Public-Private Partnerships against Corruption in Russia

ASSESSING CORRUPTION & ANTICORRUPTION PROGRAMS IN SAMARA OBLAST

COMPARISON OF SURVEYS, 2001-2006

NOVEMBER 29, 2006

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1. Introduction

It is a widely held belief that little can be done – especially over the short-term – to rid a community of corrupt practices. However, since 2001, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations, business associations, and media outlets, in coordination with the Samara oblast administration, planned and implemented a multifaceted program against corruption in government that has resulted in significant and positive impacts on the problem. While corruption certainly has not been eliminated in Samara, many positive conclusions are clearly observable. For example,

- the problem has been elevated on the public agenda,
- more people are aware of the costs of corruption on their quality of life,
- reforms have been put in place to make corruptive practices less likely,
- government has established more effective ways to monitor and control the operations of corruption-vulnerable departments,
- law enforcement agencies have become more actively engaged in investigating and prosecuting corrupt officials,
- citizens and businesspeople have outlets to register their grievances about corruption and seek redress, and
- civil society has mobilized itself into effective public oversight bodies and advocacy groups that place greater demands on government to enforce the rule of law and see to it that reforms are not only enacted but implemented rigorously.

These activities and their implications for the everyday lives of citizens, businesspeople and government officials in Samara have been positive. Before and after public opinion surveys demonstrate that people notice that, incrementally, the anticorruption campaign over these five years has contributed to a reduction in the detrimental effects of corruption. Comparison of survey data collected as a baseline at the beginning of the program in 2001 with survey data collected in 2006 corroborate these findings. These surveys collected data on both public perceptions and behaviors related to corruption and demonstrate quantitatively that the corruption situation in Samara is now reduced.

But perhaps, one might say, the corruption problem in Russia, as a whole, has gotten better, and it was not the special efforts undertaken in Samara that made the difference. To test for this possibility, we compared Samara survey results with Russia-wide survey results and found that while the corruption situation in Russia has either stabilized or gotten worse over these years, the situation in Samara has improved. This report documents these before-and-after comparisons of citizen perceptions and behaviors related to corruption in Samara.

2. Objectives

The goals of this report are threefold:

- To compare the two surveys to identify where there have been major changes in response to the corruption situation in Samara and where things have not changed substantially over the years.

- To assess the impact of the Anti-Corruption Program in Samara since 2001.

- To develop recommendations based on these findings that help in developing a new targeted agenda to fight corruption based on past successes and failures for Samara citizens and policymakers to pursue.

3. Background

Public sector corruption, commonly understood as *the misuse of public office for private gain*, exists throughout the world and is widespread in many places. Corruption has been shown to be very costly to economic growth and inhibits the development of effective governing practices. From an economic perspective, corruption increases the cost of doing public and private business and is a major disincentive for investors. From a governance perspective, corruption distorts the intent and implementation of laws and regulations, limits the delivery and quality of government services, excludes citizens from open participation in their government, and reduces government accountability, transparency and legitimacy.

For many years, the Samara Oblast and City Administrations have demonstrated their political will to fight corruption by enacting a variety of reforms and institutional changes. Many of these reforms are described on the Samara Oblast website: http://www.adm.samara.ru.

At the request of Governor Konstantin Titov, a comprehensive anti-corruption program was initiated in Samara oblast focusing on reforms and initiatives to enforce the law, prevent opportunities for corruption from occurring, and educate the public to make it aware of the costs of corruption and increase its legal literacy. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its partner organization, Management Systems International (MSI), have provided support to this program since 2001. As first steps in this program a detailed Anti-Corruption Action Plan on Counteracting Corruption in Samara Oblast was developed, a Public-Private Coalition Against Corruption comprised of representatives of all sectors of society was established, and a Coordinating Council under the Governor's leadership was created. The Anti-Corruption Coordinating Council has met regularly over the years. The oblast and city government have implemented many reforms to streamline bureaucracy and institute stricter internal controls. As well, the Coalition has been extremely active in mobilizing civil society, business and the mass media in a wide variety of anticorruption actions. Its actions have put pressure on government authorities to reform targeted laws, procedures and institutions so they become more transparent and accountable to the public. The Coalition has also been successful at increasing the population's legal literacy and ensuring that the corruption issue remains high on the public agenda. (See the Coalition's website: www.stopcor.ru.)

This report compares the results of a baseline survey conducted in October 2001 with a follow-up survey conducted in June 2006. The survey was based on a systematic representative sampling oblast-wide of 1963 households, 712 of which were in Samara

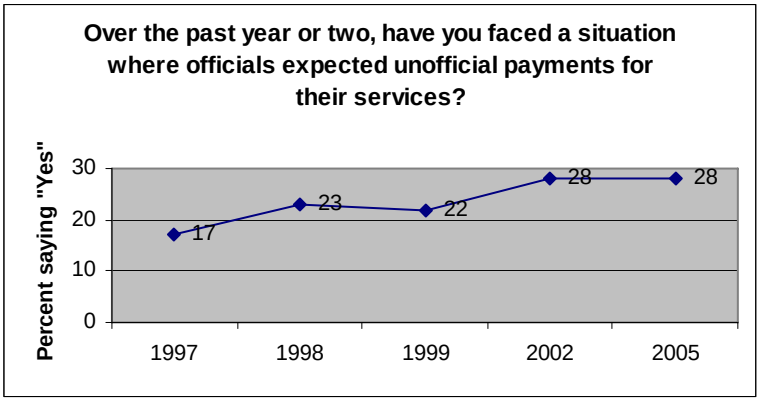
city.[1] The survey questionnaire was designed based on corruption and governance surveys conducted by MSI and the World Bank in other countries. The sampling methodology, interviewing and data collection were conducted by ISITO, a survey research organization based in Samara. In 2006, the survey was again conducted by ISITO, covering a representative sample of 1000 households in Samara city alone using many of the same questions. The results analyzed and compared in this report consist only of the responses collected in Samara city.

In addition to comparing these corruption surveys conducted in Samara, several all-Russia corruption surveys conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation between 1997 and late 2005 are also analyzed in this report. These latter surveys provide a useful context within which to understand the impact of Samara's Anti-Corruption Program over time. Overall, the findings from these survey comparisons can help the Samara Coordinating Council and Coalition pinpoint where their activities have worked and those sectors where additional efforts need to be targeted in the future.

4. Russia-wide Results: 1997-2006

The Public Opinion Foundation (Russia) conducted nationwide representative public opinion surveys concerning corruption for many years (data for 1997, 1998, 1999, 2002 and 2005 are currently available).[2] Across a variety of basic questions, their results clearly demonstrate a continually worsening corruption situation in Russia overall.

For example, since 1997, respondents report a steady increase in the incidence of being extorted for bribes by government officials: from 17% in 1997 to 28% in 2005.



