

# Public perception towards security and justice institutions and corruption issues in Albania



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The data presented in the report derive from the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey. WBSB is a new regional initiative launched by KCSS in 2020, implemented in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in Serbia and Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) in Albania, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). WBSB serves as an instrument to measure public perceptions in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia on different security-related issues. The findings demonstrate how citizens percept or are informed about the issues presented in this report. As such, the views presented in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the KCSS, BCSP, CSDG or NED.

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# **PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS SECURITY AND JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS AND CORRUPTION ISSUES IN ALBANIA**

**January 2022**



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# INTRODUCTION

The Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) has conducted the Albanian Security Barometer for the past two years (2019 and 2020) in an effort to measure public perception towards institutions and different security related issues. In its third edition, CSDG has joined the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) in its second edition to conduct an identical regional barometer in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia. This edition is different from the two previous barometers, because it has taken a regional dimension by measuring not only the perception of Albanian citizens towards their institutions and security issues, but also their perceptions on regional cooperation and specifically the relations between Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia. WBSB has an identical methodology in all three countries, and it also measured simultaneously the perceptions of the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia on the same issues. The results of the WBSB will be published in four different reports for each country. This report, Public Perception towards Security and Justice Institutions and Corruption Issues is the first report that includes only the data for Albania. In the upcoming period, three other reports are going to get published for Albania, including the Public Safety and Internal and External Threats, the Bilateral Relations, Cross-Border Cooperation and Identity Issues, and the European Integration and Regional Security. This report focused solely on security-related institutions, justice institutions and corruption issues.

A multi-layered random sample of 1125 adults were used for this survey. Surveys were proportionally distributed among 61 municipalities of Albania, taking into consideration the rural/urban areas, gender and age quotas. The purpose of this multi-layered sampling approach was to achieve accurate geographic and demographic representation of Albania's adult population, while maintaining a sampling error lower than  $\pm 2.9\%$  for the overall sample. A random sampling was used for this survey, for it ensures that each resident in Albania had an equal probability of being chosen for participating in the survey. This survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews. Before starting the field work, the interviewers were trained by the project management team. The field work for collecting the data was conducted on 10-20 September 2021. The answers of the interviewees were entered directly by the field researchers on smartphones and were transmitted instantly to the central server through a special, purpose-built software program by the project's IT specialist. The time and location of each interview was recorded automatically. At the end of the field work, a general quality control check of the interview data collected on the server was conducted.

The Armed Forces (44.93%) is perceived as the most trusted institution, whereas the President (11.99%); is perceived as the least trusted institution.

The most independent institutions from undue political influence are perceived the Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime – SPAK (37.67%) and the Armed Forces (33.49%). The least independent institutions from undue political influence are perceived the courts (16.41%); prosecution (16.63%); and the State Police

(18.62%).

The most corrupt institutions are perceived the courts (56.75%) and the prosecution (54.75%). The least corrupt institution is perceived the Armed Forces (15.9%).

This report is divided into three main parts. The following chapter provides the findings pertaining to the public perception towards security-related institutions; the subsequent chapter provides the findings pertaining to the justice institutions and the final chapter provides findings related to the corruption issues. A conclusion is also provided at the end of the report.

