



CORRUPTION REPORTS 2016:
PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

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Research Conducted By

Infakto



Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) is the largest indigenous anticorruption and good governance initiative of CSOs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. SELDI currently includes partners from Romania and Moldova as well. The network contributes to a dynamic civil society in the region, capable of participating in public debate and influencing policy and decision-making process in the area of anticorruption and good governance. It has established a coalition for the development and endorsement of a regional CSO strategy and action agenda and carries out good governance monitoring. SELDI raises public awareness and advocates reformist policies through Regional Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Policy Forums.

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CORRUPTION REPORTS 2016: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

FOREWORD

This report is the product of the research conducted by TESEV within the scope of the network of Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI). Comprised of 15 NGOs from the states of Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Turkey, the SELDI network acts as a transnational research and collaboration platform for these NGOs. The main goal of the SELDI partnership, through empirical research and data-based assessments of corruption, is to understand and alleviate the problems of corruption and the lack of good governance which have become deep-rooted in Southeastern European states and Turkey.

In 2014, SELDI carried out a comprehensive assessment of corruption in Southeast Europe (SEE) covering the various aspects of the legal and institutional environments of nine countries, outlining the characteristics and challenges of state capture, and measuring actual levels of corruption.¹ SELDI seeks to bridge analysis and policy design and to use it for civil society capacity building for good governance. As a follow-up to the recommendations of the 2014 analysis, the second phase of the SELDI partnership continued with capacity building projects, public awareness campaigns, and comprehensive analyses of regional corruption issues in 2014 – 2016. This report is the product of regional corruption assessment research and focuses on Turkey. It is the first report of the Corruption Reports 2016 that covers public perceptions of corruption, corruption challenges in the energy sector, and the state of hidden economy in Turkey.

This report presents the results of two public perception surveys on corruption in Turkey in a comparative manner. The surveys were conducted by Infakto for TESEV first in 2014 (February-March) and in 2016 (February). What comes to the fore in the analysis of the results is that besides personal views and experiences, socio-political environment can affect how corruption is perceived. An assessment of perceptions on corruption can pave the way for a macro-level analysis of the social and political conditions where corruption occurs. Hence, perceptions on corruption emerge as an important instrument in searching for ways to diagnose and cure corruption.

In the 2014-2016 period, education and political party choice seem to have influenced corruption awareness, the perceptions on significance of corruption, causes of corruption, and corruption-voting behavior relationship. The most prominent examples of corruption involve public officials, which puts not only the officials but also their institutions into question. As to the chances of eradicating corruption, younger generation is more optimistic than seniors. The media emerges as the main medium with which perceptions are formed making it an important actor in anti-corruption activities. Civil society's role is also crucial to raise awareness on the problems caused by corruption and ways to fight against it. This report and the overall SELDI project are indeed civil society efforts to contextualize corruption and its various stakeholders, generating evidence for policy making that targets fight against corruption.

¹ SELDI. (2014). *Anti-Corruption Reloaded: Assessment of Southeast Europe*. Center for the Study of Democracy: Sofia.

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PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

Assessing the public perceptions on corruption proves to be an important indicator and tool for corruption monitoring. In this section, results of public perception surveys on corruption in Turkey, conducted by Infakto for TESEV first in 2014 (February-March) and later in 2016 (February), are analyzed shedding light onto the current state of mind of the society².

Unanticipated events and socio-political conjuncture can affect how citizens perceive or to what extent they attribute importance to corruption. These, therefore, are to be kept in mind for a nuanced analysis of how perceptions on corruption take shape. The highlights of 2014 were the local municipal elections in March 30 and the corruption allegation of December 17-25. The prime minister of the time and some ministers were imputed of being involved in corruption, and there was a wide coverage in both the traditional and the social media, and the public was engaged in the alleged corruption case for months to follow. These developments might have influenced the results of the survey considering that the level of public awareness on corruption was significantly high at the time. It should also be noted that the very political and sensitive nature of the issue might have resulted in skewed responses based on political affiliations of the respondent. Although there is not any specific incidence reported by the field team, this situation might have also resulted in non-responses during data collection.

At the beginning of 2016 when the second corruption survey took place, terrorist attacks in metropolitan cities and the police/military operations against the terrorist organizations dominated the country's agenda. Due to the tragic terrorist attacks, debates on security, internal and international politics proliferated. It should also be noted that two general elections were held in June and November 2015 heating the political climate. After the failure of the parties to form a coalition government following the first election, the second election resulted in Justice and Development Party (AKP) gaining the power to form a single-party government. The political mood swings during the election period led to fierce discussions between the party leaders and among the electorates. Social scientists and opinion leaders increasingly talked about an enhanced polarization among the public, particularly between the conservatives and the secular, Turks and Kurds, and at a certain level between AKP supporters and the rest; influencing the public opinion in all social matters. Although it would be overambitious to infer a direct causality between the intense social and political climate and the perceptions on corruption, it should be noted that public perception is always embedded within a broader socio-political context. The very contextuality of the public perception is all the more significant, if the matter at hand is a political one such as corruption. Therefore, the survey results should be read and analyzed assuming the intensity of political debates of its time.

² The results were presented at the panel *Corruption in Turkey: Perceptions and Perspectives* organized by TESEV, TEPAV, and Istanbul Bilgi University, on 16 June, 2016.

When 2014 and 2016 data are analyzed using binary logistic or ordered logit equations in terms of importance attributed to corruption among other social problems, acts that are regarded as corruption, corruption-voting behavior correlation, convictions on the reasons and the likelihood of prevention of corruption, and the professions that are most prone to corruption; the key findings show significant differences on perceptions based on *education levels, income, place of settlement, political party choice, and age*. In this chapter we will first present the key findings of this analysis, followed by the comparative presentation of survey questions.