[1] Management Systems International (2002) "Assessment of Corruption in Samara Oblast: Results of a Public Opinion Survey, October 2001," Washington, DC: MSI.
[2] National surveys were conducted in 44 regions, territories and republics with sample sizes of 1500 respondents. The results are posted on the Foundation's website: www.fom.ru.
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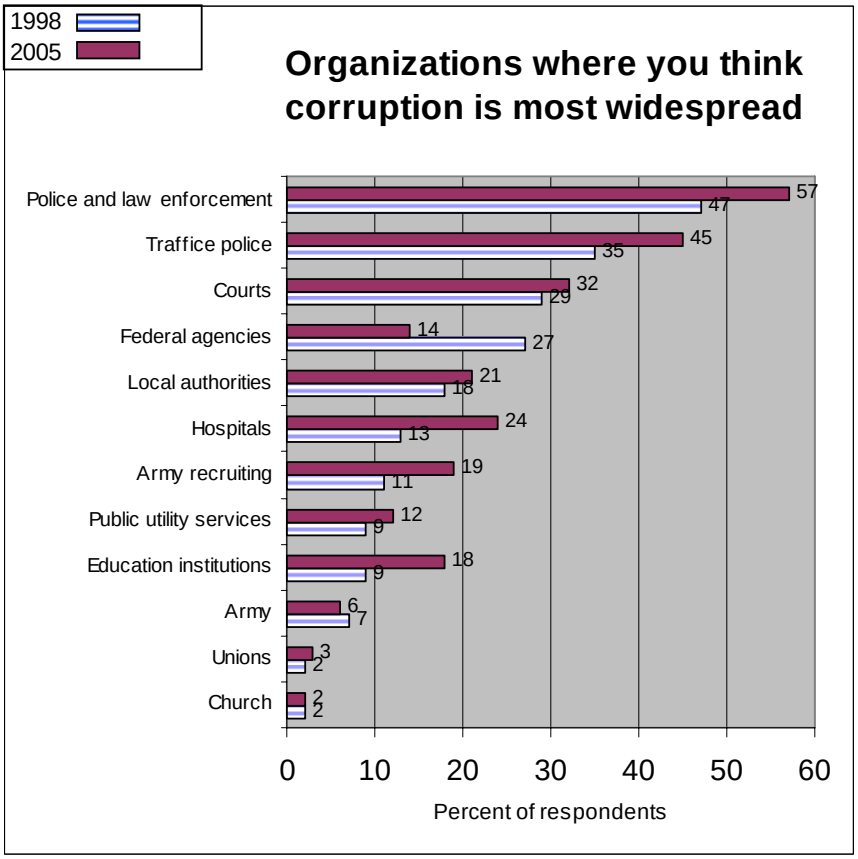
When asked their opinion on how many officials in Russia are corrupt, the result remains steady. In both 2002 and 2005, 64% say that they believe that all or the majority of government officials are corrupt.

Does the population perceive that this level of corruption has changed over the past few years? The results suggest that there has been little change of opinion: 86% believed that corruption has increased or stayed the same in 1998 and 83% believed that in 2005.

Is corruption more widespread in different levels of government? Again, over the years, there is little change in opinion: in 2002, 61% of respondents believed that corruption at the local and federal levels was the same and in 2005, 59% believe that they are the same.

In which institutions or agencies of government is corruption most widespread? The top three on the list have not changed between 1998 and 2005, although respondents believe the corruption problem in each of these institutions has gotten worse over the years. The worst is the police, customs and law enforcement (47% believed corruption was most widespread there in 1998 and 57% believed it in 2005). Second is the traffic police (in 1998, 35% believed it was the most corrupted and in 2005 45% believed that). Next in line are the courts and prosecutor's office (29% believed it was most corrupt in 1998 and 32% in 2005). In fact, out of 12 institutions monitored, only two got slightly improved ratings over the seven years from 1998 to 2005: 27% believe that corruption was widespread in Federal agencies in 1998 compared with 14% in 2005; as well, 7% believe corruption was widespread in the Army in 1998, while 6% believed that in 2005. All other institutions showed a marked increase in increased corruption spread over the seven years.



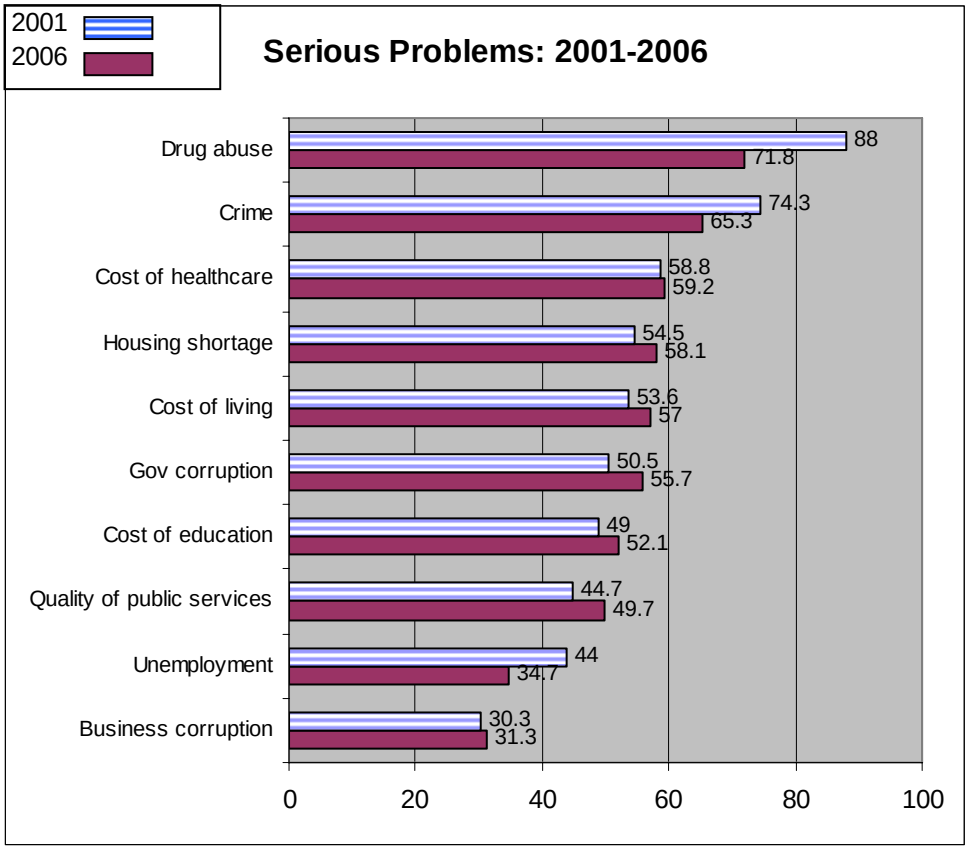
Finally, do people think it is possible to eradicate corruption in Russia? The majority think it is impossible, though that opinion has been wavering over the years. In 1999, 61% of respondents thought it impossible, while in 2005, 50% thought it impossible.

