

## Working Paper 44

# Perceptions of corruption and anti- corruption efforts in Bulgaria: Results of a national survey 2023

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## About this publication

The Working Paper presents the results of a nationwide survey of 1,209 individuals in Bulgaria, conducted in February to early March 2023. The survey examined how corruption is perceived in Bulgaria by different types of respondent, and what kind of behaviour is considered acceptable. It also looked at respondents' perceptions of anti-corruption efforts and under which circumstances they would be more likely to report corruption to the authorities.

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This Working Paper is intended for general informational purposes and does not constitute and/or substitute legal or other professional advice. We have made reasonable efforts to ensure its accuracy and completeness but cannot guarantee these.

For questions, please email [info@baselgovernance.org](mailto:info@baselgovernance.org).

## Executive summary

- A survey of 1,209 Bulgarian citizens, conducted shortly before the fifth snap elections in April 2023, **revealed that corruption** is considered to be a pressing problem in the country. Respondents named it **second most frequently as the most important problem** in Bulgarian society, following inflation.
- People of different genders, ages, educational backgrounds and places of residence perceive **corruption as being widespread in Bulgaria**.
- Respondents are strongly against acts of corruption, especially grand corruption, and consider them **unacceptable**.
- The **sector** which is perceived as most affected by corruption is the **judicial system**. However, many other sectors are perceived as being highly affected by corruption.
- Respondents are considerably **critical of political elites' efforts** to fight corruption, with significant variation based on political party affiliation.
- Only about one-third of respondents are **likely to report incidents of corruption**, with a higher likelihood among younger and higher educated individuals.
- Reporting corruption is more likely if the **efforts required to report** are perceived to be **low** and **reporting causes no harm**.
- The **Bulgarian Prosecutor** is the most frequently selected institution to **lead the fight against corruption**. At the same time, respondents currently have **very little trust in the Prosecutor** and see the judicial system as the sector most affected by corruption.
- Most respondents learn about corruption scandals on **private (commercial) and public (state) TV channels**. However, informal channels such as friends and family as well as social media are common, too.
- Cases related to the **Magnitsky sanctions** and corruption scandals in the **highway and roadway construction** sector are the most well-known instances of corruption in Bulgaria.
- Only about 30% of the respondents are able to name efforts against corruption by the Bulgarian government.

Overall, the survey results demonstrate a widespread perception of corruption in Bulgarian society and a strong desire to combat it, coupled with scepticism about the effectiveness of government efforts to do so.

## Introduction

Democracy and corruption are highly correlated. In its latest Liberal Democracy Index, the V-Dem Project ranked Bulgaria only in 48th position – the fifth-lowest score in the European Union (V-Dem, Annual Report for 2022). Trust in political institutions is considerably lower in Bulgaria than in other EU countries and citizens' satisfaction with democracy is the lowest among all EU countries (Claassen & Magalhães, 2022). In addition, among EU countries, Bulgaria has the second highest levels of perceived corruption according to the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International (43 points out of 100).

In order to gain a better understanding of perceptions of corruption in the Bulgarian public, a nationwide survey was conducted from February to March 2023. It asked 1,209 respondents about their knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards corruption and anti-corruption efforts in Bulgaria. Respondents were selected based on the quota sampling criteria of age, gender, education and place of residence, in order to ensure a sample which accurately represents the Bulgarian population.

Importantly, the survey was conducted between the October 2022 and April 2023 general elections, amidst a series of five electoral cycles in the last two years. During this period of political instability, corruption was a highly politicised topic and efforts to curb it became one of the most important campaign issues in Bulgaria. Following the 2020 widespread anti-corruption protests that erupted in the country, a new political force emerged that competed in elections with the sole purpose of combatting corruption and consolidating rule of law.

This report contributes to the public debate by providing systematic results about the perception of corruption in Bulgaria. It sheds light on how widespread corruption is perceived to be by respondents, as well as on public attitudes towards and knowledge about government efforts in the fight against corruption. Furthermore, the survey provides insights about the willingness of respondents to report corruption and about the conditions under which they are more likely to report corruption to the authorities.

The survey therefore aims to serve as an important source of information for policymaking and governmental communication efforts in the fight against corruption in Bulgaria.



## Methodology

In-person interviews were conducted by fieldworkers from the Bulgarian survey company Global Metrics. Due to the sensitivity of the questions and to avoid interviewer effects, respondents received a tablet with a pre-loaded digital questionnaire from a fieldworker and then answered the questionnaire themselves. The questionnaire was programmed in Qualtrics and, upon completion of each question, data was instantaneously transferred to the University of Basel database for further analysis. The overall number of respondents after data cleaning was 1,209.

The fieldwork was conducted between 17 February and 2 March 2023. The methodology was based on quota sampling with the following fulfilment criteria: age, gender, education and place of residence in order to guarantee an accurate projection of the general population.

Table 3 gives an overview of the number of respondents from the 28 Bulgarian regions.

**Table 3:** Respondents by Bulgarian region

Region ID	Region name	Number of respondents
1	Blagoevgrad	51
2	Burgas	71
3	Varna	77
4	Veliko Tarnovo	42
5	Vidin	20
6	Vratsa	34
7	Gabrovo	20
8	Dobrich	30
9	Kardzhali	28
10	Kyustendil	32
11	Lovech	31
12	Montana	30

13	Pazardzhik	41
14	Pernik	10
15	Pleven	40
16	Plovdiv	100
17	Razgrad	20
18	Ruse	41
19	Silistra	21
20	Sliven	40
21	Smolyan	21
22	Sofia-city	220
23	Sofia region	26
24	Stara Zagora	52
25	Targovishte	20
26	Haskovo	31
27	Shumen	30
28	Yambol	30
<b>Overall</b>		<b>1209</b>

Further details on the respondents are explored in Section 7.

# 1. Corruption, trust and democracy in Bulgaria

**Chapter summary:** The survey began by asking respondents about their individual assessment of the most important problem faced by Bulgarian society, as well as their evaluation of the state of democracy and their level of trust in key actors and institutions in Bulgaria. After inflation/high prices, corruption was mentioned second most often as the most important problem in Bulgaria. Furthermore, the results presented below indicate that a large majority of respondents believe that the Bulgarian system of democracy requires fundamental changes. The findings reveal that Bulgarians have strikingly low levels of trust in their key political and legal actors and institutions.

In the summer of 2020, a wave of protests against corruption in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian government began in Sofia, and the issue of corruption once again became highly politicised in public debates in Bulgaria. This study presents findings from a survey conducted in Bulgaria shortly before the fifth snap elections in April 2023, during a time of political instability and economic uncertainties aggravated by high inflation and ripple effects from Russia's war in Ukraine.

## 1.1 Corruption as the second most important problem in Bulgaria

One of the key issues in Bulgarian society is the prevalence of corruption at all levels. Figure 1.1 illustrates the frequency of words mentioned by respondents when asked about their assessment of the most important problem in Bulgarian society.

Importantly, respondents were not prompted about the topic of corruption before answering the question. Prior to this question, corruption was not mentioned and, to avoid bias, respondents were only informed that the survey was about their perceptions of Bulgarian society. Moreover, the question was open ended, so respondents were not given multiple-choice options but instead had to come up with an answer on their own. Therefore, the displayed results reflect the genuine beliefs of respondents as closely as possible.

The word cloud should be interpreted as follows: the larger a word appears, the more frequently it was mentioned by respondents.

High prices, corruption and inflation were the most frequently cited problems. This finding confirms previous studies that identify Bulgaria as one of the EU countries with the highest levels of perceived corruption.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1.1:** Word cloud “What is the most important problem in Bulgaria?”

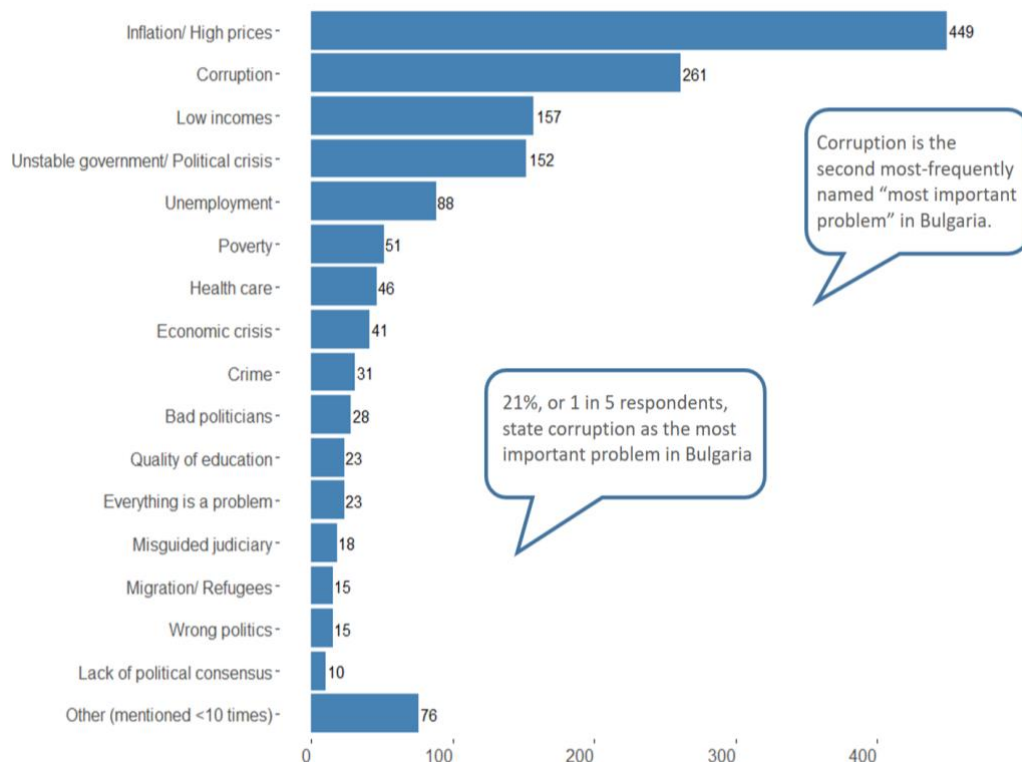


Figure 1.2 displays the results of the word cloud and shows the frequency with which different problems were mentioned by respondents. Corruption was cited by approximately 21% of respondents (261 times). Only high prices/inflation were mentioned more frequently than corruption, with 37% (449 times) of respondents identifying this issue as the most significant problem.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/bgr>

**Figure 1.2:** Answers when asked about the most important problems in Bulgaria



Afterwards, the respondents were presented with a list of seven significant problems of today's societies and were asked to rank these according to their assessment of Bulgaria's most important problem. The seven problems were:

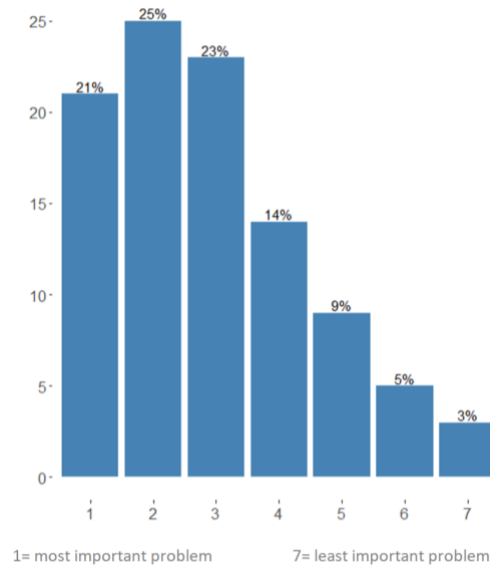
- climate change
- inflation
- unemployment
- political instability
- corruption
- crime
- energy supply

The order of how these items were presented was *randomised* and therefore different for every respondent in order to avoid ordering biases.

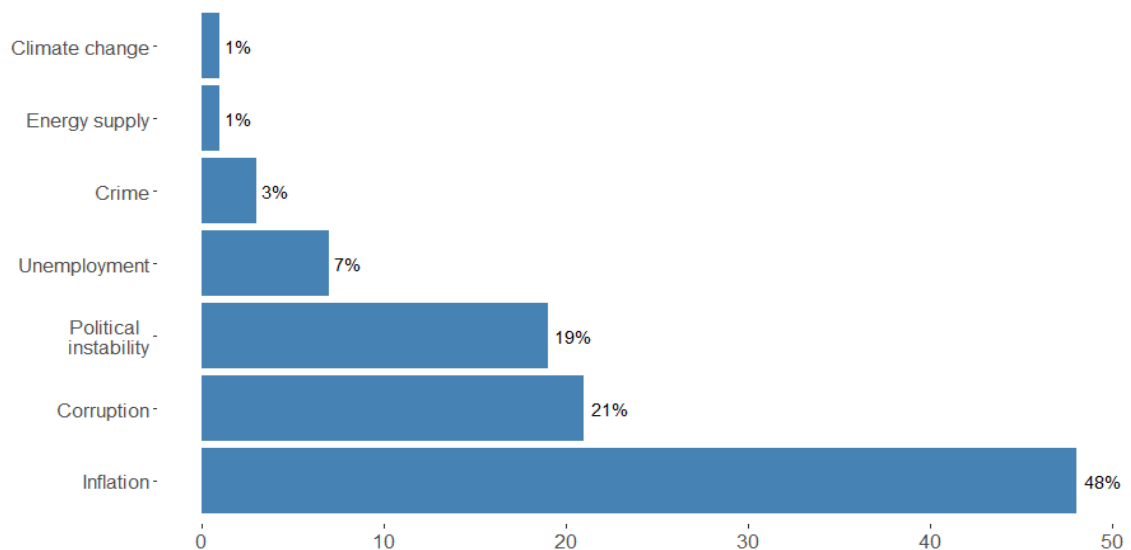
Figure 1.3 shows that corruption was ranked highest as the most important problem by 21% of the respondents and second highest by 25% of the respondents. Figure 1.4 displays how often each of the seven items was ranked as the number one most important problem. Again, inflation is the most pressing problem for a majority of respondents with 48% citing it as the most important problem. Corruption was ranked second most often as the most

important problem (21%) and political instability was ranked third most often (19%). These results highlight the finding that corruption is a major problem for Bulgarian society.

**Figure 1.3:** Ranking corruption between 1 (=most important problem) and 7 (=least important problem) in Bulgaria



**Figure 1.4:** Ranking of seven issues in order of perception as the most important problem in Bulgaria



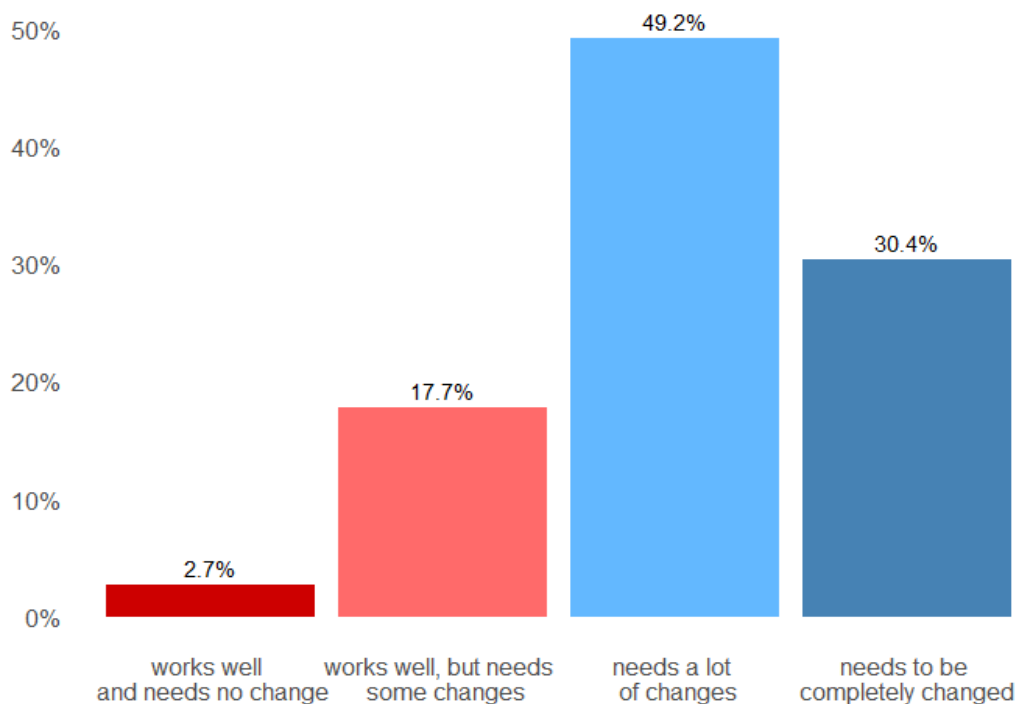
## 1.2 Critical attitudes regarding the status of democracy

Perceiving corruption as one of – or even the – most important problem in Bulgaria is also reflected in an overall critical view towards the system of democracy in Bulgaria. In general,

respondents were largely critical of the functioning and the system of democracy. Figure 1.5 shows that, overall, 80% of the respondents stated that the system of democracy needs either a lot of changes (49.2%) or needs to be completely changed (30.4%). In contrast, only 2.8% of the respondents stated that Bulgarian democracy works well and needs no change. Another 18% answered that the system of democracy works well but needs some changes.

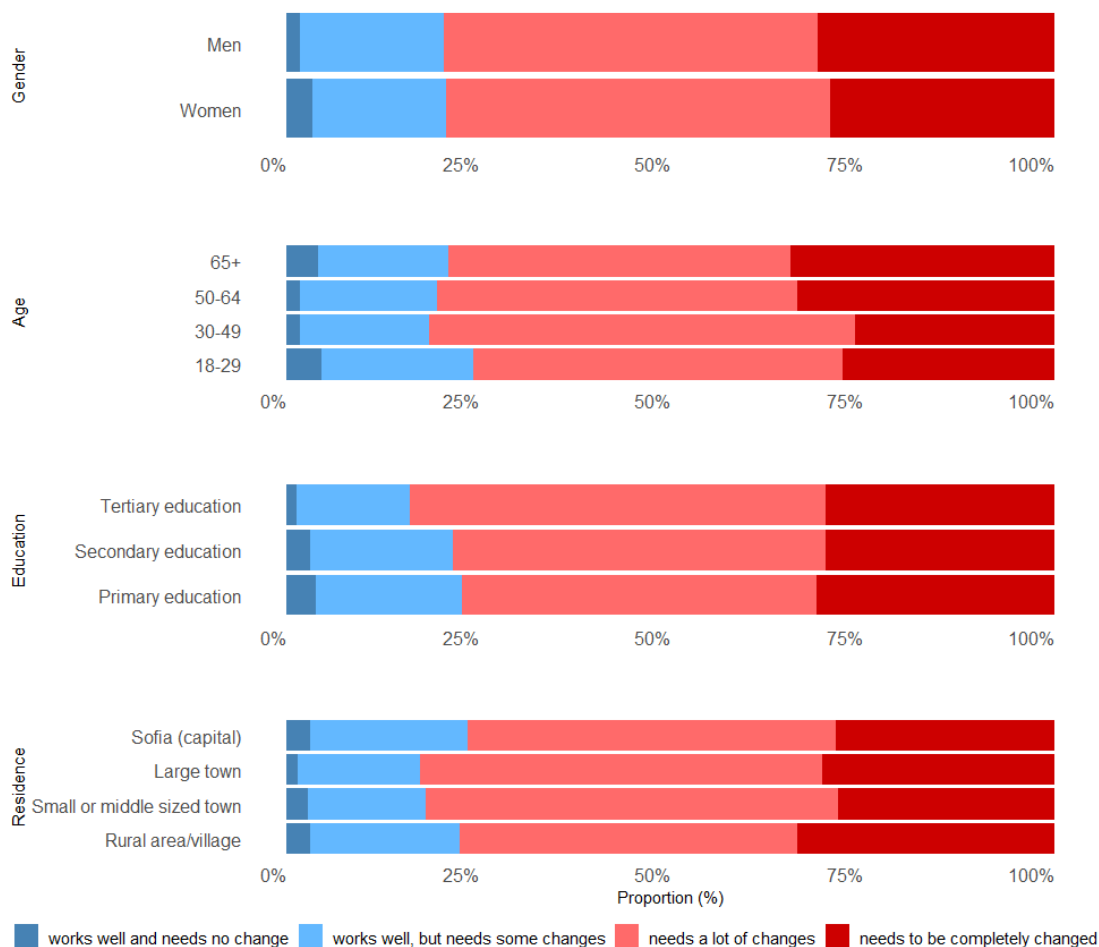
It is important to note that these results cannot determine whether people's dissatisfaction with democracy is caused by high levels of corruption, or whether a dysfunctional democracy leads to increased corruption. It can only be concluded that both phenomena are correlated.

**Figure 1.5:** Satisfaction with democracy in Bulgaria: “How well or badly do you think the system of democracy works these days in Bulgaria?”



This pattern is consistent across different societal groups, with only minor differences observed. Women tend to be slightly less critical than men, and the youngest (18-29 years) and oldest (65+ years) respondents tend to have a more positive view than the middle-aged respondents. Furthermore, Figure 1.6 reveals that individuals with higher levels of education, as well as those living in large towns (with the exception of residents of the capital city, Sofia), tend to be more critical.

