



South African Citizens'  
**Bribery Survey**  
**2017**





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# at a glance

A survey of bribery as experienced and perceived by ordinary South African citizens

2015

2016

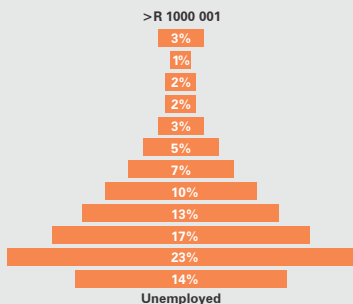
2017

Third year we've done the survey

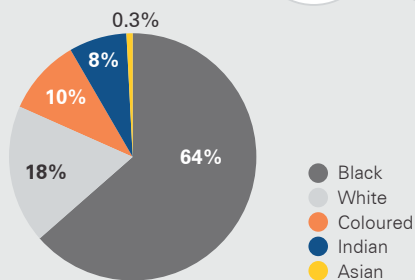
**4 962**  
participants

## A GOOD DISTRIBUTION OF...

### Annual household income



### Race



mostly urban

five provinces



**37%**

Know someone who was asked for a bribe in the last year

Up  
**4%**  
from 2016



**24%**

Know someone who paid a bribe in the last year

Up  
**4%**  
from 2016

## AVERAGE bribe amount



### TENDERS

**R 82 282**

### ALL BRIBES

**R 1 550**

### TRAFFIC

**R 205**

## top 5 reasons for bribing

- 1 Avoiding traffic offences **39%**
- 2 Getting drivers' licences **18%**
- 3 Getting jobs **14%**
- 4 Public services **8%**
- 5 Police/criminal charges **7%**

Up from  
**4%**  
last year

**NEW ENTRY**



35%

Have said "NO" to paying a bribe at some point

Up 8% from 2016

Why people say "NO" to bribes

- 1 Against moral or religious principles (47%)
- 2 Against the law (18%)
- 3 Could not afford it or no cash (12%)



51%

Believe it is possible to get through life in SA without paying a bribe

Up 2% from 2016

POOR

household income <R200 000 p.a.



45% agree

"It is IMPOSSIBLE to get through everyday life WITHOUT

A BRIBE"

29% agree



household income >R800 000 p.a.

RICH

## POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO FIGHTING CORRUPTION

If the political party you supported was enabling bribery and corruption, *would you change your vote?*

Nope, we're staying.



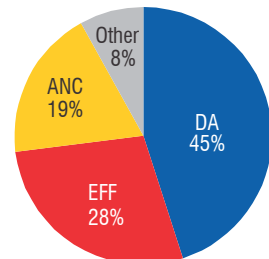
29%

71%



Bye - we're out of here!

Which political party is most committed to fighting corruption?



# A Introduction

We started conducting the Citizens' Bribery Survey in 2015 with the aim of better understanding the bribery challenges that ordinary South Africans face on a daily basis, their beliefs about bribery, and the socio-economic factors that influence bribery. This is the third consecutive year that we have conducted the survey.

Every year, we keep our core indicators the same, but add some new questions as well. Over the years, during the course of our ethics training sessions, we have observed a strong narrative regarding the influence that leaders have on the ethical environment, and specifically the fact that people look to leaders to role model desirable behaviour. In the context of bribery and corruption, we therefore wanted to find out whether people truly care about the commitment that leaders show to combating corruption, and also which leaders they see as showing the strongest commitment.

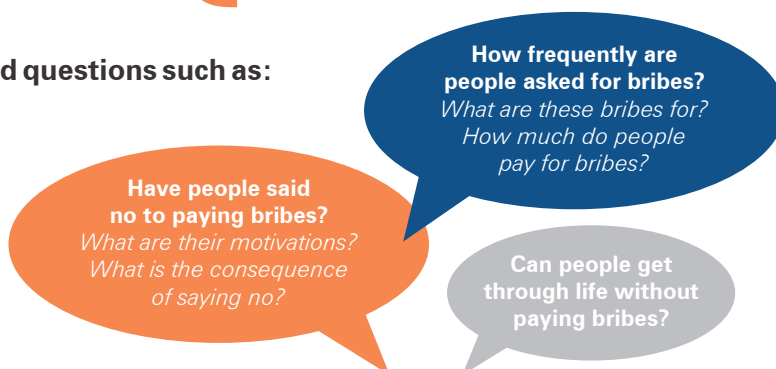
## 1. What is the survey about?

The survey had two distinct sections. **In the first section**, we asked people about their experiences and perceptions of **bribery**.

There are a number of different forms of corruption, but we decided to focus specifically on bribery.

**Bribery is when** { one person gives another person something of value (usually money) for that person to abuse the powers with which they have been entrusted.