5. Samara Results: 2001-2006

The results presented in this section compare the Samara city corruption surveys conducted in 2001 and 2006. Significant changes over time on key indicators related to corruption, as well as maintenance of the status quo, are described below.

5.1 Problems in the Oblast

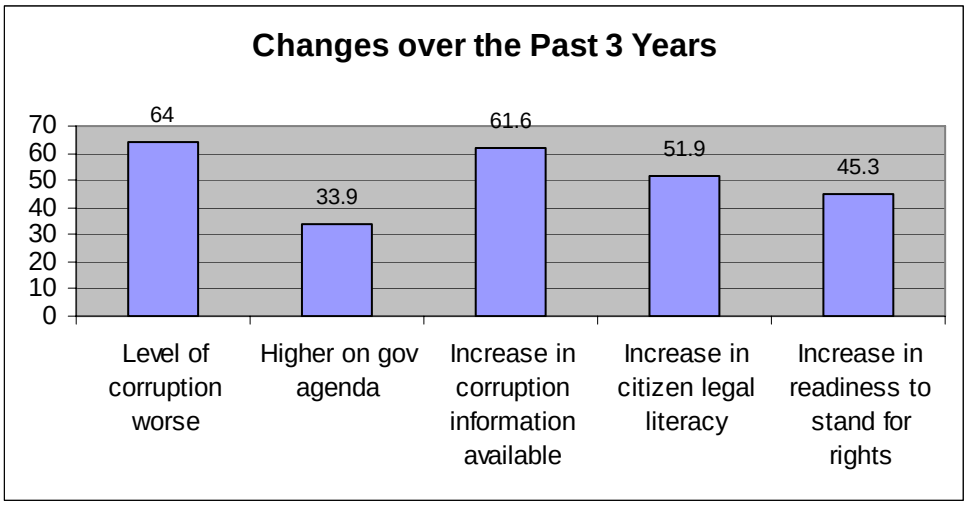
Respondents in 2006 believe that several public policy problem areas are less serious than had been in 2001. Among these areas are drug abuse/drug trafficking, crime activity, and unemployment. On the other hand, several policy areas have stayed the same or gotten a little worse in the public's eye. These include governmental corruption, corruption in the private sector, the cost of healthcare, the housing shortage, the cost of living, the cost of education, and the quality of public services.



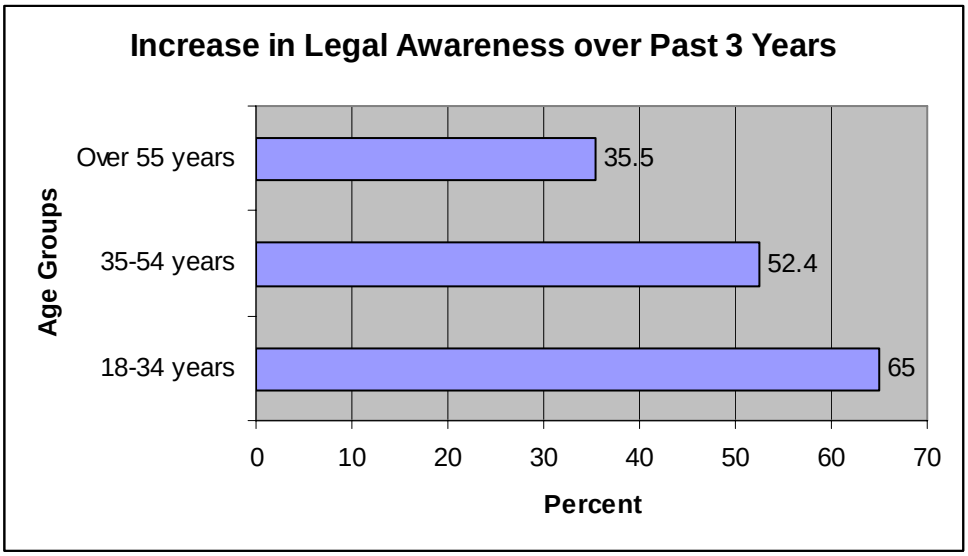
5.2 Overall Changes in the Past Three Years

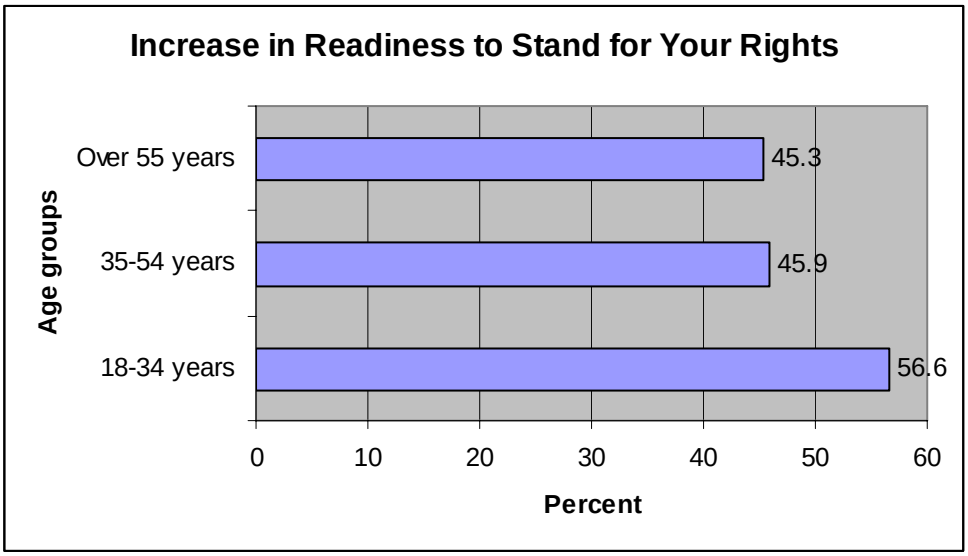
When asked how life has changed in the oblast over the past three years, 64 percent of respondents in 2006 acknowledge that the level of corruption has gotten worse, but other indicators suggest that solutions to the corruption problem are receiving greater priority. For example,

- Almost 34 percent of respondents believe that corruption issues now higher on the government's agenda
- Almost 62 percent believe that more corruption information is available now than it was three years ago
- Almost 52 percent believe that citizens now have greater legal literacy about corruption issues now
- Approximately 45 percent of respondents believe that citizens generally are more willing and ready to stand up for their rights now than they were three years ago.