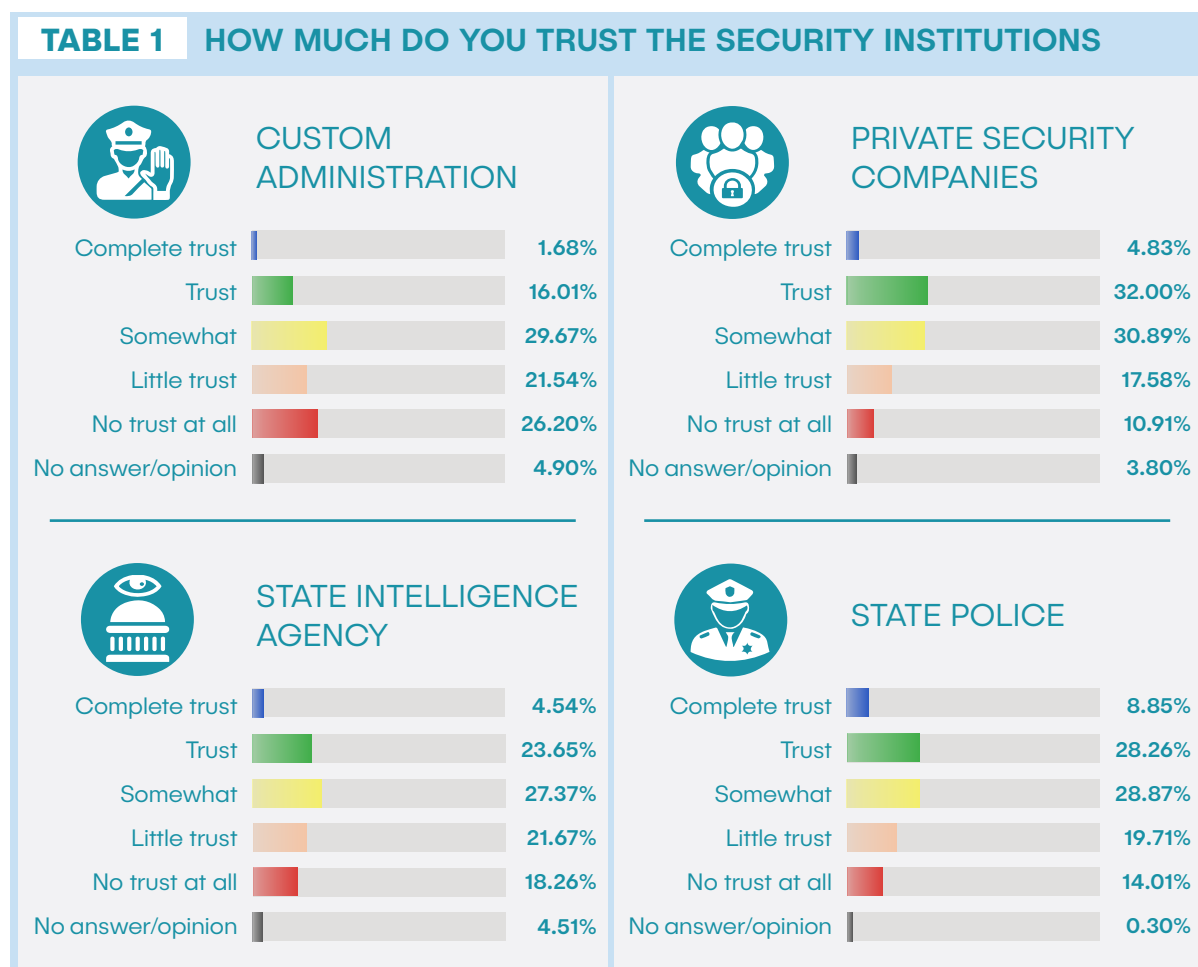


# PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS SECURITY INSTITUTIONS

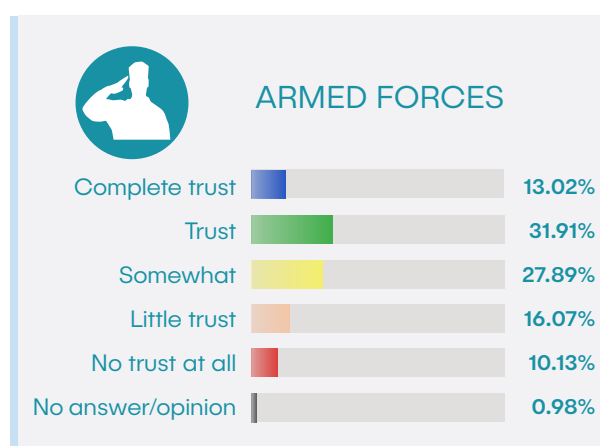
This section provides all the survey results related to the perception of responders towards security institutions. The security institutions that this report refers to include the Armed Forces, State Police, State Intelligence Service, the custom administration and the private security companies. However, in addition to these, this section includes also a graph with other security-related institutions that although their primary focus is not security, they still have a peripheral role in security matters, namely, the Ombudsperson, the Assembly, the Government, the President and the municipality.

The most trusted security institution is the Armed Forces (44.93%). In contrary, the custom administration (17.69%) is the least trusted security institution. The most trusted security-related institution is the municipality (32.74%), whereas the least trusted is the President (11.99%).

**TABLE 1** HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE SECURITY INSTITUTIONS







The Armed Forces is the most trusted security institution in Albania. Although the Socialist Party voters have the most trust in the Armed Forces (65.43%), contrarily to other institutions, the Armed Forces enjoy a considerate level of trust even from non-Socialist Party voters (32.59%). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that one in four responders (26.2%) have little or no trust in the Armed Forces.

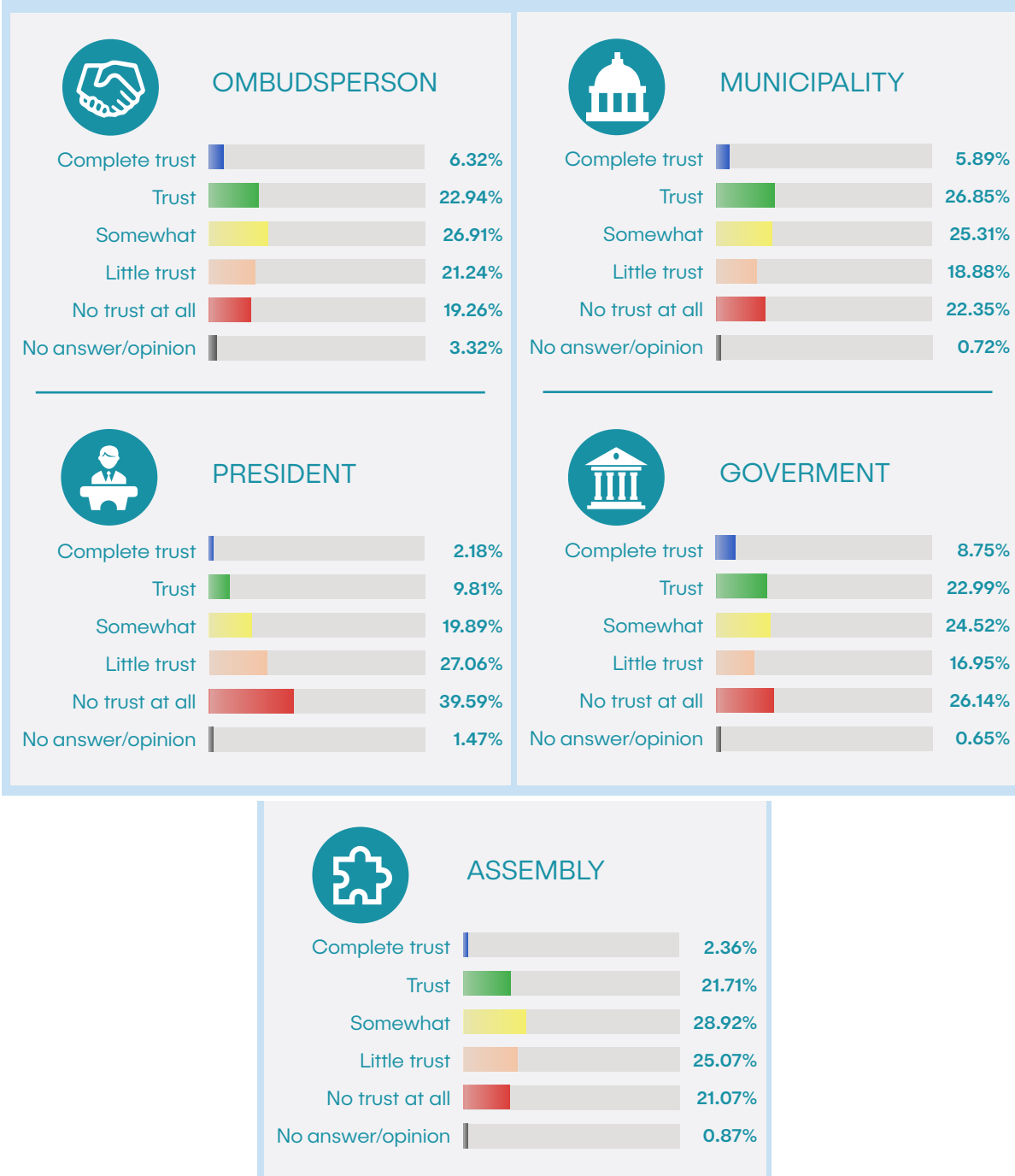
The audience was highly divided with regard to its trust in the State Police. Comparable percentages of audience find themselves in the opposite spectrum of trust in State Police. A total of 37.11% of responders trust or completely trust the State Police; whereas one in three responders (33.72%) have little or no trust at all. Also, 28.87% of responders hold a neutral position.

