



2018 Barometer | Executive summary



Corruption in Catalonia: Citizens' perceptions and attitudes



Technical data

Study carried out on a sample (representative of the population with Spanish citizenship resident in Catalonia) of 850 telephone surveys with proportional affixation to persons aged over 18, from 5 to 31 October 2018.

The perception of levels of corruption

Some 71.9% of citizens consider there is a lot or quite a lot of corruption in Catalonia, while 24.4% think there is little or none. By gender, more women (76%) than men (67%) have the perception that there is more corruption.

We note a continued descent in the curve of this perception (since its peak in 2014, with 82.3%, and the 74.2% of 2016). (p. 13¹). *Comparison 1.1.*²

However, 81.3 % of respondents consider corruption in Catalonia to be a serious or fairly serious problem. (p. 14). *Comparison 1.2.*

Data on the subjective perception of variation confirms this relative improvement in the tendency, as those who believe corruption has increased are 30% (as opposed to the 34.6% of the previous barometer). (p. 15). *Comparison 1.3.*

As regards personal and direct contact with public corruption (abuse of a public position for private gain): 30% say they have witnessed irregular conduct in the workplace (a significant increase with respect to the 12.8% recorded in 2016); 22.9% inappropriate criteria being

¹ The page number corresponds to the **Results report**.

² The indication corresponds to the **Comparison of results**.

followed in the application of rules; 22.5% favouritism shown towards family members, friends, companies or the respondent themselves (versus the 31.8% of 2016); 12.2% the acceptance of gifts; and 4.2% the acceptance of a bribe. (p. 11).

Breakdown of the data regarding such conduct shows that the public healthcare system is where most respondents have witnessed favouritism being shown towards family members, friends, companies or the respondent themselves, and the acceptance of gifts. The local administration is where, to a greater extent, respondents have seen inappropriate criteria being followed in the application of rules and irregular conduct in the workplace. The Catalan Government Administration (Generalitat) and local entities are where most cases of bribes are concentrated (of the small percentage observed, some 4.2%). (p. 12).

Citizens

A total of 76.4% think that Catalans are very or fairly honest, while 17.9% consider they are a little or not at all honest. (p. 17).

Some 78.5% believe that, in general, the Catalans comply with laws a lot or quite a lot, and 17.9% a little or not at all. (p. 18).

With respect to the possibilities of citizens becoming involved in the fight against corruption (data introduced in the questionnaire this year): 36.1% believe that the most effective action they can take is to report corruption; 30% trust in voting for clean candidates or parties that promise to fight corruption efficiently; other options are to join or support anti-corruption organisations and associations (17.2%) or disseminate the problem publicly (12%). (p. 19).

Concept of corruption

Among the conducts most tolerated, 17.7% of respondents accept (strongly or fairly strongly) that a senior manager receives a case of wine as a gift, 11% that a person who works in the public healthcare system helps a family member jump the waiting list, and 8.5% tolerate (strongly or fairly strongly) nepotism (when an elected representative hires a close friend to occupy a position of trust). The acceptance of money by an official to help a procedure go through more easily is one of the conducts least accepted (a tiny 0.7% consider it acceptable). (p. 7).

The conduct considered most justifiable continues to be, as in previous editions, registering a child at the grandparents' address in order to enter the catchment area of the desired school (28.2%), followed by phoning a doctor to jump the waiting list (22.7%) or not paying the corresponding VAT (12.9%). Padding the CV is considered not very or not at all acceptable by a large majority (91.8%), while

copying in an examination is disapproved of by 90.8% (who consider it not very or not at all acceptable). Claiming for personal invoices by passing them off as work expense or keeping a wallet containing money are conducts listed as deserving least justification in the opinion of respondents (only 1.3% consider them justifiable). (p. 8).

Conducts identified as corrupt by the highest percentage of respondents are: when a person takes advantage of their public office for private gain (95.5%); when a businessman pays to win a public contract (94.2%) and when a politician votes in favour of a project to benefit his or her child's company (92.7%). Former senior officials using their contacts to influence political decisions is not considered corrupt by 9.9% of respondents. Accepting gifts from a supplier is corrupt according to 53.6% when the recipient is a private manager and by 76% when it is a public official. (p. 9).

Politics

In the case of a party that the respondent would like to vote for being affected by a case of corruption, even though it may have reduced unemployment and improved the economic situation during its term of office, 23.5% of respondents say they would continue voting for that party, 43.2% would vote for another party, while 14.6% would abstain and 13.3% would spoil their vote (this figure was 10.9% in 2016). (p. 21).

In answer to the question about the reasons candidates stand for election, respondents indicate the power and influence politicians acquire by being elected (the opinion of 37.2%, as opposed to the 34.5% of 2016); this is followed by personal enrichment (21.6%); the possibility of defending citizens' interests (20.9%, a figure which was 16.8% in 2016); and, lastly, that of fighting for their ideals and those of the party (17.4%, versus the 20.6% of 2016). (p. 22).

Some 87.5% of respondents consider politicians do not do whatever it takes to fight against corruption (a significant increase with respect to the 2016 result of 82.5%). However, 55.1% of respondents believe that ordinary citizens can make a difference in the fight against corruption, while 44.1% think the opposite. A lack of transparency in public decisions is noted by 72.5% (69.1% in 2016). A large percentage is critical with the rendering of accounts: 89.8% consider that politicians fail to offer sufficient explanations about their management (against the 84.6% of the previous edition). Excessively close links between business and politics is perceived by 82.9%. (p. 23).