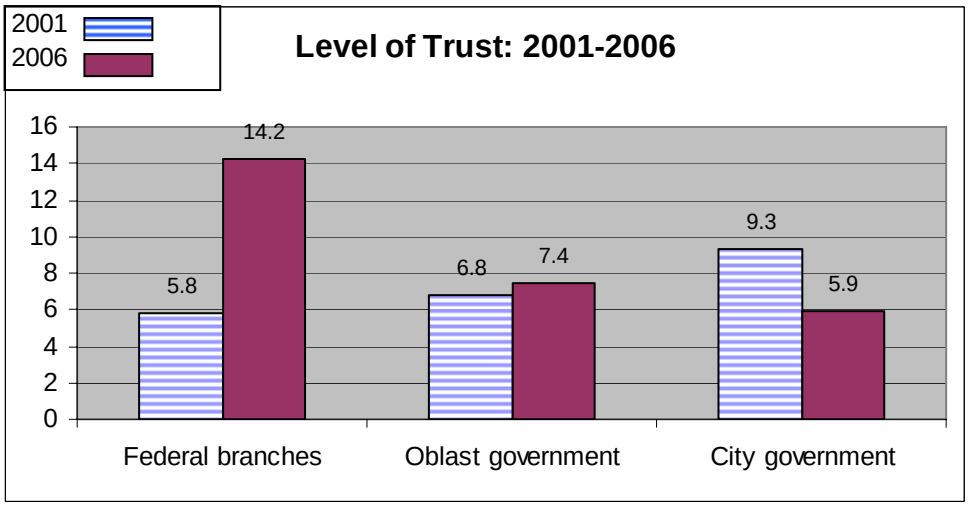
Analyzing some of these results by age group, we find that the greatest shift in legal awareness over the past three years is clearly among the youngest group of respondents (between 18-34 years). As well, there is a statistically significant difference in beliefs about readiness to stand up for one's own rights if confronted by a corrupt official: almost 57% of respondents in the 18-34 year old group indicate a greater readiness as compared with only 45% among older groups.





5.3 Trust in Government

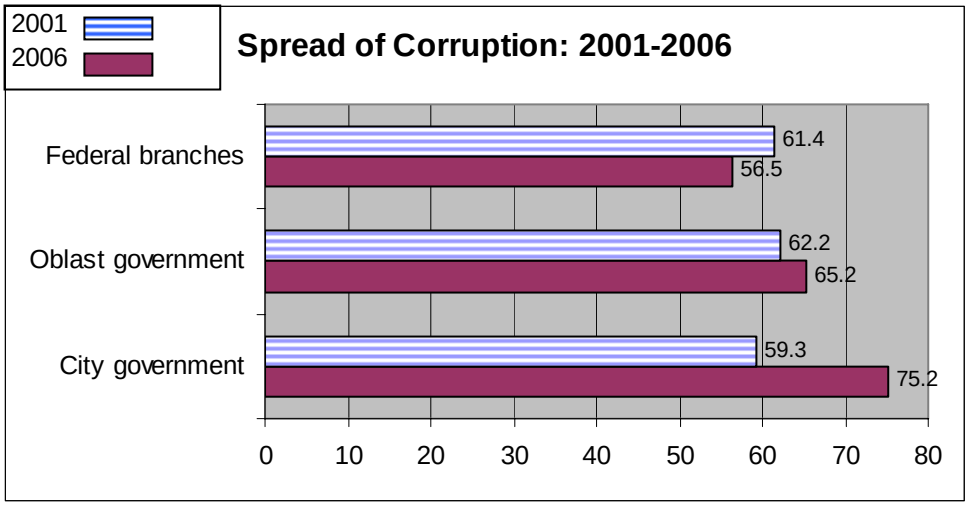
The surveys demonstrate a major increase in the level of trust citizens have in the Federal branches of government operating at the regional level. A small increase in trust in registered for oblast government agencies. There is a decrease in trust for city government departments. Despite these trends, it must be noted that the level of trust that the government is operating with the interests of the people in mind is rather low in all three cases.



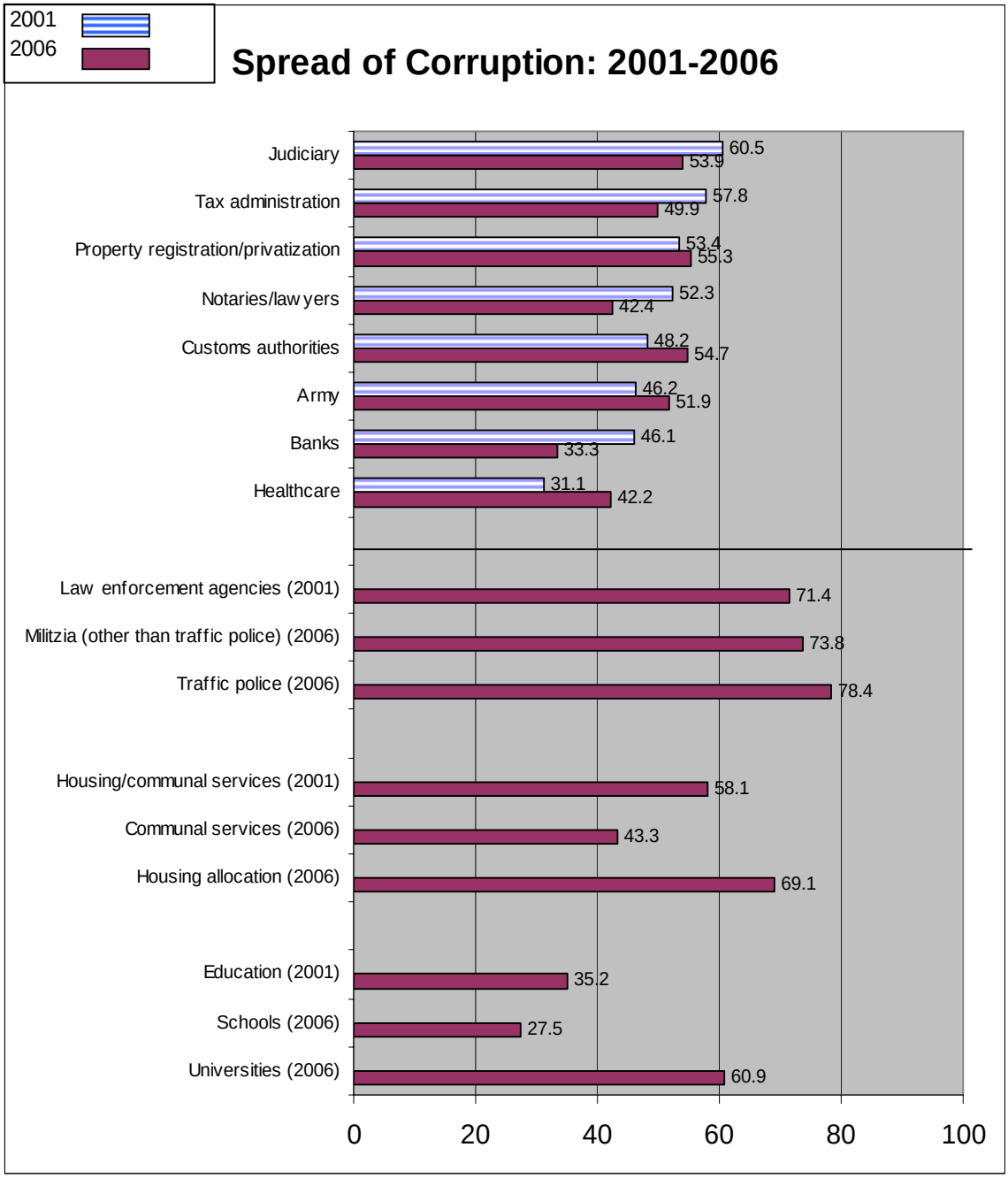
5.4 Spread of Corruption

Reflecting the increased degree of trust in Federal branches operating in the region, public perceptions find that corruption is less widespread now at that level of government

than it was in 2001. However, at the oblast and city levels, public perceptions suggest increased spread of corruption among officials.



