



# CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: PATTERNS AND TRENDS

THIRD SURVEY ON CORRUPTION  
AS EXPERIENCED BY THE POPULATION

JULY 2024





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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME

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Comments on the report are welcome and can be sent to:

Research and Trend Analysis Branch  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
PO Box 500  
1400 Vienna  
Austria  
E-mail: [unodc-research@un.org](mailto:unodc-research@un.org)

Editing: Jaya Mohan

Design and layout: Gerda Palmetshofer



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# PREFACE

The third round of the Nigeria Corruption Survey marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's ongoing efforts to combat corruption. Conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and supported by the MacArthur Foundation and the Kingdom of Denmark, this survey provides a critical tool for evidence-based policymaking, enabling a comprehensive analysis of corruption trends and the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies.

Through these surveys, Nigeria leads in establishing international best practice in the periodic and scientific assessment of anti-corruption efforts, reinforcing the importance of evidence-based strategies in the journey towards a corruption-free society.

This survey round is particularly strategic as it was conducted during a period of governmental transition, providing vital insights into the state of corruption and progress made in mitigating its impacts. Building on lessons from previous surveys, this third round incorporates technological advancements and methodological improvements, such as the use of digital enumeration maps, to ensure greater accuracy and reliability of the data collected. Notably, it includes a Gender and Social Inclusion module, which allows for the collection of granular, disaggregated data by gender and disability status, providing greater understanding of how corruption affects different segments of the population.

The implementation of this survey has been a collaborative effort, involving extensive partnerships with relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of government, as well as other law enforcement agencies within Nigeria. These partners were integral to the process from inception to execution, providing valuable contributions and support throughout. Such partnerships lend legitimacy to the process and ensure that survey findings are integrated into policy-making frameworks. Collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) has been equally crucial as they will help in the continuous engagement and advocacy of the results and its ultimate impact on citizens and communities – translating data to action!



The results from the third national corruption survey will help evaluate the effectiveness of previous anti-corruption efforts by presenting key residual gaps, and policy recommendations that will allow the government to design and implement more targeted and effective anti-corruption policies that will improve the lives of Nigerian citizens. The findings will also empower citizens to demand greater accountability and transparency from public officials and government and provide a roadmap for better policy reforms and institutional strengthening to enhance good governance in Nigeria.

As we present the findings of the third-round Nigeria Corruption Survey, we acknowledge the collective efforts and contributions of all partners and stakeholders. Their unwavering support has been vital in making this survey a success.

**Mr. Prince Adeyemi Adeniran**  
Statistician-General  
National Bureau of Statistics

**Dr. Kole A. Shettima**  
Director  
MacArthur Foundation, Nigeria

**Dr. Oliver Stolpe**  
Country Representative  
UNODC, Nigeria



## *Scope of bribery*

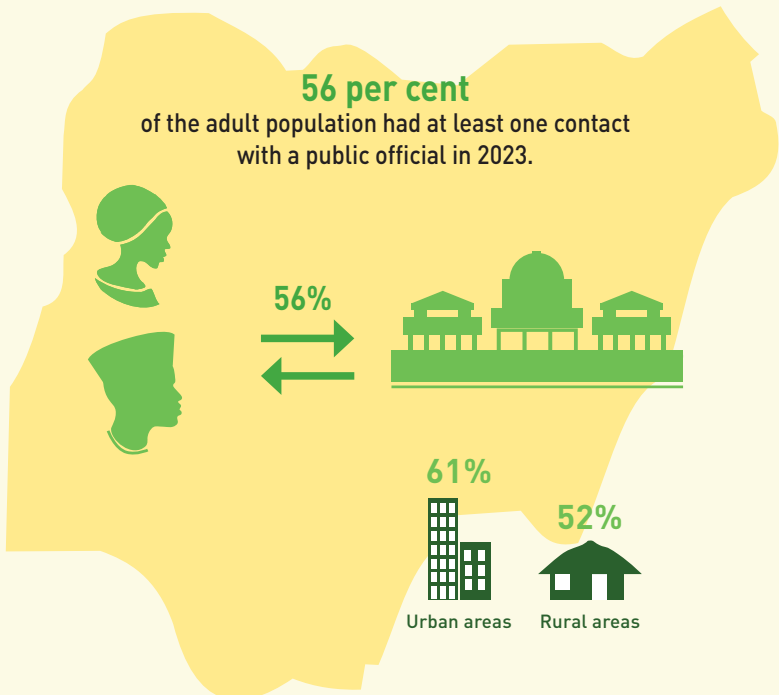




**More than half of the population has contact with public officials, a decrease compared to four years ago.**

In 2023, around 56 per cent of Nigerians had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the survey. This represents a reduction in the contact rate since 2019 (63 per cent), which was observed across most types of public officials and across zones. Contact with public officials remains higher in urban areas (61 per cent) compared with rural areas (52 per cent).

In 2023, the largest share of Nigerian citizens had contact with health care professionals and public utilities officers, at 30 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. Police officers came third, with a contact rate of 20 per cent.





The frequency of bribe-paying has remained relatively stable compared with four years ago.

In 2023, 5.1 bribes were paid on average by each bribe payer in Nigeria in the 12 months prior to the survey. This represents a modest and statistically insignificant decrease in the frequency of bribe-paying from 2019, when on average 5.4 bribes were paid by each bribe payer. It is estimated that some 87 million bribes were paid in 2023 (compared with 117 million estimated in 2019) – the equivalent of an average of 0.8 bribes per each adult.

The frequency of bribery is, on average, higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In 2023, bribe-payers living in urban areas paid on average 4.5 bribes, while those living in rural areas paid on average 5.8 bribes.