**Figure 1.6: Satisfaction with democracy in Bulgaria, by different groups**



### 1.3 Low trust in Bulgarian institutions and actors

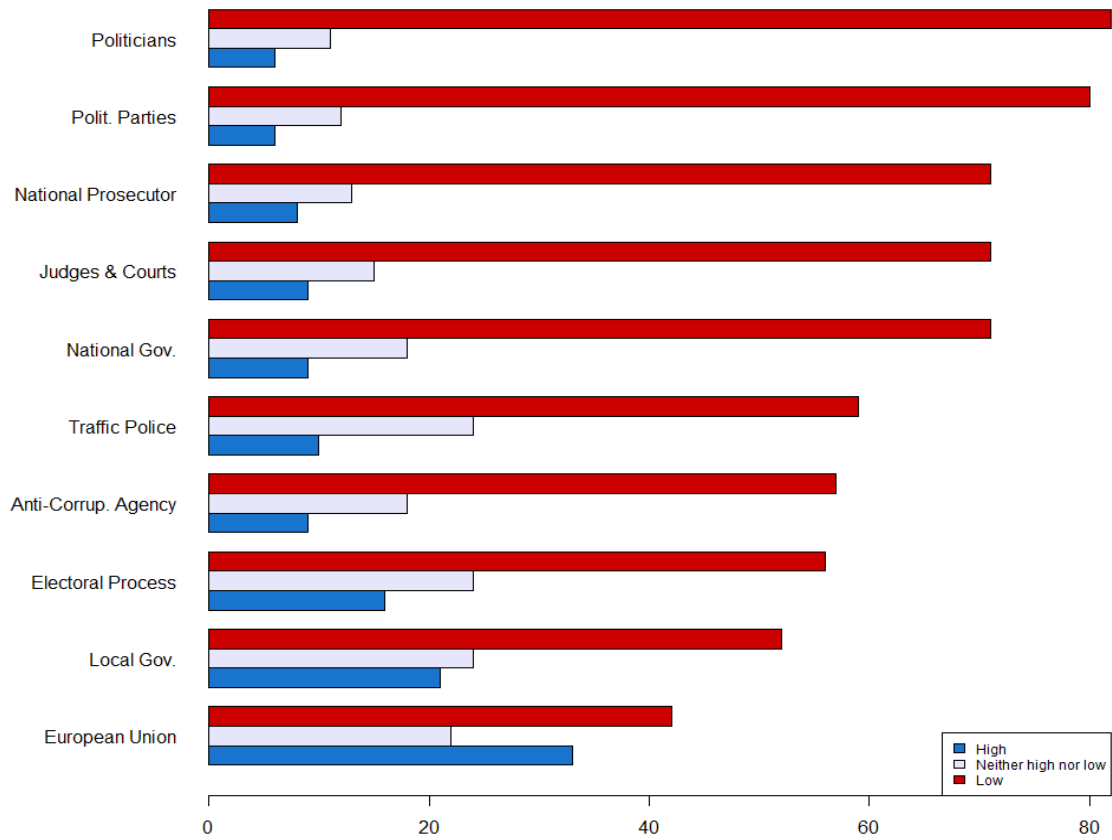
A functioning democracy relies on citizens' trust in its institutions and such trust can be weakened by corruption. Thus, the respondents were asked to rate how much trust they have in 10 of the most important actors and key institutions in Bulgaria: the national government, the local government, the National Prosecutor, judges and courts, the electoral process, the National Anti-Corruption Agency (the Anti-Corruption and Asset Forfeiture Commission), the European Union, politicians, political parties and the traffic police. Respondents could rate from very high (7), high (6), rather high (5), neither high nor low (4), rather low (3), low (2) to very low (1) or choose "I do not know".

Figure 1.7 summarises the categories into high (5–7), neither high nor low (4) and low (1–3). Overall, trust in national actors and institutions can be described as noticeably low. The European Union – the only non-national institution – received the highest levels of trust (33% of respondents have high trust). Still, more respondents indicated low trust (43%) in



the EU than high trust. The lowest levels of trust are attributed to politicians (83% low), the political parties (81% low), the National Prosecutor (77% low), judges and courts (75% low), as well as the national government (72% low).

**Figure 1.7:** Trust in Bulgarian actors and institutions



## 2. Perceptions of corruption

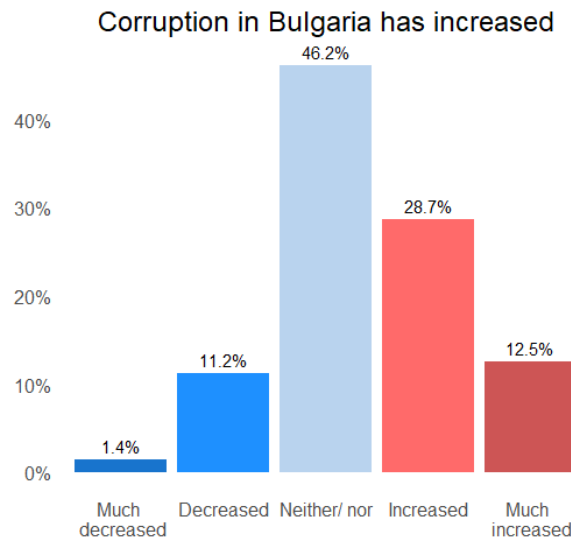
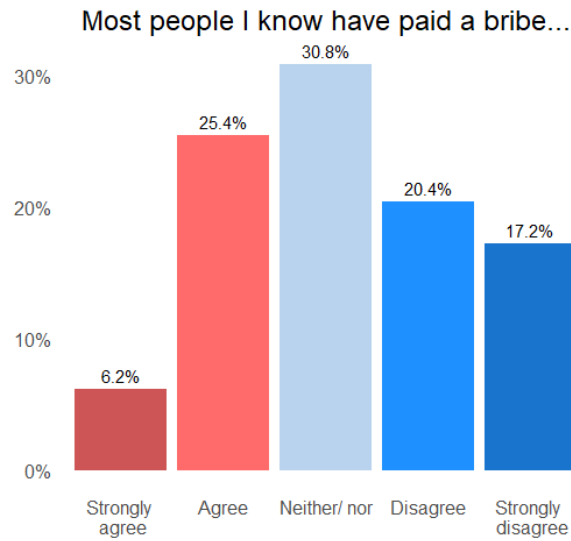
**Chapter summary:** This chapter presents the results of the survey on how respondents perceive corruption in different settings and sectors in Bulgaria. Overall, corruption is perceived by the respondents as being widespread and increasing over the past two years. The perception of corruption being widespread varies between social groups and the Bulgarian regions. Moreover, the survey participants have a clear understanding of what behaviour they find acceptable or unacceptable regarding petty and grand corruption. Although they are concerned about both types of corruption, they are more worried about grand corruption. Additionally, respondents most frequently mention the judicial system as the sector being most affected by corruption in Bulgaria.

The first part of the survey has established that major parts of the Bulgarian population are highly sceptical of the system of democracy as well as its actors and institutions. The results above also underline that corruption is perceived as one of the most important problems Bulgaria faces. The survey further asked respondents about how widespread they perceive corruption to be and which behaviour they see as acceptable.

### 2.1 Overall perception of corruption in Bulgaria

In order to understand how widespread corruption is perceived to be in Bulgaria, the survey asked participants if they agree with the statement “Most people I know have paid a bribe”. By not asking directly about their perception of corruption in Bulgaria, an overestimation is being avoided. Further, respondents do not have to answer about their own involvement in corrupt behaviour, which should reduce a bias in the answers due to the respondents answering in a socially desirable way or being afraid of negative consequences when answering truthfully. The results are presented on the left in Figure 2.1. It displays that 32% of the participants agree that *most people they know have paid a bribe* while 38% disagree with this statement. Similarly, the graph on the right in Figure 2.1 shows that more than 41% agree with the statement that corruption has increased in Bulgaria over the last two years.

**Figure 2.1:** The perception of corruption prevalence in Bulgaria



When investigating how different groups perceive the prevalence of corruption, it can be seen in Figure 2.2 that men agree to a higher percentage than women that most people they know have paid a bribe (35% of men vs. 28% of women). Furthermore, the oldest (aged 65+) and the youngest (18-29 years old) cohorts “rather disagree” with this statement. Respondents living in small or middle-sized towns disagree to the highest extent that most people they know have paid a bribe (41%), while respondents from the capital, Sofia, agree to the highest extent (42%).

Overall, there is some variation across the different groups, but still only a minority of respondents (17% on average) strongly disagree that most people they know have paid a bribe, which underlines that corruption is perceived as being widespread in Bulgarian society.

**Figure 2.2:** Perception of corruption prevalence by different social groups: “Do you agree: ‘Most people I know have paid a bribe’?”

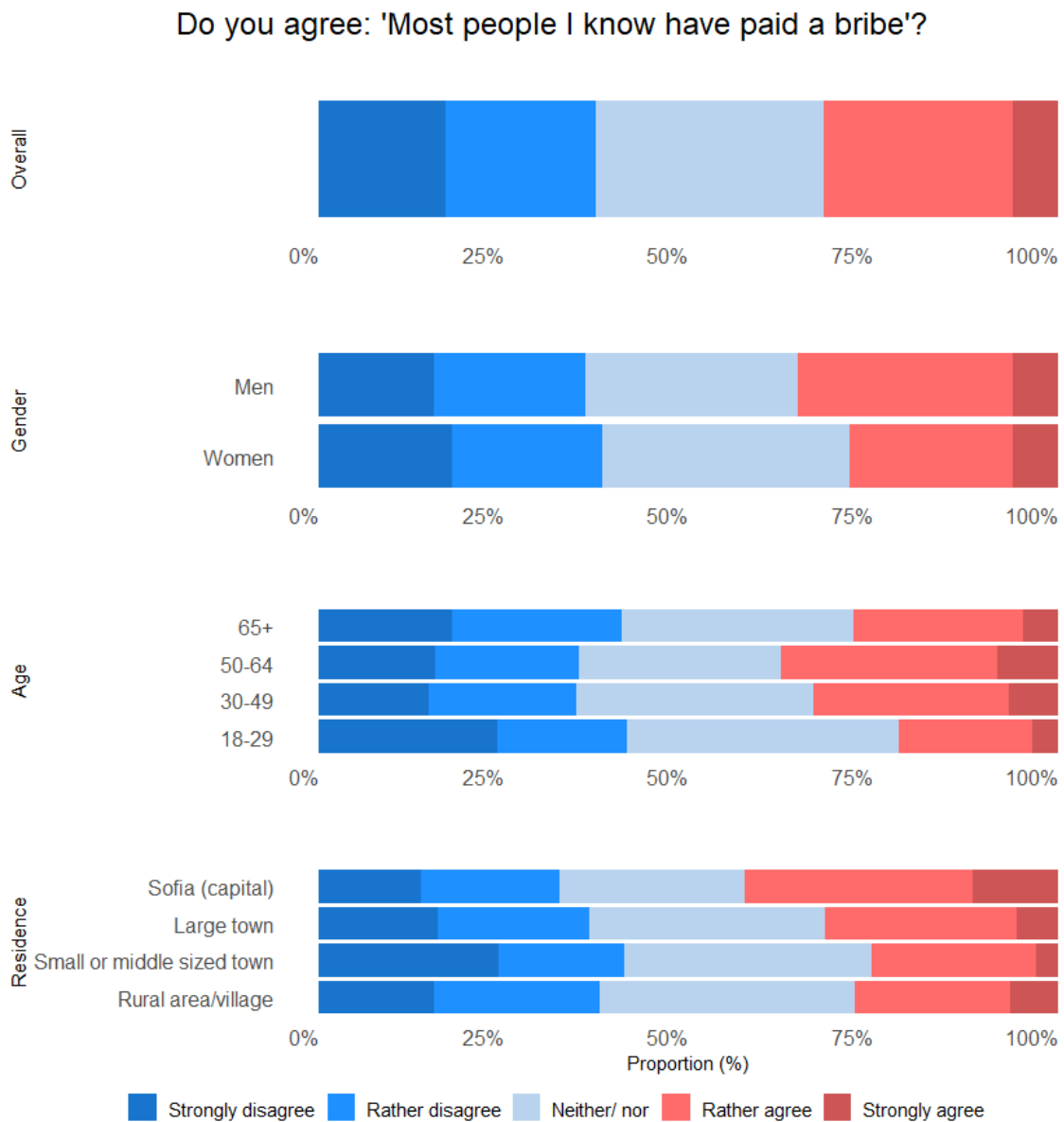
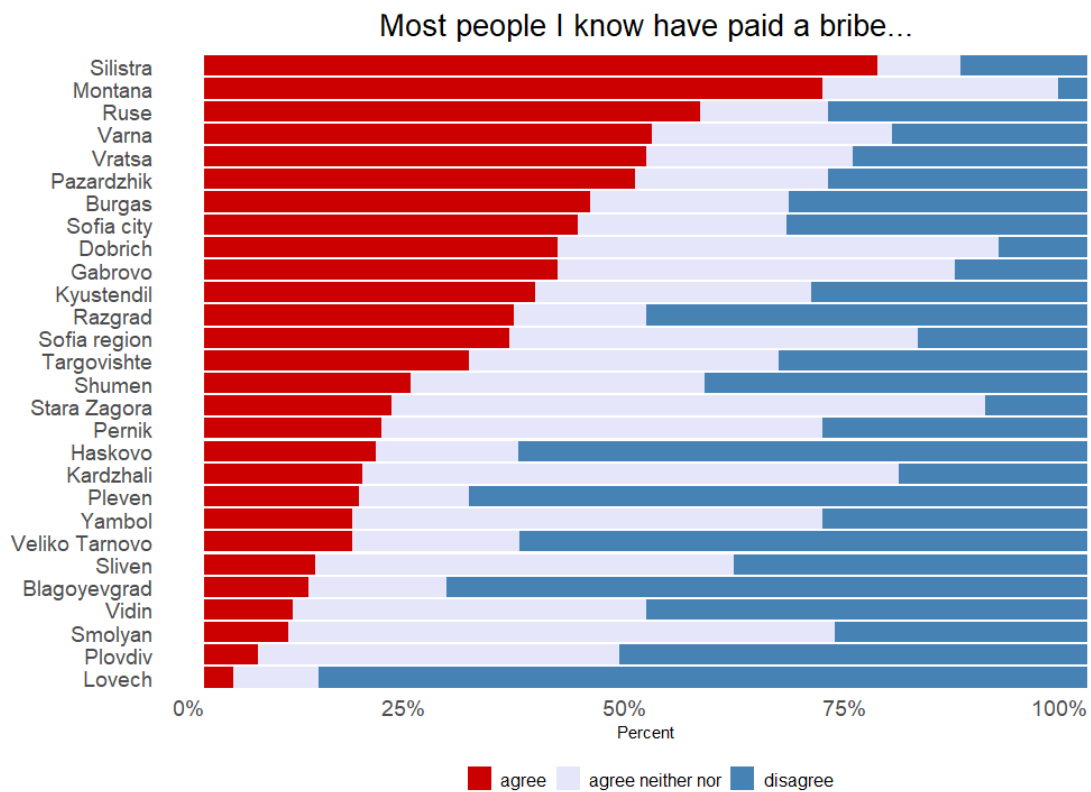


Figure 2.3 displays the perception of corruption prevalence in the 28 Bulgarian regions. A strong variation among respondents can be observed, ranging from 76% of respondents in Silistra agreeing with “*Most people I know have paid a bribe*” to only 3% in Lovech. This

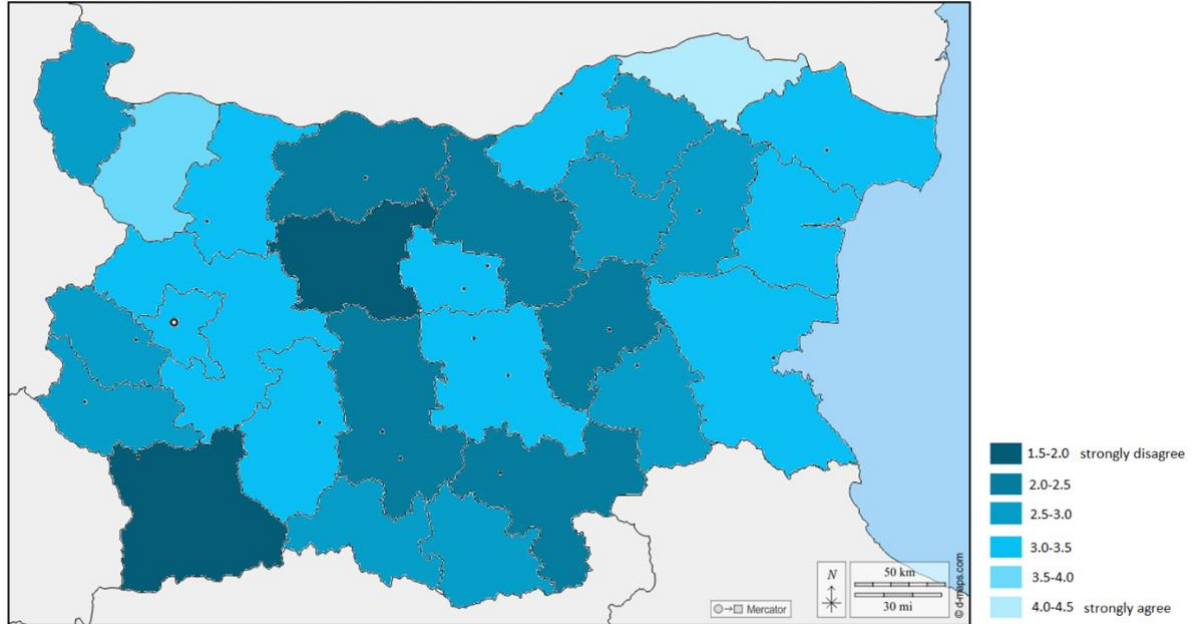
finding can also be seen in the map in Figure 2.4, which shows the mean values of agreement for each region where darker colours represent higher disagreement and lighter colours higher agreement levels in a region about the prevalence of corruption. Thus, corruption is perceived as being less widespread in areas with darker colours. The sample set is however rather small for some of the regions, which is why those differences should be interpreted with caution.

**Figure 2.3:** Perception of corruption prevalence in 28 Bulgarian regions: “Most people I know have paid a bribe”



**Figure 2.4:** Map of perceived corruption prevalence in 28 Bulgarian regions: “Most people I know have paid a bribe”

Most people I know have paid a bribe, mean value by Bulgarian region



## 2.2 When corrupt behaviour is perceived as (un)acceptable

To gain a deeper understanding about the different forms of corruption, the survey investigated which kind of behaviours are considered acceptable or unacceptable by distinguishing various petty and grand corruption scenarios. In cooperation with the project partners, five typical scenarios were identified which could be considered as petty corruption (see table 1) and another five scenarios which vary from lobbying to grand corruption (see table 2). The respondents were presented with these scenarios and were asked to rate which of these behaviours they considered (un)acceptable.

**Table 1:** Scenarios of petty corruption

Scenario name	Scenario
<b>Patient offers gift to avoid waiting time</b>	A patient offering a gift to a nurse to be treated promptly and avoid waiting time.
<b>Patient gives valuable gift after treatment</b>	A patient gives a valuable gift to a doctor after receiving treatment.
<b>Parent pays teacher to change grade for child to qualify for scholarship</b>	A parent pays a teacher to change the grade of a child from mediocre to very good which will make him/her eligible for a scholarship.
<b>Driver offers money to officer to avoid sanction</b>	A driver offers money to a traffic officer to disregard a traffic violation.
<b>Teacher requests money for changing grade to a pass</b>	During parent-teacher conferences, the teacher hints to parents at the desirability of making a “voluntary” contribution to ensure children receive passing grades.

As shown in Figure 2.5, citizens have a rather distinct and clear understanding of what they define as corruption: it coincides with the internationally recognised definition of Transparency International, which defines corruption as the abuse of power for private gain. If we accept this definition for the purposes of this survey, all of the identified behaviours in the figure below – where citizens bribe nurses, teachers and traffic officers to get a favourable or better treatment – are regarded as corruption by the large majority of the citizens. Especially interesting is the assessment of the scenario where a valuable gift offered after medical treatment in hospital is considered as corruption. In this case, answers vary more strongly because only 31% consider this as totally unacceptable and 24% as rather not acceptable. Around 44% find this behaviour acceptable, which is understandable because the valuable gift could be considered as a one-off present that does not imply a demand for favourable treatment.