The survey asked questions such as:



The **second section** related to **leadership and corruption**. Here, we asked questions such as:

- *How committed are certain leadership groups to combating corruption?*
- *Which political party is most committed to combating corruption?*
- *Would a political party's stance on corruption impact your vote?*

# B Methodology

## 1. How did we conduct the survey?

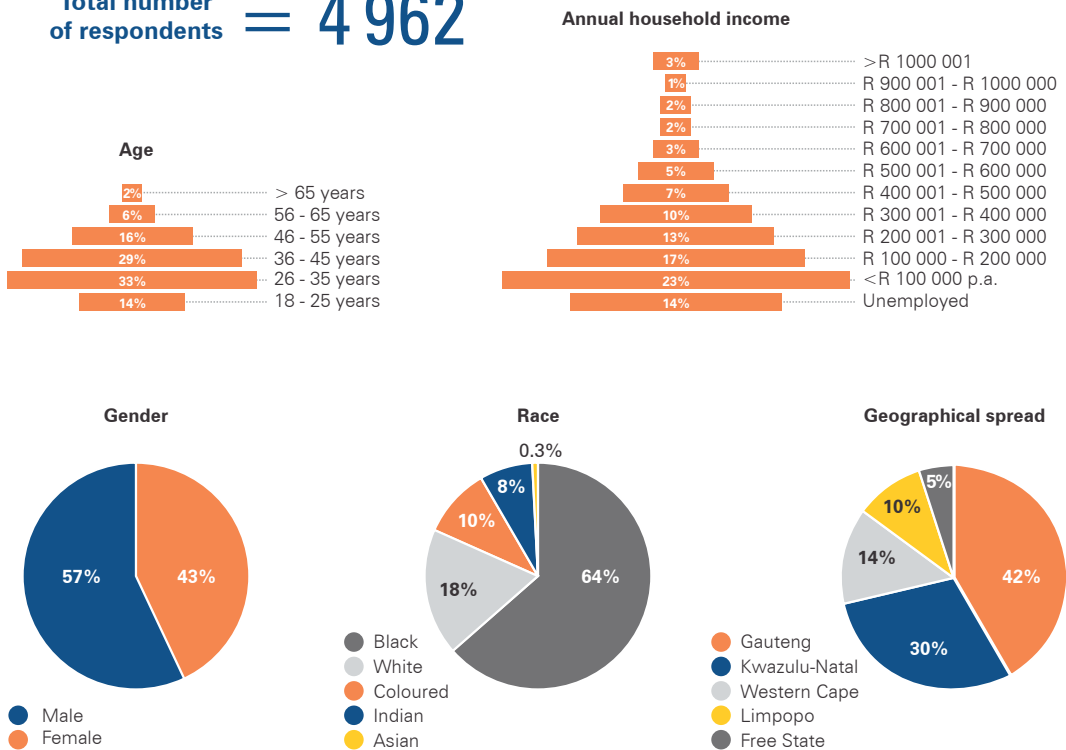
The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews across South Africa. The sample represented people from five of South Africa's nine provinces, mostly in major urban centres around the country. The areas targeted cater to people from a wide socio-economic range, as can be seen from the demographic data below.

We made use of trained field researchers to conduct the survey. They were equipped with electronic tablets onto which the survey was loaded in digital format. The field researchers approached shoppers who were asked to participate in a five-minute confidential survey, and responses were captured digitally directly onto the tablets.

The survey questionnaire was developed in the second quarter of 2017, and the field research was conducted over three weekends from 23 September to 8 October 2017. This timing was consistent with that of our 2015 and 2016 surveys.

## 2. Who participated? (Demographic breakdown)

Total number of respondents = 4 962

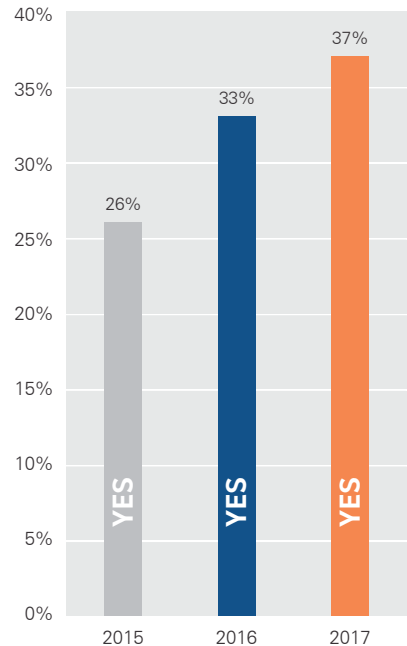


# C Results - Bribery

## 1. Experiences of bribery

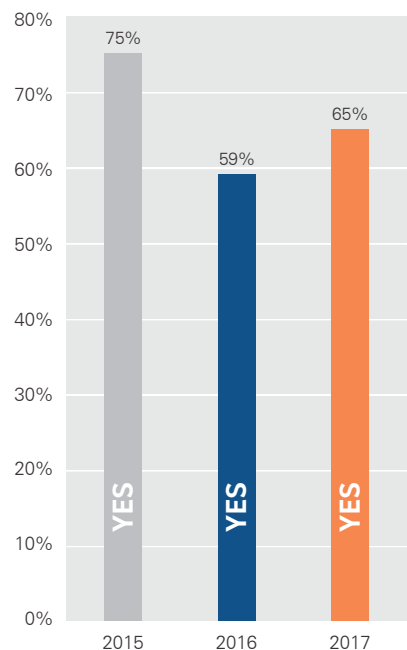
### Q “Do you know someone who was asked to pay a bribe in the last year?”

- We did not ask whether participants themselves were asked to pay a bribe, working on the assumption that people may be reluctant to give answers that reflect negatively on themselves. By asking them whether they know someone else who was asked to pay a bribe, we tried to avoid this social desirability response bias.
- Almost 2 in 5 people (37%) reported that they knew someone who had been asked to pay a bribe in the last year.
- There seems to be an incremental upward trend over the three years: about 11% more people reported that they knew someone who was asked for a bribe than in the 2015 survey.