In 2023, bribe-payers  
paid an average  
**5.1 bribes.**



**4.5**



Urban areas

**5.8**

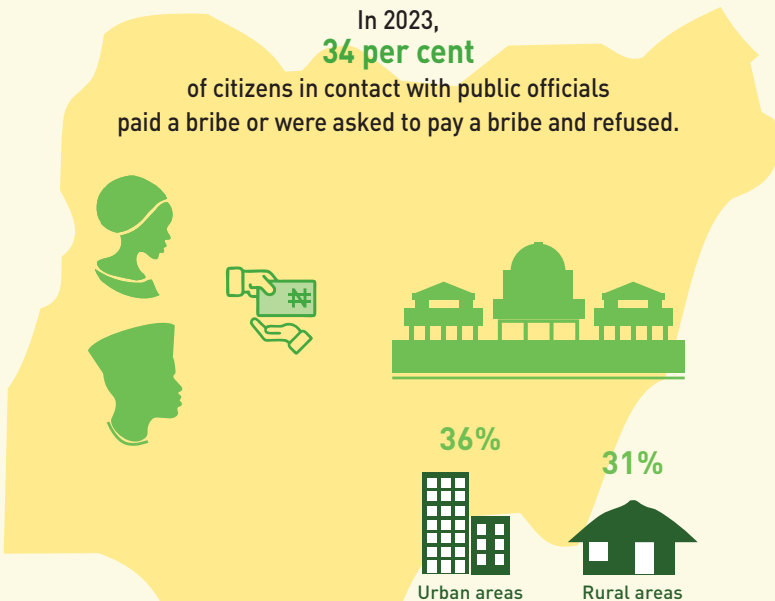


Rural areas



## Bribery prevalence has remained relatively stable compared with four years ago.

Out of all Nigerian citizens who had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the 2023 survey, 27 per cent paid a bribe to a public official. In the context of comparable past estimates, this means that the prevalence of bribe payments in Nigeria has undergone a minor but statistically significant decrease since 2019, when it stood at 29 per cent.<sup>1</sup> When also accounting for instances where bribes were requested but citizens refused, more than one in every three interactions (34 per cent) between citizens and public officials in 2023 involved bribery.



<sup>1</sup> The data published for 2019 and 2016 were respectively 30.2 and 32.3 per cent, but this included a partial estimate of people who refused to pay a bribe. The 2019 and 2016 figures of respectively 29 and 31 per cent includes only people who paid a bribe. A full account of people refusing to pay requested bribes was included only in the 2023 survey and it is not possible to have comparable figures from the other two surveys of 2019 and 2017.

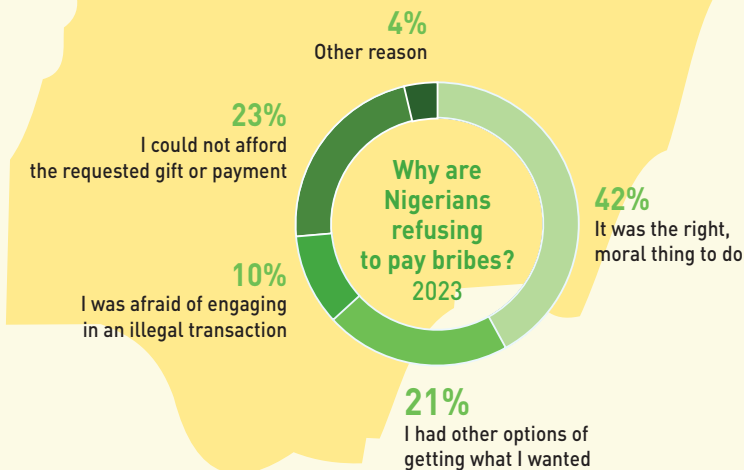


## A large share of Nigerians refuses to pay bribes, increasingly without fear of repercussions.

70 per cent of Nigerians who were asked to pay a bribe in 2023, refused to do so on at least one occasion. The bribery refusal rate was found to be highest in the North-West (at 76 per cent), although all zones recorded refusal rates above 60 per cent.

Bribery is becoming less accepted in Nigeria. The share of citizens who think that bribery requests are acceptable in order to speed up administrative procedures decreased from 29 per cent in 2019 to 23 per cent in 2023. Fewer citizens report suffering negative consequences after refusing bribe requests in 2023 (38 per cent) compared with 2019 (49 per cent). This suggests that Nigerians feel increasingly empowered to confront corrupt officials without fear of repercussions.

In 2023, a sizeable share of all bribe-refusers (21 per cent) indicated that their main reason for refusing a bribe request was because they had other options of getting what they wanted. The data also show that normative concerns (42 per cent) as well as cost of living pressures (23 per cent) play an important role in explaining why Nigerians refuse to pay bribes.



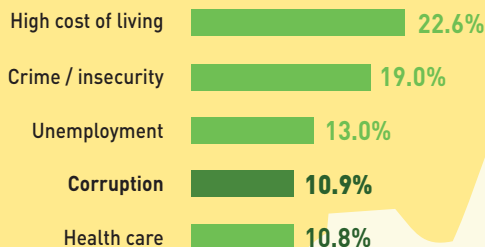


## Corruption continues to rank among the most important problems affecting Nigerians.

As reported by Nigerians, corruption ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the most important problems affecting the country in 2023, after the cost of living, insecurity and unemployment. This suggests relatively stable and high levels of concerns about corruption over time and compared to other concerns such as education or housing.

Nigerians' confidence in the government's anti-corruption effort has been declining over time and across regions. While in 2019, more than half of all citizens thought that the government was effective in fighting corruption, in 2023, the share declined to less than a third of all citizens. The downward trend in the citizens confidence is observable across the entire country, with all six zones recording reductions of more than 10 percentage points between 2019 and 2023 in terms of the share of citizens who thought the government was effective in fighting corruption.

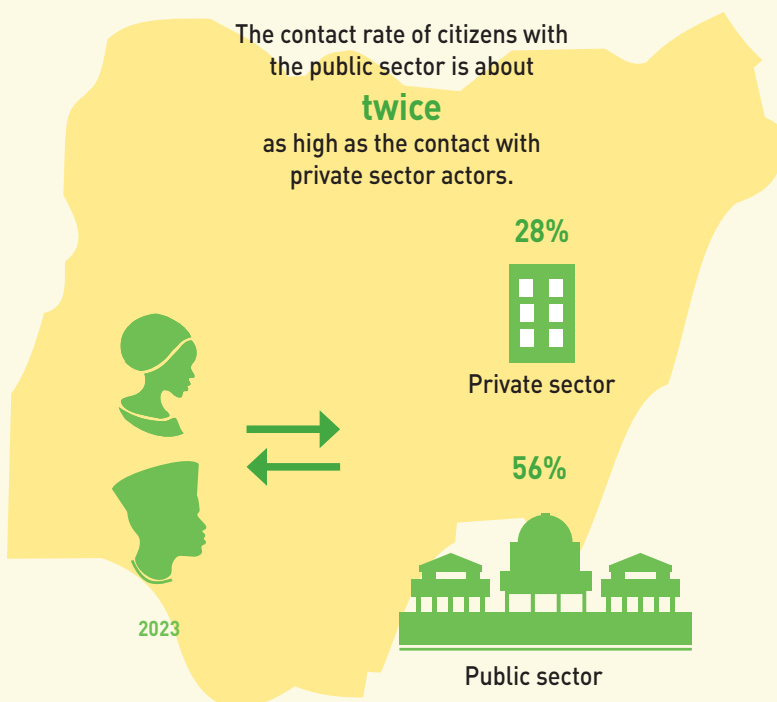
### Most important problems affecting Nigerians in 2023