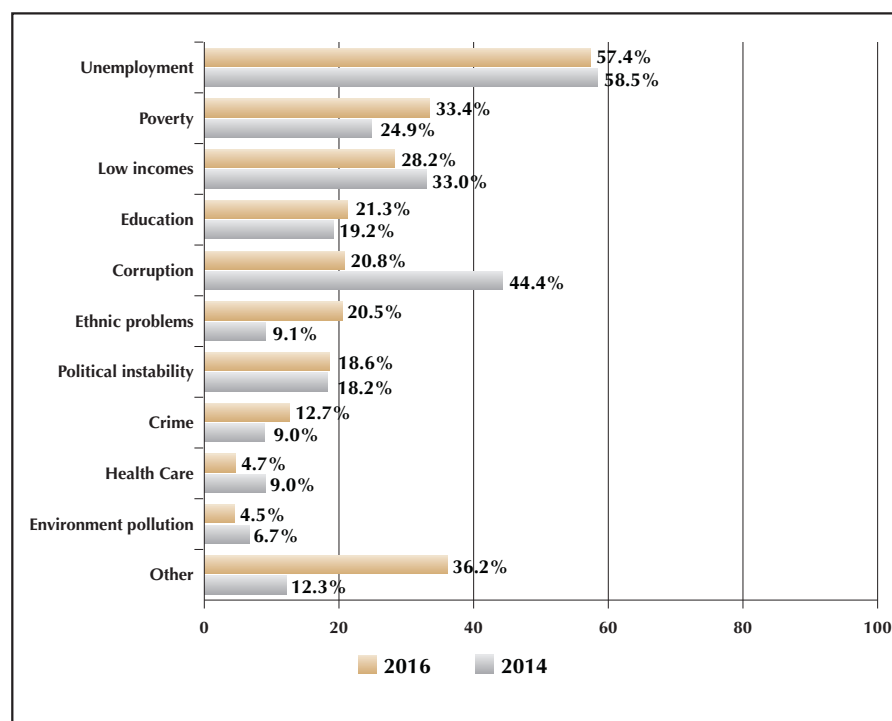
KEY FINDINGS

1. Corruption awareness is high among highly educated people, people in higher income groups, and those living in more populated places of settlement
2. Attributing a higher rank to corruption among important social problems depends on both political conjuncture and political party choice
3. The most prominent examples of corruption are: 'Administrative officials accepting money for tax evasion or tax reduction' and 'giving money to a police officer so that your driver's license is not suspended'
4. As to perceived causes of corruption, opposition parties' voters, as opposed to AKP voters, are more likely to state that 'there is a moral crisis in our society nowadays' and 'corruption is a specific characteristic of our culture'
5. Opposition parties' voters, as opposed to AKP voters, are more likely to think that police officers, business people, ministry officials, and ministers get involved in corrupt practices more than others
6. Opposition parties' voters, as opposed to AKP voters, are more likely to point out that candidates' involvement in corruption would affect their voting behavior
7. Youngsters, as opposed to seniors, are more likely to think that 'corruption in Turkey can be substantially reduced', whereas there is no statistically significant difference on this issue in terms of political party choice

1. Spread and Dynamics of Corruption

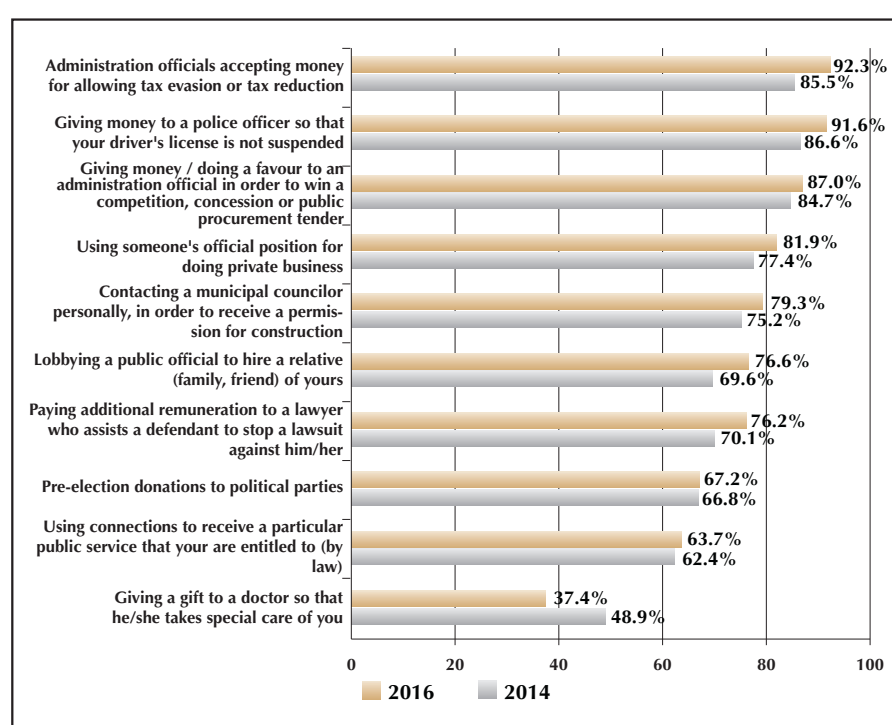
This part examines assessments of the spread of corrupt practices.

1.1 Paramount Problems in Turkey: Order of Significance



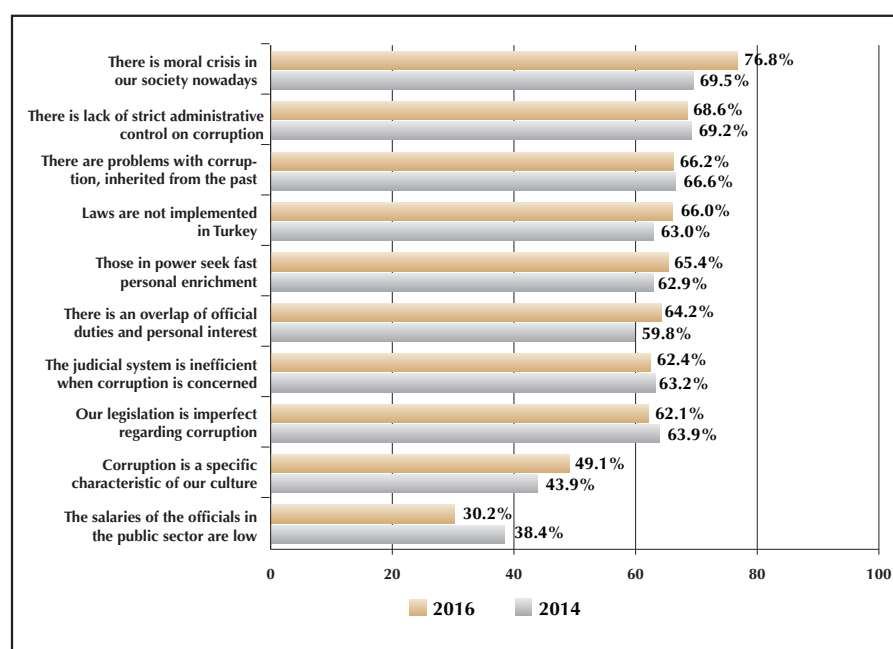
The question “As you see it, which are the three paramount problems in Turkey today?” aims to identify how participants place “corruption” vis-à-vis other significant problems. The most paramount problem was “unemployment” according to 59% of the participants in 2014 and 57% in 2016. While the second most important problem was “corruption” according to 44% of the participants in 2014, it dropped to 21% in 2016; and corruption went down to 5th place in importance. “Poverty” took the second place of importance in 2016 with 33%.

1.2 Examples of Corruption: Actions



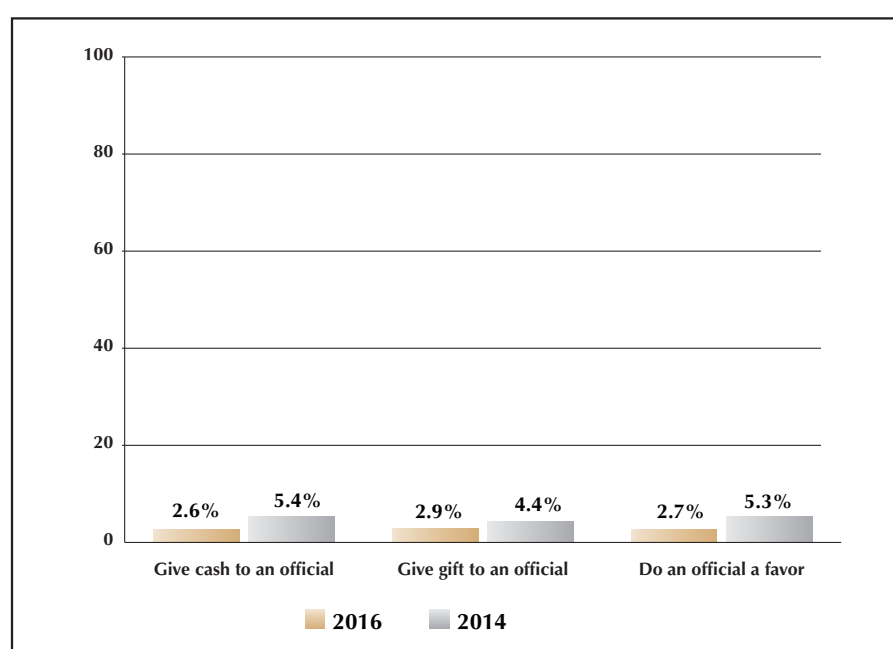
The question “In your opinion, which of the following actions are examples of “corruption”?” seeks to discover what participants understand from “corruption”. In 2016, almost all participants (92%) perceived “Administrative officials accepting bribery for allowing tax evasion or tax reduction” and “Giving money to a police officer so that your driver’s license is not suspended” as corruption. Other than “giving a gift to a doctor so that he/she takes special care of you”, all actions were perceived as “corruption” by more than half of the participants, both in 2014 and in 2016; and the listed actions above were increasingly identified with corruption in 2016.