**Figure 2.5:** Which behaviour is considered acceptable (petty corruption)?

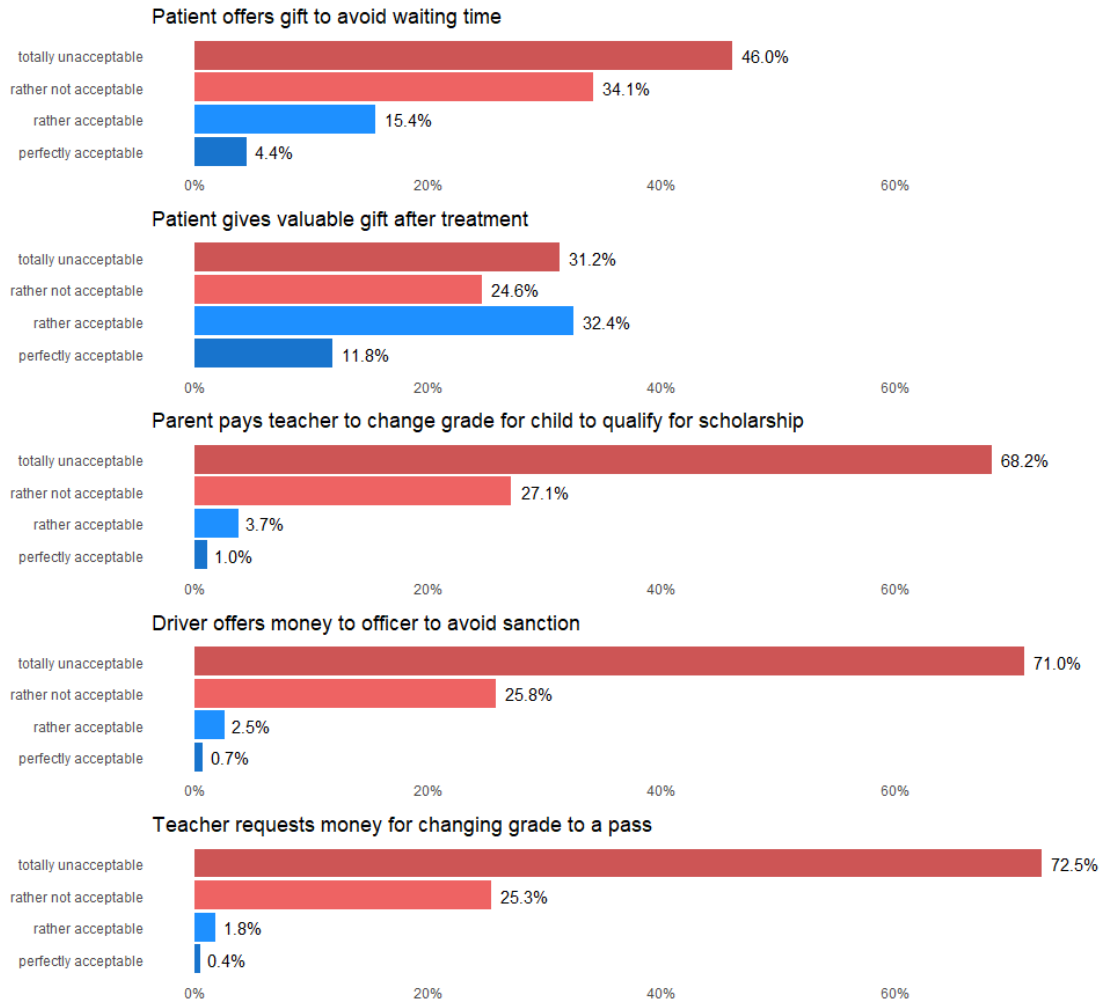


Table 2 displays scenarios about lobbying and grand corruption to see whether respondents distinguish between these different behaviours. Hence, the scenario “dinner between old friends” (in which we describe an exchange about important information) is presented next to situations where an actual service (such as the arrangement of a meeting or the lobbying for a protective law) is intended in exchange for the payment of a dinner, a gift or a paid job.

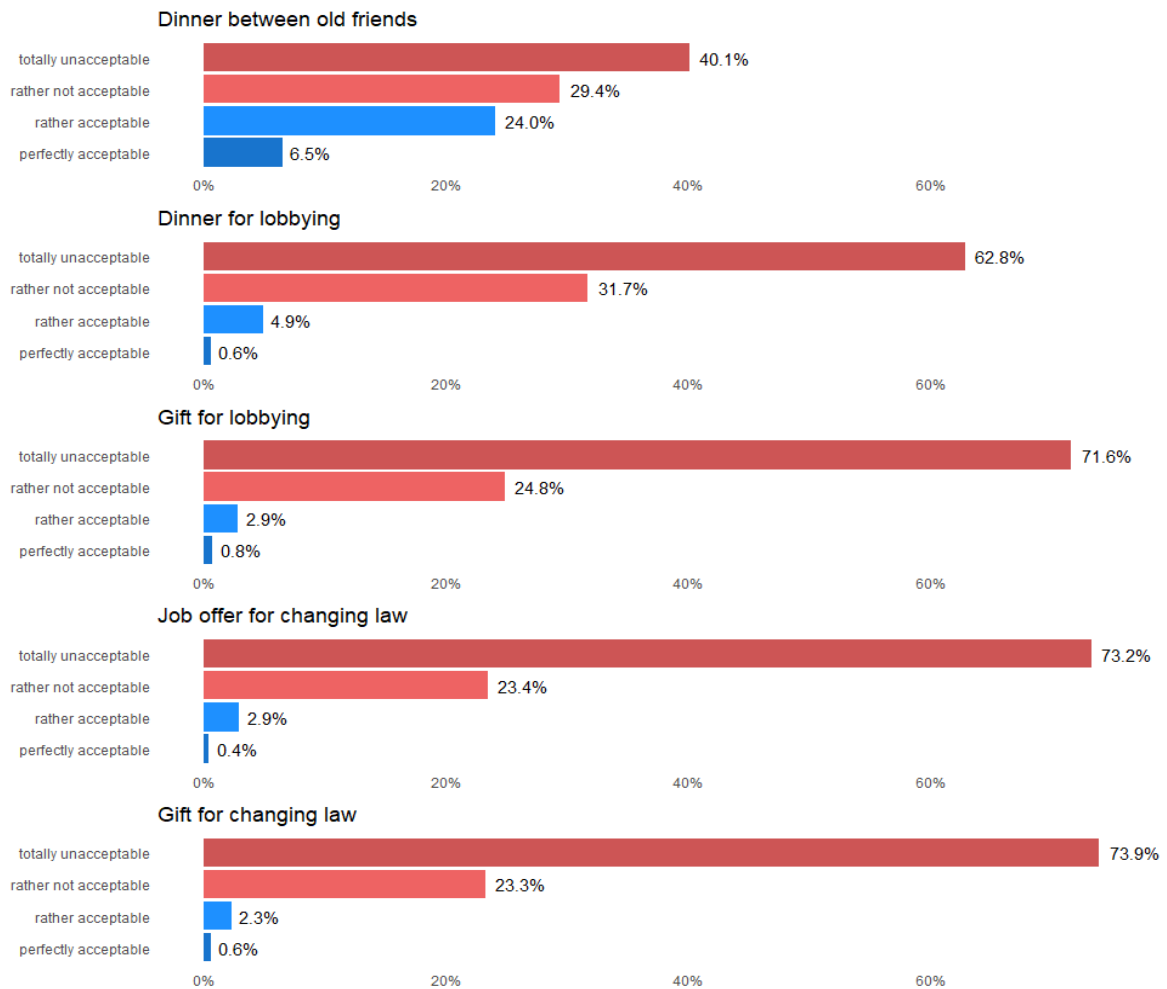


**Table 2:** Scenarios of lobbying and grand corruption

Scenario name	Scenario
<b>Dinner between old friends</b>	The minister of Transport meets his old friend from university, who is now CEO of a road construction firm, for dinner. They talk about their families but also about upcoming infrastructure projects of interest for both.
<b>Dinner for lobbying</b>	A civil servant is invited for dinner by a construction company in exchange for arranging a meeting with the responsible minister to lobby for changing a permission law about protective areas in the company's interest.
<b>Gift for lobbying</b>	A minister receives an expensive gift (e.g. a valuable watch) from a construction company. Later, the minister lobbies to make a protective law about building permissions in protected areas less restrictive.
<b>Job offer for changing law</b>	A minister receives a paid job offer from a construction company after his/her political career. Later, the minister uses his/her powers to make a protective law about building permissions in protected areas less restrictive.
<b>Gift for changing law</b>	A minister receives an expensive gift (e.g. a valuable watch) from a construction company. Later, the minister uses his/her powers to make a protective law about building permissions in protected areas less restrictive.

Overwhelmingly, the respondents identify the latter four scenarios as grand corruption and consider them to be totally unacceptable. They also clearly distinguish these scenarios from the first scenario, which is rather a form of lobbying than corrupt behaviour. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents still consider this behaviour as being totally unacceptable – but this is a much lower percentage than for the other scenarios of grand corruption. When comparing petty and grand corruption, it can be concluded that respondents find the scenarios of both forms of corruption unacceptable and do not consider everyday forms of petty corruption as more acceptable than grand corruption.

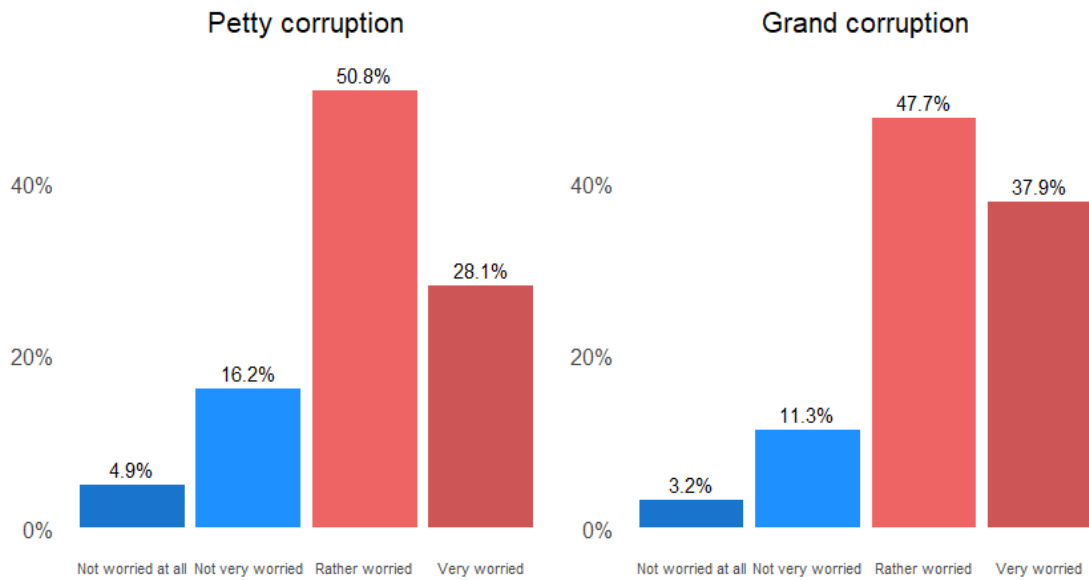
**Figure 2.6:** Which behaviour is considered acceptable (lobbying vs. grand corruption)?



### 2.3 Worries about corruption

In general, the majority of respondents are quite worried about the consequences caused by petty as well as by grand corruption, as shown in Figure 2.7. Remarkably, 85% of the citizens are rather or very worried about grand corruption and its consequences, while this percentage is a bit lower (78%) for petty corruption.

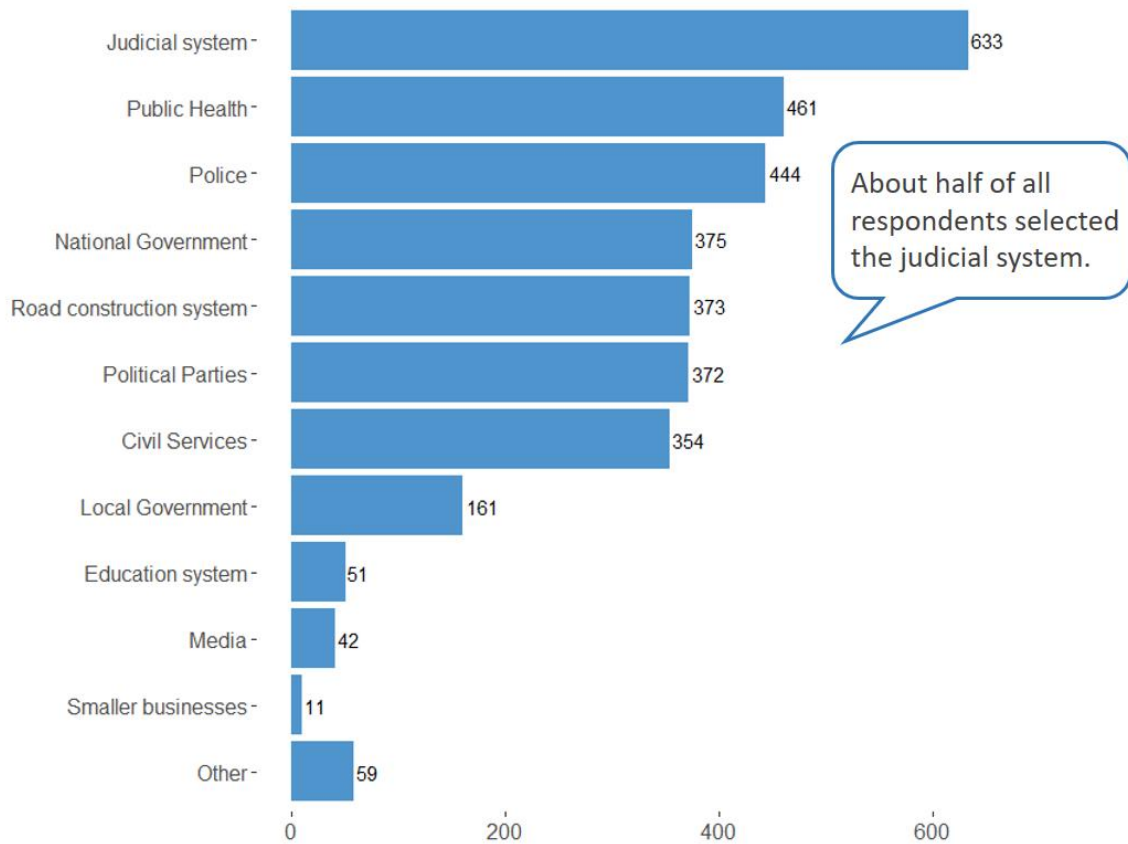
**Figure 2.7:** Worried about the consequences of corruption



## 2.4 Sectors with most corruption

To explore which sectors are perceived as being most affected by corruption, survey respondents were asked to identify up to three sectors that they believe are most affected by corruption out of 12 given options. The order of presentation of the 12 sectors was randomised for every respondent in order to avoid selection biases. Overwhelmingly, respondents agreed that the judicial system is the sector most affected by corruption in Bulgaria (as identified by half of all respondents) followed by the public health sector and the police. Figure 2.8 presents the results for this question.

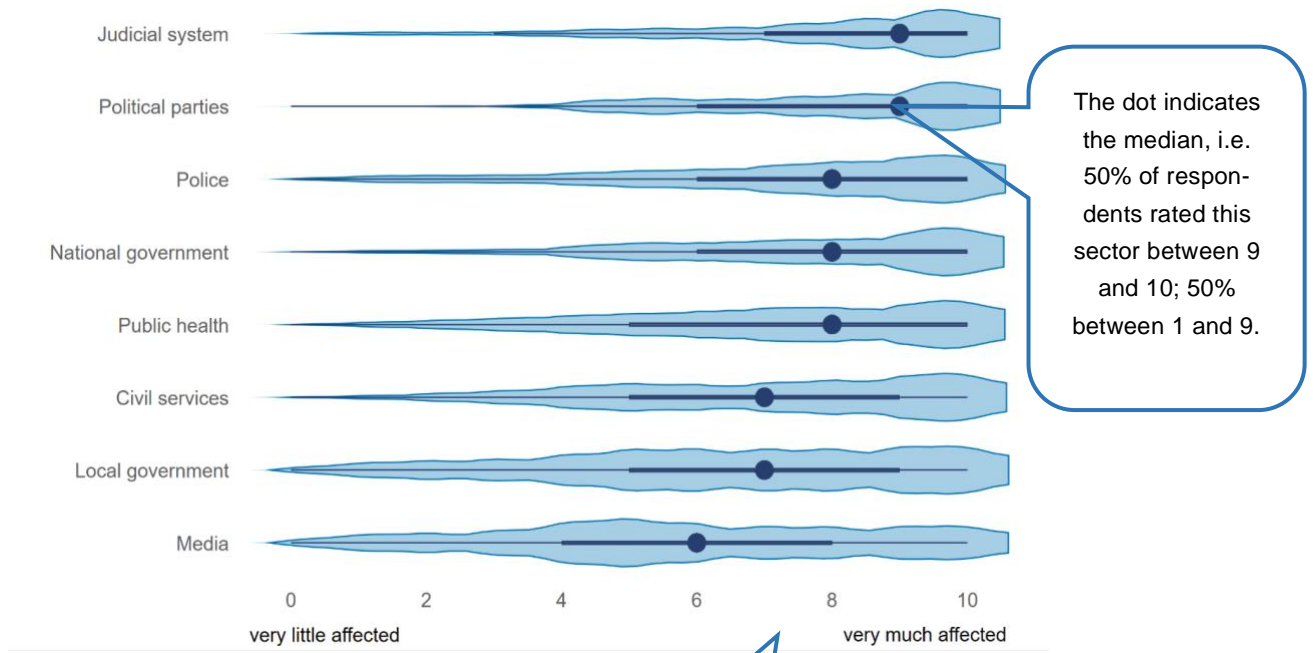
**Figure 2.8:** Selection of sectors most affected by corruption (up to 3 out of 12 choices)



Moreover, the respondents were asked to rate eight of the above sectors for how much they are affected by corruption on a scale between 0 and 10. Figure 2.9 displays these results and underlines that corruption is seen as being most widespread in the judicial sector. The displayed violin plots can be read as follows: the thinner the violin and the more long-spread the violin plot, the more people disagree about the rating. The dark blue dot displays the median position where 50% of the answers are located to the left and 50% to the right-hand side. We can observe that while citizens' negative estimates about the judicial system and political parties do not vary extremely, the judgements vary far more when it comes to the sectors of the media and local government.

Furthermore, it can be seen that even though the sectors of the local government or of the media were not selected very often as one of the top three affected sectors by respondents, most respondents still perceive them as being significantly affected by corruption.

**Figure 2.9:** Violin plots – Rating eight sectors regarding the prevalence of corruption



The light blue area displays the distribution of answers. The thicker the area, the more people selected this answer. The answers regarding corruption in the media sector are more broadly distributed and in the judicial system, rather dense.

## 3. Corruption and government efforts

**Chapter summary:** Respondents are rather sceptical about the willingness and effectiveness of Bulgarian political elites to rigorously fight corruption. Most variation in the assessment of anti-corruption efforts by political elites can be seen between the group of voters and the group of non-voters, with the voters being less critical than the non-voters. Also, affiliates of the different political parties identified by their vote choice in the last national elections (held in October 2022) differ substantially in their views. Further, the data shows that non-voters can be reached with specific messages about anti-corruption efforts by parties.

Since political parties in Bulgaria have also recognised corruption as a political issue, the fight against corruption has been one of the most campaigned political issues by the parties. To investigate the effectiveness of different messages and different senders of messages, we confronted the respondents with a variety of questions and messages regarding the efforts of the Bulgarian political parties and the national government.

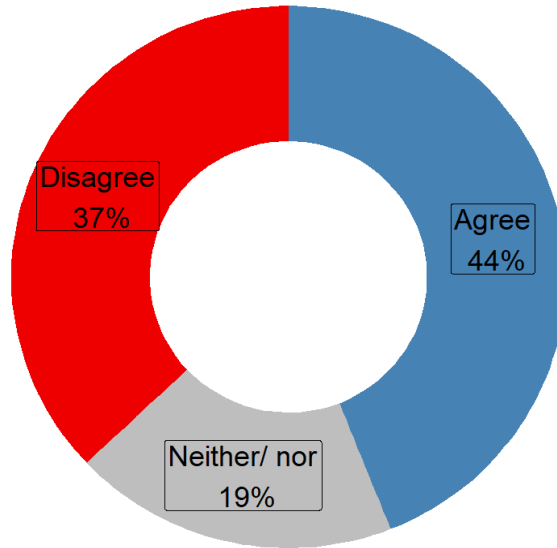
### 3.1 Is corrupt behaviour acceptable for the government?

A substantial share of respondents (44%) agreed with the statement *“It is acceptable for the government to engage in corruption as long as it delivers good results”*. Only 37% of the individuals disagreed, indicating that for a large part of the Bulgarian population, corruption can be acceptable under certain circumstances. The highest percentage of disagreement can be found among people who did not vote in the last elections and those who voted for the *We Continue the Change* and *Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB)* coalition, as well as for the *Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)* (in total 41%). The lowest percentage of disagreement can be found among the voters for *Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)* (18%).

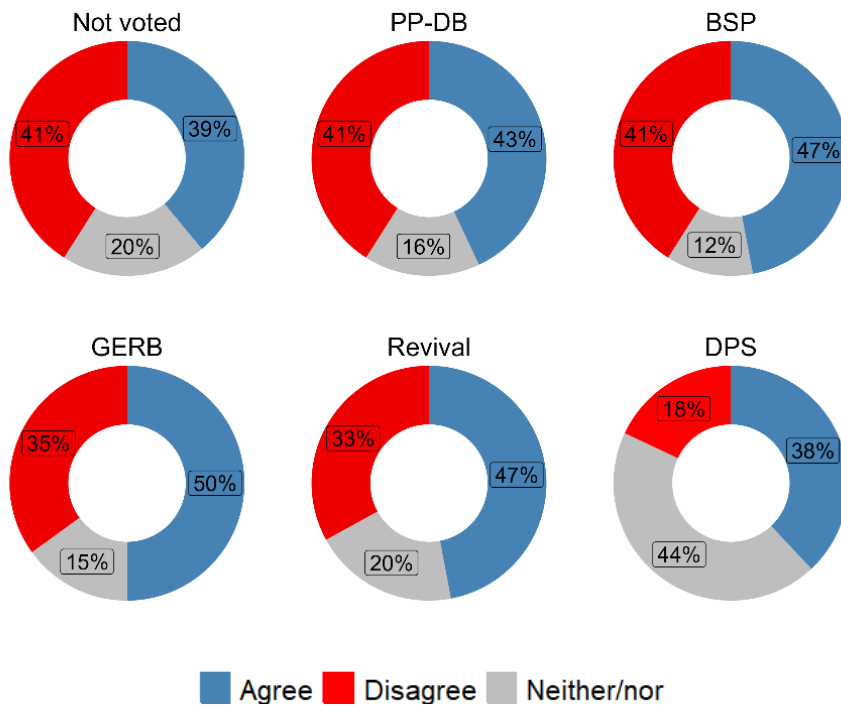
Overall, this result may be understood in the way that different electorates prioritise different topics and that corruption is not the highest priority for all voters – despite claiming that it is when asked directly as shown below in Figure 3.8.