## Private sector bribery is increasing, but continues to be less prevalent than in the public sector.

The prevalence of bribe payments to private sector actors (such as doctors in private hospitals and employees of private companies) increased significantly, from 6 per cent of citizens who had at least one contact with a private sector actor in 2019 to 14 per cent in 2023. The increase in private sector bribery between 2019 and 2023 was observed across all regions and all types of private employees. Despite this increase, the prevalence of bribery in the public sector remains approximately twice as high as in the private sector. Furthermore, the contact rate of citizens with the public sector is also about twice (56 per cent) as high as the contact with private sector actors (28 per cent).





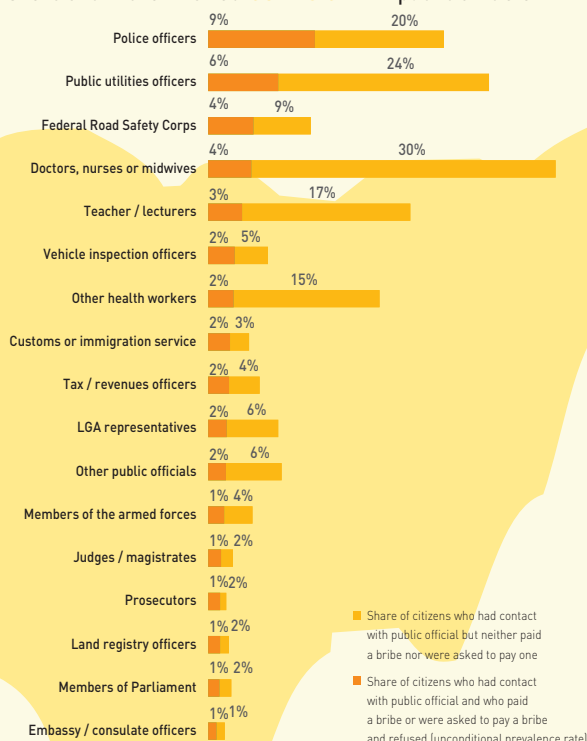
## *Who takes bribes?*



## Bribery prevalence varies widely across different types of public official.

Several types of public officials who frequently encounter citizens have relatively small shares of interactions involving bribery (such as doctors, nurses, or teachers), while other types of officials who rarely encounter citizens (such as prosecutors or land registry officers) have relatively large shares of interactions involving bribery.

### Share of citizens who had **contact** with public officials



Note: The contact rate by type of public official refers to the share of the adult population who had at least one contact with a specific type of public official in the 12 months prior to the survey, irrespective of whether it involved bribery. The unconditional bribery prevalence by type of public official refers to the proportion of the adult population who paid at least one bribe to a specific type of public official in the 12 months prior to the survey, or were asked to pay a bribe but refused that type of public official.





# *How bribery works*

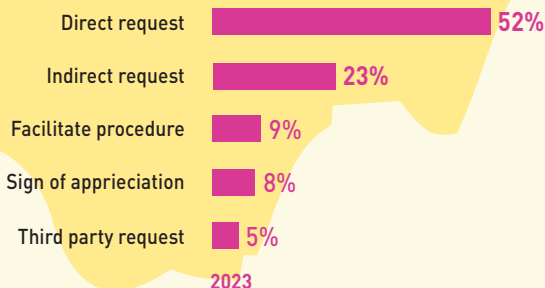


## Public officials continue to be blatant about bribe requests, but less so than in the past.

Bribery dealings can be initiated in different ways: with a direct request by a public official or indirectly. In 2023 in Nigeria, direct bribery requests by a public official accounted for 52 per cent of all bribery transactions, representing a decrease from the 60 per cent recorded in the 2019 survey. Indirect requests for a bribe accounted for 23 per cent of all bribery transactions, while spontaneous payments to facilitate or accelerate a procedure accounted for 9 per cent. Some 8 per cent of bribes were paid with no prior request from the bribe-taker as a sign of appreciation to a public official for services rendered.

Around 58 per cent of all bribes are paid before a service is provided by a public official, according to the 2023 survey, a proportion that is significantly smaller than the 67 per cent recorded in the 2019 survey. Conversely, 22 per cent of bribes were paid after the service in 2023, which is markedly higher than in 2019 (15 per cent). The shift towards more retro-active bribing, combined with indirect requests by public officials, may suggest that public officials are becoming less assertive in asking for bribes and could indicate a gradual shift in the power relationship between officials and citizens to the benefit of the latter.

In 2023,  
**more than a half**  
of all bribes paid to public officials were  
requested directly by those officials.

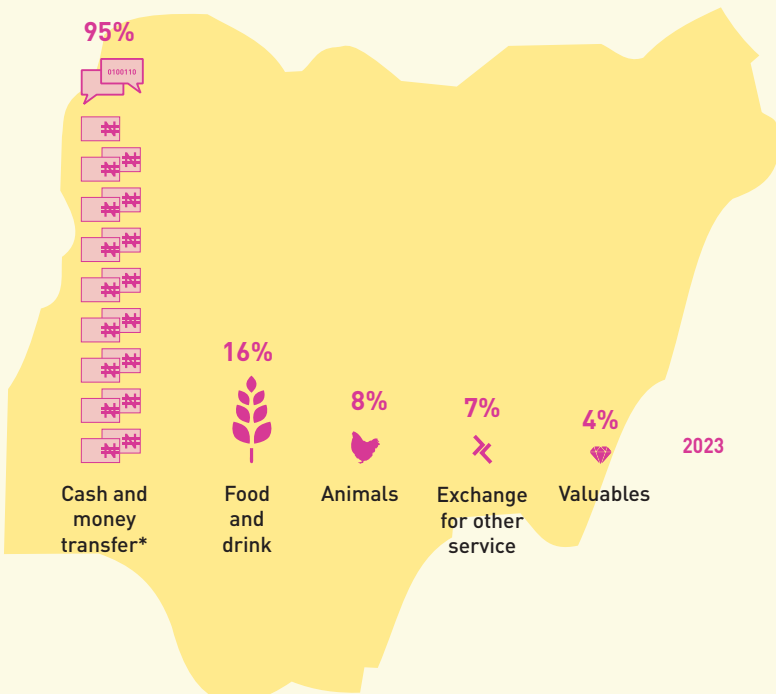




## Cash continues to be the dominant form of bribery.

More than 95 per cent of all bribes paid in 2023 were paid in monetary form (cash or money transfer), a slightly larger share than in 2019.