There is a slight increase in the percentage that believe political parties are illegally funded: 51.9%, while the figure in 2016 was 48.1% (P. 24). A total of 81% think that receiving private funding influences their decisions once in government. (p. 25). *Comparison 3.2.*

The population is divided as regards their perception of the honesty of public officials in Catalonia: 42.6% consider they are very or fairly honest, while 54.2% find them not very or not at all honest. (p. 26).

The public administrations

The public service where corruption is considered most widespread is public works (83.7%), urban planning comes second (78.3%) and in third place we find justice (65.3%). The order is the same as in 2016, though the percentages have risen (81.4%, 72.8% and 56.4%). (p. 29). Financial institutions and political parties (scoring 82% and 82.7% respectively), followed by the media (60%) are the institutions where corruption is perceived to be most prevalent. This perception has increased in all three with respect to the previous barometer. The universities occupy last place, though the percentage has rocketed (from 20.4% in 2016 to the current 30.3%). (p. 31). *Comparison 4.1.*

The public activity in which corruption is most common, according to the surveys, is that of public procurement (76.7%), followed by the granting of licenses and authorisations (68%) and subsidies to organisations (66.5%). A certain growth in the general perception of corruption is also evident. (p. 31). *Comparison 4.2.*

Some 67.8% of the people interviewed tend to disagree or totally disagree with the affirmation that appointments in the public administration are based on merit and capability (64.5% in 2016). (p. 23). (*Comparison 4.4.*) A total of 68% believe the public administrations show favouritism in their dealings with people and organisations that are close or related to the government. (p. 33). To get something from the administration or a public service, respondents would rather offer a favour (17.2% say they would be very or fairly prepared to do so) than make a gift (6.3%) or give money (1.7%). (p. 28). *Comparison 4.3.*

The percentage of the population that considers staff working for the administration in Catalonia to be very or fairly honest (69%) has grown slightly (in 2016 the figure was 66.5%). (p. 32). There has been a steady upward tendency in this perception since 2012 (54.2%). *Comparison 4.4.*

Companies and the media

Some 59.2% of respondents consider corruption to be very or fairly prevalent in private companies. (p. 30).

A total of 80.5% consider relationships between elected representatives and interest groups are not sufficiently transparent. (p. 35).

And 66.2% believe that the information offered by the media about corruption cases is not very or not at all objective (a perception which was held by 69.5% in 2016). (p. 36).

Transparency and conflicts of interest

A majority of Catalans (54.8%) consider that the public administrations are not very or not at all transparent, (p. 40), despite a certain reduction in relation to the 2016 result (58.5%) and a sustained growing tendency of improvement since 2010 (71.6%).
Comparison 6.1.

In the event of a local authority refusing to provide information, the preferred reaction is to exhaust all possible avenues, including the judicial approach (35.1%); the second choice is to send a complaint to the mailbox (32.1%), followed by lodging an administrative appeal (28.6%) and, finally, to publicise the problem through social networking sites or the media (19.1%).

The public response demonstrates significant progress in people's determination to access information, compared to data from 2016 (in which a complaint to the mailbox was only considered by 22.8%, and an administrative appeal by 18.8%). (p. 38). *Comparison 6.2.*

Having something to hide is the first reason considered by respondents when an institution fails to give the information requested (43.4% against the 38.6% that chose this response in 2016). Costs and complications is the conclusion reached by 32.9%, and for 25.6% the motive lies in the knowledge that there will be no penalty for such failure. Only 9.3% attribute refusal to people requesting absurdities. (p. 38). *Comparison 6.3.*

The main reason a public official may put private interests above the general interest is his or her own economic interests, in the opinion of 34.4% of respondents; in second place comes the expectation of obtaining a good job after leaving public service (30.4%). Personal financial difficulties is the reason chosen by 14.1%, followed by family or personal relationships and friendships (10%). (p. 41).

The belief that the assets and economic activity of elected representatives should be monitored by an independent body has reached 90% (versus the 86.2% of 2016). Of these, 68.9% extend such consideration to the politician's family. (p. 42).

The fight against corruption

In the opinion of 86% of respondents, the reaction of institutions and parties when there are indications of corruption that affect one of their officials or elected representatives should be to separate that person from their duties, while 10% are inclined to leave them in post until there is a sentence.

Almost half (48.2%) of the people asked identify the difficulty in securing evidence as the main obstacle to reporting a case of corruption that they are aware of (as opposed to the 34.6% of 2016). Fear of reprisals is the second reason given (30% versus 16.4% in 2016). The lack of response from the system (the culprit will not be punished) is the option chosen by 26.9%, and not knowing where to report it that offered by 17.4%. There is a rapid rise overall in reasons beyond the control of the complainant. (p. 45).

The index of confidence in the institutions to fight against corruption is headed by the police (with an average of 6.1), followed by the NGOs and other associations (6), the media, press and journalists (5.3) and in last place, the justice system (5). (p. 47).

Some 67.5% of the people interviewed are aware of the Anti-Fraud Office, with an average confidence indicator of 5.9. (pp. 46 and 47).

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