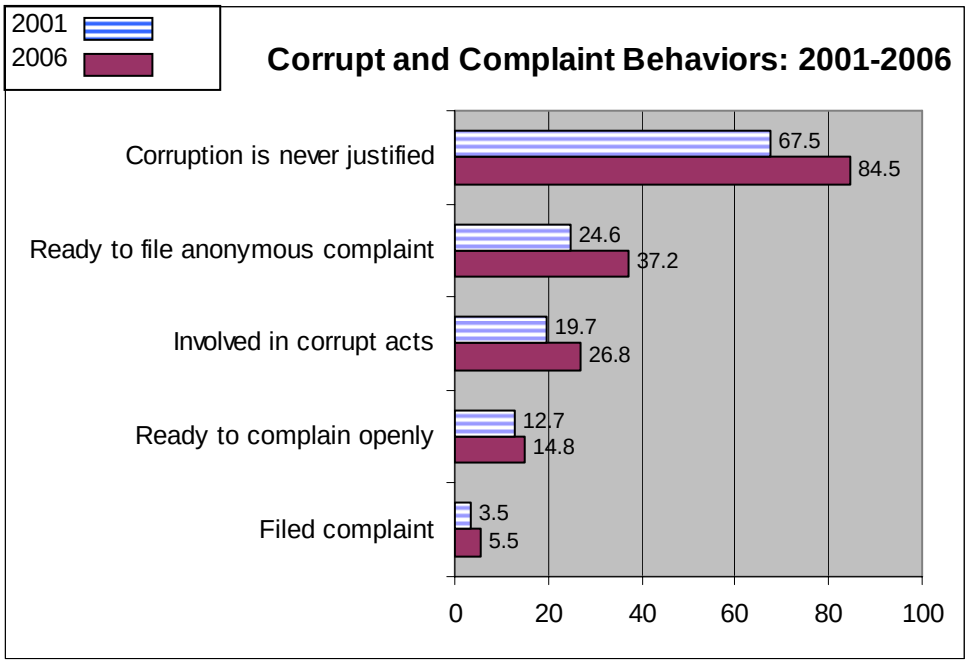
When asked how widespread corruption is among government officials in various key sectors and institutions, the worst offenders remain constant over time: the traffic police and militzia, the judiciary, universities, housing allocation, the tax administration, property registration, notaries and lawyers, customs authorities, the Army, and healthcare. Corruption in several of these government functions is perceived to have increased over the past few years, while it has decreased in others. Corruption appears to have become more widespread in law enforcement agencies, property registration, customs, the Army and healthcare. Corruption seems to have decreased in the judiciary, the tax administration, notaries and lawyers, and banks.



5.5 Corruption and Complaint Behaviors

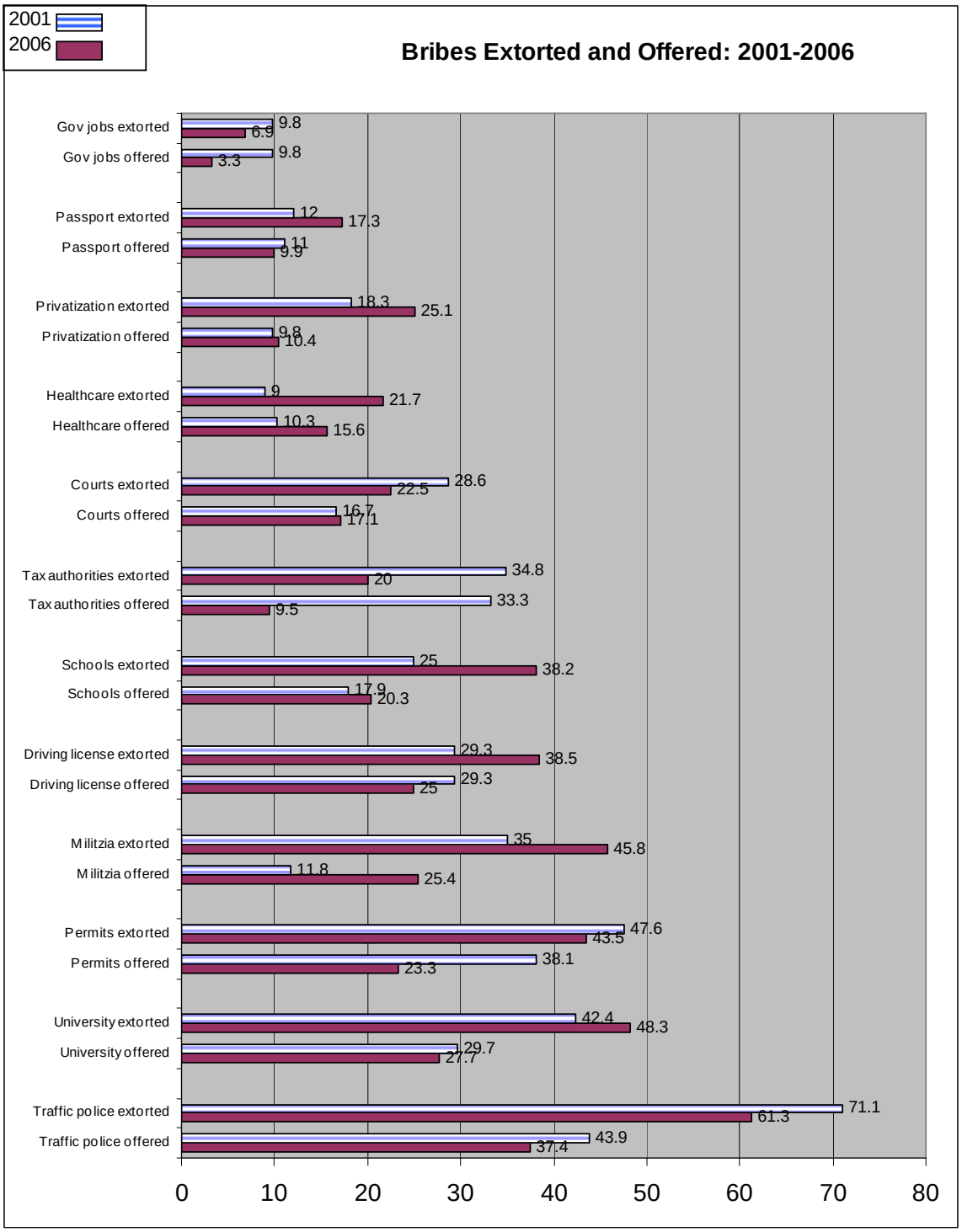
Over the five years, respondents indicate a dramatic increase in the belief that corruption is never justified (from 67% in 2001 to 84% in 2006). Analyzing this changing belief by age group, it is evident that the greatest increase is among the youngest group of respondents (18-34 years). This age group, more than the older groups, has grown more intolerant of corruption over the past five years, experiencing an attitude shift of a 20% toward greater intolerance. Despite this belief, there was an increase in respondents