1.3 The Importance / Possible Reasons of Corruption and Efficiency of the Anti-corruption Practices in Turkey: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree



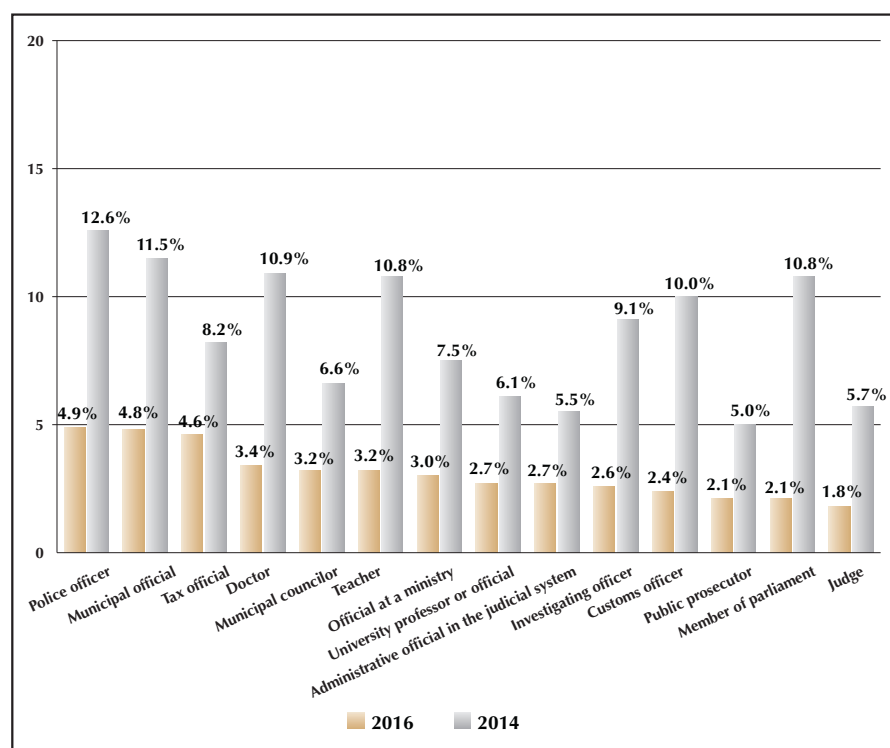
The question “*Would you strongly agree, agree, neither agree, nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:*” aims to identify the perceptions on the importance of corruption, possible reasons of the presence of corruption, and efficiency of the anti-corruption practices in Turkey. In 2016, 77% of the participants strongly agree or agree that “There is moral crisis in our society nowadays”, with an 8-percentage point increase compared to 2014. Both in 2014 and 2016, 69% of the participants stated they strongly agree or agree that “There is lack of strict administrative control on corruption”. In 2014, 67% of the participants stated that they strongly agree or agree to the following statement: “There are problems with corruption, inherited from the past”. Other statements that receive a relatively high score in 2016 are “Laws are not implemented in Turkey” by 66%, and “Those in power seek fast personal enrichment” by 65%.

1.4 Self-assessed Involvement in Various Forms of Corrupt Behavior: All/Most of the Cases



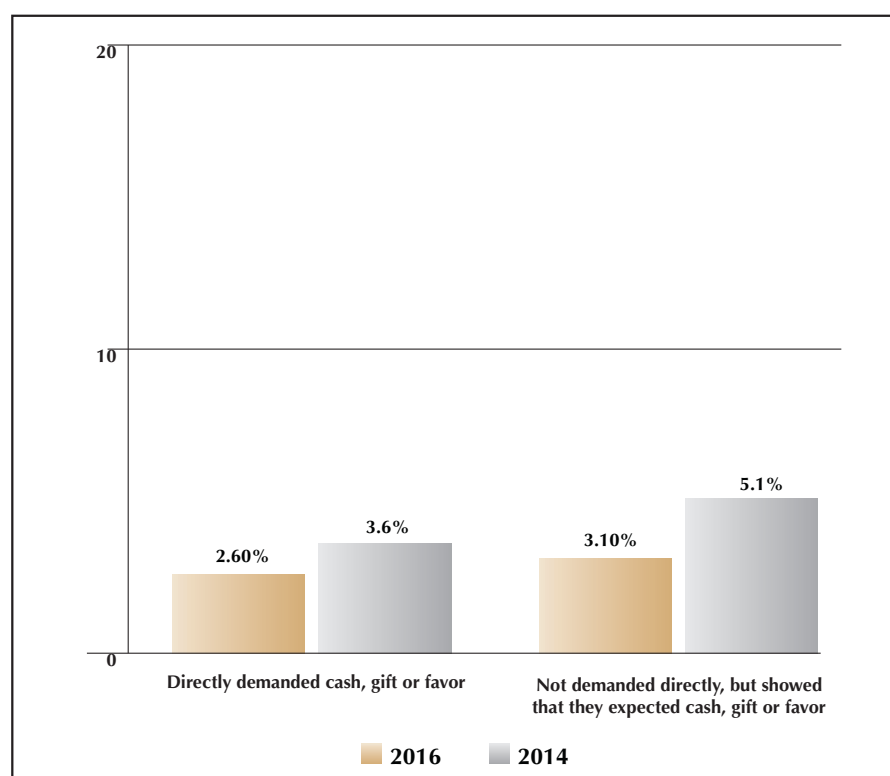
The question “*Whenever you have contacted officials in the public sector, how often in the last year you have had to: Give cash to an official / Give gift to an official / Do an official a favor*” aims to measure the self-assessed involvement of the respondents in various forms of corrupt behavior. For the three options (cash, gift, favor), a significant majority of the participants responded as “in no cases”. Only around 3% stated they may give cash to an official, give gift to an official, or do an official a favor, in all cases or in most of the cases.