State Intelligence Service is the second least trusted security institution in Albania. There are more responders (39.93%) who have little or no trust in the State Intelligence Service, than those who have (28.19%). Another 27.37% of responders hold a neutral position.

A total of 36.83% of responders trust or completely trust the private security companies. Hence, the private security companies enjoy only 0.26% less trust than the State Police. On a reverse trend, there are 5.23% less responders who have little or no trust in private security companies (28.49%) compared to the State Police (33.72%).

The custom administration is the least trusted security institution in Albania. Only 17.69% of responders trust or completely trust the custom administration. In contrary, 47.74% of responders have little or no trust at all. Another 29.67% hold a neutral position on the matter.



**TABLE 2** HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE SECURITY-RELATED INSTITUTIONS

The Assembly is the second least trusted security-related institution in Albania. 24.07% of responders trust or completely trust the Assembly, whereas a larger percentage (46.14%) have little or no trust at all. A total of 28.92% hold a neutral position.

The Government is trusted or completely trusted by 31.74% of responders. A considerably bigger percentage (43.09%) have little or no trust at all. Almost one in four (24.52%) responders hold a neutral position.

The institution of the President is the least trusted security-related institution in Albania

according to this survey. Only 11.99% of responders trust or completely trust the President. There is no significant distinction among different categories of subsamples. A considerable majority of responders (66.65%) have little or no trust at all. Last, one in four responders (19.89%) hold a neutral position.

The municipality is the most trusted security-related institution in Albania. Almost one in three responders (32.74%) trust or completely trust their municipality. A bigger percentage (41.23%) have little or no trust at all. One in four responders (25.31%) hold a neutral position.

A total of 40.5% of responders have little or no trust at all in the Ombudsman. Another 29.26% of responders trust or completely trust the Ombudsman, whereas 26.91% hold a neutral position.

Citizens were also asked about their contact with security and security-related institutions during the past year. The results indicate that citizens have had more contacts with the municipality (44.85%) and the State Police (22%). In contrary, the Ombudsman (1.54%) and the Armed Forces (4.42%) are reported to have the least contacts with citizens.

Interestingly, the Armed Forces are the most trusted security institution and perceived as the most independent security institution from undue political influence (33.49%), regardless of the fact that they have little contact with citizens. The considerable majority of responders (64.75%) perceive the Armed Forces as an institution that is subject to undue political influence. However, compared to other security institutions, the Armed Forces are still perceived as the most independent institution in Albania. One in three responders (33.49%) believe the Armed Forces are independent or very independent from undue political influence.

Responders have ambivalent perceptions about the State Police. On one side, the State Police is perceived as the least independent security institution (18.62%); the significant majority of responders (70.26%) believe the State Police does not treat all citizens equally; and less than half of responders (46.47%) believe the State Police serves to the citizens. On the other side, the vast majority of responders (82.57%) believe the State Police improves their safety substantially or at least partially; and another 66.54% of responders report that they have not experienced police misconduct during the past year. When asked to which institution/organization they would report a police misconduct in case of witnessing it, most of responders listed the General Directorate of State Police (26.87%); Service for Internal Affairs and Complaints – SHÇBA (23.64%); and media (16.38%). Interesting to note, 15.35% of responders would not report it nowhere.

This section provided the survey results pertaining to the security institutions in Albania. The following chapter provides the survey results for the justice institutions in the country.



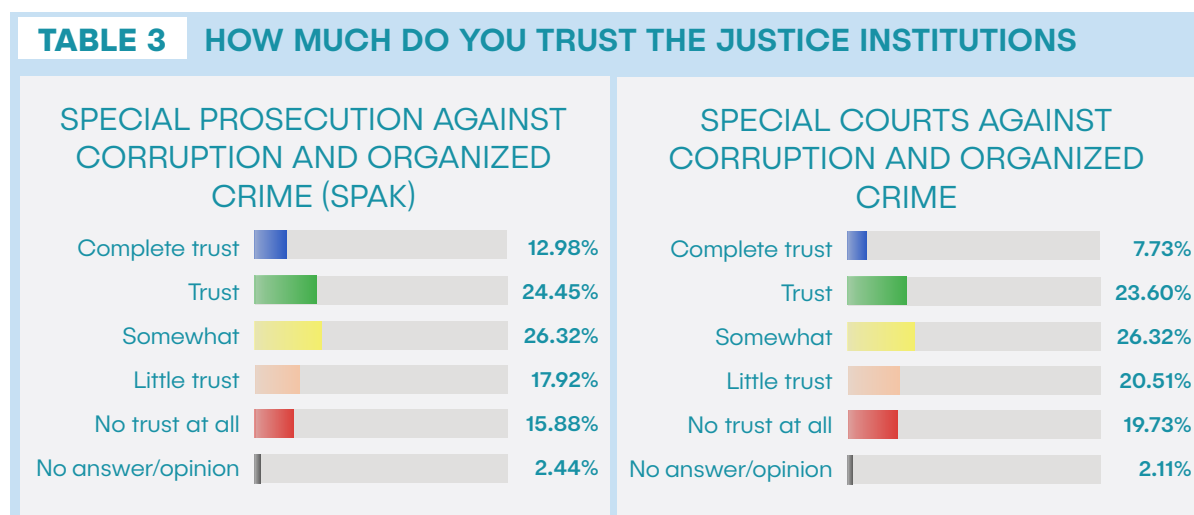
# PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS

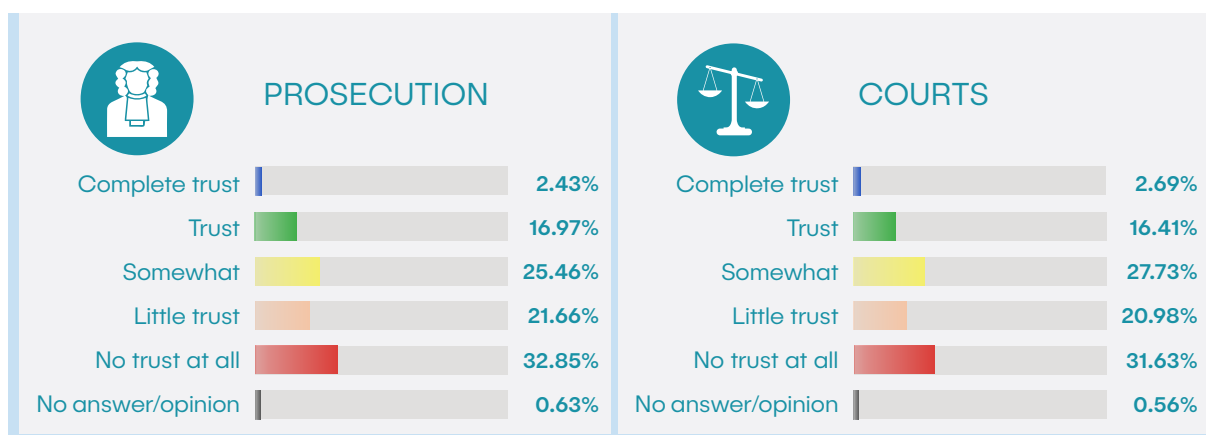
This section provides all the survey results related to the perception of responders towards justice institutions. The justice institutions that this report refers to include the courts, prosecution, Special Courts against Corruption and Organized Crime, and the Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK).

The Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime – SPAK (37.43%) is the most trusted justice institution in the country, whereas the courts (19.1%) are the least trusted. The least trusted justice institutions have had the most contact with citizens. 10.99% of responders have had contact with the courts during the last year. In contrary, the most trusted justice institutions have had almost no contact with the responders. Only 1.14% of responders have had contact with the Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime – SPAK.

Responders perceive the Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime – SPAK (37.67%) and the Special Courts against Corruption and Organized Crime (29.55%) as the most independent justice institutions from undue political influence. In contrary, the least independent justice institutions from undue political influence are perceived the courts (16.41%) and prosecution (16.63%).

**TABLE 3** HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS





Courts are the least trusted justice institution in Albania. The majority of responders (52.61%) have little or no trust at all. Another 27.73% hold a neutral position, whereas only one in five responders (19.1%) trust or completely trust the courts.

The prosecution is the second least trusted justice institution in Albania. The majority of responders (54.51%) have little or no trust at all. One in four responders (25.46%) hold a neutral position, whereas one in five responders (19.4%) trust or completely trust the prosecution.

The Special Courts against Corruption and Organized Crime are the second most trusted justice institutions in Albania. A total of 31.33% of responders trust or completely trusts these institutions. Nevertheless, 40.24% of responders have little or no trust at all, whereas one in four responders (26.32%) hold a neutral position in this regard.

The Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) is the most trusted justice institution in Albania. A total of 37.43% of responders trust or completely trusts this institution. In contrary, one in three responders (33.8%) have little or no trust at all, whereas another 26.32% of responders hold a neutral position.

While this section provided the survey results pertaining to the justice institutions in Albania, the following section presents the findings on corruption perceptions in the country.



# PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS CORRUPTION ISSUES

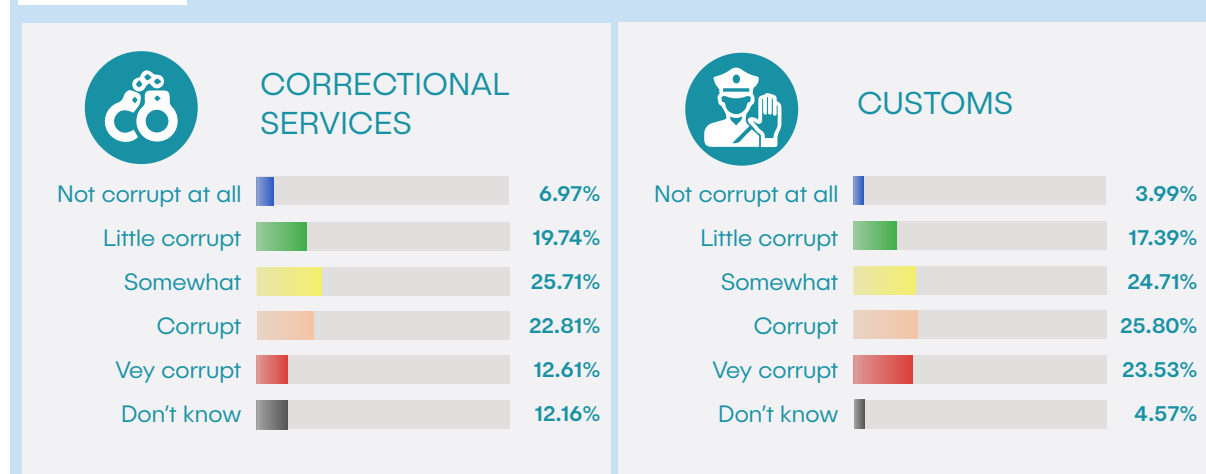
Responders were asked to provide their perceptions with regards to the corruption issues in Albania. This section presents findings pertaining to the responders' trust in anti-corruption bodies, their perceived corruption level in each of the security or justice institutions, the spread of corruption in procurement/tenders, the threat of corruption to national security, and the meritocracy in recruitment of staff in state institutions.