indicating that they had been involved in a corrupt act, from almost 20% in 2001 to 27% in 2006. There was a very small increase in citizens indicating that they had filed an official complaint about a corruption incident they had been involved in. However, there is a growing number of people indicating that they would be ready to file a complaint if it could be done anonymously.



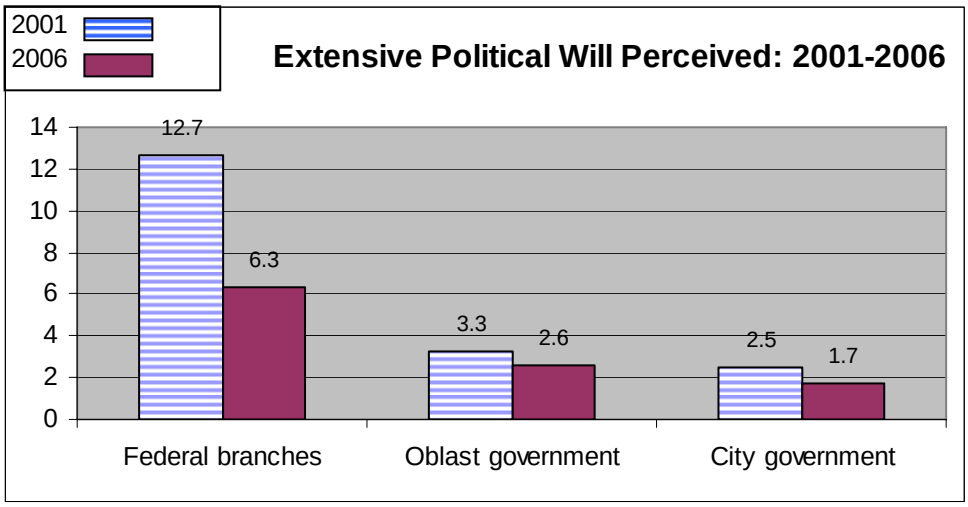
5.6 Bribes Extorted and Offered

Trends in bribe extortion by officials and bribe offering by citizens have changed over time and across government functions. In general, extortion of bribes by officials is more common than citizen offers of informal payments or gifts to officials across all government functions. The worst government functions where bribes are requested by officials or offered by citizens are: traffic police, the university, getting permits, militzia, getting driving licenses, schools, and tax authorities. Even among these worst cases, corruption with the traffic police, in getting permits, and with tax authorities has decreased substantially over the past five years. However, the trend in bribery in universities, with the militzia, getting driving licenses, and in schools has been increasing over time.



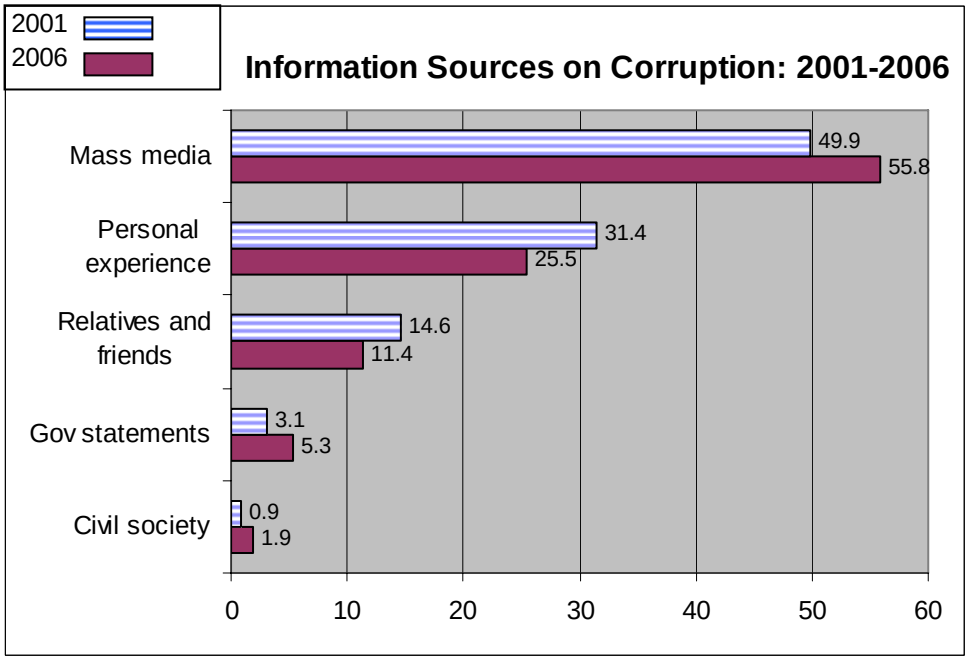
5.7 Political Will

Interestingly, the political will, commitment and leadership at all levels of government to deal effectively with fighting corruption are perceived by the public to be at relatively low levels and diminishing.