### Q “Did they end up paying the bribe?”

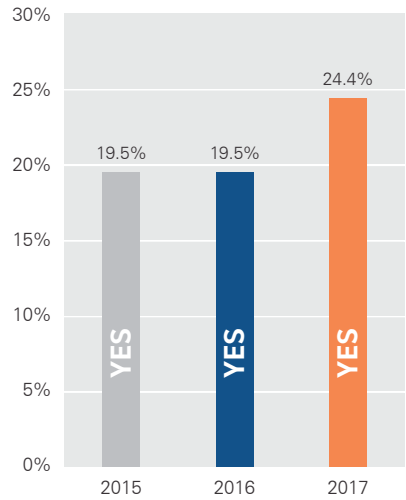
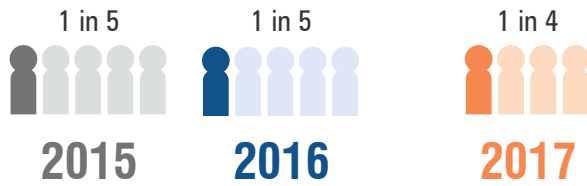
- Of the 37% of participants who said they knew someone who had been asked to pay a bribe, 65% said that the bribe was paid.
- This means that the majority of people who were approached for a bribe ended up paying it, showing a low resilience to refuse bribe requests.
- This figure is up 6% from last year, but still well below 2015, when three quarters of people said the bribe was paid.





## How many people know someone who paid a bribe in the last year?

- In 2015 and 2016, the figure remained constant at about 1 in 5 participants. Although fewer people were asked to pay a bribe in 2015, more of them paid.
- In 2017, a larger proportion (almost 1 in 4 people) know someone who paid a bribe.



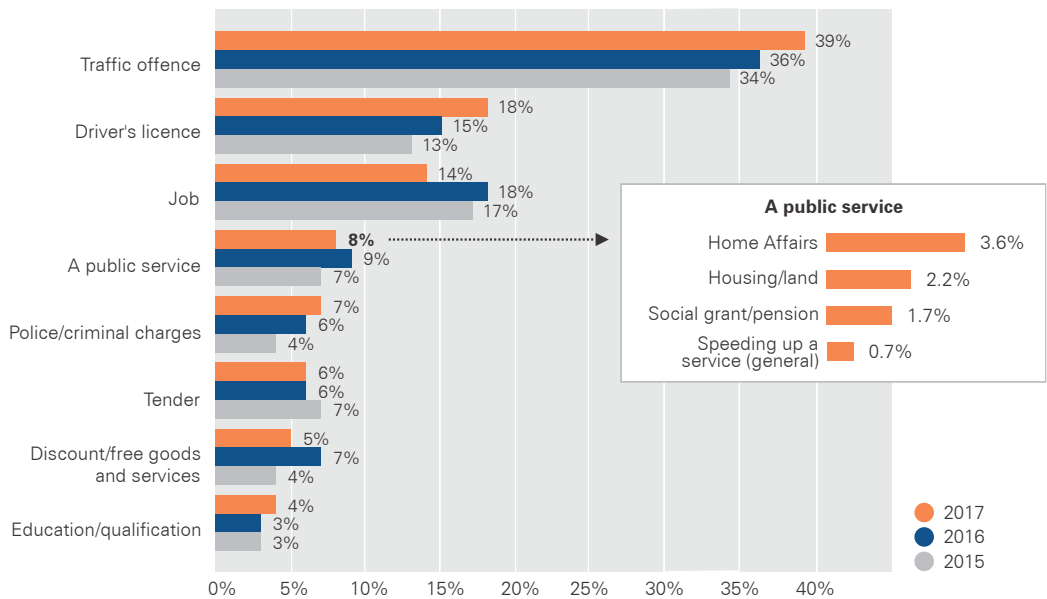
### “What was the bribe for?”

This question was posed to all participants who indicated that they knew someone who had been asked to pay a bribe (37% of the sample). We utilised the main categories that emerged from the previous two surveys, but also allowed people to indicate other examples.

### Top five reasons for bribing

	2015	2016	2017	
1	Traffic offence	Traffic offence	Traffic offence	↔
2	Job	Job	Driver's licence	↑
3	Driver's licence	Driver's licence	Job	↓
4	A public service	A public service	A public service	↔
5	Discount/free goods and services	Discount/free goods and services	Police/criminal charges	← NEW ENTRY

## Comparison with 2015 and 2016 data



- By far the most bribes (39%) related to avoiding a fine for a traffic offence. This is higher than the figure recorded for both the previous years.
- The next highest incidence was of bribe requests for a driver's licence (18%), moving it up to second place from third in the previous years.
- This means the first two most prominent bribery types are both road related, which has obvious implications for road safety. Together, they make up 57% of bribes, up from 51% last year.
- Bribes for jobs makes up a significant 14% of all bribes asked in South Africa in the last year based on those polled. It has, however, moved down to third place from second position last year.
- This year, we have combined the various types of bribes for public services into one category, which moves it into fourth place, at 8% of all bribes.
- For the first time, bribes for police matters and criminal charges moved into the top five, in fifth place. It is disturbing that this type of bribe, which impacts so significantly on the integrity of the criminal justice system, is in the top five.