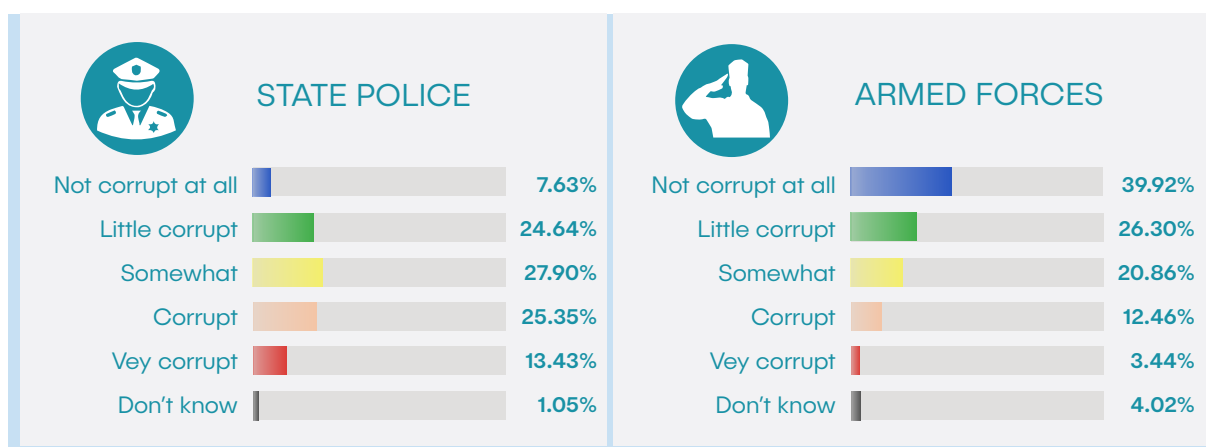
Only one in four Albanians trust the anti-corruption bodies in the country. The courts (56.75%); prosecution (54.75%); and political parties (54.58%) are perceived as the most corrupt institutions in Albania. In contrary, the firefighting service (5.94%); religious communities (7.74%); and the Armed Forces (15.9%) are perceived as the least corrupt institutions.

Although the significant majority of responders (79.94%) believe corruption is widespread in the procurements/tenders of public security institutions, less than half of responders (40.15%) recognize corruption as a threat or high threat to national security.

In terms of recruitment in security institutions, a significant majority of responders (70.22%) believe that such recruitment is based on merit and skills only for the minority of staff members or none of them. As regards to the recruitment in the public administration, a slightly higher percentage (75.52%) believes the same.

**TABLE 4** DO YOU THINK THE SECURITY INSTITUTIONS ARE CORRUPT





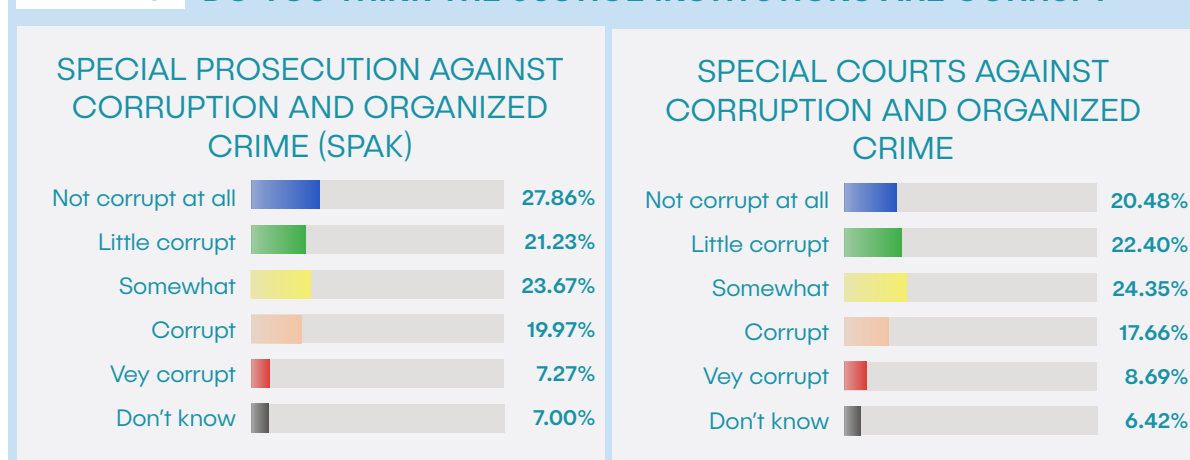
The Armed Forces are perceived as the least corrupt security institution in Albania. The majority of responders (59.22%) consider the Armed Forces as little or no corrupt at all. Only 15.9% of responders believe the Armed Forces are corrupt or very corrupt.