### More than 9 out of 10 bribes are paid in cash or via money transfer.



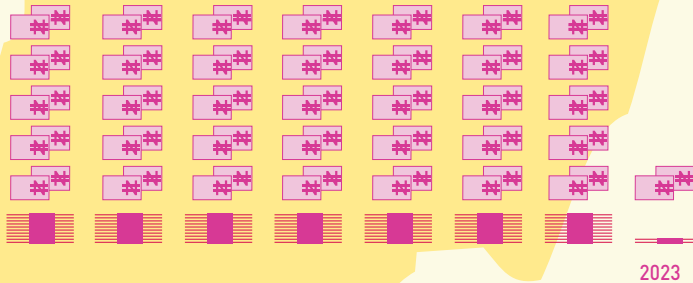
\* Respondents could indicate that multiple payment forms were used in one instance of bribery, which means that the shares do not add up 100%.



**More than NGN 700 billion in cash bribes were paid by citizens to public officials in 2023.**

According to the 2023 survey, the average cash bribe paid was 8,284 Nigerian Naira (NGN). While the nominal average cash bribe size increased since 2019 (from NGN 5,754), this does not account for inflation. The inflation-adjusted average cash bribe in 2023 was actually 29 per cent smaller than in 2019 in terms of what could be bought with the money. Overall, it is estimated that a total of roughly NGN 721 billion (US\$1.26 billion<sup>1</sup>) was paid in cash bribes to public officials in Nigeria in 2023, corresponding to 0.35 per cent of the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria.

**A total of roughly  
NGN 721 billion  
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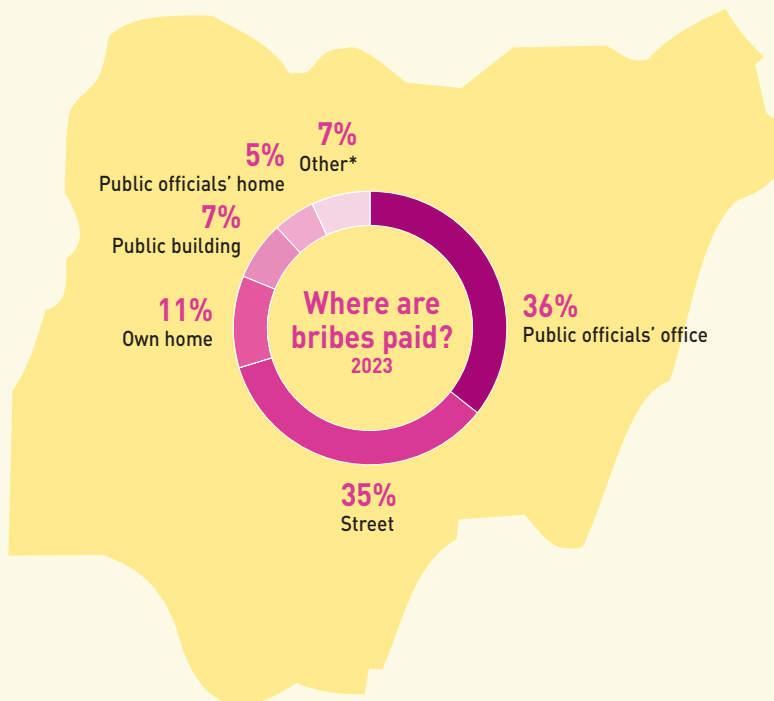


<sup>1</sup> Average central exchange rate over the reference period of the survey, from November 2022 to October 2023.

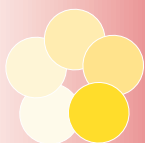


## Most bribes are paid in the street or in a public official's office.

In 2023, bribes paid in a public official's office and in the street accounted for around 35 and 36 per cent of all paid briberies, respectively. 11 per cent of bribes were paid in the respondents' own home, while 7 per cent were paid in public buildings such as restaurants, malls, or stations.



\* "Other" stating "Other location, Do not know and Not applicable".



## *How citizens respond to bribery*



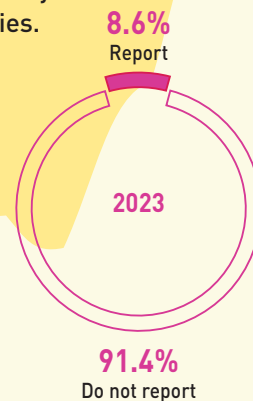
## Nigerians are increasingly reporting bribe payments to official authorities.

In 2023, out of all citizens who paid a bribe, 8.6 per cent reported their experience to an official institution capable of investigating or otherwise following up and acting on that report. This represents a marked increase in the bribery reporting rate since 2019 when it stood at 3.6 per cent.

The increase is primarily driven by developments in the Northern zones, where the bribery reporting rate increased markedly from 4.7 per cent in 2019 to 13.4 per cent in 2023. In the Southern zones, the bribery reporting rate instead decreased moderately from 2.5 per cent in 2019 to 1.7 per cent in 2023.

The largest increases between 2019 and 2023 in the share of citizens who reported bribery cases were recorded by the police, anti-corruption agencies, and the media. Increasingly, Nigerians are also turning to non-traditional reporting mechanisms, with 68 per cent of those reporting bribery cases approaching both official authorities such as the police as well as non-official authorities such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the media.