**Figure 3.1:** Is corruption in the government acceptable?

### Overall



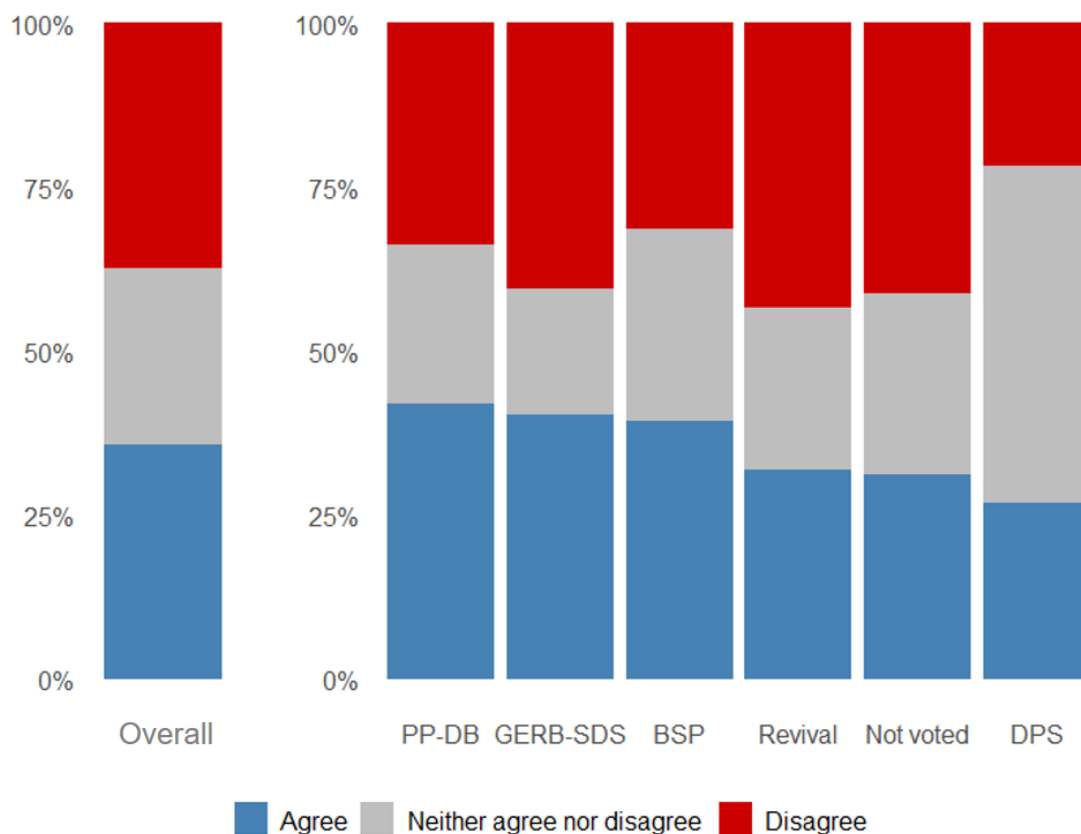
It is acceptable for the government to engage in corruption as long as it delivers good results



### 3.2 The attempts of Bulgarian executive elites to fight corruption

As Figure 3.2 shows, respondents were rather divided regarding the assessment of recent attempts to fight corruption by the Bulgarian government (i.e. the institution of the government; respondents were not asked about their assessment of a specific government). About a third (36%) of the respondents agreed that there have been recent serious attempts to fight corruption, while another third (37%) disagreed with this statement. The remaining 27% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Again, there is significant variation depending on whether respondents voted in the last elections (October 2022) and for which parties. Respondents who indicated that they voted for PP or DB at the last elections agreed to 42% with the statement, which is likely due to PP-DB's latest government participation in and the parties' election platform campaigning on anti-corruption efforts. In contrast, participants who did not vote in the October 2022 elections agreed to only 31% and DPS voters to only 27%.

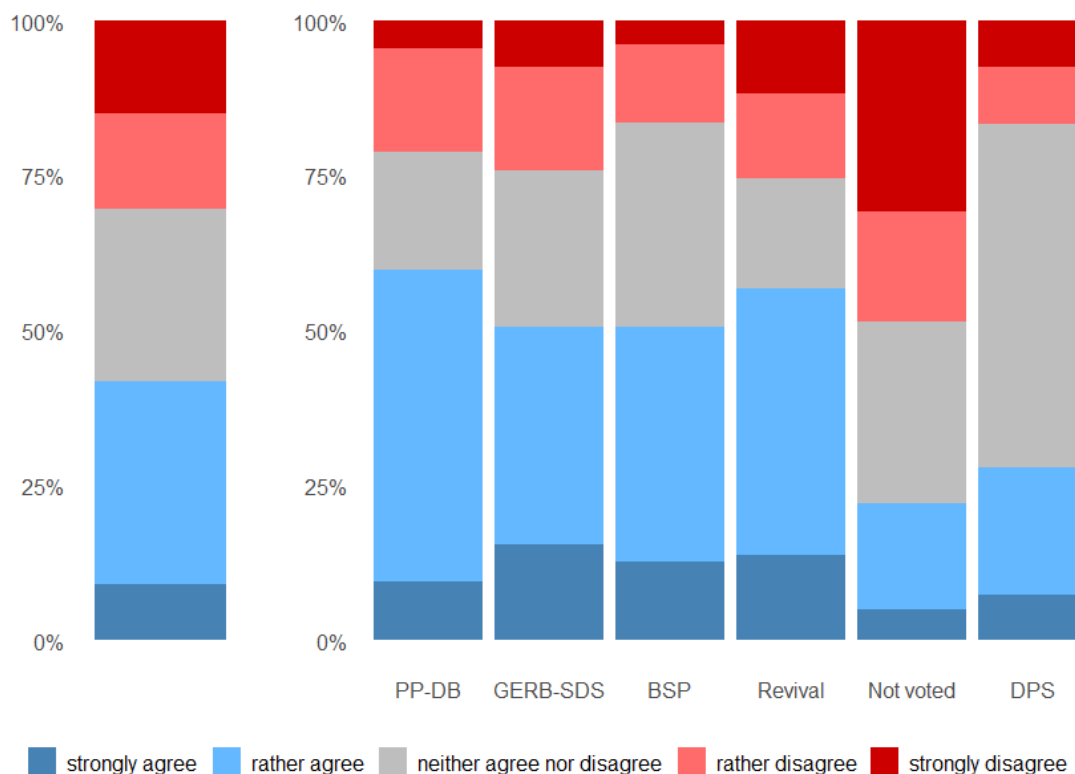
**Figure 3.2:** There have been serious attempts by the Bulgarian government to fight corruption





Results regarding the statement “*There are national parties that severely try to fight corruption in Bulgaria*” are rather similar, but slightly more positive than the judgement regarding the government (see Figure 3.3). Overall, 42% of the respondents rather agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (9%) that there are parties in Bulgaria that sincerely try to fight corruption. Again, this percentage was highest among the individuals who voted PP or DB, with 60% agreeing (10% strongly, 50% rather agree). The lowest levels of agreement can be found among the individuals who did not vote, with 22% (5% strongly, 17% rather agree).

**Figure 3.3:** There are parties in Bulgaria which severely try to fight corruption




*Note: For this graph, a reduced sample of 901 respondents was used in order to avoid contamination of the data with the results of our experiment (explained in the following subsection). Thus, the group which received a partisan message (see page 23) was excluded for this graph.*

### 3.3 Messages on governmental anti-corruption efforts

In order to investigate whether anti-corruption messages can shape the attitudes of respondents, we designed an experiment in which we randomly assigned the respondents to four groups with an approximately equal number of individuals (ca. 300 respondents). One group did not receive any message (the “control group”), while the other three groups received a message which informed them about the importance of government anti-corruption efforts and latest attempts. However, each message had a different “sender” in order to investigate whether the type and party affiliation of the sender has an effect on their final answer. We tested the following different senders:

- A fictitious international anti-corruption agency
- The Bulgarian government (as national institution without any party clues)
- Three of the parties under the last regular government led by Kiril Petkov (PP, BSP, DB)

**Figure 3.4:** Messages about governmental anti-corruption efforts by different senders

No message	Government message
	 <p data-bbox="836 1144 1369 1176"><b>The Fight Against Corruption in Bulgaria</b></p> <p data-bbox="836 1227 1319 1296">A report by the <b>Bulgarian government</b> shows that:</p> <ol data-bbox="836 1352 1398 1715" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="836 1352 1342 1464">1. the implementation of anti-corruption reforms should be a <b>first priority for any national government;</b></li><li data-bbox="836 1518 1398 1715">2. there <b>have been important first steps</b> to fight corruption by the <b>previous government:</b> the government secured a more <b>transparent allocation of public funds</b> which is <b>independent of political party</b> connections.</li></ol> <p data-bbox="836 1767 1390 1836">As a result, there should be <b>less fraud</b> and the government would have <b>more money for</b></p>

**the public**, e.g. for schools, pensions, and health care.

#### International agency message

#### Party message



#### The Fight Against Corruption in Bulgaria

A report by the international and independent agency “Fight Corruption” shows:

1. the implementation of anti-corruption reforms should be the **first priority for any national government**;
2. there have been **important first steps** to fight corruption by the previous government: a **more transparent allocation of public funds** which is **independent of political party** connections.

As a result, there should be **less fraud** and the government would have **more money for the public**, e.g. for schools, pensions, and health care.



#### The Fight Against Corruption in Bulgaria

A report commissioned by the **parties PP, BSP, and DB** shows:

1. the implementation of anti-corruption reforms should be the **first priority for any national government**;
2. there have been **important first steps** to fight corruption by **our** government: a **more transparent allocation of public funds** which is **independent of political party** connections.

As a result, there should be **less fraud** and the government would have **more money for the public**, e.g. for schools, pensions, and health care.

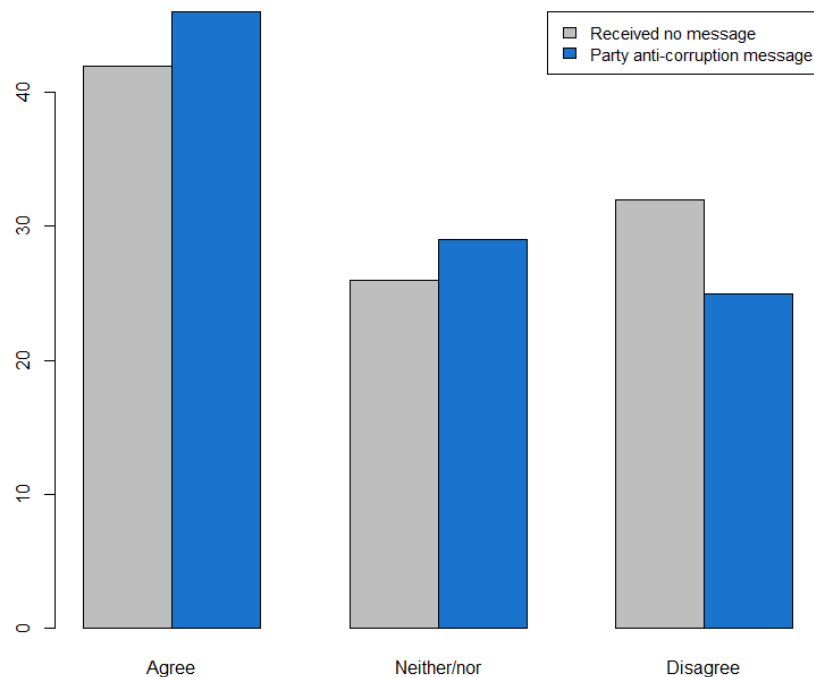
After the respondents were “treated”, i.e. presented with one of these three messages, they were asked whether they agreed to a range of statements regarding corruption in Bulgaria. When asked whether respondents disagree or agree with the statement “*There are national parties that made substantial efforts trying to fight corruption*”, we found a higher percentage of respondents agreeing with this statement among the group that had been presented with the message by the parties PP-DB and BSP than among the control group which did not receive a message: the control group (grey bars in Figure 3.5) agreed to only 42% and disagreed to 32%. The group which received the message sent by the parties agreed to 46% and disagreed to only 25%.

This difference in means between these two groups is statistically significant on the 95%-level, meaning that there is a 95% probability that the difference between the groups is not due to chance or random variation. It indicates that the difference is considered not likely to be a result of random error or sampling variability. However, advanced statistical analyses have to follow up on this result to find if this difference holds when controlling for additional factors.

The takeaway is: when presented with a specific, partisan message about government efforts by their preferred party, respondents are more likely to agree that there are parties which try to fight corruption. We interpret this as an encouraging sign that parties can indeed benefit from fighting corruption and communicating about it.

**Figure 3.5:** Differences by groups which received different messages – There are national parties that sincerely try to fight corruption in Bulgaria

### There are parties which severely try to fight corruption

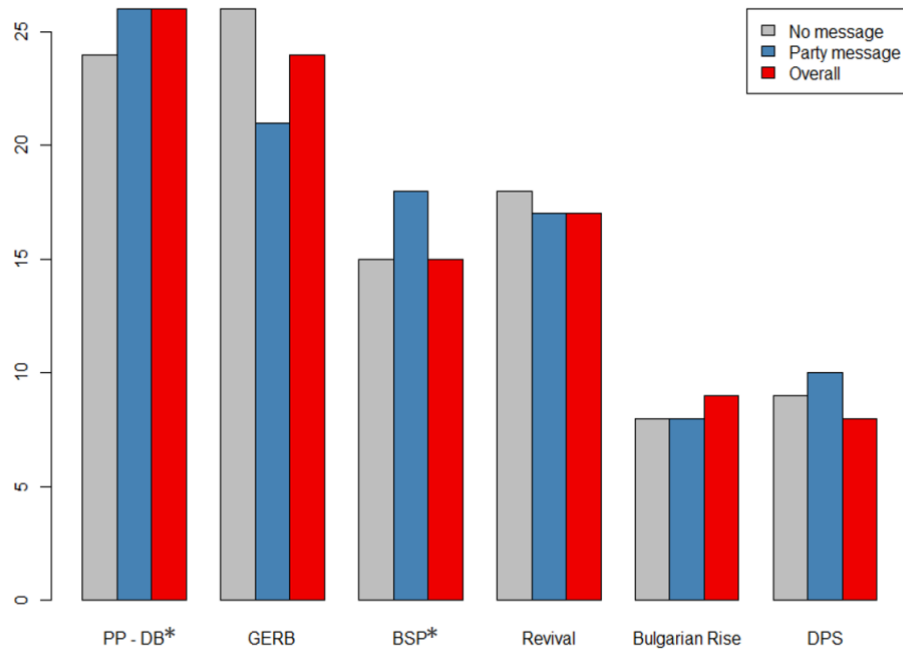


One can also observe the mean differences between groups regarding the question “*Which party is most likely to fight corruption in Bulgaria?*”. Overall, the respondents selected most frequently (26.5%, red bars) PP-DB as the party coalition most likely to fight corruption, followed by GERB-SDS (24%, red bars) as can be seen in Figure 3.6. Respondents who received the party message (blue bars) more frequently selected the PP-DB, as well as BSP, in contrast to respondents who received no message (grey bars). The difference in means is not significant on conventional levels but there are significant effects for sub-groups, as Figure 3.7 reveals. Figure 3.7 shows the percentage of each voter group which selected PP-DB or BSP (i.e. one of the parties which sent a message of anti-corruption government efforts) by sub-group (i.e. those who received no message vs. those who received the party message).

While for the voters of PP-DB and BSP (the parties in cabinet which were the “senders” of the message) the messaging showed no effect – most likely because they are already convinced by their own parties – GERB voters reacted negatively to the message and were significantly less likely to select one of the messenger parties as being most likely to fight corruption (indicated by the \*\*). In contrast, non-voters were significantly more likely to select one of the messenger parties when they had been presented with the party message (indicated by the \*\*). This shows that non-voters are particularly able to be convinced by partisan messages about specific anti-corruption efforts. In contrast, people who already vote for the party do not change their attitudes (but might be mobilised) and respondents

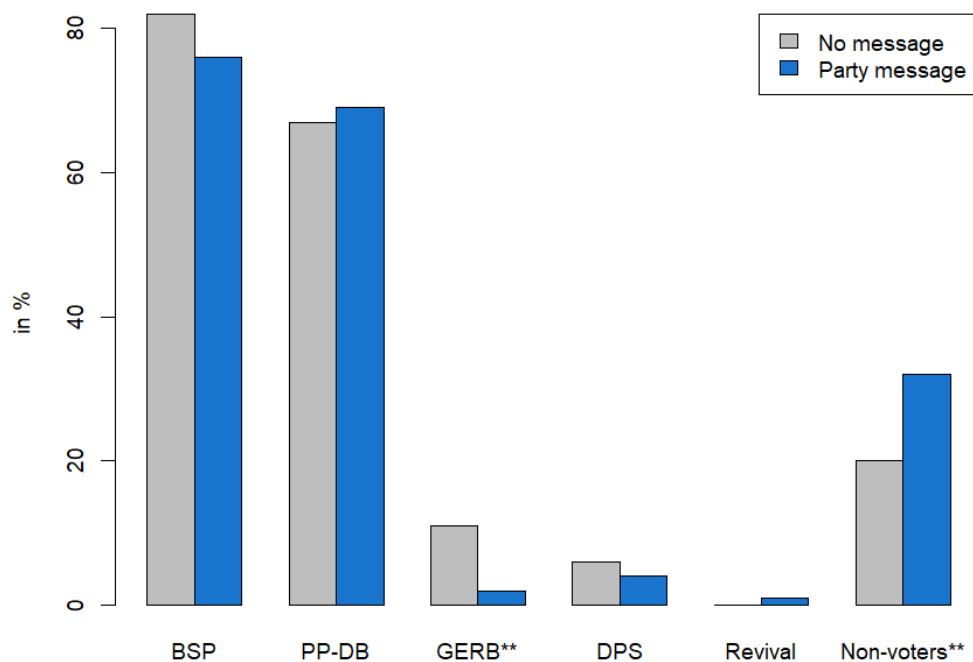
who voted for the political opponent may even be less convinced when receiving such a message.

**Figure 3.6:** Differences by groups which received different messages – Which party is most likely to fight corruption?



\*Party was the sender of message on government fight against corruption.

**Figure 3.7:** Differences among groups that received different messages – Selecting BSP/PP-DB as the party most likely to fight corruption by party vote last election



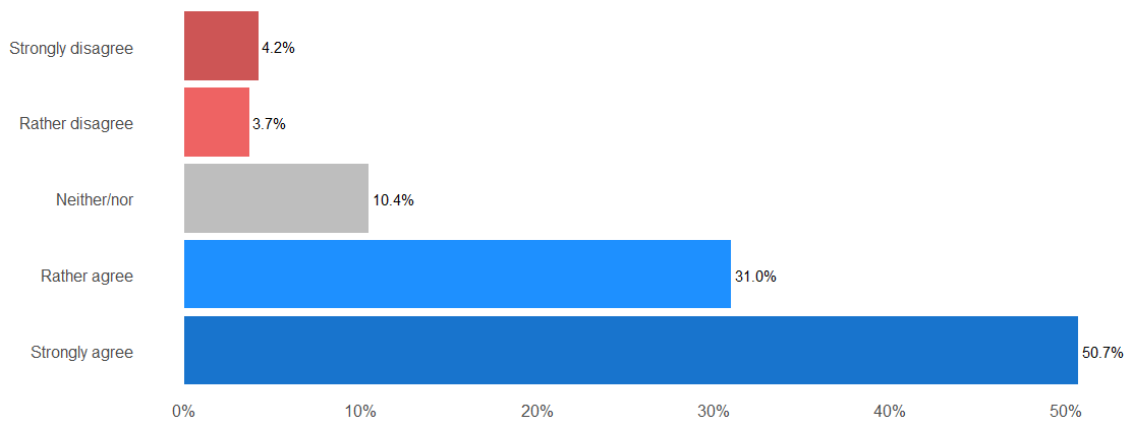
Note: \*\* indicate statistically significant effects

No other significant effects of the messages about the government’s performance in the fight against corruption were identified.