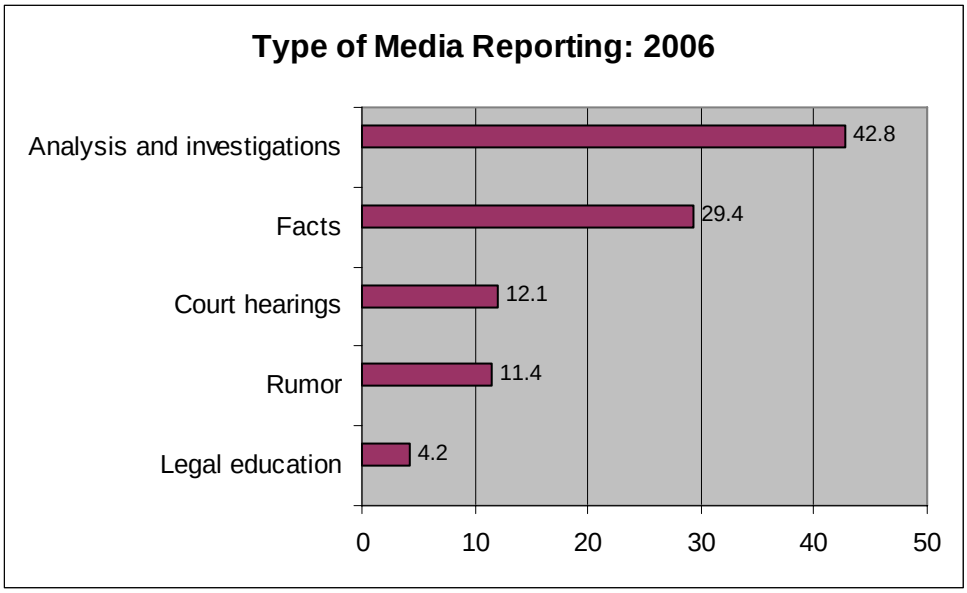


5.8 The Media and Public Awareness

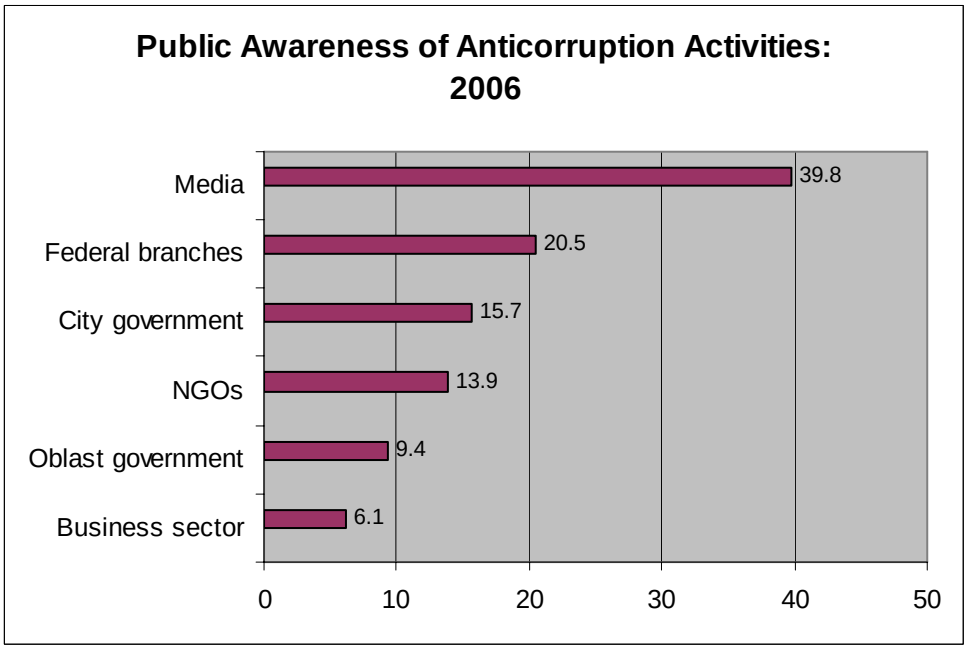
Most people get their information about corruption issues from the mass media and that trend is increasing substantially.



The majority of media information available to the public is seen as journalistic analysis and investigative, fact-based reporting.

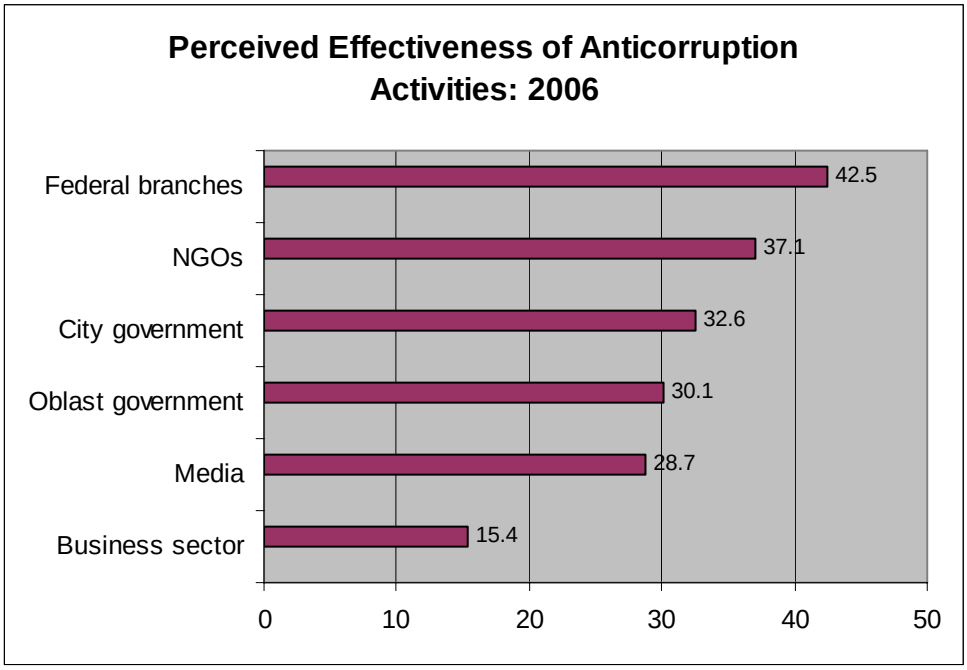


Public awareness about anticorruption activities as undertaken by different institutions and organizations varies substantially. Almost 40% of respondents are aware of anticorruption information disseminated by the mass media. The next closest agencies conducting anticorruption activities that people are aware of are Federal branches operating at the oblast level (20%) and city government (16%).

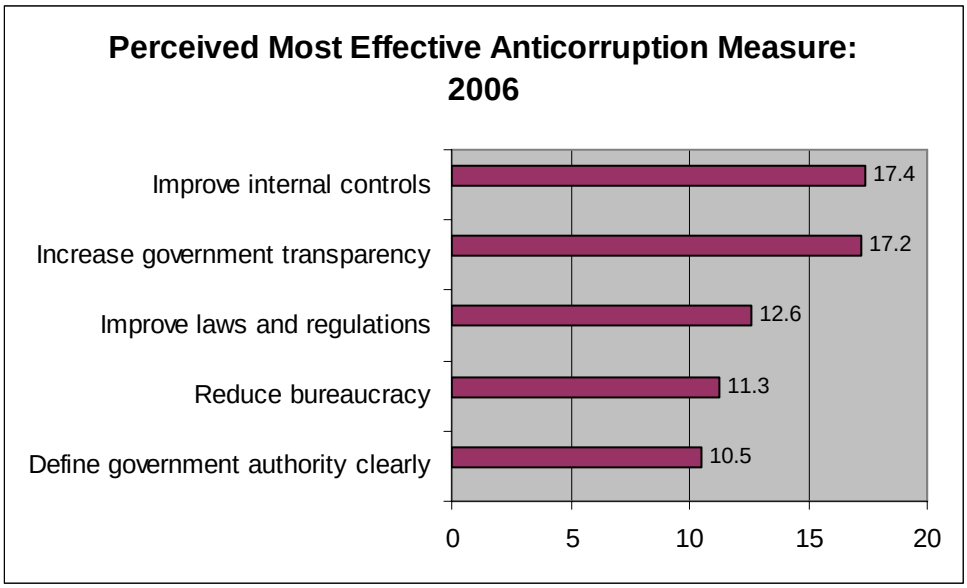


5.9 Perceived Effectiveness of Anticorruption Activities

Of those institutions and organizations conducting anticorruption actions, the Federal branches operating at the oblast level (42%) and nongovernmental organizations (37%) are viewed as being the most effective in achieving their objectives.