1.5 Tendencies of Corrupt Practices: Different Professional Groups



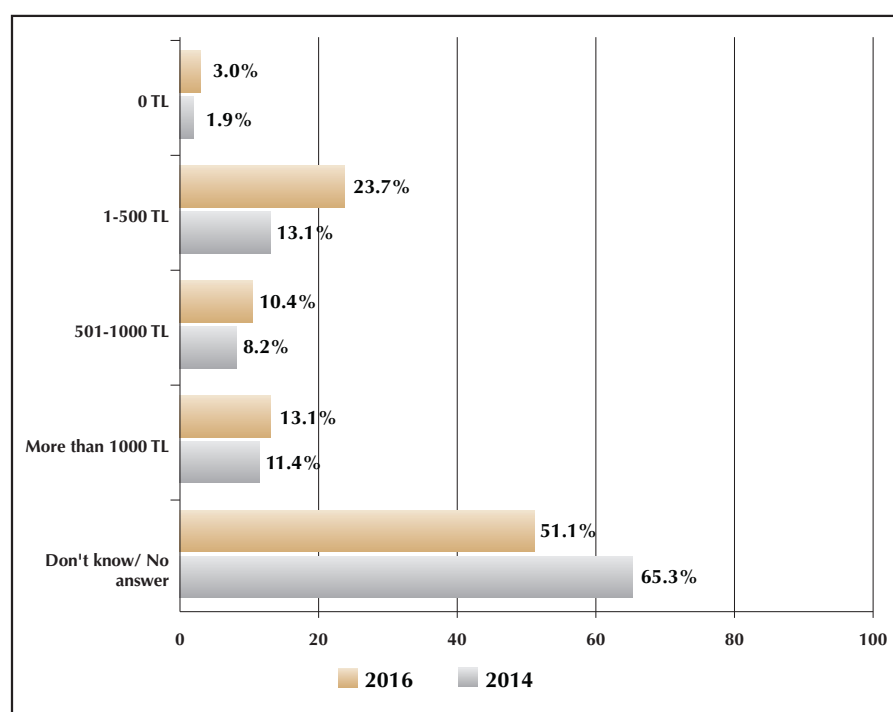
To examine tendencies of corrupt practices among different professional groups, the question *"If in the course of the past year you were asked for something in order to have a problem of yours solved, you were asked by a: Doctor/teacher/university professor or official/official at a ministry/municipal official/administrative official in the judicial system/judge/public prosecutor/investigating officer/police officer/customs officer/tax officer/member of parliament/municipal councilor"* is asked. Police officers (5%), municipal officers (5%), and doctors (5%) were ranked relatively higher by the participants in 2016; and the rest are told to be involved in corrupted practices by less than 4%.

1.6 Public Officials Demand Bribe: In Most/All Cases



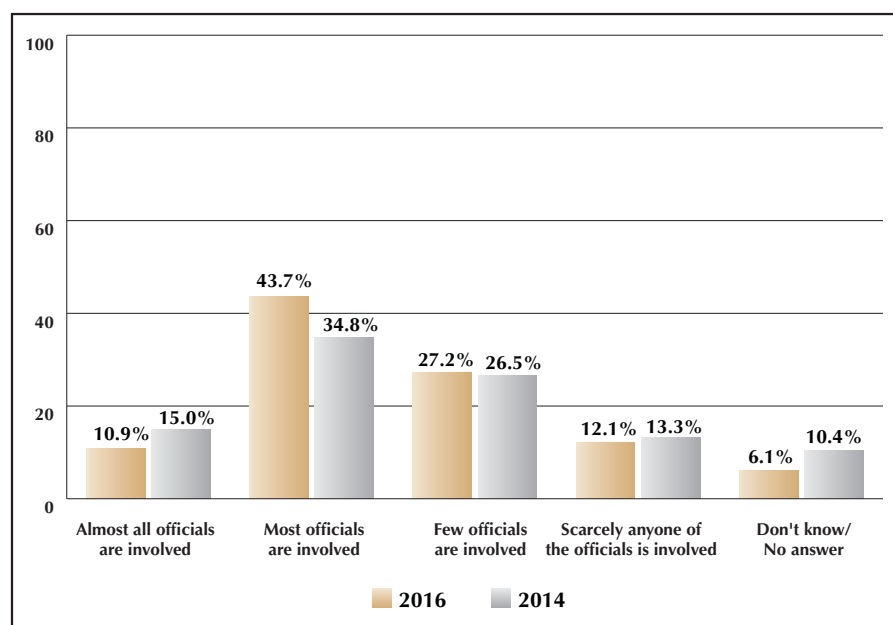
In response to the question, *"Whenever you have contacted officials in the public sector, how often in the last year they have: Directly demanded cash, gift or favor / Not demanded directly, but showed that they expected cash, gift or favor?"*; the ratio of those who stated *"in most cases"* or *"in all cases"* officials demanded or showed that they expected cash were less than 5% in 2016. The ratios of two years show similarities.

1.7 Average Citizen Pays: Annual Amount of Bribe



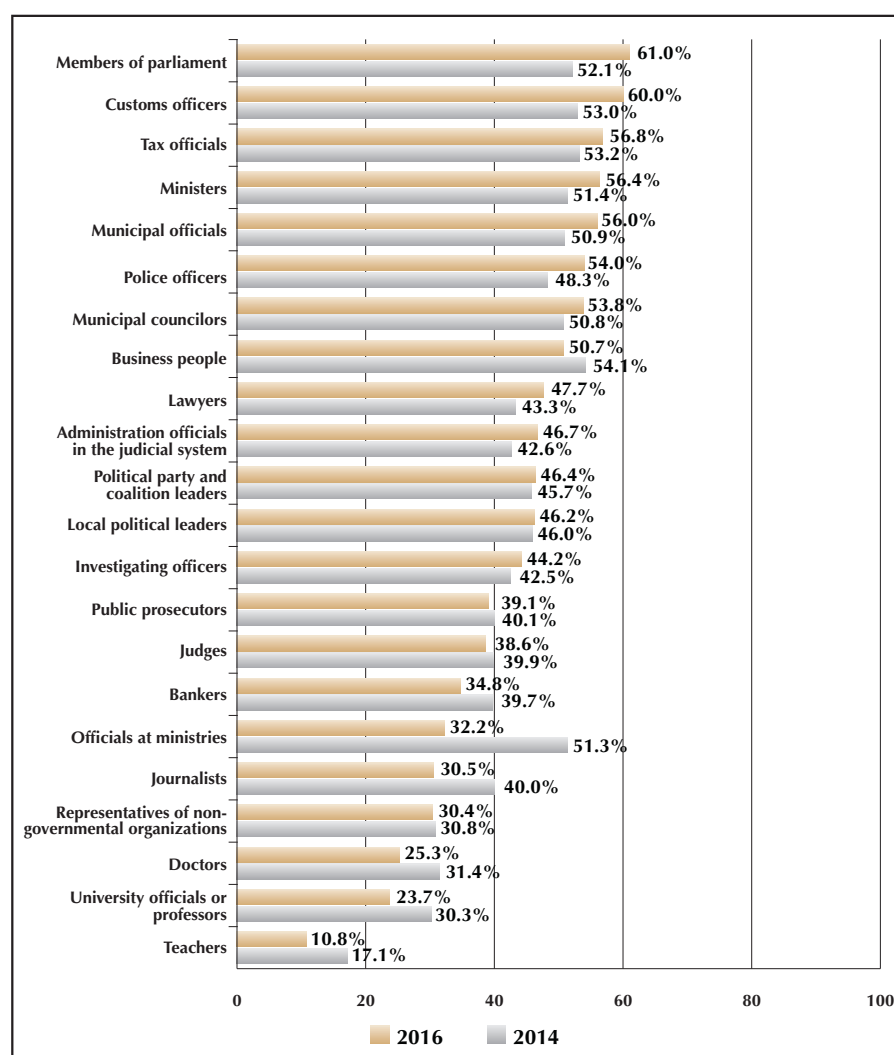
In response to the open-ended question “In your opinion, approximately how much Turkish lira (TL) does an average citizen of Turkey need to pay in bribes annually?”; 24% of the participants stated “1-500 TL” followed by “more than 1000 TL” with 13% in 2016. However, the majority of the participants (51%) in 2016 stated that they don’t know or abstained to give an answer.