### 3.4 Fighting corruption as first priority for the future government

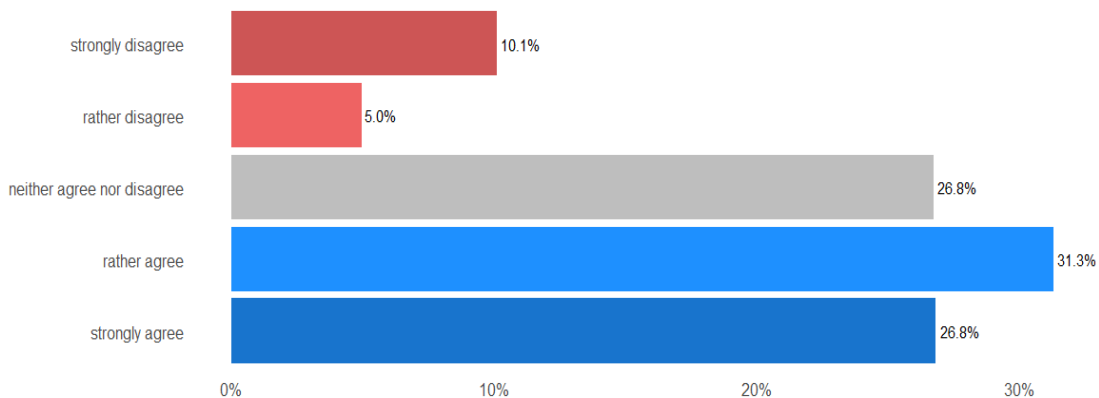
The overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) declared that they either strongly agree (50.7%) or rather agree (31%) with the statement that *“Fighting corruption should be the first priority for any new government”* (see Figure 3.8). Only about 10% of the respondents disagreed. This is simultaneously unsurprising and somewhat striking as this result contrasts with the results presented above in Figure 3.1, where a plurality of respondents accept corruption as long as the government delivers good results. However, this result is very steady across different political, social and demographic groups.

**Figure 3.8:** Fighting corruption should be the first priority for the next government



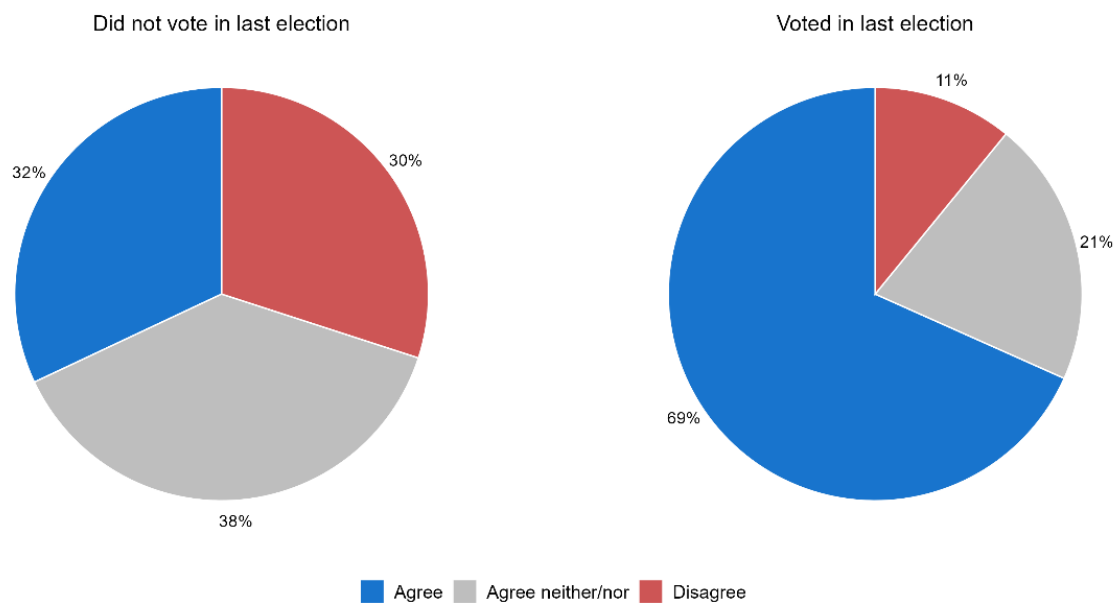
Similarly, a majority of respondents agreed with the statement that they vote for the party most likely to fight corruption (58%) as presented in Figure 3.9. However, the pie charts in Figure 3.10 indicate that there is a significant difference in agreement among individuals who voted in the last elections (October 2022) and those who did not vote. Non-voters agreed to only 32% while voters agreed to 69%.

**Figure 3.9:** For the upcoming elections, I will vote for the party which is most likely to fight corruption





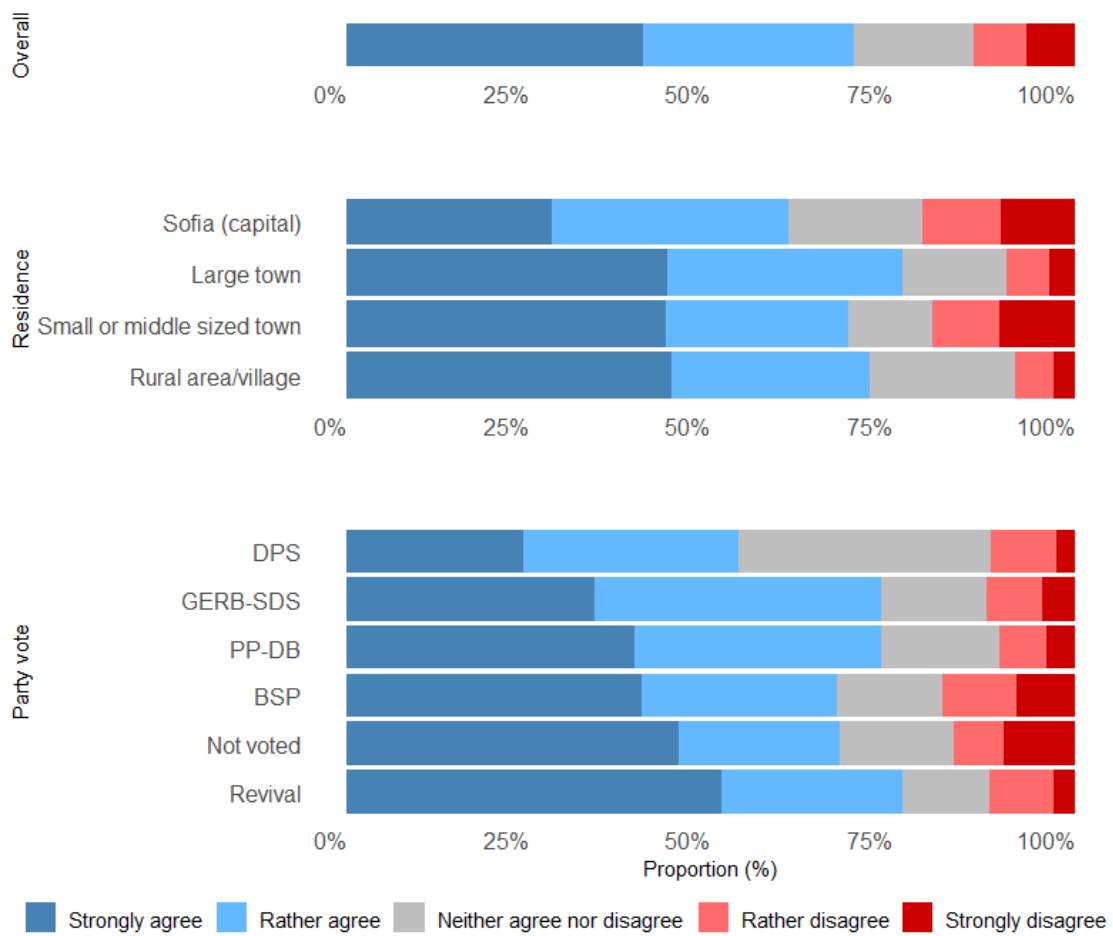
**Figure 3.10:** For the upcoming elections, I will vote for the party which is most likely to fight corruption, by respondents who voted in the last elections (Oct 2022)



In the following question, survey respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with the statement “*Politicians have no real will to fight corruption as they may benefit from it*”. The findings show that respondents are rather critical regarding their politicians’ will to fight corruption in Bulgaria. Figure 3.11 reveals that overall, 70% agreed (41% strongly and 29% rather agree) with the statement that politicians in Bulgaria have no real will to fight corruption as they may benefit from it. There is some variation across party voters, but the agreement was overwhelmingly high. The highest percentage of disagreement can be found among the individuals who voted for BSP in the last elections (18% disagree). Revival voters agreed the most (76%). Further, there is some variation regarding the place of residence of respondents. Individuals living in Sofia agreed the least (and disagreed the most) that “politicians have no real will to fight corruption as they benefit from it”.

This finding is likely rooted in the fact that there is a long tradition of Bulgarian parties campaigning on anti-corruption platforms but very little change in corruption perceptions among the Bulgarian public and little serious anti-corruption legislation. Moreover, the survey data shows that agreement with this statement is highly correlated with higher levels of populist attitudes in Bulgaria. This is consistent with the finding that individuals in Sofia disagree the most with this statement – in the capital, respondents live in closer proximity to the political elites and show in general lower levels of populist attitudes.

**Figure 3.11: Politicians have no real will to fight corruption as they may benefit from it**



## 4. Reporting corruption

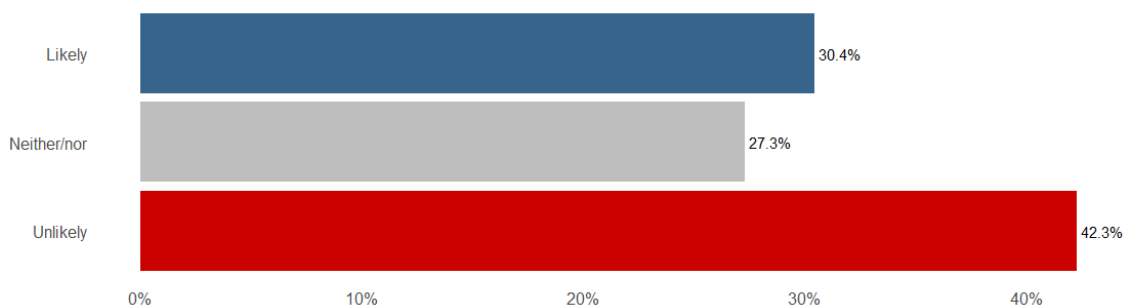
**Chapter summary:** Generally, a substantial number of respondents are hesitant to report corruption to the authorities. However, younger respondents and those who are educated to a higher level are more likely to report it. Furthermore, the survey found that lowering the threshold of effort for filing a report as well as giving the opportunity of reporting anonymously can increase the willingness of individuals to report corruption.

One major challenge in the fight against corruption is to increase the willingness of the public to report corruption to the authorities. Hence, this part of the survey concentrated on the respondents' likelihood to report an act of corruption which they experience, and how this likelihood is affected by different circumstances and scenarios.

### 4.1 Likelihood to report corruption to the authorities

Overall, Figure 4.1 shows that a plurality (42%) of the respondents indicated that they are unlikely to file a report about an act of corruption they experience to the authorities. 17.5% even stated that it is not at all likely (Figure 4.2, left plot). In contrast, only 30% stated that it is somewhat or very likely that they would report corruption to the authorities. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the respondents were undecided.

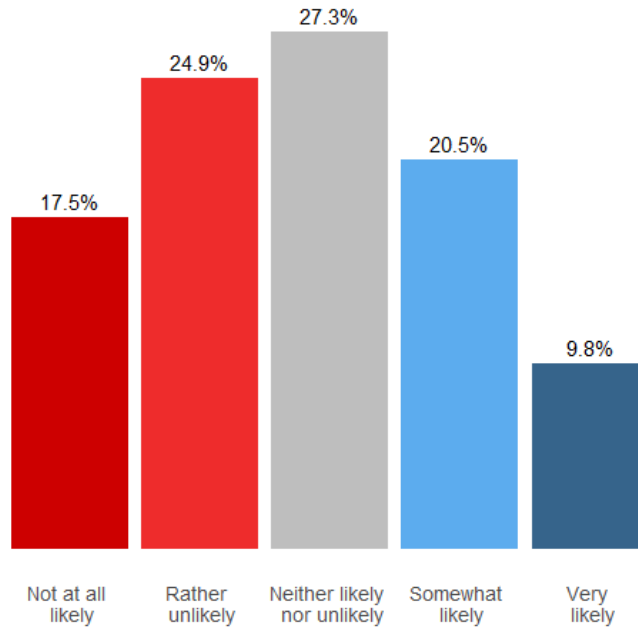
**Figure 4.1:** General assessment of reporting corruption: "I would report an act of corruption to the authorities"



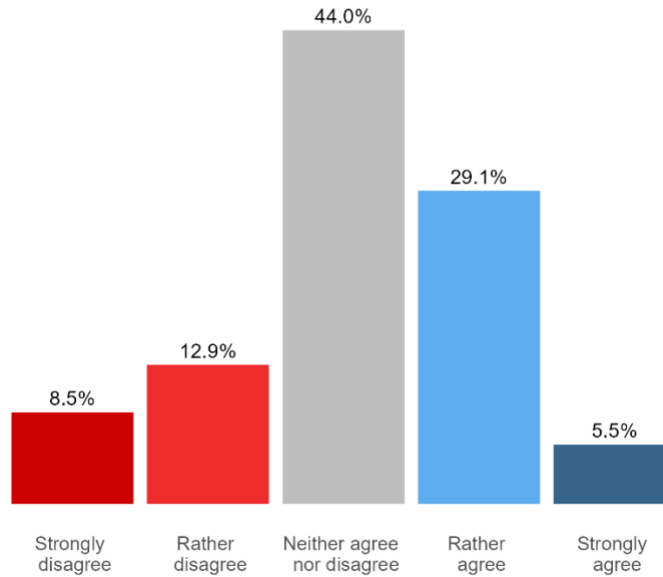
Moreover, the right plot in Figure 4.2 displays that about a third (35%) of the respondents perceived that, overall, civic involvement in the fight against corruption and reporting corruption is easier today than five years ago. Around a fifth (21%) disagreed with this statement. A remarkable number (44%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Figure 4.2:** General assessment of reporting corruption

I would report an act of corruption to the authorities



It is easier now to report corruption than 5 years ago



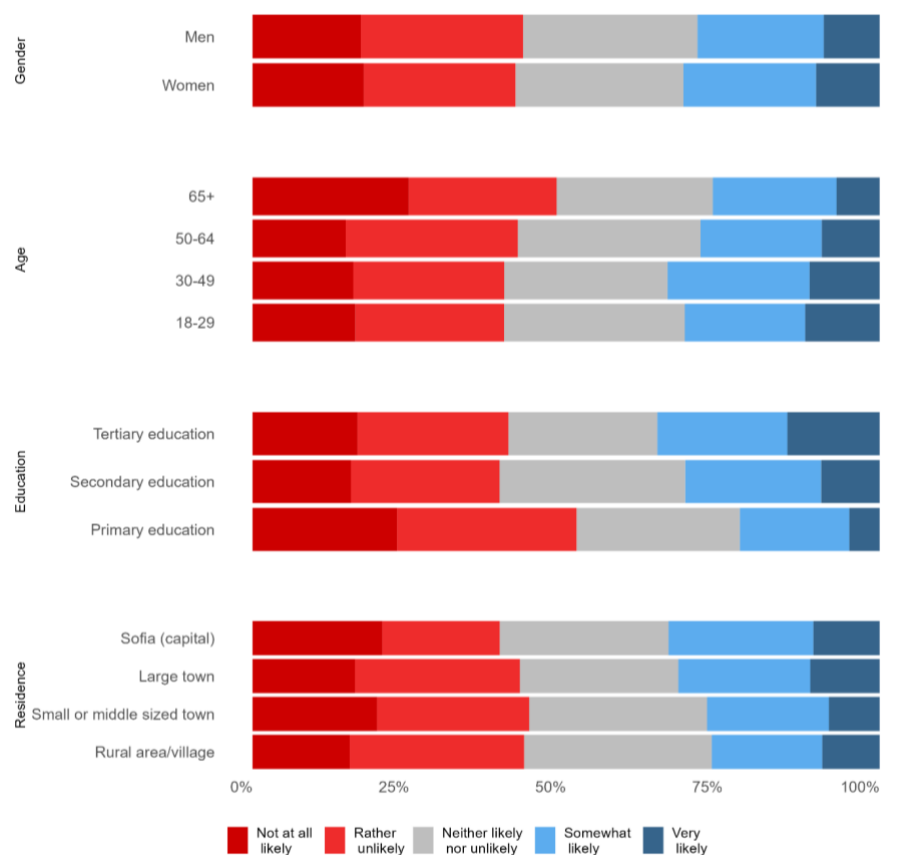
The likelihood of reporting corruption does vary across different social and demographic groups, as can be seen in Figure 4.3. With 31%, women are slightly more likely to report corruption than men (29%). Looking at the different age groups, the oldest respondents (65+ years old) are least likely to report corruption: 49% of them stated that they are rather unlikely (24%) or not likely at all (25%) to report corruption, while only 27% stated that they

are likely to report to the authorities. The age group of 30–49-year-old citizens is most likely to report corruption. Around a third (34%) of respondents in this age group indicated that they are very or rather likely to file a corruption report to the authorities.

Figure 4.3 further reveals that individuals with primary education are least likely to report corruption. When experiencing an act of corruption, 52% of the respondents in this group stated that it is rather unlikely (29%) or not likely at all (23%) that they would report it. Only 22% stated that they are likely to file a corruption report. Respondents with a university education were most likely to report an act of corruption. Thirty-five percent (35%) of university educated individuals answered that it is very likely (15%) or rather likely (21%) that they would report corruption to the authorities, which corresponds with other survey results (Amini, Douarin, and Hinks 2022).

More differences can be observed among individuals who live in rural areas and smaller towns and those living in larger towns or the capital, Sofia. Only 27% of the residents in rural areas indicated a likelihood to file a report against corruption, while 44% of the residents in Sofia indicated that they are likely to do so.

**Figure 4.3:** Likelihood to report corruption, by different social groups: “I would report an act of corruption to the authorities”



## 4.2 Reporting corruption in an experimental setting: low willingness in all groups

With another experiment, we investigated the mechanisms of reporting corruption in more detail. In the survey, respondents were randomly selected into three groups of approximately equal size (about 400 respondents each). One group, the “control group”, received no message while the other two groups received a message with a scenario where they should imagine experiencing an act of corruption in a hospital. In Scenario 1, the Personal Message, they are directly and negatively affected by corrupt behaviour. In Scenario 2, the Bystander Message, they only observe the corrupt behaviour but are not directly affected by it. The messages are displayed in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4:** Messages with scenarios of an act of corruption

(1) No message	(2) Personal Message: Scenario of being personally negatively affected by a case of corruption	(3) Bystander Message: Scenario of observing a case of corruption without being personally affected
No message (control group for comparison)	One of your parents is in the hospital. While they are on the operating table, the surgeon comes out of the operating room and tells you that if you give 2000 BGN to the surgeon personally, your parent will get much better treatment during the surgery.	You are in the hospital corridor waiting for your spouse to be discharged. You see a surgeon wearing medical scrubs and gloves talking animatedly to another person (a citizen). You hear the doctor say that the citizen’s loved one will get much better treatment on the operating table if the person gives 2000 BGN to the surgeon personally.

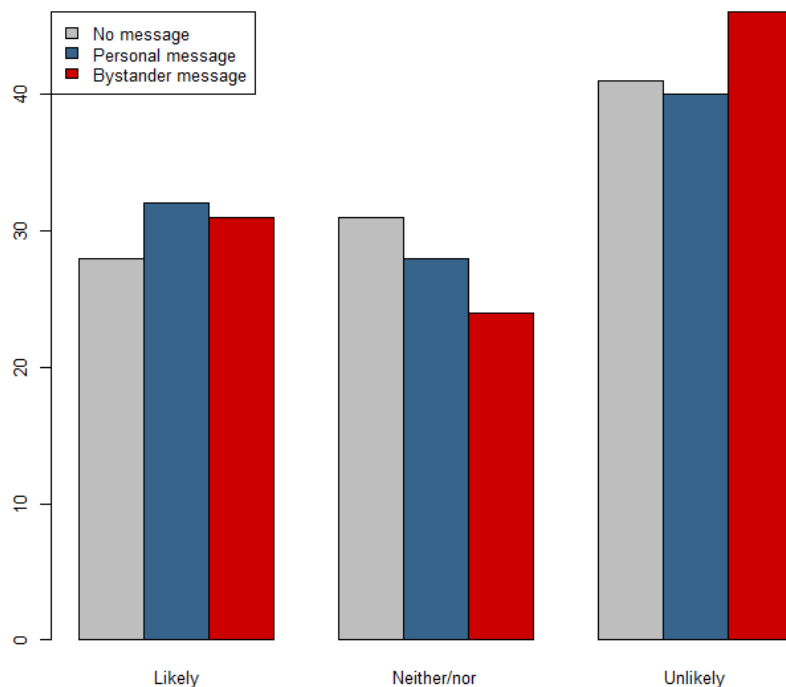
Figure 4.5 shows the likelihood of respondents to report an act of corruption they experience for the three subgroups. The respondents who received no message are displayed by the grey bars, the respondents who received the Personal Message of being directly negatively affected by corruption are displayed by the blue bars and the respondents who received the Bystander Message are displayed by the red bars. Both groups that received a message were slightly more likely to report corruption than the control group. In the group receiving the Personal Message, 32% of the respondents were likely to report, and in the group receiving the Bystander Message, 31%.

By contrast, in the control group 28% stated they are likely to report corruption. The members of the control group were more uncertain about whether they would report corruption than the other two groups. The individuals in the group receiving the Personal Message were less unlikely to report corruption than the control or the Bystander group (Personal Message: 40%, Bystander Message: 46%, Control: 41%). This means that personally affected citizens are to a small degree less likely to not report corruption (i.e. more likely to report it). In other words, being personally negatively affected slightly increases the likelihood of respondents to report corruption.