• Bribes for tenders contributed 6% of all bribes. It should be kept in mind that this is a general citizens' survey, and the picture may have been very different had we only interviewed business people.

- Bribes for discounts/free goods and services moved out of the top five from fourth place last year, but is still at a significant 5% of all bribes mentioned. The private sector is, therefore, clearly also being detrimentally impacted.

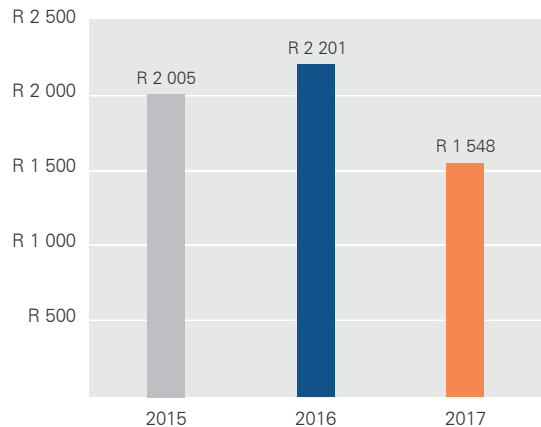


## “Do you know the value of the bribe? How much was it?”

Participants who indicated that they knew someone who had been asked for a bribe were also asked about the bribe value. This was an open-ended question where participants could give actual Rand amounts.

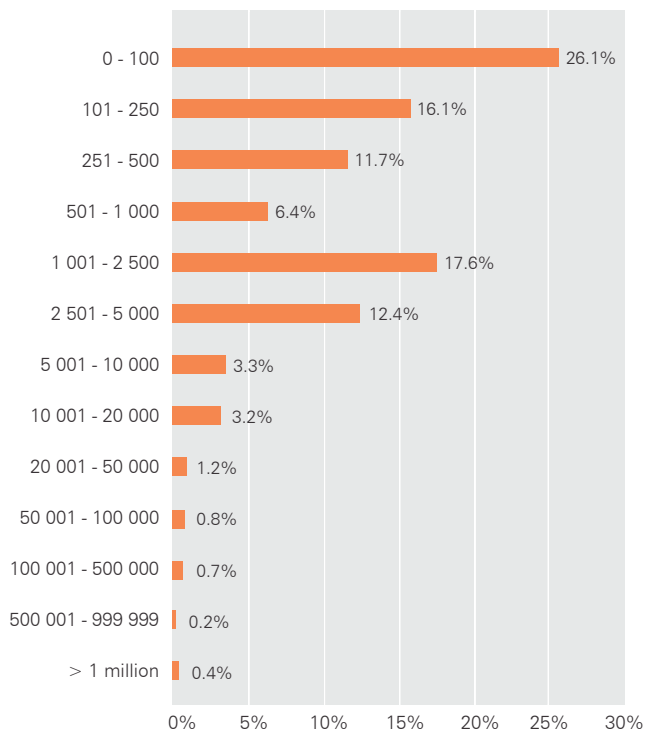
### Average bribe amount

- The average bribe amount mentioned was R1 548. This is quite a bit lower than the R2 201 average of last year, and even below the R2 005 of 2015. This could be reflective of the high incidence of traffic bribes, which, as indicated in the Bribe value per type graph, has the lowest bribe value.
- To calculate the average, we excluded the top and bottom 5% in order to remove outliers. This is the same methodology that was applied in 2015 and 2016.

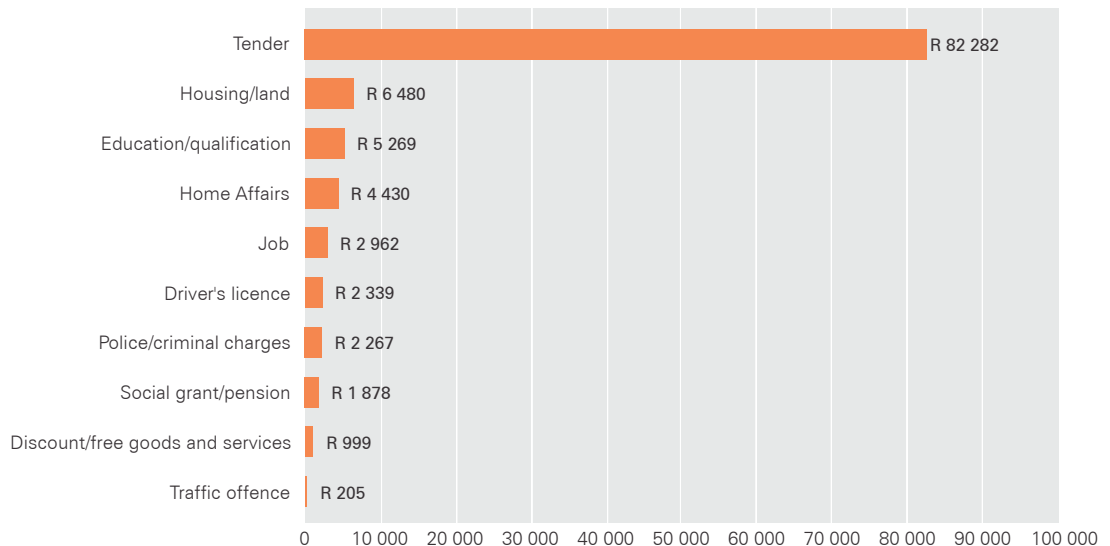


### Distribution of bribe value

- More than a quarter of bribes reported (26.1%) were below R100.
- Ninety percent (90%) of bribes were reported to be below R5 000, indicating that very high bribe values were rare. This should, however, be viewed in the context that the survey is conducted in relation to the everyday life experiences of private citizens and this amount could be considerably higher if it was in conducted in relation to organisations.