1.8 Proliferation of Corruption among Public Officials: Almost All, Most, Few, Scarcely Any, No Answer



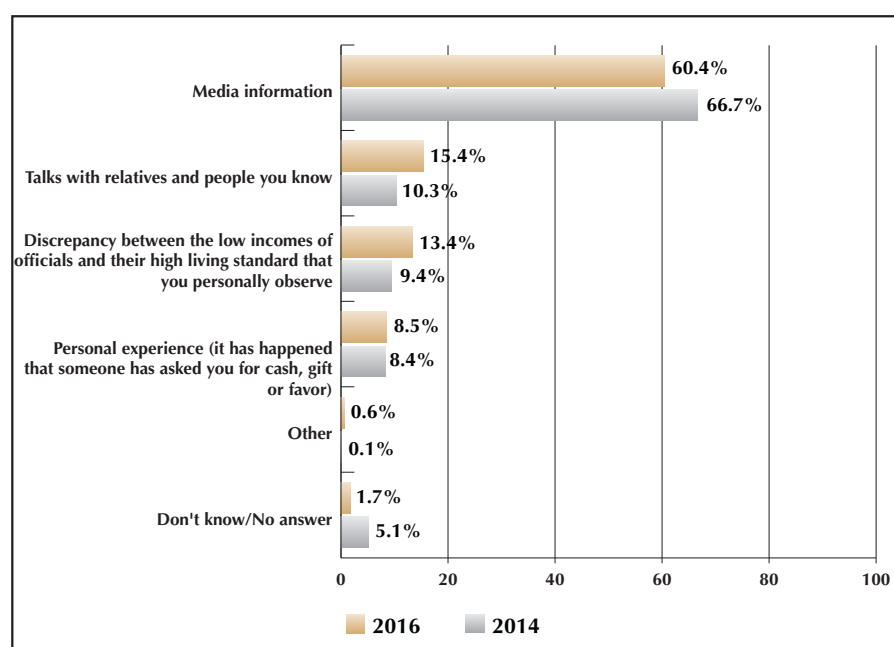
The question “As you see it, how far has corruption proliferated among the officials in the public sector?” aims to assess perceptions on the spread of corruption. In 2016, almost half of the participants (44%) responded that in the public sector “Most officials are involved” in corruption. The ratio of those who stated that “Few officials are involved” is 27% in 2016.

1.9 Proliferation of Corruption among Professional Groups: Almost All/Most



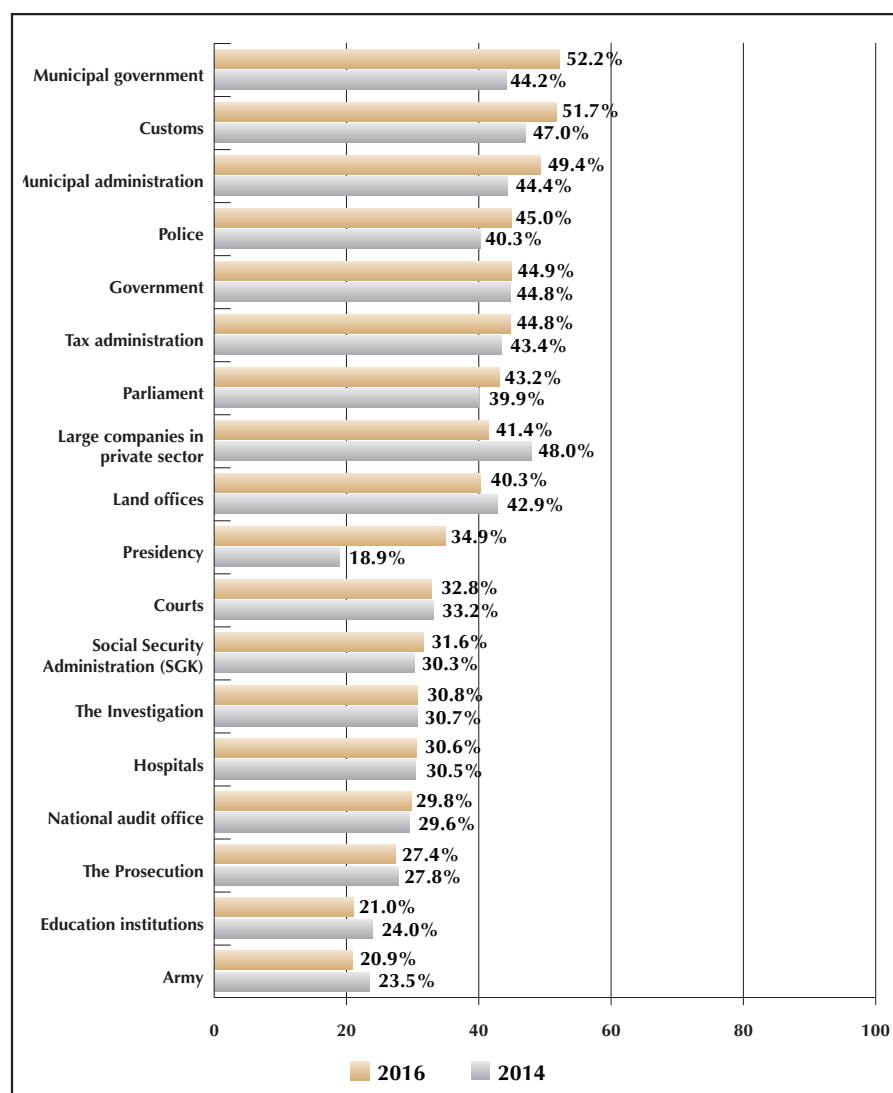
Assessed by the question “According to you, how far is corruption proliferated among the following groups?”; “members of the parliament”, “customs officers”, “tax officials”, “ministers”, “municipal officials”, “police officers”, “municipal councilors”, “business people” are perceived as the ones that are most involved in corruption in 2016. On the other hand, “teachers”, “university officials or professors”, and “doctors” are regarded as less involved in corruption compared to other groups in 2016. Those who stated that almost all or most “members of the parliament” are involved in corruption (61%) have increased by 9 percentage points compared to 2014. On the contrary, the number of those who think that “almost all” or “most” of the officials at ministries are involved in corruption dropped around 20 percentage points from 2014 to 2016.

1.10 Basis of Perception: Corruption Proliferation



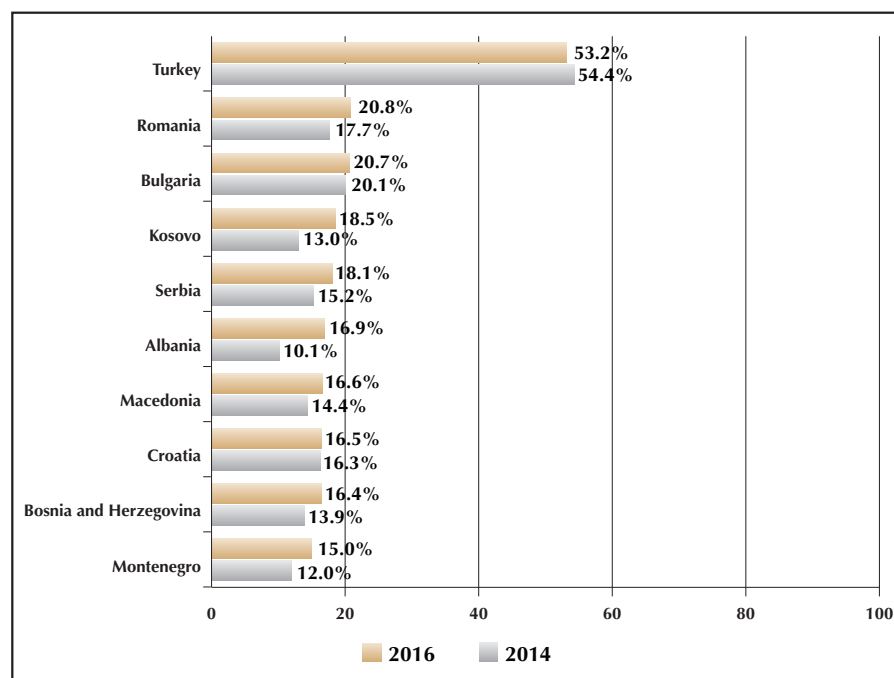
In order to understand the dynamics behind the perception on the corruption proliferation in Turkey, the question “Your assessment of corruption proliferation in Turkey has been formed mainly on the basis of:” was asked. In 2016, 60% answered “Media information”, whereas this was 67% in 2014. “Talks with relatives or people you may know” was selected by 15% of the participants in 2016.