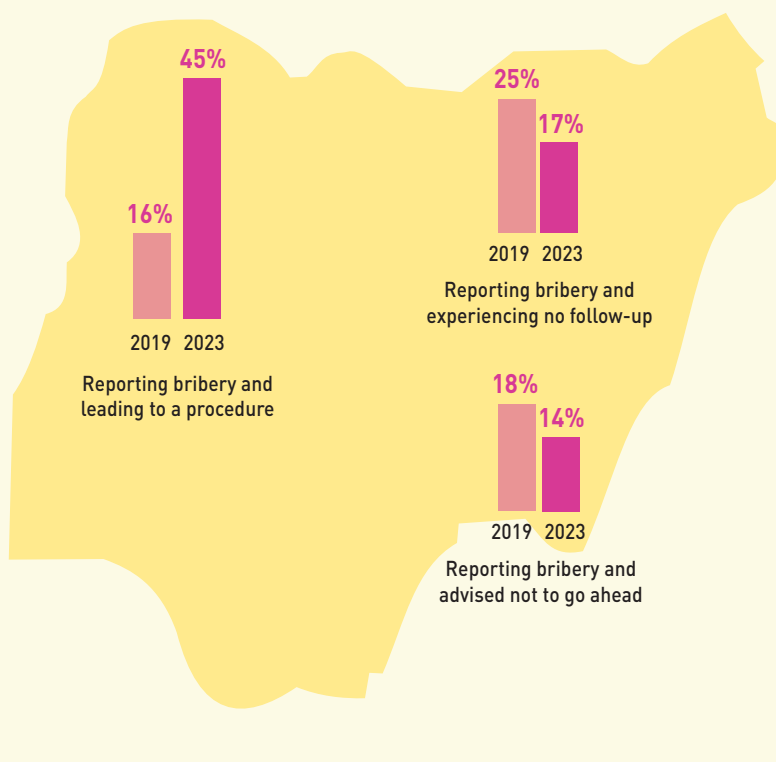
In 2023,  
**8.6 per cent**  
of people who paid a bribe actually  
reported it to official authorities.





## More formal procedures are initiated due to reporting, and fewer cases have no follow-up.

The share of bribery reports that lead to the initiation of a formal procedure against the public official increased nearly three-fold between 2019 and 2023, from 16 per cent to 45 per cent of bribery reports. The share of citizens who reported a bribery instance but experienced no follow-up after reporting went down from 25 per cent to 17 per cent, as did the share of citizens who reported a bribery incident and were advised not to go ahead with the report (from 18 per cent to 14 per cent).







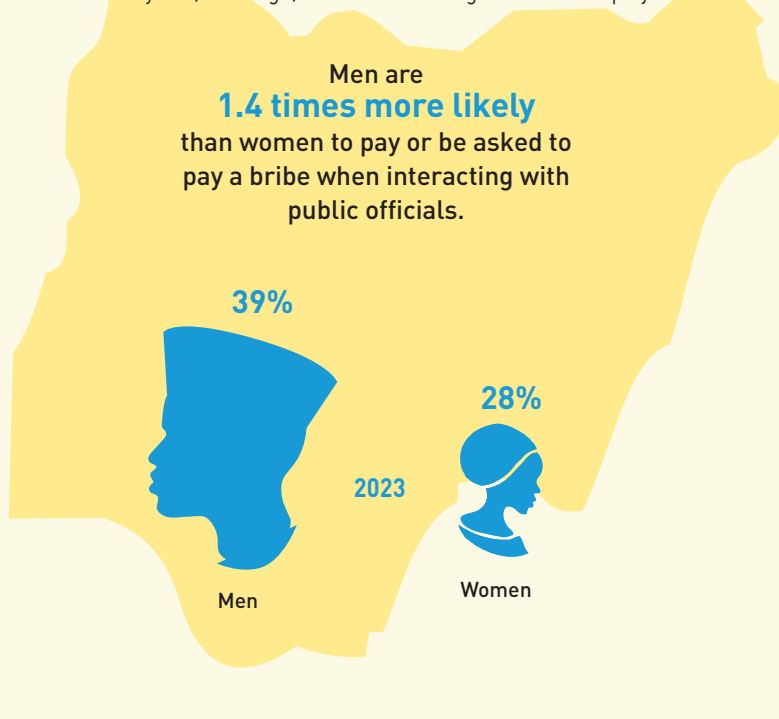
# *Gender and socio-demographic dimensions of corruption*



## Women are less exposed to bribery than men.

When in contact with public officials, women are less likely to experience bribery than men. In 2023, 39 per cent of all men who had contact with a public official either paid a bribe or were asked to do so but refused. The figure for women was significantly lower, at 28 per cent. This overall difference in bribery exposure between men and women is possibly driven by interactions with a few frequently contacted types of public official, in particular police officers, as well as some less frequently contacted types of officials such as Members of the Armed Forces and embassy and consulate officers, to whom men were more likely than women to pay or be asked to pay a bribe.

Women in Nigeria are less likely to engage in bribery than men irrespective of where they live, their age, educational background and employment status.

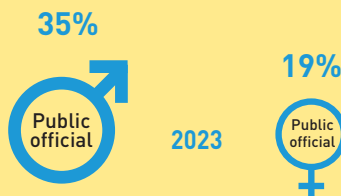




## Female public officials are less likely than their male counterparts to solicit bribes.

The share of male public officials who solicit or receive unsolicited bribes when interacting with the public is nearly twice that of female public officials. An estimated 35 per cent of all male public officials who had contact with citizens in the 12 months prior to the 2023 survey engaged in bribery (i.e. were either paid a bribe or requested a bribe but were refused), while a much smaller share of female public officials (19 per cent) requested or received a bribe.

