

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL REPORT: ONE OUT OF THREE HONDURANS PAID A BRIBE FOR A PUBLIC SERVICE

- *The measurement evaluated the payment of bribes in schools, hospitals, during the acquisition of IDs, and with the police and courts*
- *In Honduras, the highest level of bribery was reported in the courts*

Tegucigalpa, October 9th, 2017. Twenty-nine percent of Latin Americans who used six important public services (schools, hospitals, acquisition of IDs, public services, police, and courts) in the past 12 months paid some bribe, according to the report “People and Corruption: Latin America and the Caribbean,” Transparency International (TI) reported this Monday.

That percentage is equivalent to approximately 90 million people in the 20 countries studied, including Honduras, where approximately 33% of those consulted said that they had paid a bribe in the previous year.

This report is part of a series of the Global Corruption Barometer, for which over 22,000 people were surveyed between May and November of 2016.

In Latin America, the highest indexes of bribery were reported when accessing public health services. More than one in five people (20%) who accessed medical attention in the 12 months prior – including urgent and life-saving treatments – paid a bribe to obtain the required treatment.

Public education was also affected by bribes: one out of every five people who were in contact with public schools paid a bribe in access education services (18%).

In Honduras, the highest percentage of bribes were registered in the judicial sector. Fifty-six percent of those surveyed paid a bribe in courts, while between 21-30% paid a bribe in schools, hospitals, or to obtain an ID, and 11-20% for public services or to the police.

“In this country, we have a great challenge in the judiciary,” said Carlos Hernández, executive secretary of the Association for a More Just Society (AJS), “The study shows that this institution is where most bribes are being given, which is why we are accompanying the efforts of the judiciary to achieve independence and improve the application of justice for all under equal conditions.”

The report shows that men and women pay bribes in roughly equal proportions. Sixty-nine percent of those paying bribes were 35 years old or older.

In addition, 25% of the people in the region who are not living in poverty had paid a bribe to access basic services, while 30% of people living in poverty had paid a bribe. While these percentages are similar, the payment of bribes represents a disproportionate strain on the limited resources of the poor, says TI.

“Latin Americans are being defrauded by their governments, their political classes, and the leaders of the private sector,” said José Ugaz, president of Transparency International.

“The “Carwash” case in Brazil, which caused a tremendous impact in the region, demonstrates that corruption is highly extended. Bribery represents a way for a few to enrich themselves and a grand obstacle to access important public services, in particular, for the most vulnerable sectors of our society,” said Ugaz.

Perception of Corruption

More than six out of ten people who live in Latin America and the Caribbean believe that the level of corruption increased in the past year (62%), while one out of ten thinks that it decreased (10%), and another quarter saw no change (25%).

For 53% of Hondurans surveyed, corruption increased, though 55% recognized that the government has carried out some efforts to combat it.

Across Latin America, the institution that is perceived to be the most corrupt is the police, followed by elected officials and local governments.

As far as barriers to reporting corruption, 66% of Hondurans affirmed that it is socially acceptable to make a report; nonetheless, in practice, very few people actually report acts of corruption when they observe them.

In the region, of the citizens who indicated that they had paid bribes, fewer than one out of ten said that they had effectively reported the act before authorities (9%), and of those who reported the act, 28% reported having suffered some form of reprisal.

In the report, TI calls on governments to strengthen their judicial systems, combat corruption in the police, and support those citizens who are ready to report corruption through the creation of accessible and anonymous channels.

A significant majority of those surveyed said that they had hope in the positive role that citizens can manage to combat bribery. Those surveyed in Brazil, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Nicaragua, and Honduras were much more likely to agree with the statement that citizens can carry out an important role in the fight against corruption (76-83% agreed).

In Honduras, seven out of ten agree that ordinary people can make a difference.

“It’s necessary that the government take greater measures to eradicate corruption at every level, above all in law enforcement agencies, which should have a key role in the fight against impunity,” said José Ugaz, “They must strengthen mechanisms for the investigation and prosecution of the corrupt and provide greater protections to those who denounce acts of corruption.”

Transparency International’s full report on corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean can be accessed here: <https://www.transparency.org/view/publication/7983>