1.11 Corruption Proliferation in Institutions: Highest Degree



In the question, “According to you, what is the degree of corruption proliferation in the following institutions?” participants were asked to evaluate the degree of corruption on a scale of 5, where 1 stands for “not proliferated at all”, and 5 for “Proliferated to the highest degree”. “Municipal government” got the highest ratio with 52% of the participants stating that there is a high degree of corruption in these institutions in 2016. In 2014, “Large companies in private sector” ranked the highest percentage that is 48%. A drastic change is observed in the case of “Presidency”, where in 2014, 19% of the participants stated corruption proliferation to a high degree, this ratio almost doubled this year, jumping up to 35%.

1.12 Corruption Proliferation in Countries in South Eastern Europe and Turkey: Very/ Greatest Extent

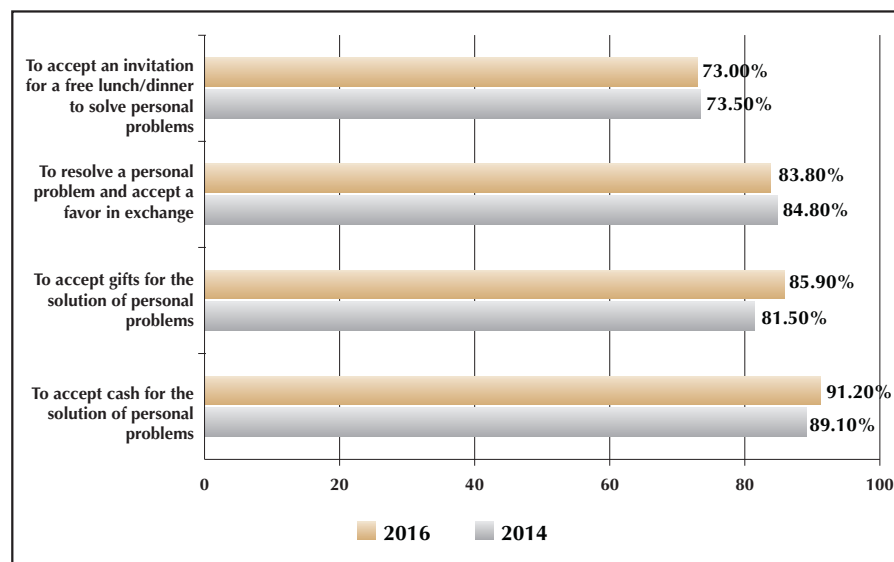


A similar question, this time evaluating the corruption level in different countries is asked; "According to you, to what extent has corruption proliferated in the following countries?", where on a 1-5 scale 1 represents "not spread at all", and 5 represents "spread to the greatest extent". Majority of the participants stated that in Turkey corruption was "spread to the greatest extent" or "very widespread" both in 2014 and 2016. Turkey is followed by Romania, and Bulgaria.

2. Attitudes towards Corruption

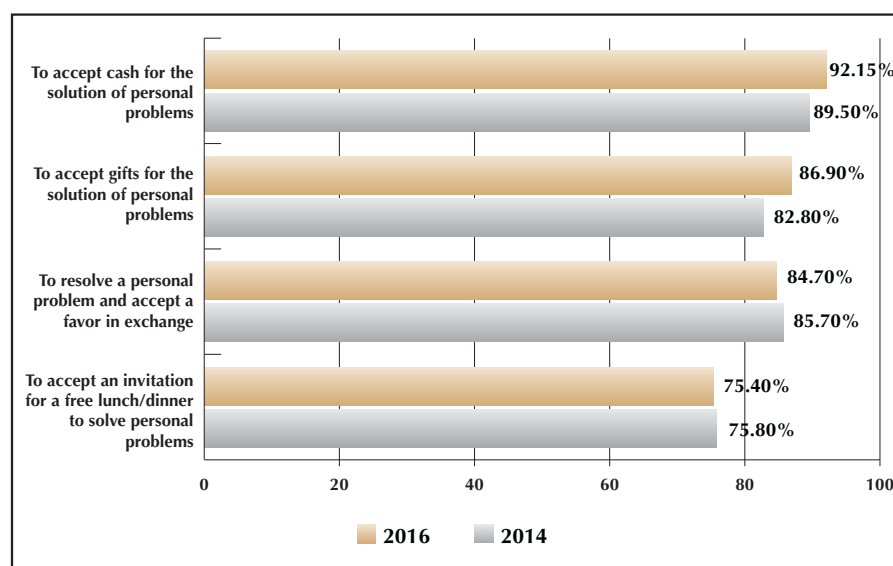
This part attempts to assess the extent to which corrupt practices or corruption are tolerated within the value system of the society.

2.1 Activities of MPs and Government: Unacceptable



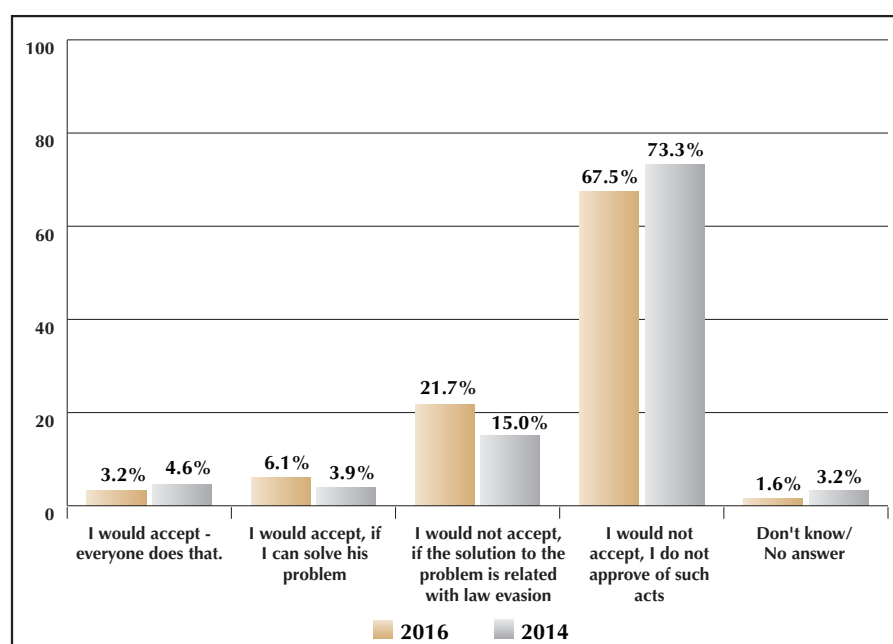
In response to the question, "According to you, are the following activities acceptable, if performed by members of the parliament or the government?"; 89% of the participants in 2014 and 91% in 2016 stated that "To accept cash for the solution of personal problems" is "unacceptable". "To accept gifts to solve personal problems" was unacceptable according to 82 % of the participants in 2014, whereas this was 86% in 2016.