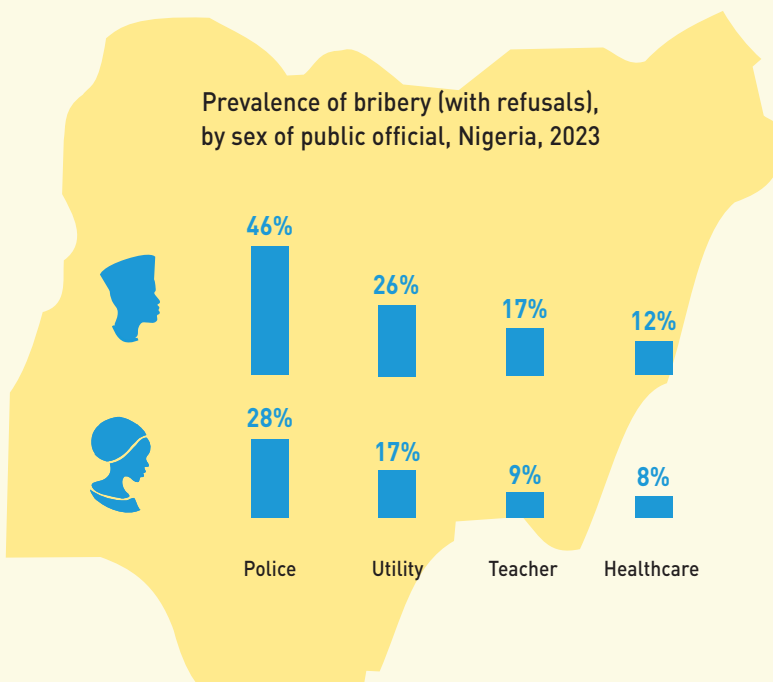
The share of male public officials who solicit or take a bribe when interacting with the public is nearly **twice** that of female public officials.





## Male-dominated professions are most at risk of bribery.

Public officials in sectors with a large share of female employees, such as education, are less likely to engage in bribery. However, male public officials are more likely to be involved in bribery irrespective of the sector.

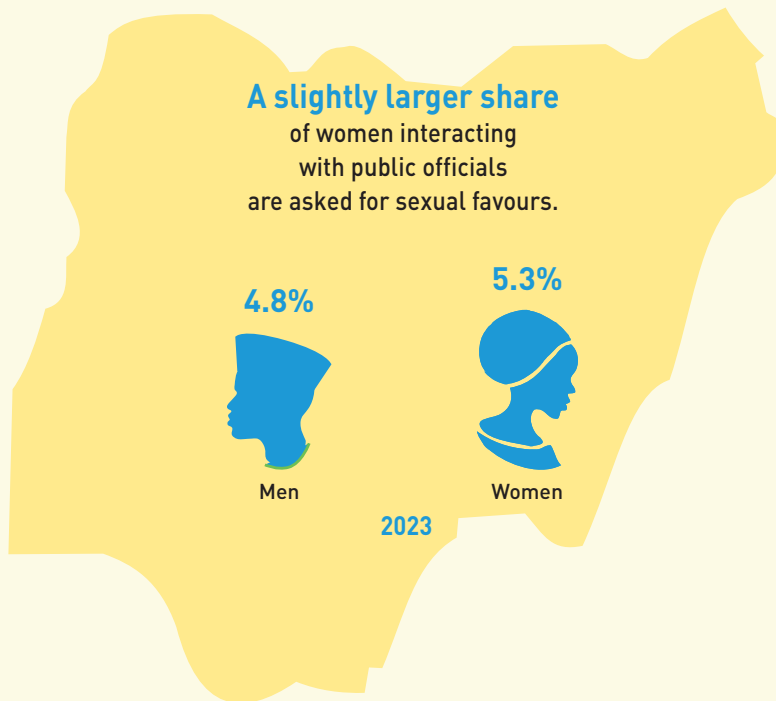


Note: The prevalence of bribery by sex of public official is calculated by dividing the total number of adults who paid or were asked to pay a bribe to a (male or female) public official by the total number of adults in contact with a (male or female) public official in the 12 months prior to the survey.



## Women are more exposed to sexual corruption than men.

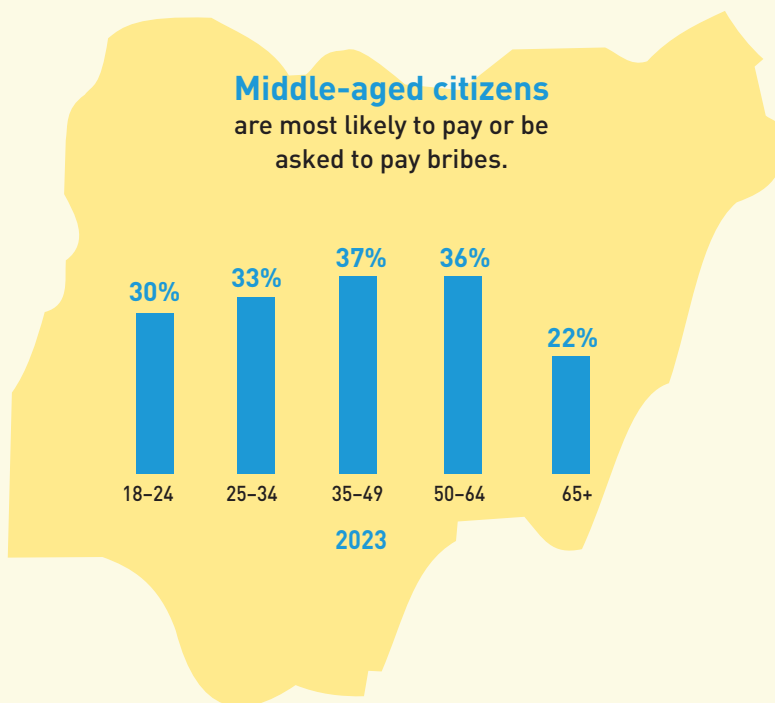
Sexual corruption – the exchange of sexual favours or acts of a sexual nature in place of monetary bribes – affects women more than men in Nigeria. 5.3 per cent of all women interacting with public officials reported having been asked for sexual favours in the three years prior to the survey, while 4.8 cent of men reported experiencing such behaviour – a statistically significant difference.





## Middle-aged citizens are most likely to experience bribery.

In 2023, Nigerians in the 35-49 and 50-64 age groups were most likely to pay bribes or be asked to pay bribes, with prevalence rates of 37 and 36 per cent respectively. Among all age groups, those aged 65 and older were least exposed to bribery (22 per cent).