Importantly, the differences between the groups are not statistically significant. This means that the differences among the groups described above regarding their willingness to support corruption in the different scenarios cannot be traced back with certainty to the treatment. This finding is rather puzzling, since the message was comparatively extreme and only led to minor, statistically non-significant differences.

An important implication of that zero finding is that a majority of respondents are not likely to report corruption even if they are personally affected to a very high degree. This might be due to their assessment that reporting corruption could be potentially harmful or that there is no point in reporting corruption (see both points below).

**Figure 4.5:** Likelihood to report corruption, by received message: “I would report an act of corruption to the authorities”



### **4.3 The circumstances under which respondents report corruption**

Figures 4.6 to 4.8 present results from further investigations into the circumstances under which respondents are more or less likely to report corruption. The circumstances explored are the degree to which individuals are personally affected and how much effort it takes to report the corruption.

In comparison with the experiment above, the respondents this time were not randomly assigned to different groups and presented with different scenarios but were simply asked straightforwardly about their willingness to report corruption. Hence, all respondents saw the same question and a direct comparison between randomised groups is not possible. Moreover, here the respondents were shown all different scenarios and asked directly. Therefore, they were more likely to answer in a socially desirable way and compare their own answers with each other. This leads to some biases in the findings, which are likely to explain why people were more likely to state that they would report when directly asked (see Figure 4.6) than when they were not directly asked as in the experimental setting above.

When asked directly whether they would report an act of corruption if only observing it but not being personally affected by it, 66% of the respondents indicated that they would be rather unlikely (41%) or not likely at all (25%) to, as presented in Figure 4.6. More individuals stated that they would be likely to report corruption if they are directly affected, even in a positive way – for example avoiding a larger fee by paying a smaller bribe. In this case, 42% of the respondents answered that they would be rather or very likely to report corruption.

In conclusion and as expected, individuals stated that they are most likely to report an act of corruption to the authorities if they are directly and negatively affected by it. Under these circumstances, 52% of the respondents indicated that they would be rather likely (31%) or very likely (21%) to file a report to the authorities.



**Figure 4.6: Reporting corruption, by status of being directly affected**

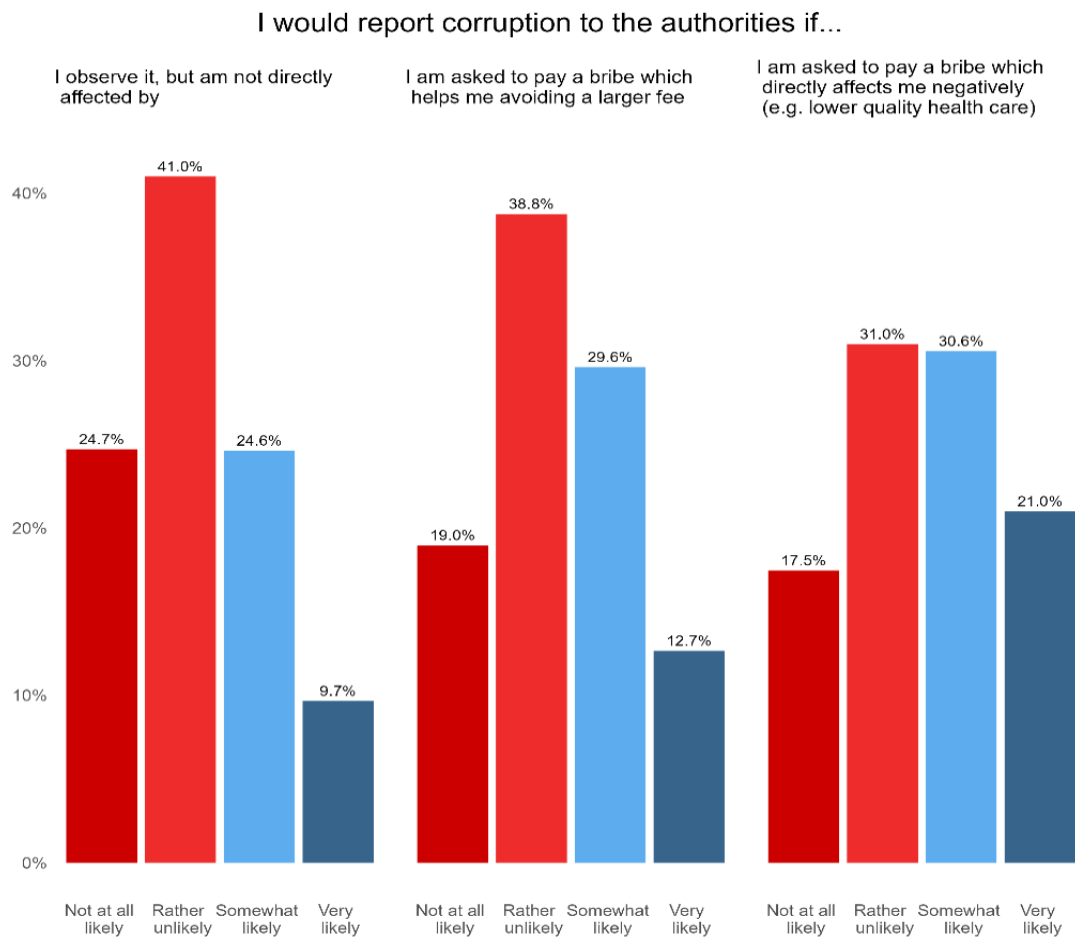
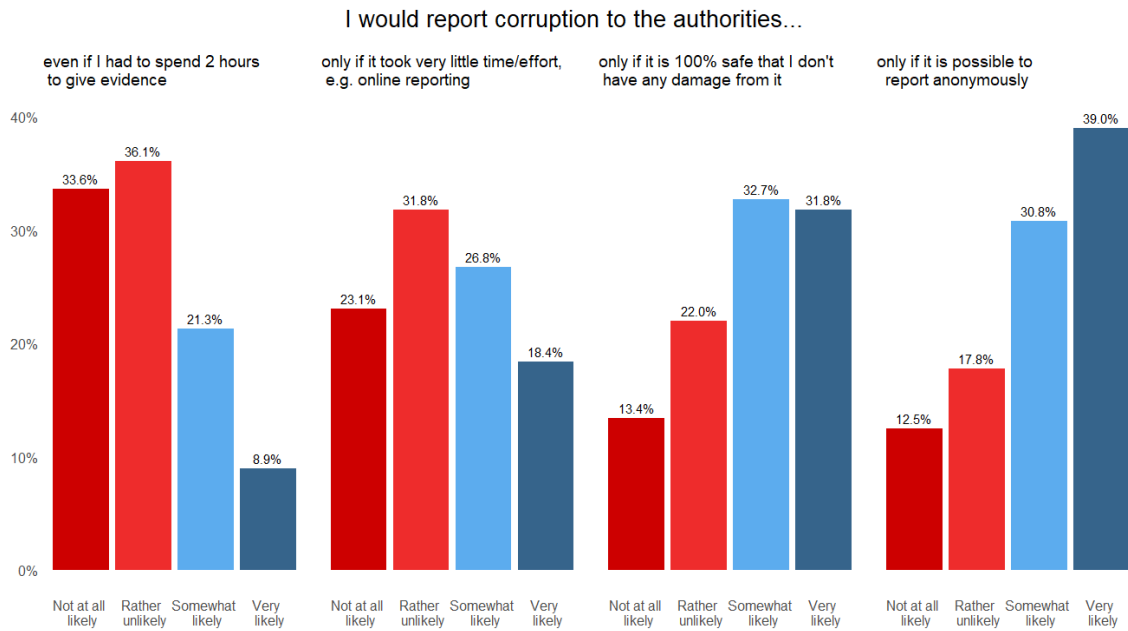


Figure 4.7 explores the external circumstances under which respondents are more or less likely to report corruption. The plot on the far left shows that more individuals stated that they are unlikely to file a report of corruption if they had to spend two hours giving evidence. Under the circumstances of such high effort, only 30% of the respondents stated that they would be likely to report corruption, while 70% of the respondents answered that it would be unlikely that they would report corruption. If it were to take less time and effort to report corruption, for example by doing it online, only 55% of respondents stated that it would be unlikely. This means an increase of about 50% to a frequency of 45% of all individuals who would report corruption, if it were possible to do so online.

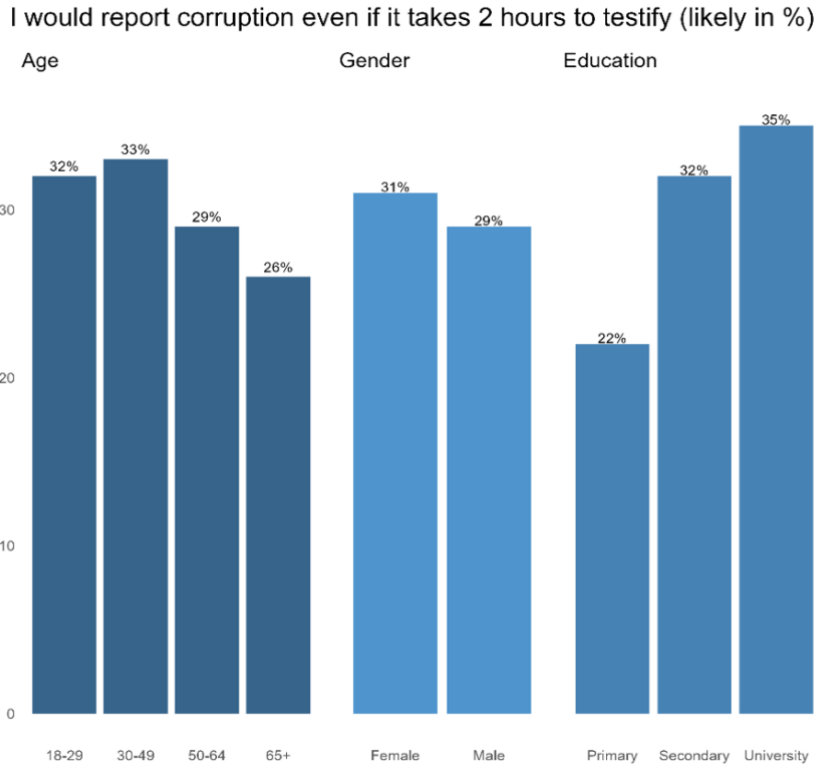
These numbers increase even more if it were 100% safe for individuals to report corruption (65% of respondents would likely report corruption) or if it were possible to report corruption completely anonymously (70% of all respondents would be willing to report corruption). Summarising, it can be seen that lower effort thresholds to file corruption reports to the authorities, as well as in particular the promise to not suffer any negative consequences from reporting, would increase the willingness of people to file corruption reports.

**Figure 4.7: Reporting corruption, by effort**



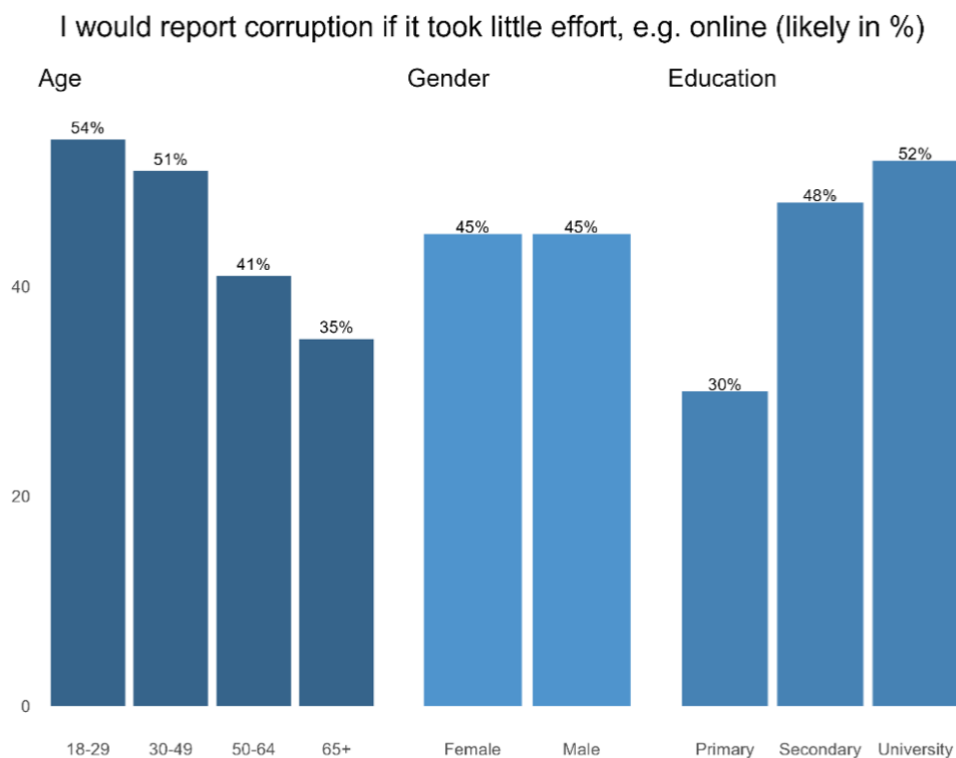
Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show the variation across age groups, gender and educational background of respondents who are likely to report corruption under conditions of high or little effort. Regarding the likelihood of reporting corruption under conditions of high effort, Figure 4.8 displays that older people are less likely to report than younger ones with, again, the age group of 30–49-year-olds being most likely to report (33%). Furthermore, women are slightly more likely to report than men under conditions of high effort (31% women vs. 29% men). Individuals with a university education are, at a substantially and significantly higher rate, more likely to be willing to file a report than individuals with primary education.

**Figure 4.8:** Likely to report corruption with high effort, by social group



If it were possible to report corruption online, the youngest respondents stated they would be more likely to report. Under this condition, 54% of the 18–29-year-olds stated that they are likely to file a corruption report. While there is no difference in the willingness to report corruption between men and women, we observe again that individuals with higher education are more likely to report corruption.

**Figure 4.9:** Likely to report corruption with low effort, by social group



#### 4.4 There is no point in reporting corruption

It is quite remarkable that a substantial percentage of individuals indicated that they are not likely to file a report of corruption, even if the corruption harms them personally or if it would require only little effort. This holds true even if it were possible to report anonymously. As for the reasons to why some respondents are hesitant to report corruption to the authorities in Bulgaria, Figure 4.10 shows that a majority of respondents agreed with the statement “*There is no point in reporting corruption because nothing useful will be done about it*”. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 27% rather agreed. This result may explain the low willingness of respondents to file corruption reports.

**Figure 4.10:** There is no point in reporting corruption

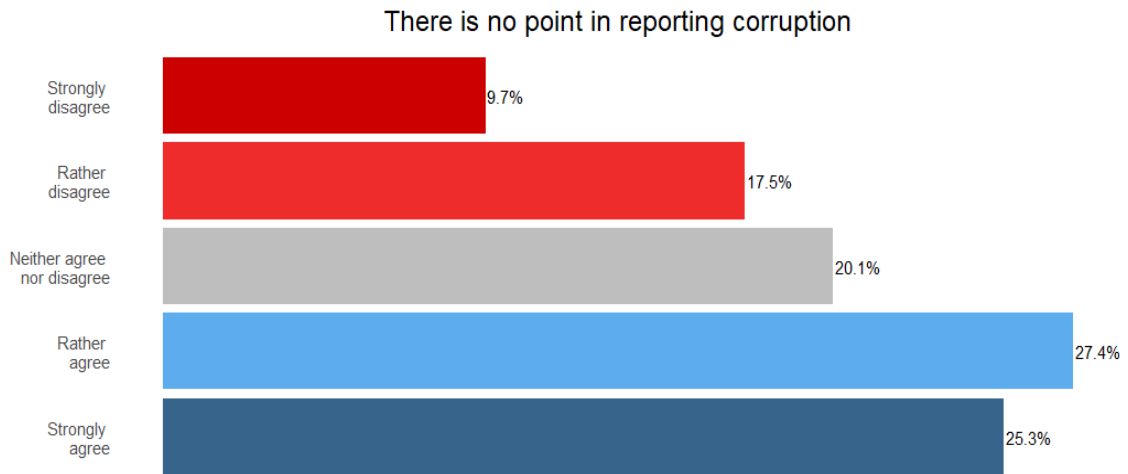
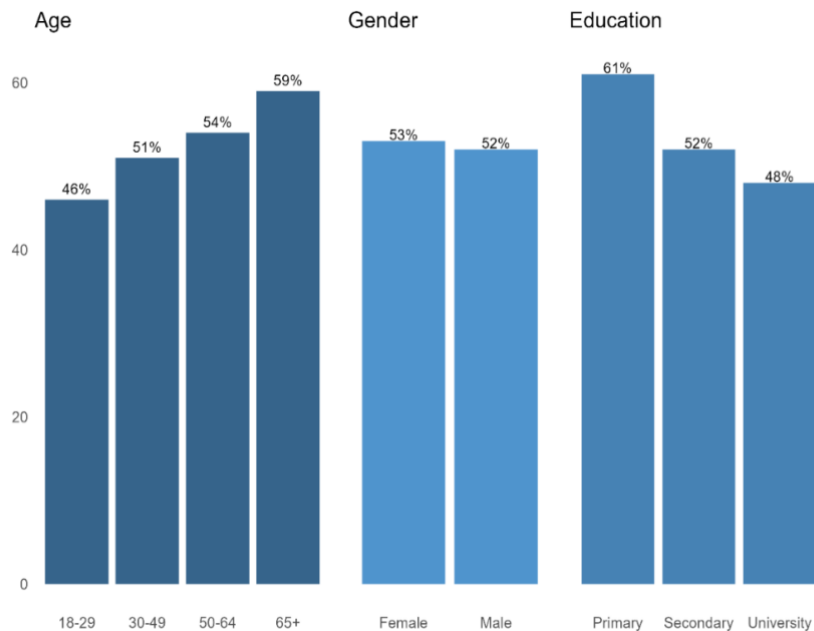


Figure 4.11 shows that the highest frequency of individuals who agreed with the statement that there is no point in reporting corruption is among the older respondents and the ones with only primary education. This figure mirrors the results presented above regarding who is more likely to be willing to report corruption.

**Figure 4.11:** Agreeing to "There is no point in reporting corruption" by social group

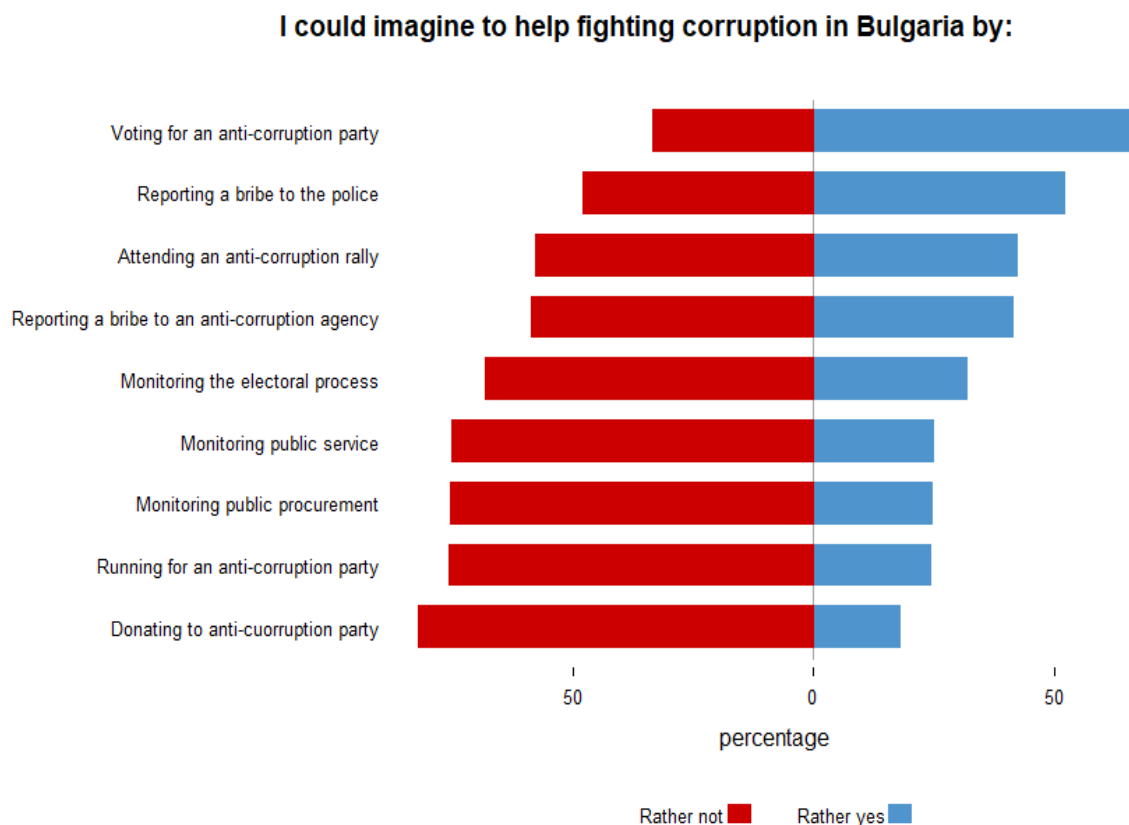


## 4.5 Personal anti-corruption efforts

Figure 4.12 explores which personal anti-corruption efforts respondents are rather likely to make in order to help fight corruption in Bulgaria. A majority of respondents (67%) stated that they are willing to vote for an anti-corruption party. Also, the willingness to report a bribe to the police received a majority (52%) of support. This is surprising and contradictory to the results presented above in Figure 4.11 and most likely based on rating the answers of this question in comparison to the other questions. Thus, the main takeaway message from this finding is to understand the potential willingness to engage in anti-corruption efforts in a ranking of the different options rather than in their absolute numbers.