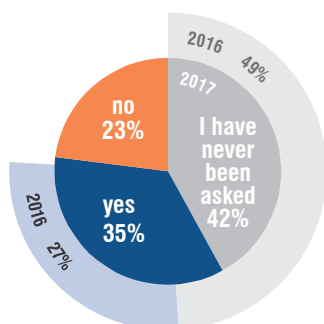
## Bribe value per type



- Although fewer instances of tender-related bribes were mentioned, the average bribe value for tenders – R 82 282 – was significantly higher than the amount paid for other bribe types.
- The cheapest bribe type was for traffic offences, at an average of R 205. This might also explain why there are so many instances of this kind of bribe occurring.
- All other bribe types have averages ranging from R 999 to R 6 480. While not as high as bribes for tenders, these are not insignificant amounts for everyday citizens.
- The data indicated that bribes for jobs may sometimes have recurring amounts, with people expected to pay a monthly portion of the salary that they receive.

## 2. Understanding those who say “No”

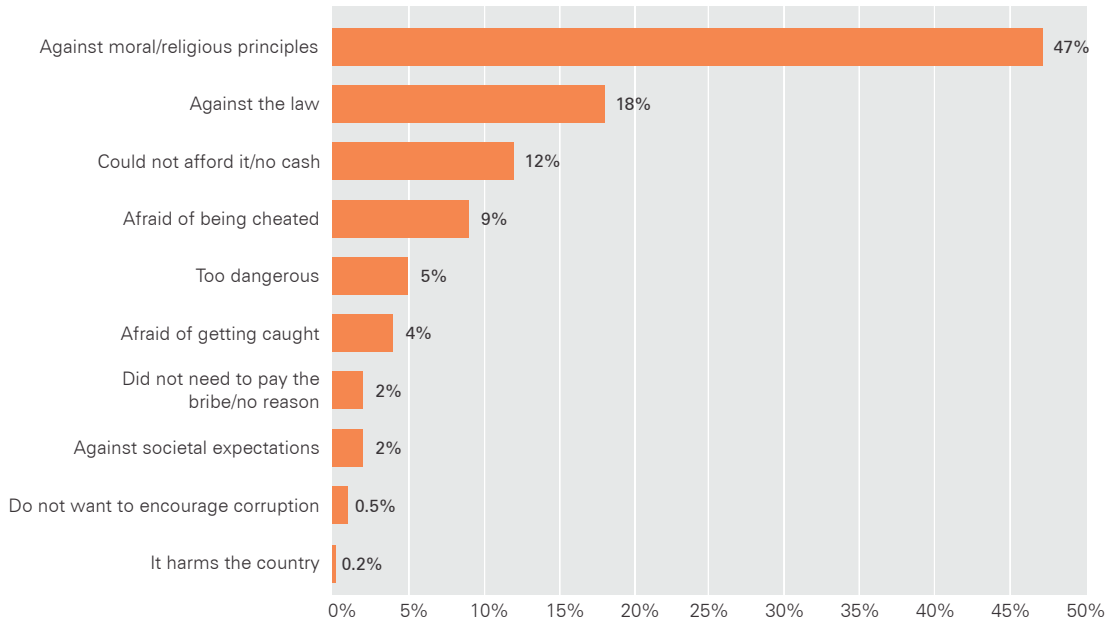
### Q “Have you ever said no to paying a bribe?”



- All participants were asked this question.
- It is interesting to note that 42% indicated that they had never been asked to pay a bribe. In the 2016 sample, this was even higher, at 49%.
- Thirty-five percent (35%) of participants indicated that they had at some point said no to paying a bribe. This equates to 60% of those who had been asked to pay a bribe.
- Twenty-three percent (23%) of participants had never declined paying a bribe. This equates to 40% of those who had been asked to pay a bribe.



## “Why did you choose not to pay the bribe? What were your reasons?”



- This question was asked of all participants who indicated that they had declined to pay a bribe in the past – 35% of the total sample.

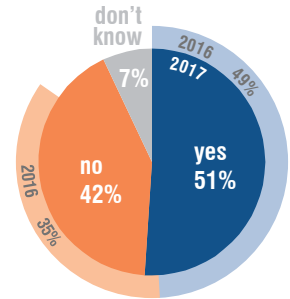
• **By far the largest group of people (47%) refused to pay a bribe because of moral or religious reasons. This is very significant as it indicates that focusing on personal morality may be one effective way of addressing corruption.**

- Eighteen percent (18%) of participants declined to pay because it is against the law. Such respect for the law is positive, but it indicates more of an external motivation as opposed to the internal moral motivation of the main group.
- Twelve percent (12%) did not pay the bribe because they did not have the money to do so. It can be assumed that the majority of this group would have paid the bribe if they had had the money.
- Only 4% of people cited fear of being caught as their main motivation for not paying the bribe. This is significant, since impunity and lack of accountability are often mentioned as key reasons why corruption thrives.