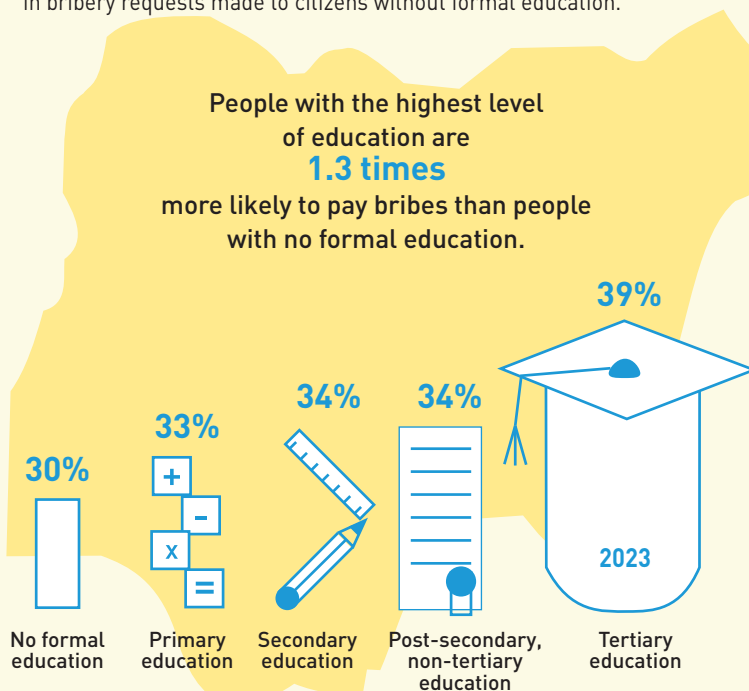




## Highly educated people are most exposed to bribery.

With a prevalence of bribery of 39 per cent, people with a master's degree and/or a bachelor's degree are much more likely to pay or be asked to pay a bribe than those with no formal education. According to the 2023 survey, people with the highest level of (tertiary) education were 1.3 times more likely than people with no formal education to have paid a bribe, or been asked and refused to pay a bribe, when in contact with a public official.

The gap in bribery prevalence between citizens with no formal and those with tertiary education has decreased significantly, from 18 percentage points in 2019 to 9 percentage points in 2023. This can be attributed to a marked increase in bribery requests made to citizens without formal education.



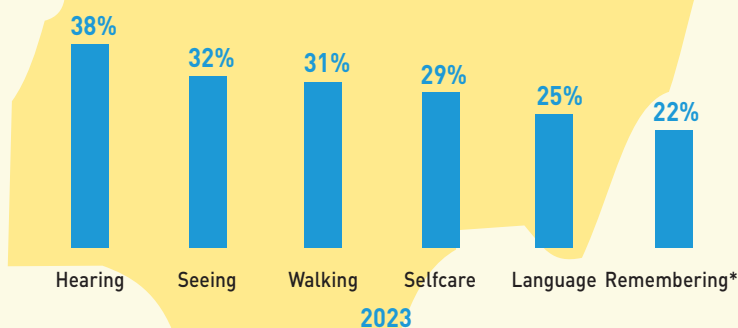


## Bribery represents a unique challenge for people living with disabilities.

People living with disabilities were found to be no less likely to pay or be asked to pay a bribe when interacting with public officials than people without disabilities. 34 per cent of people living without disabilities were exposed to bribery in 2023, whereas the figure was 32 per cent among people living with disabilities. The rate of contact with public officials is about the same regardless of the type of disability. However, given the unique challenges people living with disabilities face, having to pay bribes when accessing public services represents a greater burden for this population group than for those who live without any disabilities.

People living with certain types of disability (such as those related to seeing, hearing, and walking) may be somewhat more exposed to bribery experiences than people living with other types of disability (such as those related to memory loss, selfcare and language) although estimates are subject to uncertainty given the small samples involved.

**Bribery prevalence  
among people with disability is  
similar  
to the one among the general population.**



\* Disability status is based on the Short Set data collection tool developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, and classifies a respondent as living with a disability if they reported having "a lot of difficulty" doing one of six activities across different domains of functioning or if they reported that they "cannot do at all" one of these activities.





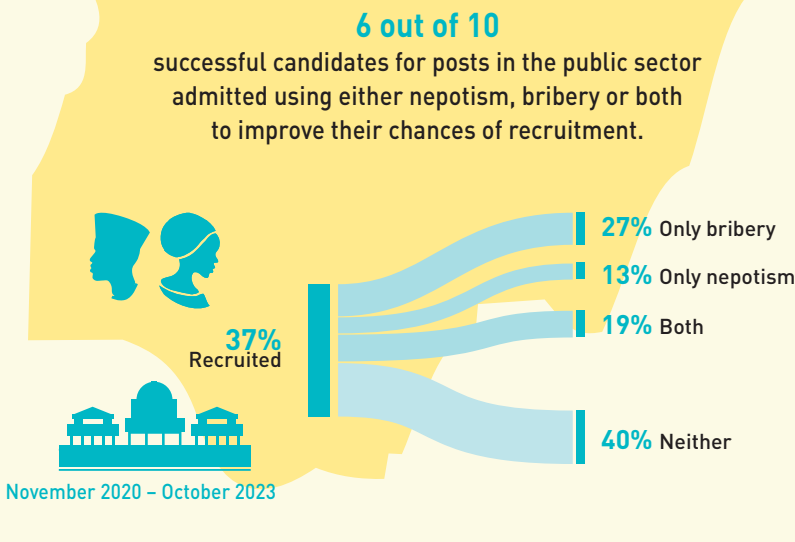
# *Corruption in public sector recruitment*



## Nepotism and bribery in public sector recruitment on the rise.

The selection process used to recruit public officials plays a crucial role in shaping the culture of integrity that should drive the civil service as well as ensure that new recruits have the highest standards of professionalism and merit. However, the 2023 survey findings indicate that the public sector recruitment process requires closer monitoring, as almost half (46 per cent) of people who secured a job in the public sector in the last three years prior to the survey admitted that they paid a bribe to facilitate their recruitment – about 1.5 times the share found in the 2019 survey (31 per cent).

