



2021

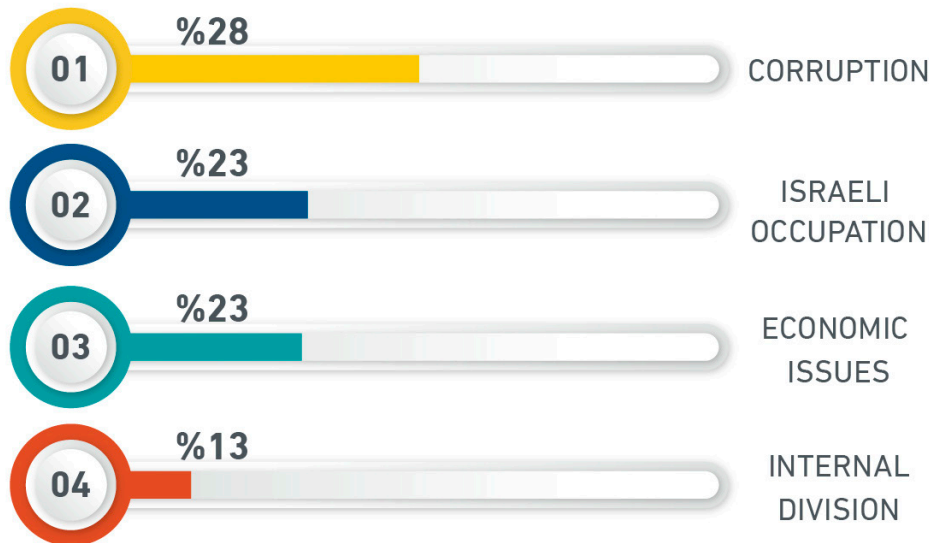
Public Opinion Poll:

The State of corruption and
Anti-Corruption in Palestine in 2021

Executive summary

The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity- AMAN conducted a public opinion poll in the West Bank, (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The poll was carried out during the period between the 6th -13th of October 2021¹ by Qiyas Center of Poll & Measuring Opinion (Qiyas Center). The purpose of this poll is to monitor the change in citizens' perceptions and level of awareness of the reality of corruption.

Results of the poll revealed four main issues that citizens believe must be given priority to be solved, these are: the prevalence of corruption, ending the Israeli occupation, the economic issues and the internal political division with 28%, 23%, 23% and 13% respectively.



28% of respondents indicated that the increase in the widespread of corruption poses the most important challenge to be solved. This percentage was higher among residents of villages, small towns and refugee camps. Similarly, the percentage was higher among government and private sector employees.

The abovementioned is accompanied by poor transparency in the management of many public issues arising from the CORONA pandemic and the declaration of a state of emergency by the Palestinian Authority (PA). This is exemplified by the distribution of the CORONA vaccine at some stages, as well as through the mechanisms by which the financial assistance was distributed to those affected. Other examples include measures taken in addressing the killing of the activist Nizar Banat where public freedoms, including freedom of expression and the right to assembly were violated. All of which led to weaken citizens' confidence in the system.

¹ The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability- AMAN signed a contract with Qiyas Center for Surveys and Measuring Opinion Polls in its capacity as an expert institution specializing in survey research, to conduct this poll according to the statistical criteria adopted in public opinion polls.

Clear discrepancies arose in the positions, opinions and perceptions of citizens in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WB&GS) on some issues. According to the results of the poll, a stereotypical critical attitude towards the PA was evident by Hamas affiliates in, both, the WB&GS with more severity expressed by the Hamas WB group. However, their positions on the authority in the GS (the Hamas authority) were less severe. This was reflected clearly in the results of various areas such as: promotions, appointments, concentration of corruption and on groups that are most corrupt. This reflected the impact of factional intolerance in the assessment of issues. On the other hand, these views appear to be less acute among those supporting the faction in power in WB, where 36% of respondents pointed to the problem of the widespread corruption as a challenge which must be given priority to be solved, compared to 15% in the GS. However, concerning the consequences and effects of the internal division, the results showed a higher degree of sensitivity among citizens in the GS.