2.2 Activities of Officials at Ministries, Municipalities, and Mayoralities: Rather Unacceptable/ Unacceptable



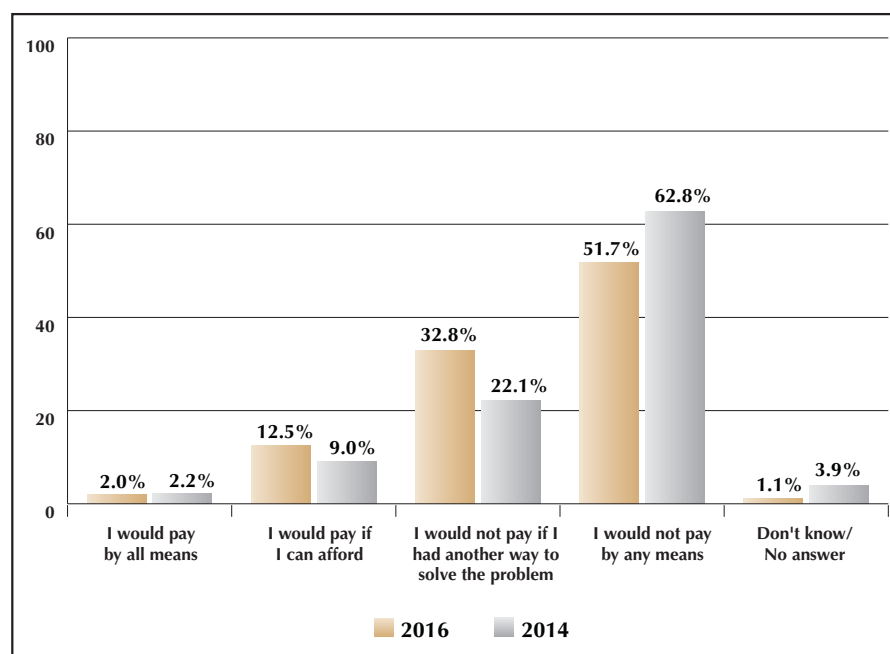
A similar question is asked regarding “officials at ministries, municipalities and mayoralities”. Likewise, “To accept cash for the solution of personal problems” got the highest ratio in being considered “unacceptable” or “rather unacceptable” by 92% of the participants in 2016, whereas it was of 90% in 2014. “To accept gifts for the solution of personal problems” was considered “unacceptable” or “rather unacceptable” by 87% of the participants in 2016, while this was 83% in 2014.

2.3 Imagined Behavior in the Face of Bribe Offer: What Would You Do?



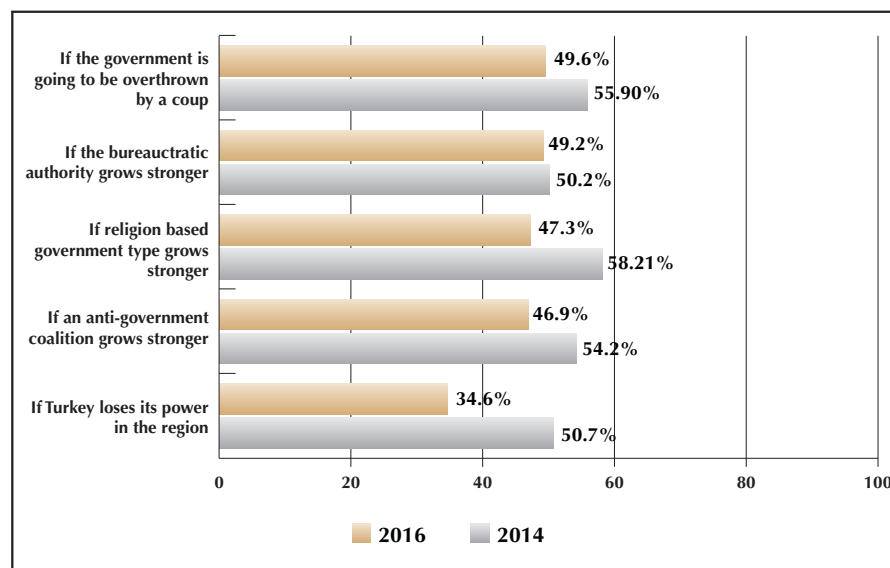
As a response to the question “Imagine yourself in an official low-paid position and you are approached by someone offering cash, gift, or favor to solve his/her problem. What would you do?” In 2016, 68% of the participants responded “I would not accept, I do not approve of such acts”, while 73% of the participants responded likewise in 2014. 22% of the participants stated that “I would not accept, if the solution to the problem is related with law evasion” in 2016, while this was 15% in 2014. In 2016, only 3% of the participants responded “I would accept - everyone does that”; and 6% said “I would accept, if I can solve his problem”.

2.4 Imagined Behavior in the Face of a Major Problem: What Would You Do?



To the question, “If you had a major problem and an official directly demanded cash to solve it, what would you have done?” majority of the participants respond that “I would not pay by any means” by 52% in 2016, while this ratio was 63% on 2014. In 2016, 33% stated that “I would not pay if I had another way to solve the problem”, while this ratio was 22% in 2014.

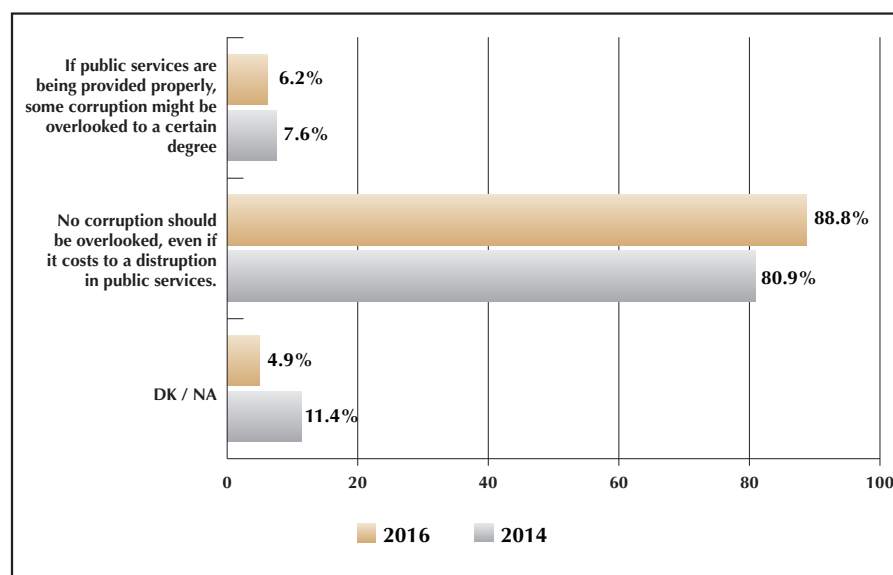
2.5 First Priority to Deal with: Corruption or Other Situations



The question “Among the following situations, which one do you consider is the first priority to deal with; corruption or these situations?: If the government is going to be overthrown by a coup / If the bureaucratic authority grows stronger / If an anti-government coalition grows stronger / If Turkey loses its power in the region / If religion based government type grows stronger” aims to assess how important the citizens regard “corruption” vis-a-vis other perceived threats. Each situation is compared with corruption; and in response