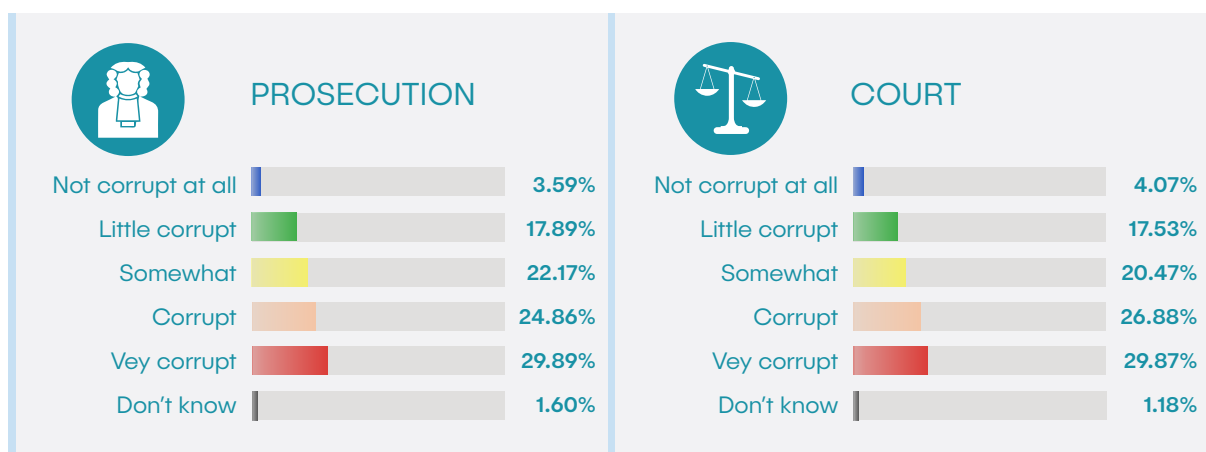
A considerable part of responders (38.78%) believe the State Police is corrupt or very corrupt, whereas one in three responders (32.27%) consider the State Police as little or no corrupt at all.

The custom administration are perceived as the most corrupt security institution in Albania. Half of responders (49.33%) consider the custom administration as corrupt or very corrupt. In contrary, 21.38% of responders consider the custom administration as little or no corrupt at all.

A total of 35.42% of responders perceive the correctional services as corrupt or very corrupt. In contrary, little more than one in four responders (26.71%) consider the correctional services as little or no corrupt at all.

**TABLE 5 DO YOU THINK THE JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS ARE CORRUPT**





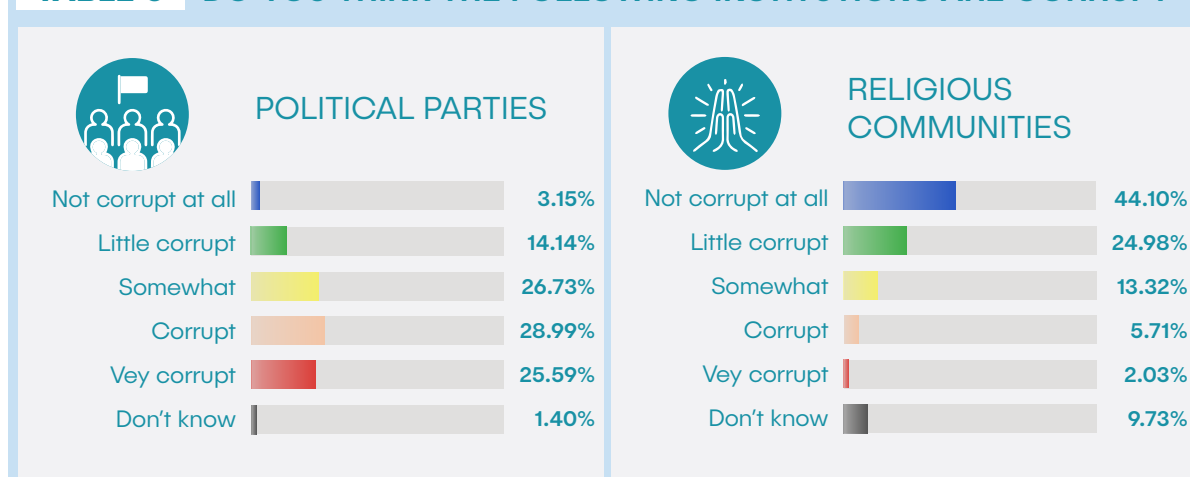
The courts are perceived as the most corrupt justice institution in Albania. The majority of responders (56.75%) believe the courts are corrupt or very corrupt. More than one in five responders (21.6%) consider the courts to be little or no corrupt at all.

The prosecution is perceived as the second most corrupt justice institution in Albania. The majority of responders (54.75%) believe the prosecution is corrupt or very corrupt. In contrary, 21.48% of responders believe the prosecution to be little or no corrupt at all.

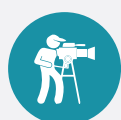
A total of 42.88% of responders consider the Special Courts against Corruption and Organized Crime as little or no corrupt at all. In contrary, one in four responders (26.35%) considers them as corrupt or very corrupt.

The Special Prosecution against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) is perceived as the least corrupt justice institution in Albania. Half of responders perceive the SPAK as little or no corrupt at all. In contrary, one in five responders (20.24%) perceives SPAK as corrupt or very corrupt.