Another interesting result is that respondents state that they would rather report corruption to the police than to an anti-corruption agency (42%). Moreover, 24% of respondents stated they are willing to actively run as a candidate for an anti-corruption party and 18% to donate money to an anti-corruption party. These figures are not so surprising, since both running as a candidate and donating money are uncommon activities in other societies as well.

**Figure 4.12:** Personal efforts to target corruption



## 5. Informed about corruption

**Chapter summary:** The survey respondents stated that private (commercial) and public (state) TV channels are their primary source of information about corruption in Bulgaria. Corruption scandals which have been recently prominently covered by the media are most known, i.e. cases related to the Magnitsky sanctions and corruption scandals related to the Hemus highway construction.

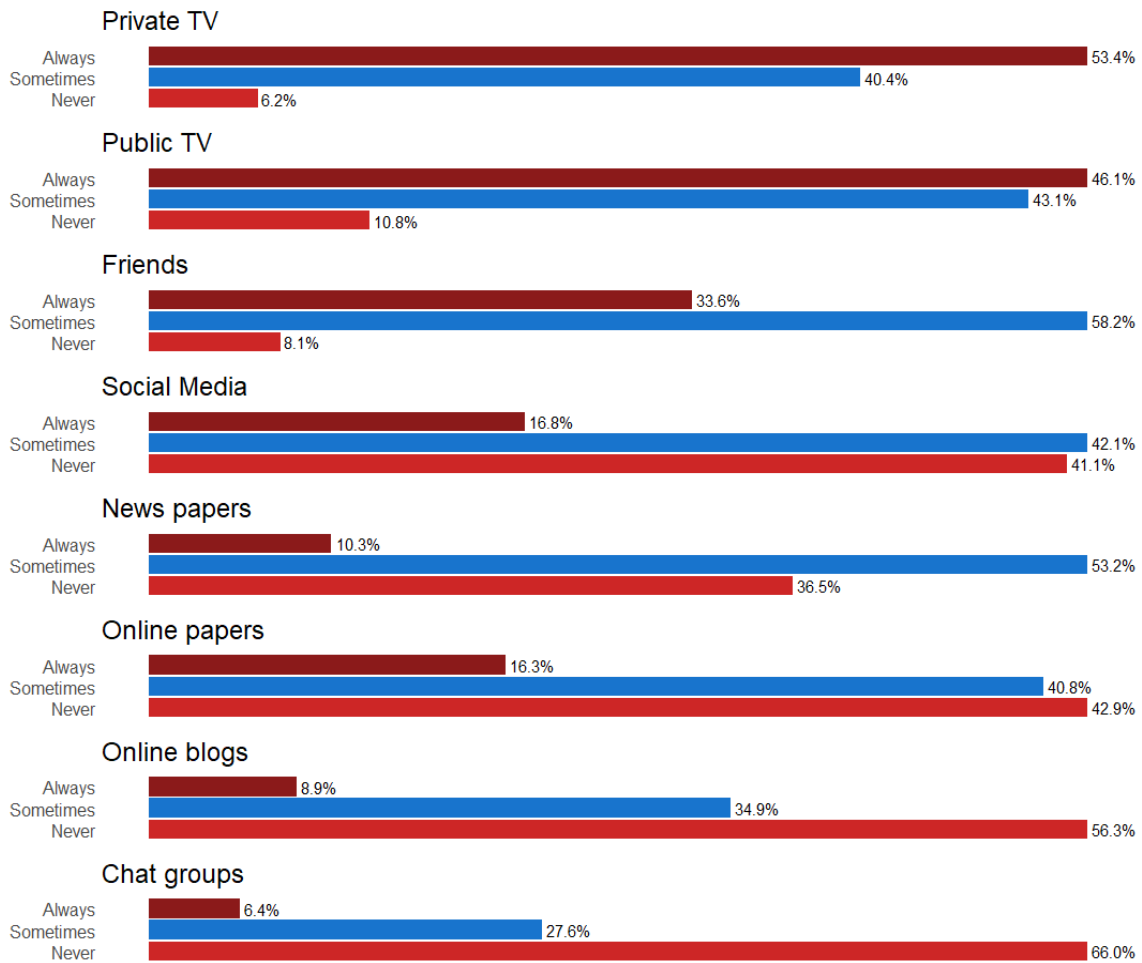
In order to tackle corruption in Bulgaria, it is highly relevant to understand how citizens are informed about corruption scandals and government efforts as well as from which sources and media they receive their information.

### 5.1 Sources respondents use to learn about corruption scandals

Figure 5.1 presents the results of questions about the respondents' sources of information about corruption scandals. Respondents could choose Never (red bars); Sometimes (blue bars); or Always (maroon bars). Private and public TV is the most important source for a majority of individuals. About 94% of all respondents stated that private TV is always (53%) or at least sometimes (40%) a source of information about corruption scandals for them. Similarly, 89% stated that public TV is always (46%) or sometimes (43%) a source of information.

Thus, it can be concluded that TV programmes and news are by far the most relevant channels to spread information about corruption scandals, particularly among older respondents. This also indicates that these are good channels for the government to communicate anti-corruption efforts and measurements to the public. Moreover, it could be deduced that various media framings on different TV channels might lead to the formation of different opinions in the public. Although online media are relevant, particularly to younger respondents, they are, according to this survey result, substantially less important than public and private TV programmes.

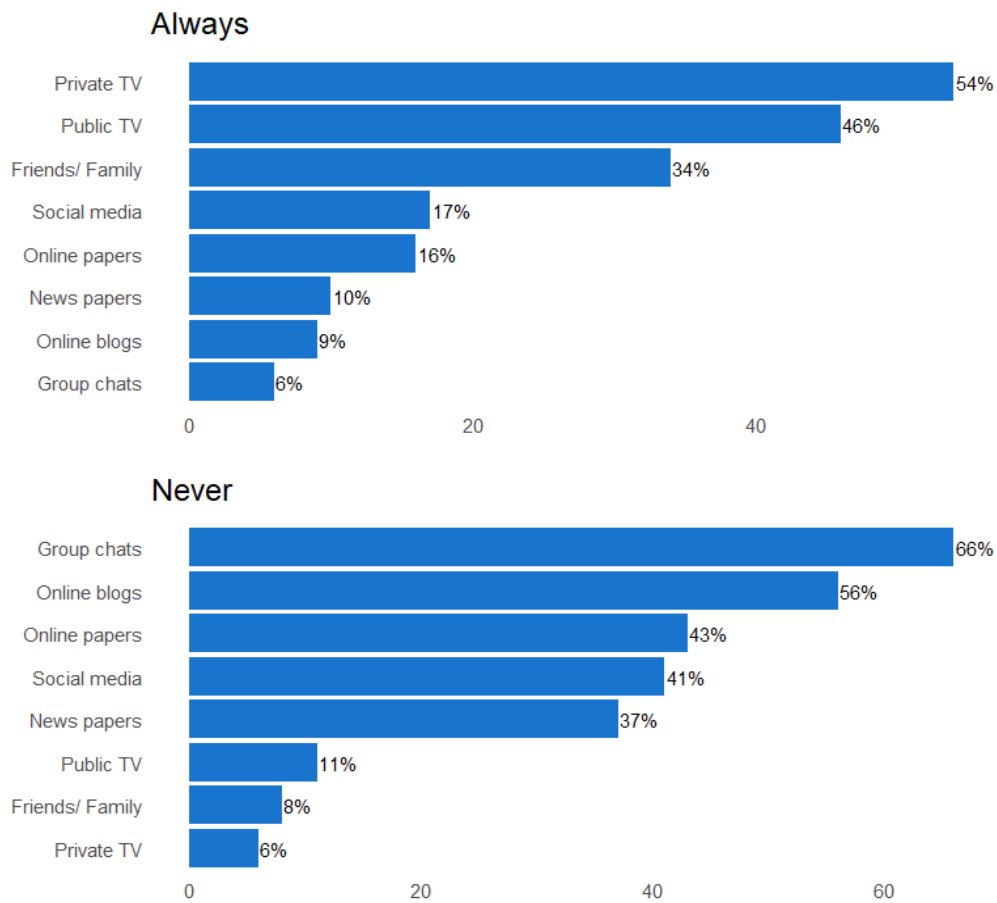
**Figure 5.1:** From which sources have you received information about corruption scandals?



Informal channels such as friends and family as well as social media are also important sources for respondents to learn about corruption scandals. This result is reflected in Figure 5.2, which shows how frequently the options Always and Never were chosen. Thus, group chats such as WhatsApp or Telegram groups are the least frequently used sources, followed by online blogs. According to these results, information campaigns about corruption scandals and anti-corruption efforts via TV would be the most powerful information sources.



**Figure 5.2:** From which sources have you received information about corruption scandals – always and never?



## 5.2 Awareness of corruption scandals in Bulgaria

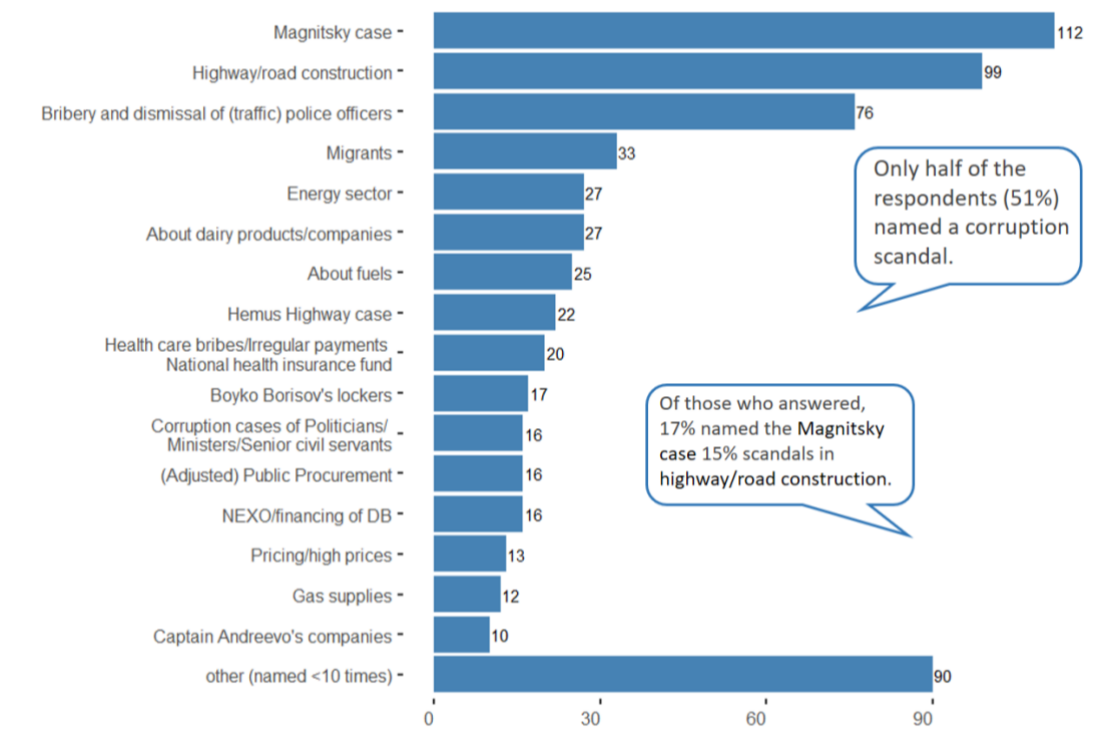
In an open question, the survey further asked respondents to name a corruption scandal of which they are aware. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 show the results to this question. Figure 5.3 presents the mentioned scandals in the form of a word cloud. This plot displays many references to corruption acts or scandals. The larger the font, the more frequently it was mentioned. Thus, cases related to the Magnitsky sanctions, highway/road construction, and bribery and dismissal of (traffic) police are the most frequently named answers.

**Figure 5.3:** Word cloud of known corruption scandals (open question)



Figure 5.4 presents the results in a more structured manner. It reveals most importantly that about half of the respondents (51%) were able to mention some kind of corruption scandal. Of those respondents who answered this question, 17% (112 individuals) named cases related to the Magnitsky sanctions, which were rather heavily covered in Bulgarian media just before the survey. Fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents who answered mentioned scandals in the sector of highway and road construction. Further, there were many, but significantly less frequent, mentions of other scandals in Bulgaria.

**Figure 5.4:** Mentions of known corruption scandals (open question)



## 6. Combating corruption

**Chapter summary:** When asked about who should lead the fight against corruption in Bulgaria, respondents most frequently selected the Bulgarian National Prosecutor – despite the very low trust ratings for the National Prosecutor and the judicial system, which were perceived as the sector most affected by corruption in Bulgaria. Furthermore, not even a third of the respondents were able to name any anti-corruption efforts by the Bulgarian government, which indicates that the government may be either failing in regards to passing meaningful anti-corruption reforms and/or failing in their efforts to communicate positive anti-corruption reforms the cabinet has been implementing.

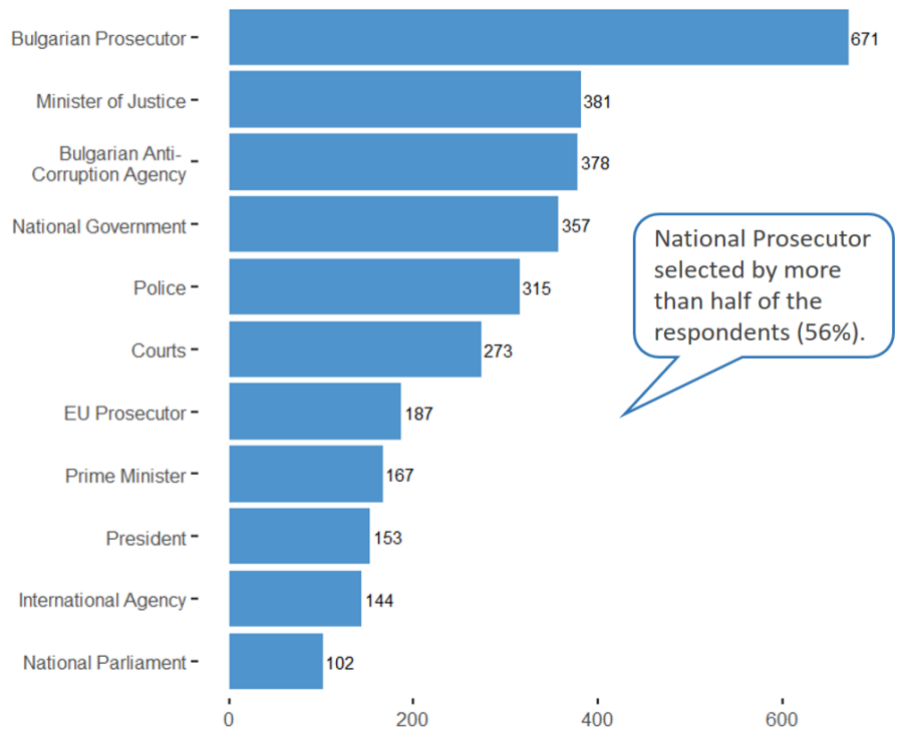
### 6.1 Leader in the efforts to fight corruption

In this part of the survey, the participants were asked to select the institution or actor which, in their opinion, should be organising and leading the fight against corruption in Bulgaria. Respondents were allowed to select up to three options and the options were presented in a randomised order to all respondents so as to avoid ordering biases in the answer.

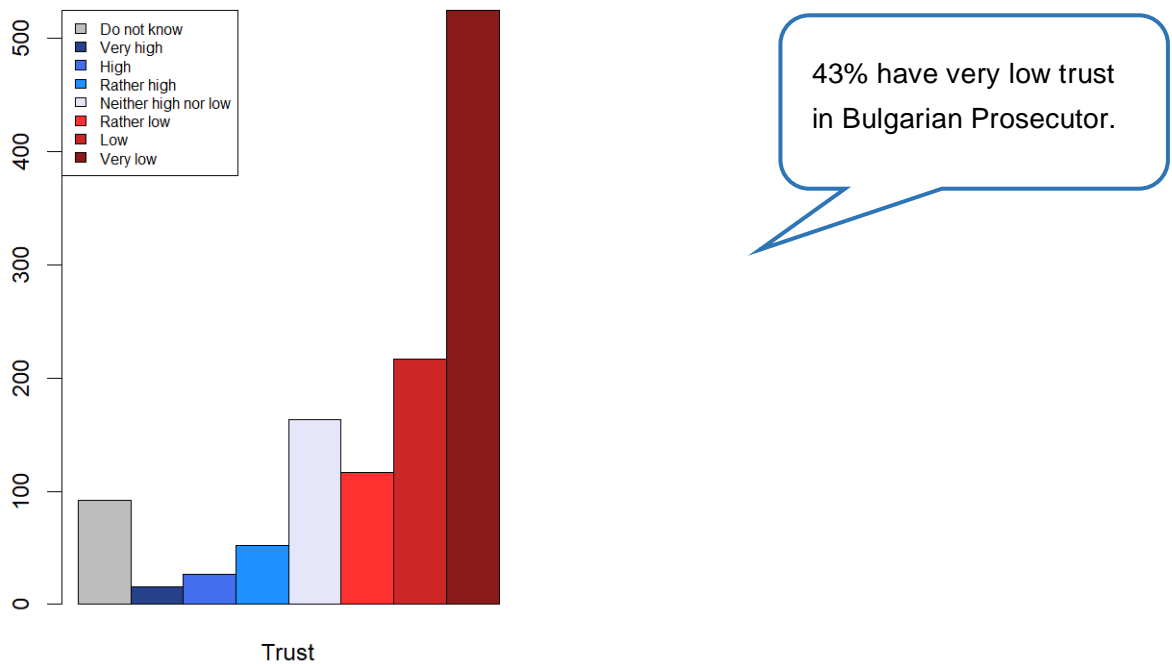
A clear majority of respondents selected the institution of the Bulgarian Prosecutor to lead the combat against corruption in Bulgaria. This result is highly interesting, especially in light of the very low levels of trust the respondents attributed to the Bulgarian Prosecutor as presented in Figure 6.2 below. About 56%, more than every second respondent, selected the Bulgarian Prosecutor as the leader in the efforts in the fight against corruption. The fact that respondents perceive corruption as being most prevalent in the judicial system stands in clear contrast to this finding, at first glance. However, it is important to note that this question neither asks about favourability nor about which institution has done a good job in fighting corruption so far. In contrast, the question aims to understand the opinion of the public about who should take up a role and start to address the problem of corruption in Bulgaria.

The findings further show that about every third respondent selected the Minister of Justice, followed by the Bulgarian Anti-Corruption Agency and the national government, as key actors in the fight against corruption. Interestingly, the survey participants seem to want no foreign involvement in the national fight against corruption, despite higher trust levels in non-national institutions.

**Figure 6.1:** Selection of actor who should lead the fight against corruption (selection of up to 3 out of 11 choices)



**Figure 6.2:** Low levels of trust for the Bulgarian Prosecutor



## 6.2 Awareness of anti-corruption efforts

In the following step the survey respondents were asked, in an open question, to name any government effort in the fight against corruption. Figure 6.3 shows that the vast majority of respondents either did not answer at all (14%) or answered with “*I do not know any*” (47% of respondents). Strikingly, another 10% of the respondents answered with “*There are no efforts*” and only 29% – fewer than every third respondent – named a governmental effort.