Of a wide range of possible actions, the anticorruption measures that are perceived by the public to be the most effective all relate to controlling government officials more persistently. They include improving internal controls, increasing government transparency, improving laws and regulations, reducing the bureaucracy and defining government authority more clearly.



6. Analysis

To what extent does it appear that the anticorruption initiatives in the Samara region have had an impact on reducing the problem and changing official and public attitudes toward it? Comparison of the before and after surveys in Samara, plus comparison of the all-Russia trends with those in the Samara region, provide detailed evidence of the positive effects of the anticorruption program. While corruption is still very much a serious problem in Samara, the oblast may have turned the corner in changing attitudes of and tolerance for corrupt practices, as well as controlling corrupt behaviors in some key government institutions and functions. For example,

- Russia-wide, perceived corruption levels among government officials are high and have changed little over the years. In Samara, while corruption is perceived to be increasing overall, there are many government functions and institutions where this trend has been reversed and citizen empowerment to fight appears to have made major advances.

- Many of the government institutions and functions where corruption reduction has been observed were the targets of government as well as NGO anticorruption initiatives over the past five years, especially in the areas of communal services and schools. Citizen watchdogs and the mass media closely monitored government decisions and activities in these areas, and citizen advocacy groups worked closely with government agencies to change procedures that hindered transparency and promoted corruption. In addition, the Citizen Advocate Office in Samara defended hundreds of clients over the past five years in court and administratively to fight corruption in the judiciary and in the tax administration, among many others.

- Public awareness activities conducted by the nongovernmental Samara Partnership against Corruption and its member groups appear to have had a major impact on citizen legal literacy and the public's readiness to stand up for its rights. The annual Anticorruption Weeks, business workshops on legal issues, brochures on what to do if confronted by corrupt officials, as well as the many TV programs and newspaper articles on corruption issues have had an effect on mobilizing citizen understanding and response to corruption.

- The anticorruption program in Samara has put much effort into training and supporting the mass media and investigative journalism. This appears to have paid off. Citizens get more of their information about corruption now from the media, and the vast majority of media reporting is viewed as fact-based and analytical.

- Over the past five years, the anticorruption program in Samara put extensive effort into working with youth – through civic education programs in schools, extracurricular programs, and university-based initiatives. The survey results suggest that these efforts paid off. The younger group of respondents exhibited statistically different results from their older counterparts in terms of greater intolerance for corruption, increased legal literacy, and increased sense of empowerment to stand up for their rights when confronted with corrupt officials.

- The anticorruption program has also supported the development of capacity of NGOs to address corruption issues in a positive and effective way. This support has come from both USAID and Oblast government sources. The result is a high degree of perceived effectiveness of anticorruption initiatives promoted by the NGO community.

7. Recommendations for Future Action

Key Survey Findings	Implications for Action
Public sector corruption was not the most important problem in the oblast in 2001 and it still remains only the sixth most important problem in 2006. However, over these five years, the corruption problem has increased slightly in importance in the public's mind.	Anticorruption initiatives continue to be important policy agenda items. Future anticorruption programs should focus attention on the corruption vulnerabilities in other priority areas, such as healthcare, housing, education, and delivery of public services. Programs should also target the nexus of corruption, drug trafficking and organized crime.
While the level of corruption is perceived as having gotten worse over the years, there are also several trends that counteract this corruption problem. Government has become more attentive to the problem, more information is	It is important to maintain public awareness and legal literacy programs that make citizens and businesspeople aware of the rights and ready to stand up for them if they are confronted with corruption. The Government needs to continue placing anticorruption programs toward the top of its agenda.

available to citizens, citizens have greater legal literacy, and citizens are more ready now to stand up for their rights.	
Corruption appears to have become more widespread among officials in particular government institutions and functions over the years: the militzia, property registration, customs, the Army and healthcare. At the same time, corruption seems to have decreased in the judiciary, communal services, the tax administration, notaries and lawyers, banks and schools.	These sectors where corruption has become more pronounced to the average citizen should receive greater anticorruption attention. This may mean increased internal controls and transparency reforms, as well as increased public oversight of these institutions and functions. A study should be conducted to learn lessons from those institutions and functions where corruption appears to have been reduced.
Citizens indicate an increasing trend in their personal involvement in corrupt incidents. But at the same time, they indicate a growing belief that corruption is never justified and if they could complain to officials anonymously, they would do it.	Complaint mechanisms should be improved, ombudsman/ human rights functions should be reinforced, and Citizen Advocate Offices that provide legal services to corruption victims should be strengthened. All of these provide outlets for citizens who are victimized to receive redress for their grievances.
Bribery (extortion and offers of bribes) in universities, with the militzia, getting driving licenses, and in schools has been increasing over time.	More attention needs to be paid to control bribery in these institutions and functions.
Political leaders are not perceived to have the commitment or will to fight corruption.	Public officials should receive frequent and quality training on the causes and costs of corruption, as well as on what they can do to reduce it. In addition, the Coordinating Council should be reinvigorated through developing a new plan of action, additional funding, and establishment of a Public Information function to make the public aware of its activities.
Public awareness about corruption and anticorruption activities is increasingly promoted by the mass media which provides primarily fact-based investigative reporting. Of all institutions, the public is most aware of the mass media's activities against corruption.	The mass media has been an increasingly effective disseminator of information to the public about the corruption issue. Through responsible investigative reporting, the media has also fulfilled its role as an effective public watchdog in the corruption area. More training and resources should be put into supporting investigative journalism, and providing legal assistance to these reporters.
Federal branches operating n the region and NGOs are perceived to be most effective in the anticorruption actions.	The Oblast should continue to provide financial support, through small grants, to nongovernmental organizations.
Exerting more internal controls over government officials through	The Duma should continue to pursue an active legislative agenda to strengthen and enforce laws and regulations that

better procedures, laws and transparency is viewed by the public as the best way of reducing corruption in government.	reduce opportunities for corruption. In addition, government institutions should conduct Integrity Reviews that analyze and identify, in detail, where corruption weaknesses exist and propose particular revisions and reforms to regulations, procedures, and personnel that can reduce the threat of corruption.