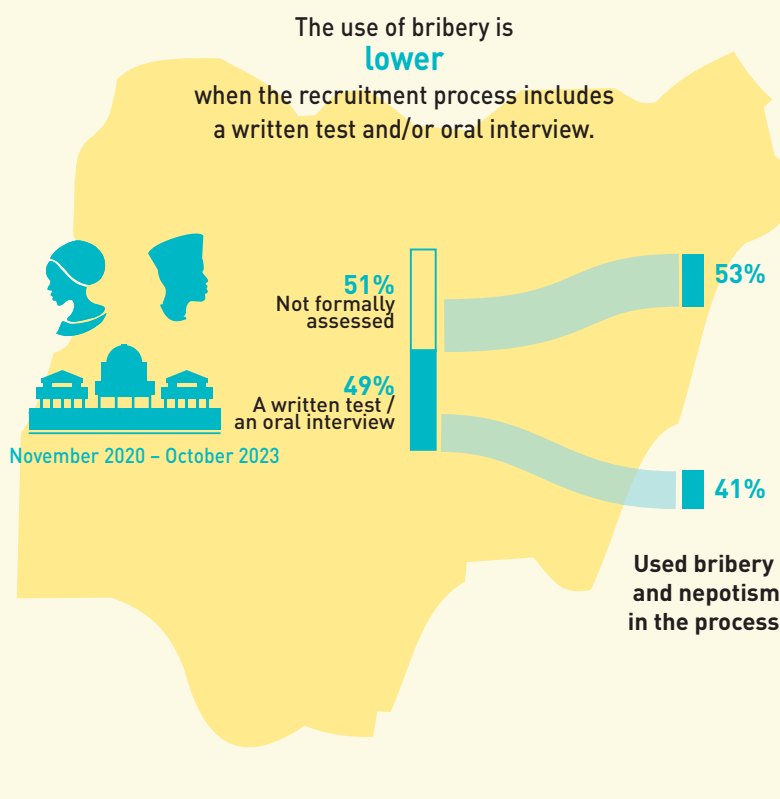
The 2023 survey also found evidence that a considerable number of people recruited into the public sector secured their posts with the help of a friend or relative, many in addition to paying a bribe: of all successful applicants in the last three years prior to the 2023 survey, 32 per cent were helped by friends or relatives. Overall, in the three years prior to the 2023 survey, around 60 per cent of public sector applicants in Nigeria were hired as a result of nepotism, bribery or both – about 1.2 times the share found in the 2019 survey.



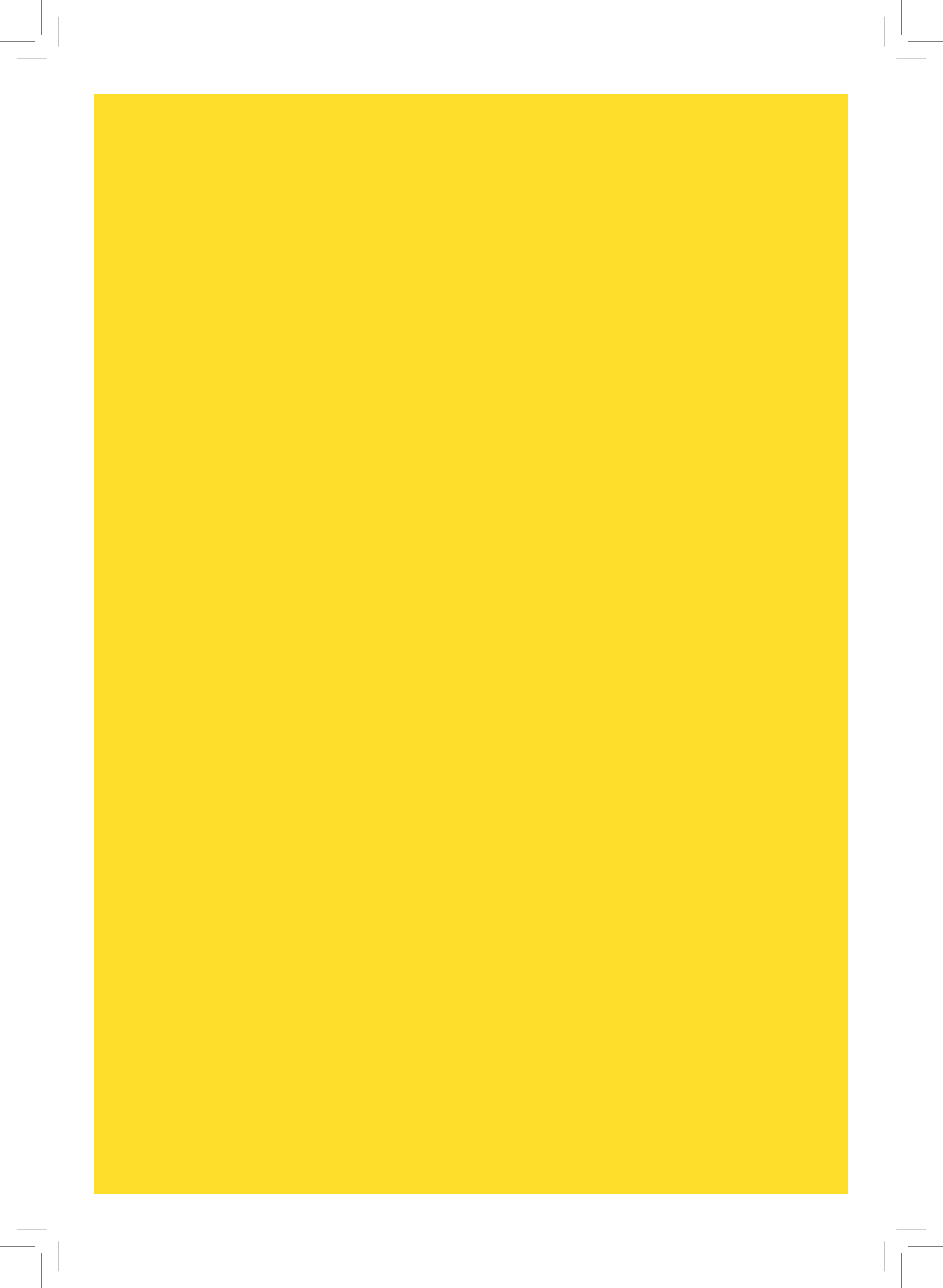


## A transparent assessment procedure has reduced corrupt practices in public sector recruitment.

The 2023 survey data show that approximately half (49 per cent) of those who secured a position in the public sector in the three years prior to the survey passed a written test and/or oral interview during the recruitment selection process. Importantly, the data suggest that the means of selection had a role in facilitating or preventing the use of illegal practices during recruitment. Among those who underwent an assessment procedure (written test / oral interview), 41 per cent made use of bribery, while the share was as much as 53 per cent among those who were not formally assessed.







Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria  
Tel.: [+43-1] 26060-0, Fax: [+43-1] 263-3389, [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)