period (i.e. since the previous survey).

Integrity Watch Afghanistan's 2010 corruption survey, for example, has a refined methodology, greater thematic scope and stronger focus on experiences, as compared to the previous study, making comparisons with previous years more problematic[14]. Similarly, CMS/TI India's 2010 corruption study narrowed its geographical focus to rural areas as compared to previous editions, due to a shift in the government's policy priorities towards rural health, water and sanitation, and school education[15]. Such changes can often be managed in a way which still allows for comparison however. ICAC NSW's Community Attitudes Survey, for example, was revised in 2009, although many questions remained unchanged to facilitate comparisons with previous surveys[16].

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[12] Olken (2009) Corruption Perceptions vs Corruption Reality; Hardoon (2011) Corruption Perceptions Index 2011 : What's in a Number?
[13] GATEway interview with Mitchell A Seligson (forthcoming); Donchev and Ujhelyi (2011) What Do Corruption Indices Measure?; Roca (2011) Measuring corruption: perception surveys or victimization surveys?
[14] IWA - Afghan Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption. A national survey;
[15] CMS/TI India - India Corruption Study
[16] IACC-NSW - Community Attitudes to Corruption and the ICAC

Promising practices

- Triangulation and mixed methods: The World Bank Institute's (WBI) Governance and Anti-Corruption (GAC) Diagnostic Surveys combine in-depth, country-specific surveys of thousands of households, business people, and public officials about institutional vulnerabilities to inform policy design and monitoring. Data collection and analysis is conducted in collaboration with government representatives, civil society, media, parliamentarians, business people, donor community, etc. Because such a process requires time and resources that are not always available at the local level, the WBI has begun modifying this process to allow countries to gather the most relevant data and achieve results quickly (e.g focussing on priority sectors or thematic areas, reducing the size of questionnaires to gather baseline data, or working with National Statistical Agencies to include key governance questions in existing national data collection processes)[17]. In a similar vein, Transparency International UK (TI-UK) has produced a comprehensive study which combines a public opinion survey on corruption with an analysis of the effectiveness of the country's institutions in preventing and fighting corruption (NIS) as well as a more in-depth assessment of key sectors, to provide a more complete picture of the corruption situation in the country[18].

- Targeted surveys: A recent trend in the field of corruption research is to conduct targeted surveys with specific demographic or social groups in order to extract more disaggregated (and hence actionable) data. One example is Transparency International's pilot Youth Integrity Survey in Vietnam, which measures the attitudes and experiences of young people in the country with regard to integrity and corruption. An adapted version of the survey has also been conducted in Hungary and is due to be completed in Fiji[19]. Other related trends include an increased focus on disaggregating findings by gender[20], and on tailoring the survey to specific sectors[21] (education, health, justice[22]) or thematic areas (e.g. conflict[23]).

All tools referenced in this guide are accessible via the gateway tool database:
http://gateway.transparency.org/tools

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[17] WB – Governance and Anti-Corruption Diagnostic Surveys

[18] TI-UK - Corruption in the UK. Part One: National Opinion Survey

[19] TI - Youth Integrity Surveys

[20] AB - Arab Barometer; Proetica - National Corruption Survey Peru; IWA - Afghan Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption. A national survey; UNODC - Corruption in the Western Balkans: Bribery as Experienced by the Population

[21] Citizen report cards are another example of service sector surveys.

[22] TI - Corruption in South Asia: Insights & Benchmarks from Citizen Feedback Surveys in Five Countries; TI India - India Corruption Study; TI Bangladesh - National Household Surveys on Corruption in Bangladesh

[23] IWA - Afghan Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption. A national survey

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