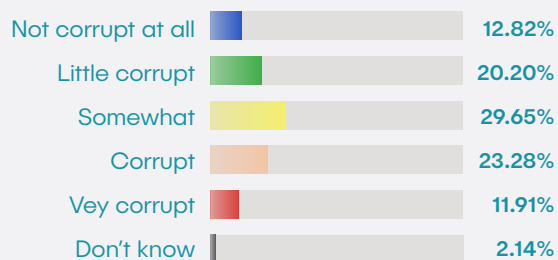
**TABLE 6 DO YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS ARE CORRUPT**



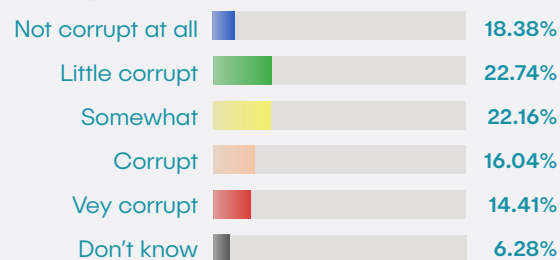
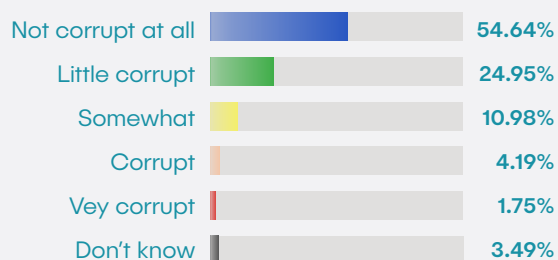
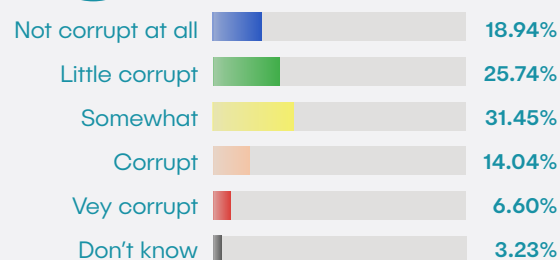
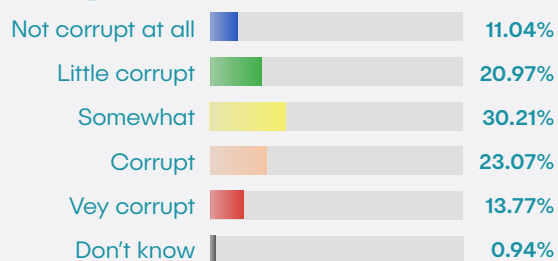




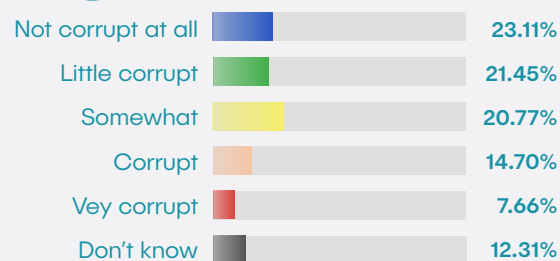
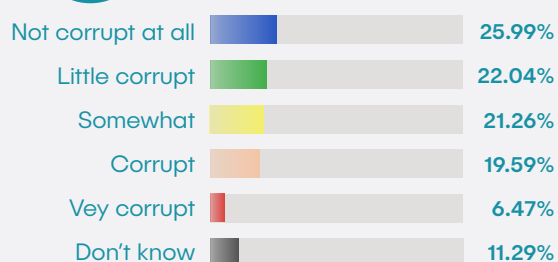
## MEDIA



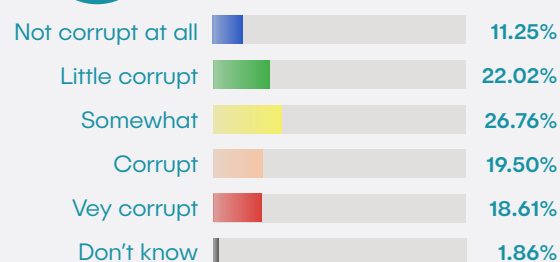
## CSO-s

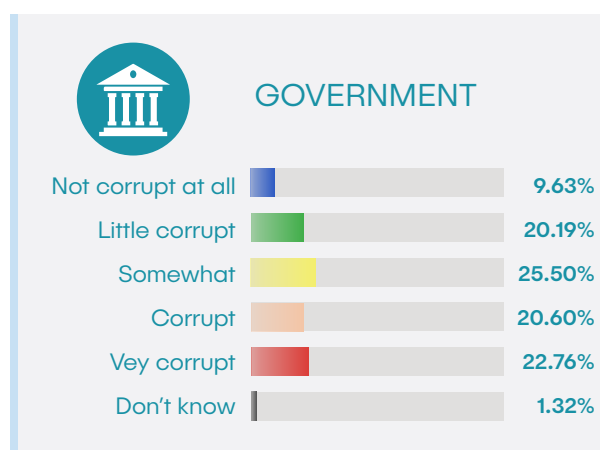
FIREFIGHTING  
DEPARTMENTEDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONSHEALTH  
INSTITUTIONS

## OMBUDSPERSON

VILLAGE  
LEADER/NEIGH.  
ADMINISTRATORS

## MUNICIPALITY





A total of 43.36% of responders believe the Government is corrupt or very corrupt. In contrary, 29.82% of responders perceive the Government to be as little or no corrupt at all.

A total of 38.11% of responders consider their municipality to be corrupt or very corrupt. One in three responders (33.27%) consider their municipality to be little or no corrupt at all. The analysis of subsamples noted a distinction among rural and sub/urban areas. The percentage of responders who consider their municipality as corrupted or very corrupted in urban areas (41.1%) is higher than the percentage who thinks so in rural areas (31.1%).

Almost half of responders consider the village leaders/neighbourhood administrators as little or no corrupt at all. In contrary, one in five responders (19.42%) consider the village leaders/neighbourhood administrators as corrupt or very corrupt. Responders from rural areas are less likely (14.9%) to perceive the village leaders as corrupted or very corrupted compared to urban areas (21.4%) for neighbourhood administrators.

Less than half of responders (44.56%) perceive the Ombudsman as little or no corrupt at all, whereas 22.36% of responders believe the Ombudsman is corrupt or very corrupt.