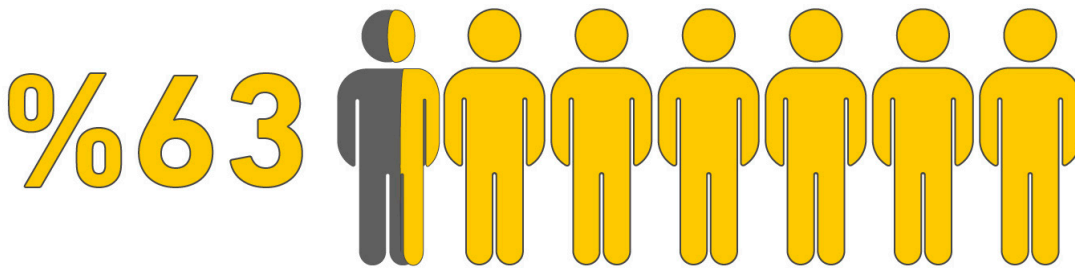


Two thirds of citizens in the WB are not convinced of the effectiveness and adequacy of the agencies in charge of anti-corruption in the WB. In addition, citizens question the independence of these institutions and believe that influential political parties interfere in their affairs. According to respondents of this poll, the most intrusive parties in this regard were as follows: 1. the Council of Ministers and ministers; 2. the office of the President; 3. the security agencies; 4. Governors; 5. Political leaders.

Similarly, citizens of the GS are also not satisfied of the anti-corruption efforts and adequacies of the agencies designated for the purpose. They too hold doubts of the independence of these institutions and believe that they are affected by parties of the ruling authority there mostly: the security forces, factions' leaders, the public prosecutor and members of parliament.

The results reveal that there is consensus on the low level of independence and effectiveness of parties in charge of follow-up of corruption cases, namely: the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB), in the WB; the Anti-Corruption Prosecution and Money Crimes and the SAACB in the GS. And, it is also agreed that these bodies are subject to interference and meddling in their work by various influential parties such as: the office of the President, the security institution and political parties' leaders, in the WB, and Hamas in particular in the GS, all of which may lead to weakening the citizens' confidence of those responsible for pursuing corruption cases, both, in the WB&GS.

The majority of citizens (63%) still believe that the level of corruption in the PA institutions not only it continues to be high but has increased in 2021.

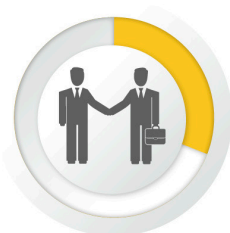


Pessimism over shadows expectations of citizens concerning the reality and anti-corruption efforts for next year, especially in the WB. In that regard, 59% of respondents of this poll believe that corruption will increase from the 55% revealed in last year's results. The percentage of this view is increased to 78% in the WB compared to 31% in the GS.

The majority of respondents in the WB believe that corruption is concentrated within the highest level of public sector employees, and in particular, those holding positions in institutions of the executive authority (ministries, the president office and the security agencies). In the meantime, citizens in the GS see that opportunities for corruption are mostly concentrated in NGOs and the private sector where aid is distributed. The percentage of citizens who believe that corruption is more prevalent in government institutions is higher among residents of villages and towns, followed by those living in refugee camps and then cities. The percentage is also higher among people above the age of 40. Similarly, employees in the private sector show a higher percentage compared to government and civil sector employees. Also a higher percentage is noted among those with higher incomes compared to those with a lower incomes.

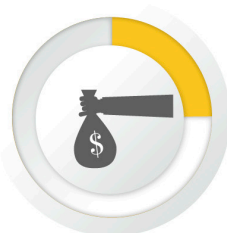
Service provision ministries such as: Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Ministry of Education (MoE) in addition to the Crossings and Borders Authority are considered the most vulnerable institutions to the spread of corruption.

Corruption crimes: wasta, nepotism, misappropriation of public funds, abuse of power, bribery, money-laundering and abuse of influence continue to be the most prevalent forms of corruption. That said, 25% of respondents find wasta and nepotism is the most widely spread crime, followed by misappropriation of public funds with 23%. In third place with 15% came abuse of power, and abuse of trust 11%, followed by bribery offences in exchange for public service, and money laundering 10% each.