### 3. Getting through life without bribing

#### Q “Is it possible to get through everyday life in South Africa without paying a bribe?”

- About half of participants (51%) indicated that it *is* possible to get through everyday life in South Africa without paying a bribe.
- While this is positive, it is quite disturbing that the other half either believe it is not possible (42%) or they have their doubts (7%).
- It is also of concern that the percentage of people who feel that they cannot get through life without paying a bribe is on the increase.

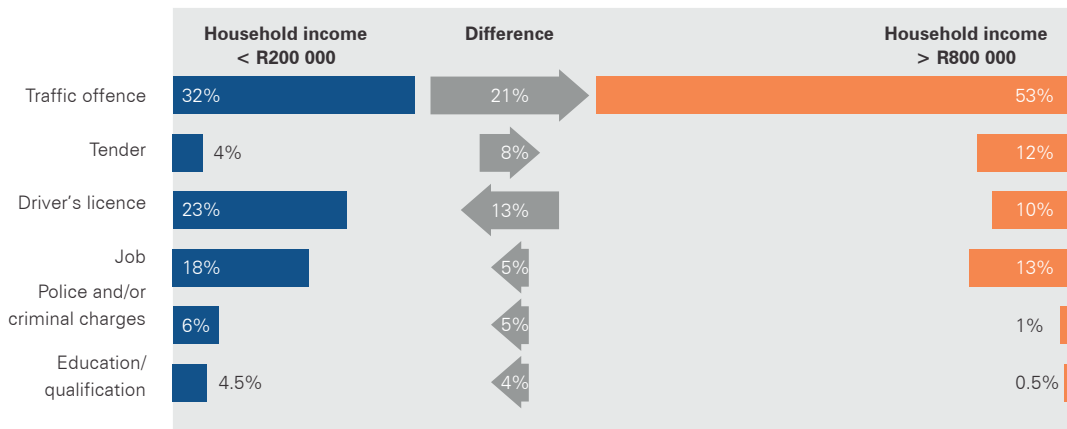


### 4. How rich and poor experience bribery

It is interesting to see how the bribery story unfolds for different income groups by comparing some of the information gathered from the survey.

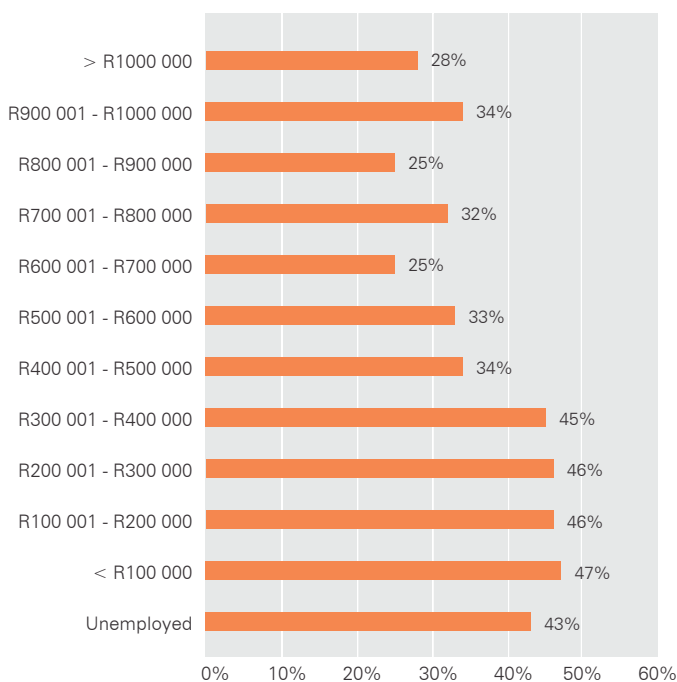
#### Q “What was the bribery for?”

The following table shows how the experience of bribery differs between two extreme income groups – those with a household income of below R200 000 and those earning more than R800 000 per year. The percentage indicated shows what proportion the bribe type makes up of all bribes mentioned by the income group. In other words, bribes for traffic offences make up 53% of all bribes mentioned by the high-income group, but amounts to only 32% for the low-income group.



- The greatest area of difference between the income groups related to bribery for traffic offences. Those in the higher-income group experienced 21% more of this type of bribery when compared with the low-income group. This might be because individuals in the high-income group are more likely to own cars.
- Those in the low-income group did, however, pay a higher proportion of bribes (13% more) to obtain a driver's licence.
- The low-income group paid a larger proportion for jobs, while those with a higher income paid a larger proportion for tenders. Both of these relate to a means of getting income.