The responders were highly divided regarding the corruption in health institutions. Similar percentages of the audience hold different perceptions in this regard. A total of 36.84% of responders believe the health institutions are corrupt or very corrupt; another 30.21% hold a neutral position; whereas 32.01% of responders consider the health institutions to be little or no corrupt at all.

Less than half of responders (44.68%) consider education institutions as little or no corrupt at all. In contrary, one in five responders (20.64%) consider the education institutions as corrupt or very corrupt.

The firefighting service is perceived as the least corrupt institution in Albania. The significant majority of responders (79.59%) perceive the firefighting service as little or no corrupt at all. Only a very small part of responders (5.94%) believe the firefighting service is corrupt or very corrupt.

A total of 41.12% of responders perceive the CSOs to be little or no corrupt at all, whereas 30.45% of responders perceive CSOs as corrupt or very corrupt. Responders in rural

areas (20.3%) are less likely to perceive CSOs as corrupt or very corrupt compared to responders in urban areas (34.8%).

Responders have different perceptions over the corruption in media. One in three responders (33.02) perceive media as little or no corrupt at all. In contrary, 35.19% of responders believe the media is corrupt or very corrupt. A distinction was noticed in subsample analysis, as the responders in rural areas (25.7%) are less likely than responders in sub/urban areas (39.3%) to perceive media as corrupt or very corrupt.

Religious communities are perceived as the second least corrupt institutions in Albania. The considerable majority of responders (69.08%) consider religious communities as little or no corrupt at all. Only a small part of responders (7.74%) consider religious communities as corrupt or very corrupt.

Political parties are perceived as the third most corrupt institutions in Albania. The majority of responders (54.58%) consider political parties as corrupt or very corrupt, whereas 17.29% of responders consider them to be little or no corrupt at all. Two distinctions were noticed in the subsample analysis, the first in the political party affiliation and the other in the rural vs. urban categories. One in three responders (34.12%) who have voted for the Socialist Party consider political parties as corrupt and very corrupt, whereas a larger percentage (66.89%) of responders who have not voted for the Socialist Party believes so. Similarly, responders from urban areas (57.2%) are more likely to consider political parties as corrupt or very corrupt compared to responders from rural areas (48.5%).

Less than half of responders (46.99%) remain sceptical over the role of anti-corruption bodies. A total of 26.33% hold a neutral position, whereas one in four responders (24.65%) trust the anti-corruption bodies in Albania.

The significant majority of responders (79.94%) perceive corruption to be widespread in the procurements/tenders of public security institutions. Only 15.7% of responders perceive corruption to be a little widespread or not widespread at all in the procurements/tenders of public security institutions.

A total of 40.15% of responders recognize corruption as a threat or high threat to national security, whereas one in four responders (24.02%) consider corruption as a low or no threat at all to Albania's national security.

A significant majority of responders (70.22%) consider that the employment in security institutions is based on merit and skills only for the minority of staff members or none of them. In contrary, 27.21% of responders consider that the employment in security institutions is based on merit and skills for the majority or all the staff members.

The significant majority of responders (75.52%) consider the employment in the public administration as based on merit and skills only for the minority of staff members or none of them. In contrary, one in five responders (20.65%) consider such employment to be based on merit and skills for the majority or all of staff members.

This section presented the citizens perceptions about the spread of corruption in the country, the meritocracy of staff recruitment, and the perceived level of corruption in each institution. This was the third and last section of this report. The following conclusion elaborates and analysis the meaning of survey results.



# CONCLUSIONS

This survey was conducted with the aim of examining the attitudes of Albanian citizens towards security and justice institutions and their perception towards corruption.

Citizens' trust in the public institutions is the foundation upon which their legitimacy is built and is central for maintaining social cohesion. Public trust is important for the successful implementation of a wide range of public policies and an apt delivery of their services. Thus, public trust leads to greater compliance with regulations and it also prompts citizens' engagement and contribution.

The results of this survey indicate that Albanian citizens have low trust in security and justice institutions. The public is sceptical about public institutions' integrity, fairness and independence from undue political influence, which are all strong predictors of public trust. Low levels of trust were noted towards state institutions. The majority of responders did not have any contact with other institutions. In some cases, this lack of contact with institutions may also influence citizens' perceptions towards them.

Trust in security and security-related institutions is generally low. The Armed Forces is the most trusted institution, although no institution enjoys the majority of citizens' trust. The State Police, which is the main institution for maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, and preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities, has relatively low level of trust among citizens.

Trust in justice institutions is among the lowest. More than five years after the adoption of the "Justice Reform" in Albania – which aimed to address the shared perception of an unaccountable, influenced and inefficient justice system – courts and prosecution are still perceived as highly corrupted and subject to undue political influence. On a positive side, the newly established justice institutions, such as SPAK, are the most trusted by citizens.

As regards to corruption, the phenomenon is still considered as very widespread by responders. This general perception is also in line with Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perception Index, where Albania is ranked 104th out of 180 countries. Interesting to note, even though citizens are aware of the widespread of corruption in public institutions, the majority of citizens do not consider corruption as a threat to national security.

In general, the results of this survey depict that the majority of Albanian citizens have low trust in most of the security and justice institutions, and perceive the corruption to be widespread. Such perception may reflect the reality of the situation in the country, it may result from a failed public communication of these institutions, or there might be another reason. Regardless of this, given that the public trust in institutions is central for maintaining social cohesion, it is necessary for each institution to look into the factors leading to such scepticism and step-up efforts to ultimately address it.

Security is a fundamental function of the state and one of the defining aspects of any democratic and law-based society. At the individual and community levels, a variety of security concerns shape people's perceptions and influence their everyday decision making. Similarly, international events and issues that affect security influence national policies and decision-making. In a democratic system that builds on free elections and delegation of decision-making powers from citizens to public officials, soliciting and reflecting on the attitudes and opinions of citizens is a necessity, both for the design of security policies and for the assessment of their implementation and effectiveness.

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