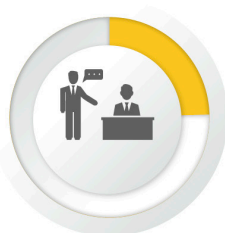
%25

Wasta and Nepotism



%23

Misappropriation
of public funds



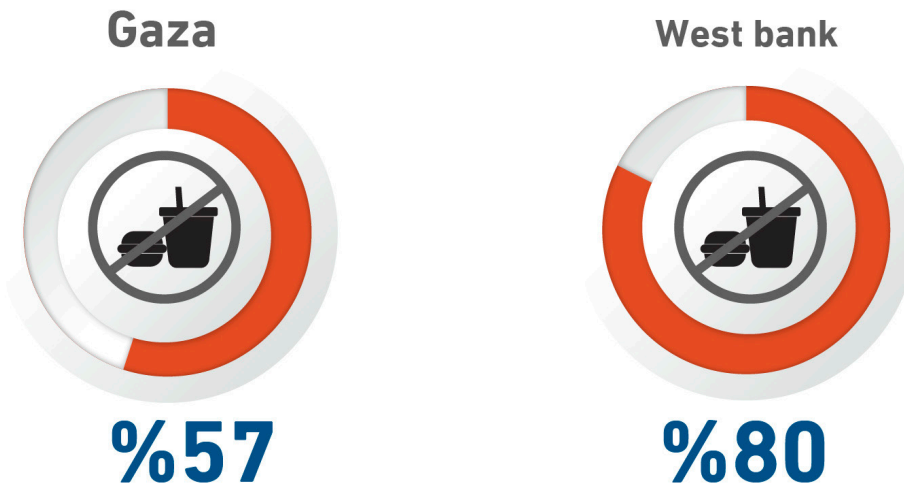
%15

Abuse of power



%11

Bribery
and money laundering



A rise was noted in citizens believing that food and medicine corruption crimes increased in 2021, as 70% of respondents attested to that (80% in the WB VS. 57% in the GS), marking a significant increase in 2021 when compared to the 59% result in 2020. Reasons for the rise include:

- Failure to hold perpetrators of these crimes accountable.
- Using wasta nepotism and favoritism as means to cover up for other corruption crimes.
- The Penal Law does not provide deterrent penalties.
- Lack of citizens' awareness of these crimes.

Citizens continue to believe that the weak commitment to the rule of law, lack of seriousness in holding senior corrupt officials accountable, and some of them enjoying immunity, weakness of civil society organizations (CSO) and the Israeli occupation. all contributed to the spread of corruption in Palestine. Citizens also believe that some services do not operate with high integrity, especially in the areas of appointments to senior positions, distribution of humanitarian assistance and health services.

Moreover, wasta remains to be seen by citizens as means to access public services, especially in the GS. Respondents who actually practiced wasta attributed their behavior to the following causes:

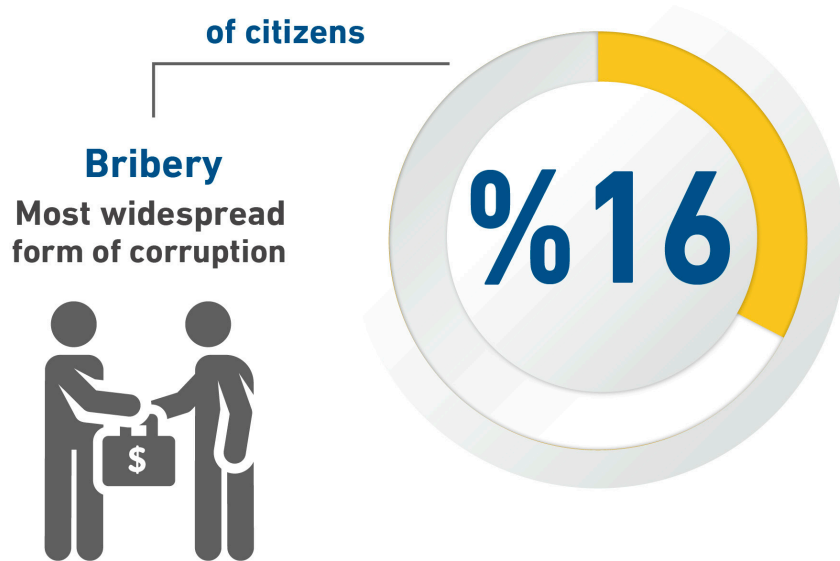
- Fear of being unable to receive the service.
- Bypass bureaucracy (shortcutting procedures).
- Fear of granting their share to others who are undeserving of it, due to corruption.
- Lack of confidence in the integrity of officials.

Reasons for resorting to wasta varied and were numerous as seen by the citizen. When justifying as to what is the most important reason for resorting to it. The results showed that 25% (30% WB, 18% GS) of respondents said it was to cut time it takes for bureaucratic procedures. While 20% (22% WB, 18%GS) of them said it was due to "fear of granting it

to an underserving person due to corruption”; 17% (18% WB, 16% GS) said that the most important reason was the lack of confidence in the integrity of service providers.