**Figure 6.3:** Ability to name a government effort against corruption (open question)

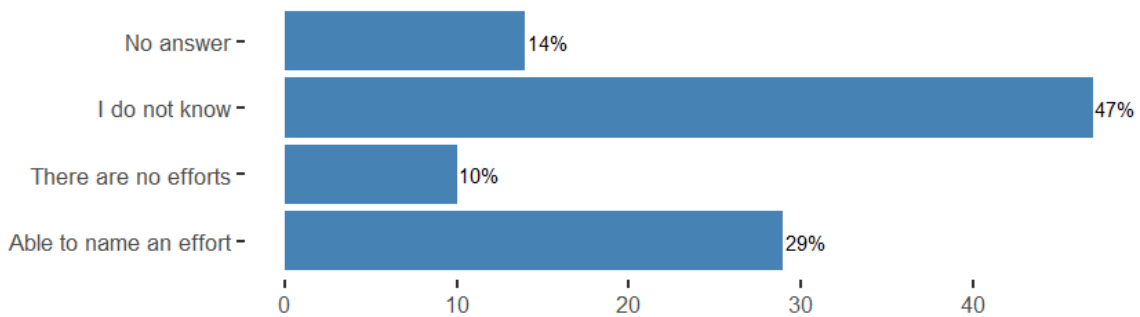


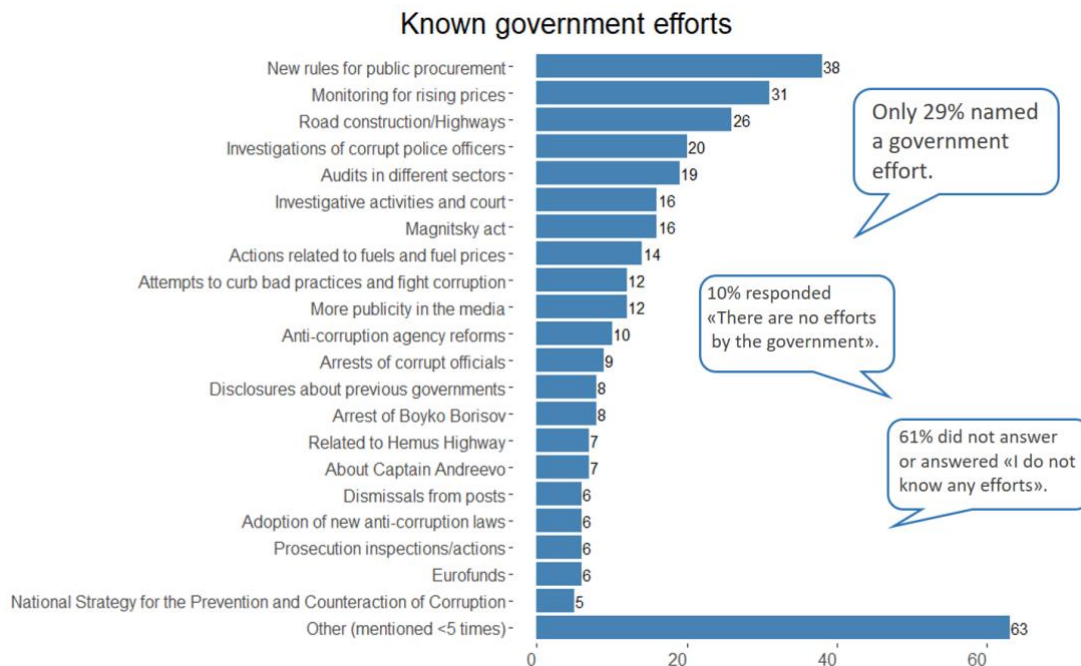
Figure 6.4 presents a word cloud of the government efforts mentioned by the 29% of respondents who answered the question. Again, larger words indicate that the effort was more frequently mentioned. The most often named government effort was *New rules for public procurement*.

**Figure 6.4:** Word cloud of known government efforts to fight corruption (open question)



Figure 6.5 presents the mentioned government efforts in a more structured way. It shows that a wide range of efforts were mentioned but none of them with a high frequency. This result indicates that there is no major government effort of which the Bulgarian public is aware.

**Figure 6.5:** Mentions of government efforts against corruption



## 7. Demographics and political attitudes of respondents

This last section gives a brief overview of the demographic, social and political attributes of the 1,209 respondents in the survey. It shows that the survey was representative of the overall Bulgarian population with regards to key characteristics such as gender, age, education level and geographical (urban/rural) location.

### 7.1 Demographics

Fifty-one percent (51.3%) of the respondents stated themselves to be female, 46.4% stated themselves to be male and 2.3% did not answer the question about their gender.

Figure 7.1: Gender of respondents

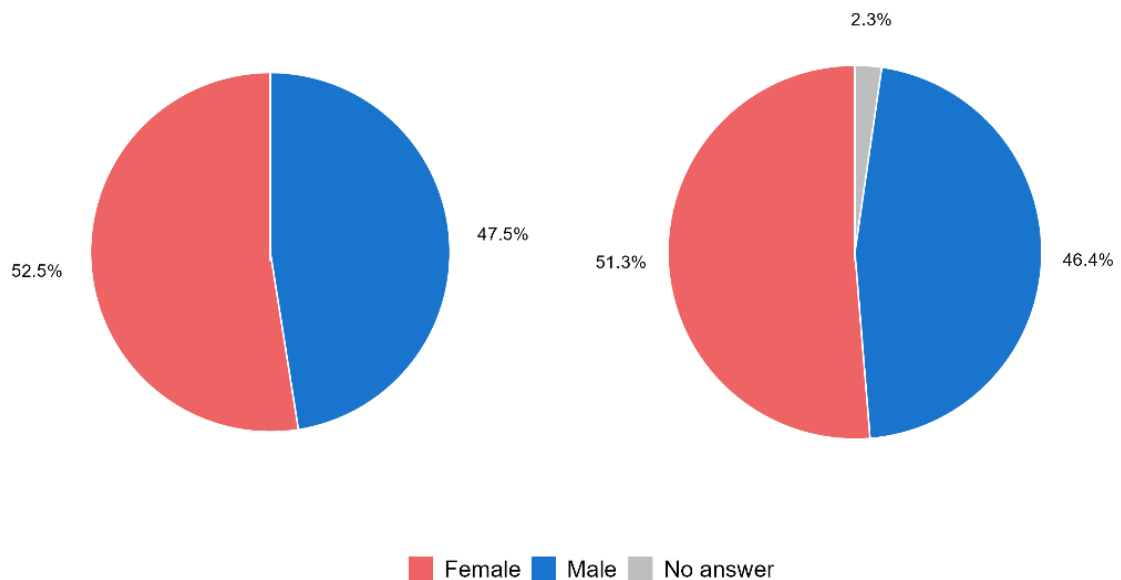


Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of the respondents in age groups. The left plot presents the age in four groups, while the right plot shows the age distribution in a more fine-grained manner, in six groups.

**Figure 7.2: Age of respondents**

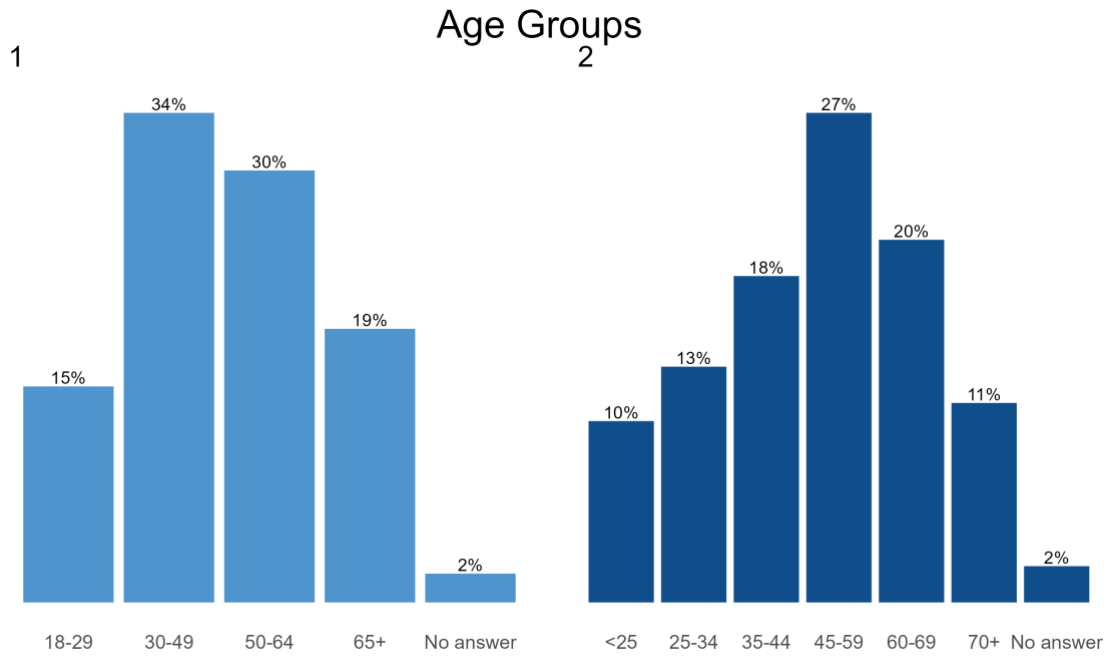
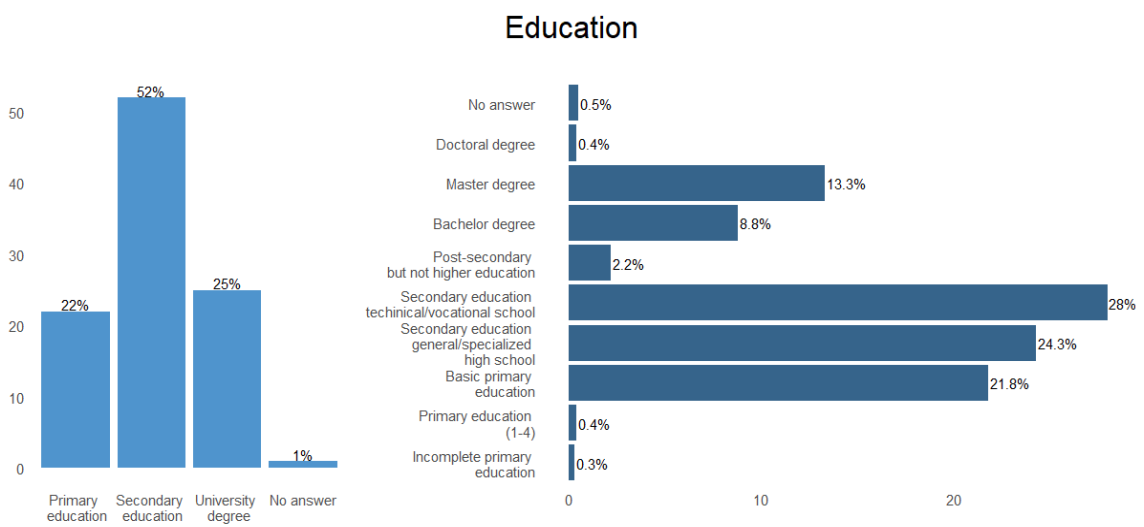


Figure 7.3 shows that the majority of respondents stated that they had completed secondary education (52%). The right plot gives more detailed information on the educational background of the respondents.

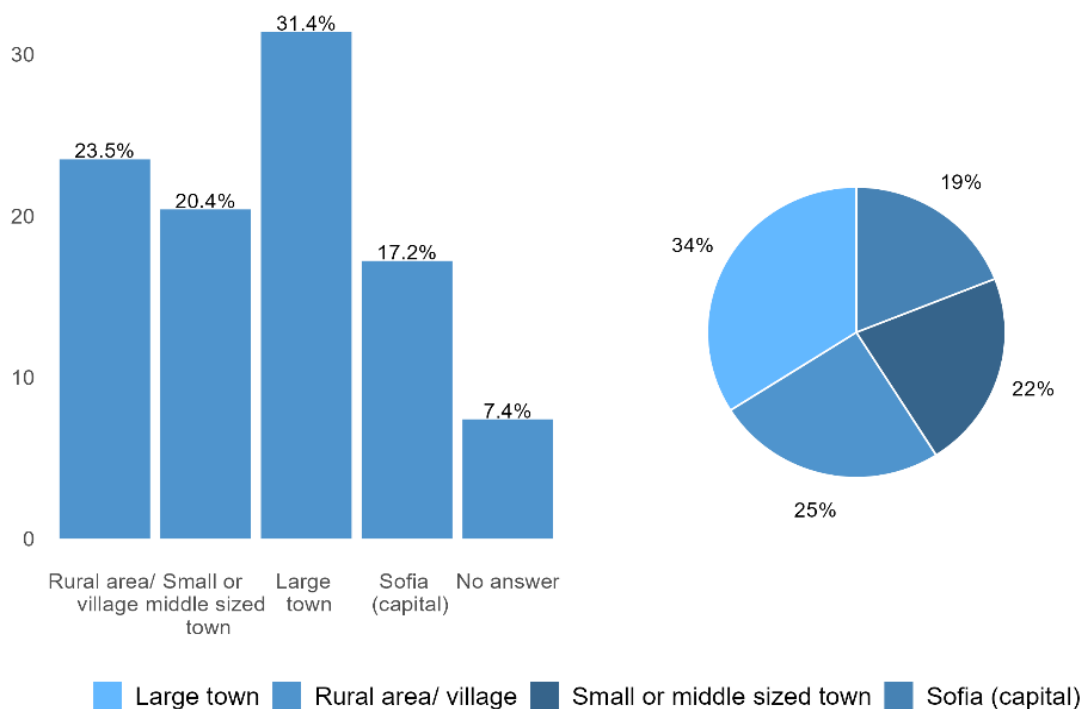
**Figure 7.3: Educational backgrounds of respondents**





Overall, the largest proportion of respondents answered that they live in a large town. Thus, 31.4% of all respondents stated that they are citizens of a large town, or 34% of respondents when ignoring the ones who did not answer the question (7.4%). 24% of respondents answered that they live in a rural area, 20% in a small or middle-sized town and 17% in the capital, Sofia.

**Figure 7.4:** Respondents' place of residence



## 7.2 Political attitudes of respondents

A major part of the survey concentrated on the attitudes of respondents towards government efforts, which is why the respondents' political attitudes are also presented here. Sixty-two percent (68.2%) of the respondents stated that they voted in the last elections in October 2022. This percentage is significantly higher than the official turnout, which was 39.3%. This difference is however not uncommon for surveys and may be due to a variety of reasons, ranging from the respondents not recollecting past behaviours correctly (likely, when considering the frequency of elections in the last two years) to answering in a socially desirable way.

**Figure 7.5:** Respondents stated if voted in last elections (Oct 2022)

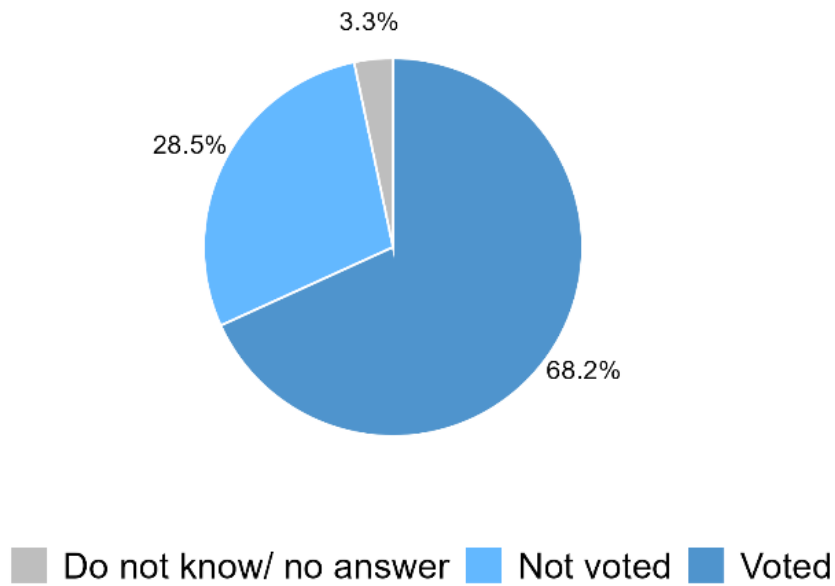
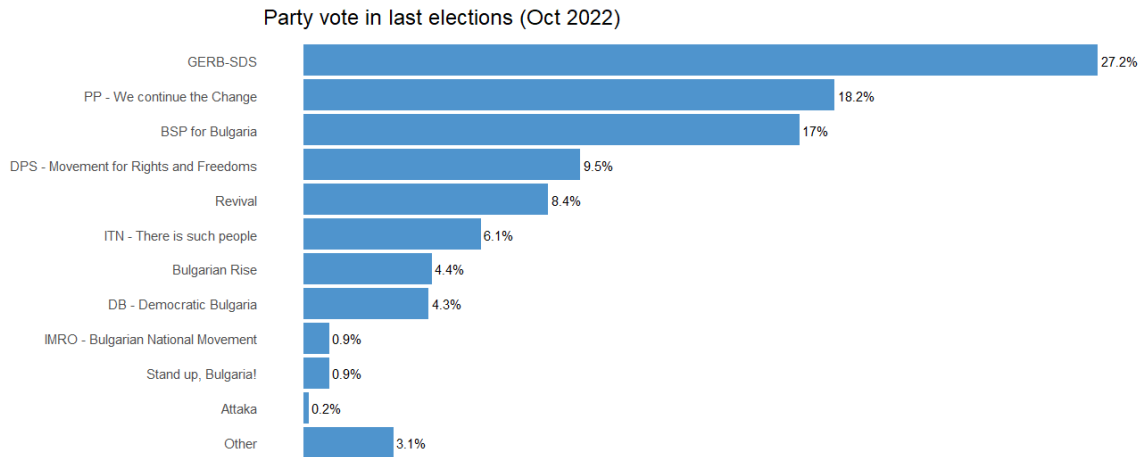


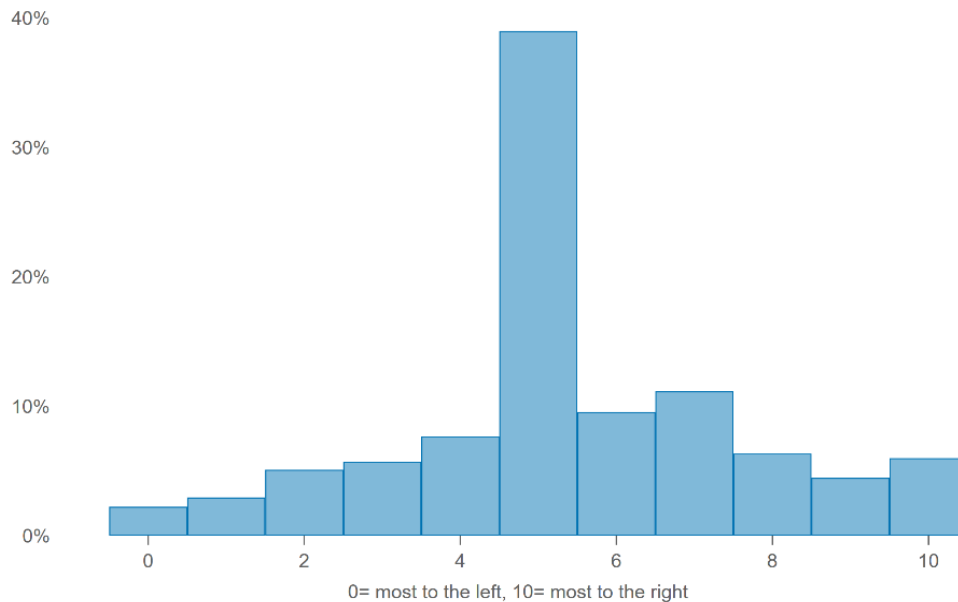
Figure 7.6 shows the party vote of the respondents in the last national elections (October 2022). Of the respondents who stated that they voted for a party in the last elections, 27.2% answered that they had voted for GERB-SDS (actual vote share: 24.5%), 18.2% for We Continue the Change (actual vote share: 19.5%), 17% for BSP (actual vote share: 9%), 9.5% for DPS (actual vote share: 13.3%), and 8.4% for Revival (actual vote share: 9.8%). Thus, BSP voters seem to be overrepresented in our sample and DPS voters underrepresented.

In contrast, Figure 7.7 shows the expected distribution of the self-placement of respondents on the left-right scale, with a majority of individuals placing themselves in the middle of the political spectrum.

**Figure 7.6:** Respondents stated party vote in last elections (Oct 2022)

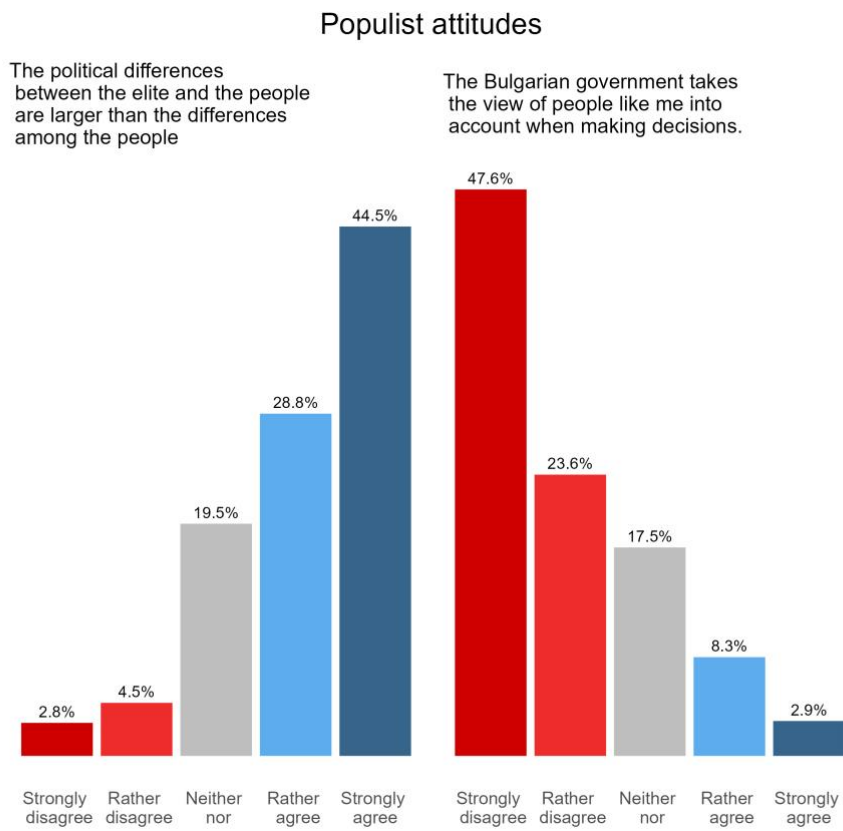


**Figure 7.7:** Left-right self-placement of respondents



Last, Figure 7.8 shows answers to two statements which can reveal if individuals tend to agree with populist attitudes. A large majority (73%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that the differences between the elite and the people is larger than among the people. Similarly, 71% disagreed with the statement that the Bulgarian government takes the view of people like themselves into account when making decisions. These results indicate that populist sentiments are rather widespread among the respondents of the survey.

**Figure 7.8: Populist attitudes of respondents**



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