**Q** “Is it possible to get through everyday life in South Africa without paying a bribe?” **No, it is not possible**



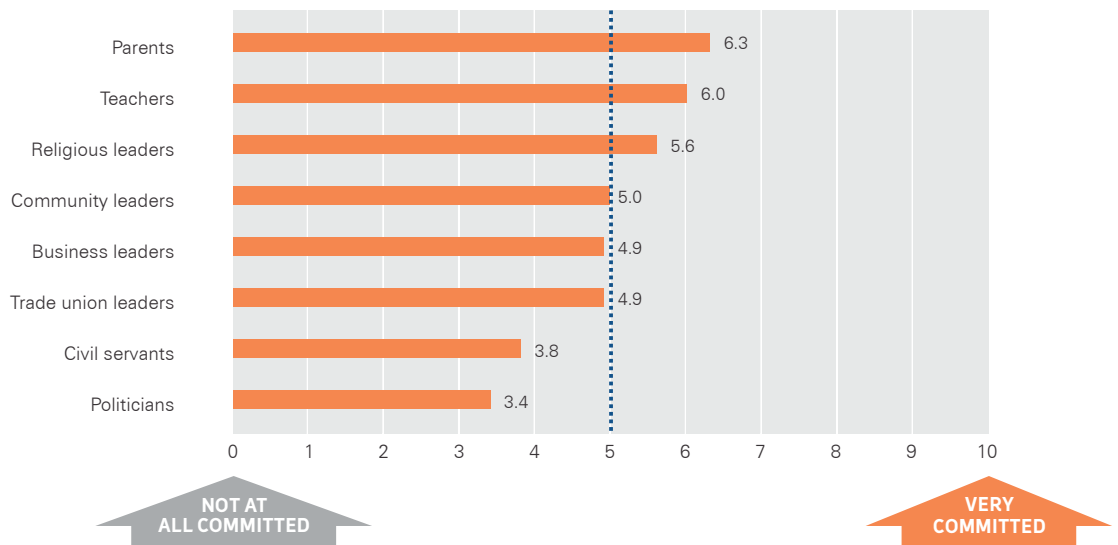
- It is clear from the accompanying graph that lower-income groups find it much more difficult to get through everyday life without paying bribes.
- Those with a household income of below R 400 000 seemed to find it significantly more difficult. On average, 45% of them said it was not possible to get through everyday life in South Africa without paying a bribe.
- In contrast, only 30% of those with a household income of more than R 400 000 believed it was not possible to get through everyday life without paying a bribe.

## D Results - Leadership and corruption

This section is new to the 2017 survey. Over the past year, there has been a great deal of coverage in the media about leaders involved in corruption, and questions are being asked about leaders taking a stand against corruption. We wanted to get a sense of how people feel about these issues, and whether the positions of leaders on corruption is of any importance to the general South African citizen.

### "On a scale of 1 to 10, how committed do you think the following societal leaders are to combating corruption?"

Participants were asked the above question in relation to the following eight categories of leaders:

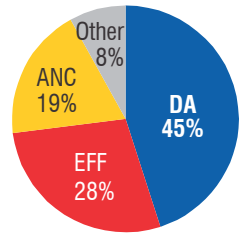


- The average for all the categories combined was 5 out of 10.
- Individuals in the top-rated categories (parents, teachers and religious leaders) are all those who would play an important role in moral development at an individual or small community level. While these categories were at least on the positive side of the scale, there does seem to be some doubt about even their commitment.
- The remainder of the leader categories would play more of a societal role. Of these, community leaders and business leaders were perceived to be the most committed, while civil servants and politicians were perceived to be the least committed.





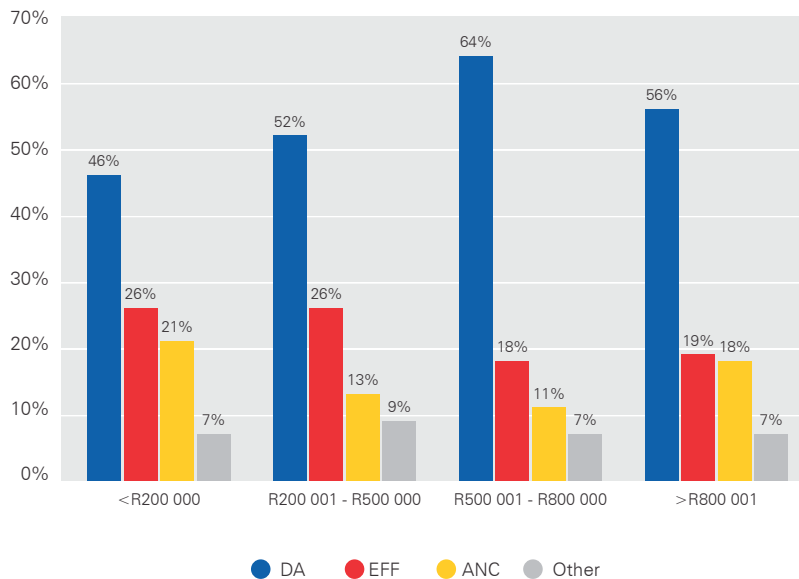
**“Please name the political party which you believe is most committed to combating corruption in South Africa”**



- This was an open-ended question – in other words, we did not provide a list of answers from which participants could select.
- The Democratic Alliance (DA) was mentioned by almost half (45%) of participants as the party most committed to combating corruption in South Africa.
- The DA was followed by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) at 28% and the African National Congress (ANC) at 19%.
- The remainder is made up of smaller parties who all received below 2% of mentions.
- The leaders identified as most committed to combating corruption were Julius Malema and Mmusi Maimane, who were mentioned by 18% and 17% of respondents respectively. Over 500 leaders were mentioned in response to this open-ended question, and no other leader received more than 10% of mentions.