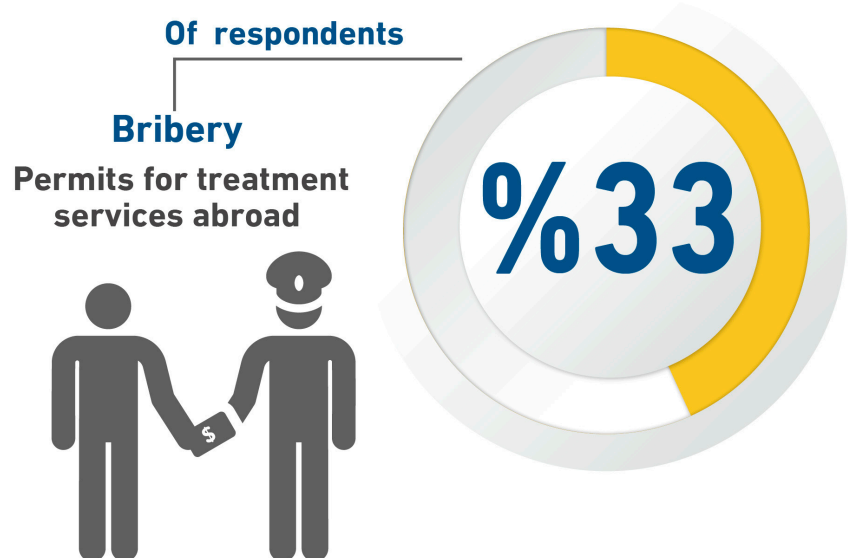
Bribery marks a rise in 2021

On the one hand, the results showed a decrease in the percentage of respondents who pointed out that bribery was the most widespread form of corruption when compared to the results of 2018 and 2017 (24%, 26% consecutively) by approximately 8 points and 10 points respectively, where 16% of citizens pointed out that it is the most widespread form of corruption. On the other hand, it increased slightly in 2021 compared to the previous two years (13% for 2020, 14% for 2019).



10% of respondents considered bribery as the most widespread corruption crime, while 19% thought that it rates second, and another 19% believed that it comes third in the rating of the most widespread corruption crimes in Palestine.

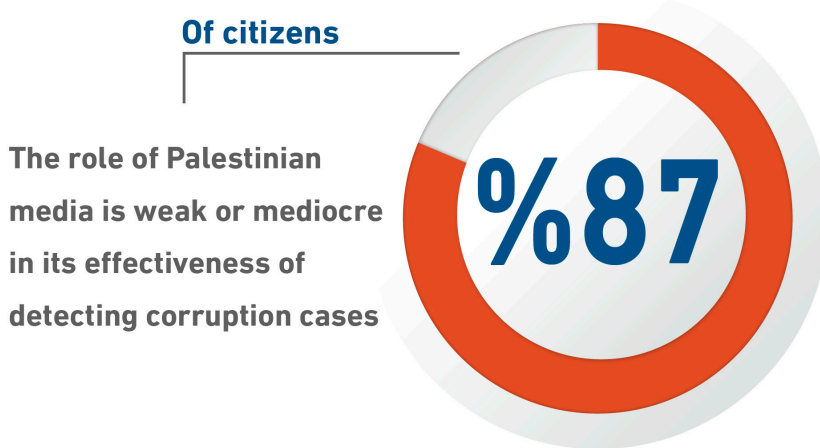
Law income of junior staff, life's demands for basic needs, limited access to public services and lack of accountability of corrupt officials all played a role in encouraging some public service employees to seek bribes. For the second year in a row, according to the results of the survey, it became clear that 17% of citizens had paid a bribe or gave gifts to a public servant in exchange for a



public service. It is worth noting that the survey question specified giving bribes and gifts in exchange for the service, which in turn may have increased the percentage of those who answered yes.

According to respondents of this survey, official services providing permits for treatment abroad are more vulnerable to the spread of bribery, especially in the GS. In this regard, 33% felt that this was the case showing a significantly higher percentage in the GS (37 percent) than in the WB (30 percent).

87% of citizens find that the role of Palestinian media is weak or mediocre in its effectiveness of detecting corruption cases in 2021. While 69% of them see that social media was the most effective mean in highlighting and uncovering corruption cases that occurred in 2021.



Three fourths of respondents believe that there is corruption in the judiciary. In addition, the proportion of those who believe that there is corruption in the courts and in the public prosecutors office increased by 7 points in 2021 compared to 2020 (76% VS.69%).



Although the system of protecting whistleblowers has been established, the majority of citizens still refrain from reporting corruption. The reasons are: fear of reprisals, lack of adequate protection for whistleblowers and witnesses, lack of adequate awareness of the meaning and forms of corruption among citizens, their belief in the futility of reporting corruption since no action will be taken against the corrupt, according to them.

A vast majority of citizens consider anti-corruption efforts insufficient.



The majority of citizens (84%) believe that anti-corruption efforts are insufficient, up 4 points from 2020, which was (80%). This percentage is higher among the population of villages and towns and among camp residents than in cities (77%). Also, the percentage of private sector employees is higher than in both the civil and government sectors. The citizens believe that the insufficiency of anti-corruption efforts is due to:

1. Weak political will in holding corrupt persons/officials accountable.
2. Penalties for perpetrators of corruption are un-detering.
3. Lack of role models in officials' commitment to the values of integrity, and in protecting public resources and interest.
4. Poor transparency in the management of state institutions.