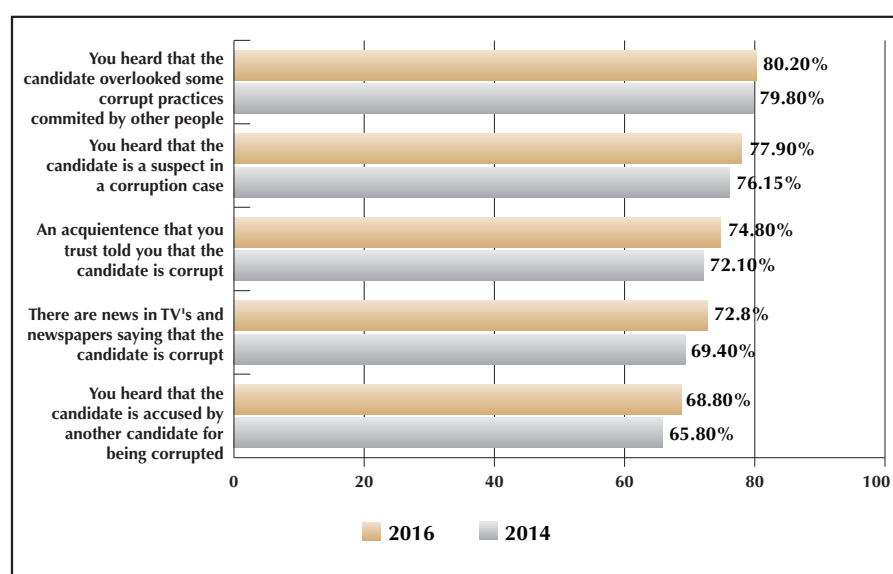
to each comparison, respectively 50%, 49%, 47%, 47%, and 35% of the participants stated “Dealing with corruption is the first priority” in 2016. While responses show similarities between the years, a drastic change is observed for “If Turkey loses its power in the region”. In 2014, 51% of the participants think dealing with corruption is the priority compared to Turkey losing its power in the region, whereas this ratio dropped to 35% in 2016.

2.6 Tolerance to Corruption: Public Services



Participants' tolerance to corruption is measured by the question "Which of the following opinions is closer to your own?: If public services are being provided properly, some corruption might be overlooked to a certain degree / No corruption should be overlooked, even if it costs a disruption in public services". By 89%, participants responded "No corruption should be overlooked even if it costs a disruption in public services" in 2016. Only 6% of the participants answered that corruption might be overlooked, if the public services are being provided properly in 2016.

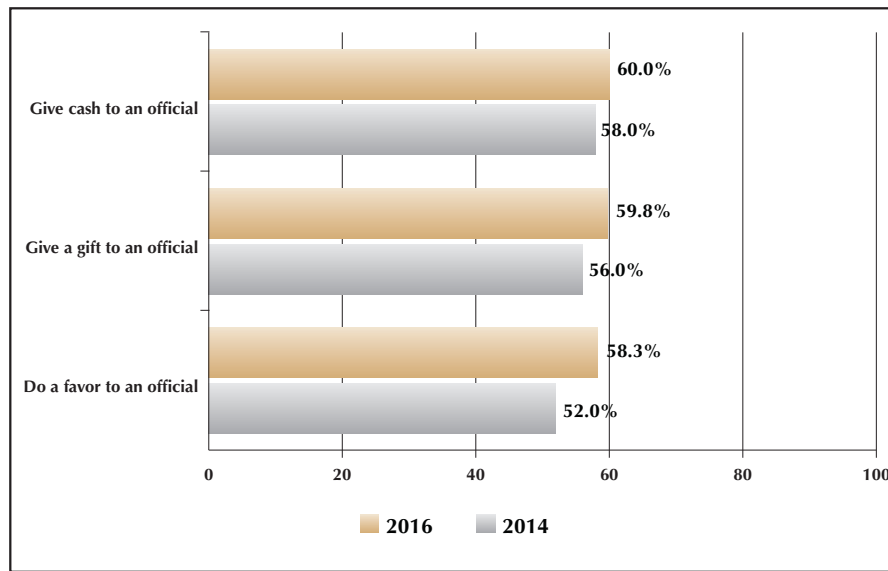
2.7 Tendency to Vote: The Influence of Corruption on Voting Behavior



The influence of corruption on voting behavior is measured by the following question: "How the following situations would affect your tendency to vote for your candidate in local elections: You heard that the candidate is accused by another candidate for being corrupt / There are news in TV's and newspapers saying that the candidate is corrupt / An acquaintance that you trust told you that the candidate is corrupt / You heard that the candidate is a suspect in a corruption case / You heard that the candidate overlooked some corrupt practices committed by other people / You heard that the candidate was found guilty 10 years ago for corruption". 80% stated that they would not vote, if they hear that the candidate overlooked some corrupt practices committed by other people; and 78% would not vote, if they hear the candidate is a suspect in a corruption case in 2016.

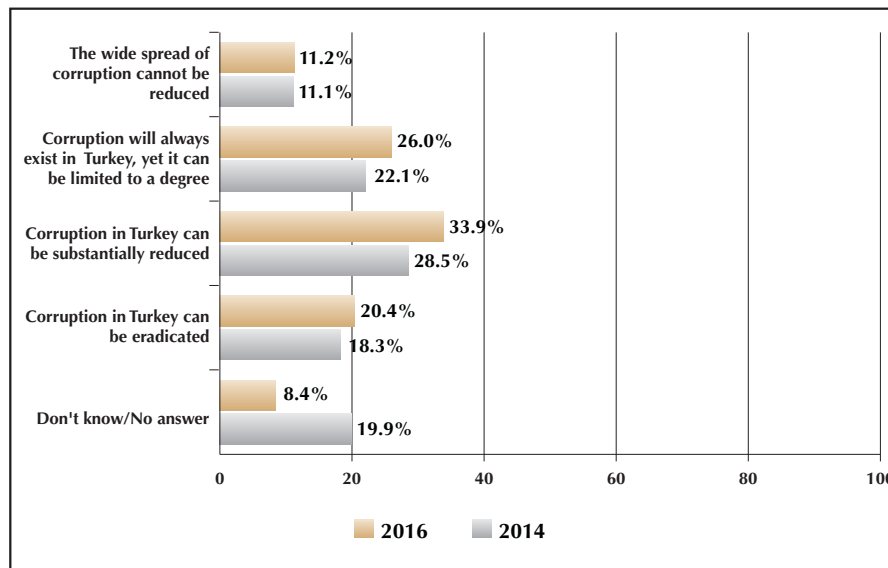
80% stated that they would not vote, if they hear that the candidate overlooked some corrupt practices committed by other people; and 78% would not vote, if they hear the candidate is a suspect in a corruption case in 2016.

2.8 Corruption in Solving Personal Problems: Rather/Very Likely



The question “In order to successfully solve one’s problem, is it likely or is it not likely, one has to: Give cash to an official / Give a gift to an official / Do a favor to an official?” aims to examine the extent to which corruption is perceived as an efficient means of solving personal problems. Majority of the participants in 2016 responded that all the three options are “rather likely” or “very likely”.

2.9 Eliminating Corruption in Turkey: Likelihood



To the question “In view of corruption in Turkey which of the following opinions is closer to your own?”; majority of the participants responded “Corruption in Turkey can be substantially reduced” (34%) in 2016. 26% of the participants responded “Corruption will always exist in Turkey, yet it can be limited to a degree” in 2016. According to 54% of the participants, corruption in Turkey is regarded as either substantially reduced, or partly eradicated in 2016. We observe a 5- percentage point rise in the number of those

who believed “corruption in Turkey can be substantially reduced” from 2014 to 2016. Also a 4- percentage point rise is observed among those who think “Corruption will always exist in Turkey, yet it can be limited to a degree”, between 2014 and 2016.



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