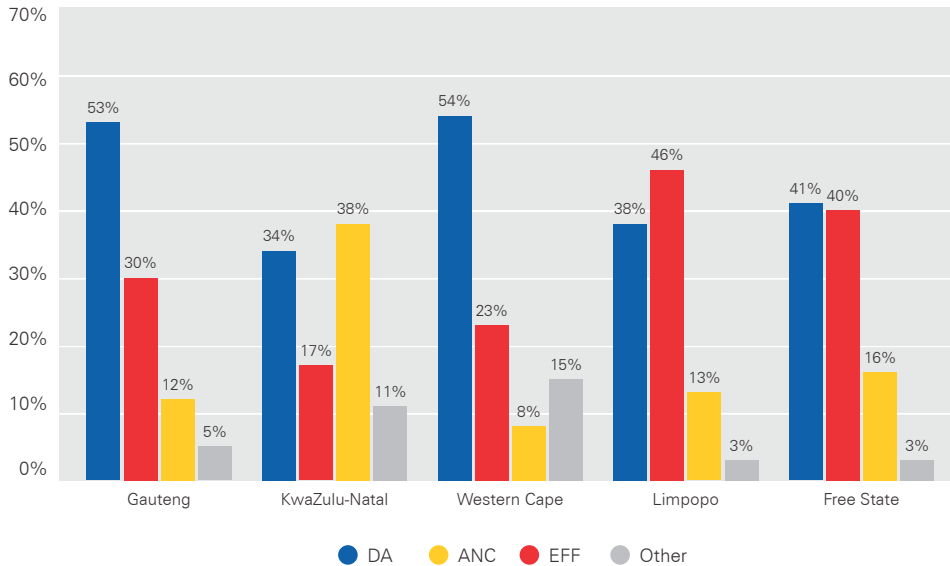
The following graphs show how various demographic profiles responded to the question.

**Most committed party per household income group**



- The DA was rated the most committed party across all household income levels, consistently followed by the EFF and then the ANC.
- The proportion of DA mentions was highest among those earning between R 500 001 and R 800 000 a year, and lowest among those in the low-income bracket (below R 200 000).
- It is significant that the incumbent ruling party ranks considerably lower across all household income levels than the main opposition parties.

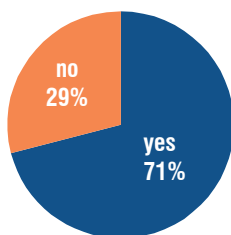
### Most committed party per province



- It is useful to see, by province, which party was perceived to be most committed to combating corruption.
- The DA was mentioned as the most committed party in Gauteng and the Western Cape.
- The ANC was noted as the most committed party in KZN, while the EFF was considered the most committed by participants from Limpopo.
- In the Free State, the DA and the EFF were mentioned as almost equally committed.



**“If the political party you supported was enabling bribery and corruption, would you change your vote?”**



- Approximately 7 out of 10 people said that they would change their vote if their political party was enabling bribery and corruption.
- It is clear that corruption is an important factor for people in deciding who they will vote for.
- This is positive as it shows that, if applied in practice, corrupt governments will likely be voted out of power.

# E Reflections

The results from the 2017 Citizens' Bribery Survey build on the findings from the previous years, and the new leadership angle tells a further story that makes for interesting reading in our current political climate.

The following are the main take-outs from the survey:

## **Bribery is getting worse**

There seems to be an upward trend in the number of bribes solicited, and the number of bribes paid. The percentage of people who know someone who was asked for a bribe increased from 26% in 2015, to 37% in 2017. This amounts to an increase of roughly 40% over the three years that the survey has been conducted. Future surveys will indicate whether this is a trend or a blip on the radar, but three years of data certainly suggest that bribery is becoming more pervasive.

## **Road deaths will continue, unless...**

The majority of bribes are still related to traffic offences and obtaining drivers' licences. This implies that many fatal accidents should be preventable if we could do something about these bribes.

## **Bribery stands in the way of justice**

Although it has always been a concern, bribes for police and criminal matters have made it into the top five bribe types this year. Together with bribes for bypassing traffic laws, this amounts to 45% of all bribes. In a country where crime rates are as high as they are in South Africa, the fact that you can pay a bribe to avoid justice is of major concern. The fact that this is becoming normalised is catastrophic.

## **The poor carry the biggest burden**

The data still suggests that the poor are much more impacted by bribery than the rich. It seems that the dividing line is drawn at a household income of R 400 000 per year. Those below that line find it significantly more difficult to avoid paying bribes. Bribes for jobs, social grants and basic services are likely to affect this segment more.

## **Corrupt political parties will not be kept in power**

People truly care about the commitment of political parties to fighting corruption, and are clear about which parties they view as being the most committed. Significantly, 71% of participants say they will change their vote if their party enables corruption.

## **All is not lost**

About half of South Africans believe that it is possible to get through everyday life without paying bribes. While it appears that we are at a tipping point, there are still a significant number of committed people who choose not to pay bribes.

## **We need a stronger moral approach – and should not just look to politicians**

The main reason why people choose not to pay bribes is because it is against their moral or religious principles. They believe it is wrong. This is clearly a strong driver of people's behaviour, so any public campaign against corruption should appeal to people's morality. There seems to be more faith in the commitment of parents, teachers, and religious leaders, who are embedded in communities and play a more important role in the moral development of individuals. These committed people should be actively brought into the fray. While the current political environment has its challenges, it highlights the impact of corruption more clearly. This creates an opportunity for people to reflect on whether they want to be part of building, or breaking an ethically responsible society.



## About The Ethics Institute

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