

# CITIZENS OF SERBIA ON POLICE CORRUPTION

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## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was designed by the research team of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in order to offer the answers to the questions related to the perception of corruption in the Serbian society and the police.

1. What is the level of corruption in Serbia?
2. How do citizens of Serbia assess the new government's fight against corruption?
3. Who is the most corrupt in the police?
4. Politicisation and criminalisation of the police as the biggest obstacle to the fight against corruption
5. How much do citizens know about the internal control of the police?
6. To what extent are citizens willing to fight corruption?

Results of the public opinion survey are the first product of the A-COP Group, which consists of 10 civil society organisations supporting the fight against police corruption.

### *Members of the A-COP Group:*

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, Toplica Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, The Novi Sad School of Journalism, The Southern News, Becej Youth Association, PROTECTA, Resource Centre, Fighters against Corruption, Info Centre, and The Initiative for Social Responsibility.

## When and how was the survey conducted?

The field research was conducted by CeSiD between 9 and 19 March 2013 within the territory of the Republic of Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija. The survey was conducted on a representative sample of 1185 adults, citizens of the Republic of Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija.

The research instrument was the questionnaire consisting of 123 variables. The interviews were conducted face-to-face (F2F), in direct contact with the respondents.

During the training for interviewers, instructors insisted on the implementation and compliance with two important rules which significantly affect both the sample itself, and the representativeness of the research. These are: respect for the steps, and the first birthday rule. Respect for the steps provided a comprehensive coverage of the entire area of the research, while the first birthday rule

excluded the possibility of the questionnaire being answered only by those people who opened the household door to the interviewer. The interviewers were required to interview the person within the household who is older than 18 years, and whose birthday is the first following the day of the visit. In this way, the sample representativeness was provided, in terms of sex, education and age.

## Description of the Sample

According to the methodology developed for this research, the following categories of respondents were included:

Sex: male (51%), female (49%)

Age: 18-29 (19%), 30-39 (18%), 40-49 (17%), 50-59 (18%) 60 and older (28%).

Education: completed primary school or less (18%), vocational school (10%), secondary school (44%), BA diploma or higher (24%); student (4%)

Occupation: farmer (7%), housewife (10%), unskilled or semi-skilled worker (7%); skilled or highly skilled worker (21%), technician (20%), student (8%); clerk (8%) expert (19%);

Nationality: Serbian (85%), Hungarian (4%); Bosniak/Muslim (3%), Roma (1%), other (7%);

Per capita monthly household income: up to 10 000 dinars (23%); 10-20000 dinars (29%); 20-40000 dinars (22%); 40-60000 dinars (5%); 60-100000 dinars (2%), more than 100 000 dinars (1%), did not want to answer (18%).

## CORRUPTION IN SERBIA

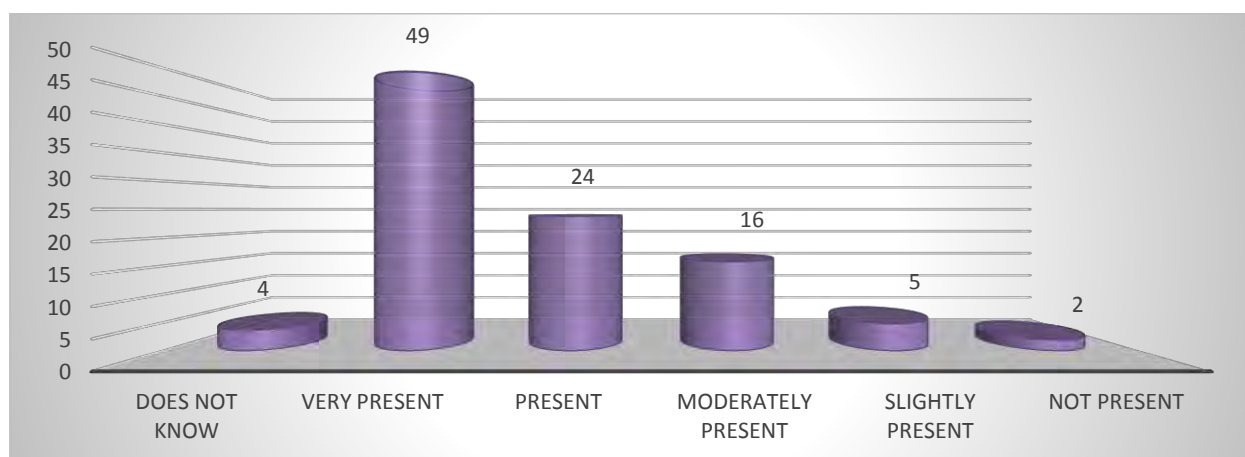
The starting point in this public opinion survey was to determine how citizens assess the level of corruption in Serbia today, whether in this respect something has changed during the past year, in what direction the fight against corruption goes, who is the most deserving for the fight against corruption, and who opposes it. Further, citizens were asked to give their opinion on which measures should be taken to advance the fight against corruption. Finally, there was a set of questions related to the perception of the level of corruption in the most important social institutions, and in which of them the state has done the least in order to reduce corruption. In this way, we sought to put the research on the attitudes of citizens about police corruption in a wider social context.

The vast majority of Serbian citizens think that corruption is a widespread phenomenon in our society. However, a significant number of respondents believe that – compared to the previous year – the level of corruption decreased a bit, and that the fight against corruption was partially successful. For a slight decrease in corruption, citizens give most credit to Aleksandar Vucic, the first Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia. The majority of citizens believe that Aleksandar Vucic will be partially successful in the fight against corruption, but some people will still go unpunished. In order to make the fight against corruption successful, citizens think that institutions need to be strengthened and penalties tightened, instead of giving more power to individuals.

### Serbia is still very corrupt, but the level of corruption has slightly decreased

**Half of the citizens of Serbia believe that corruption is very much present in Serbia, while 25% believe it is present.** Only 2% of respondents believe that there is no corruption in our society.

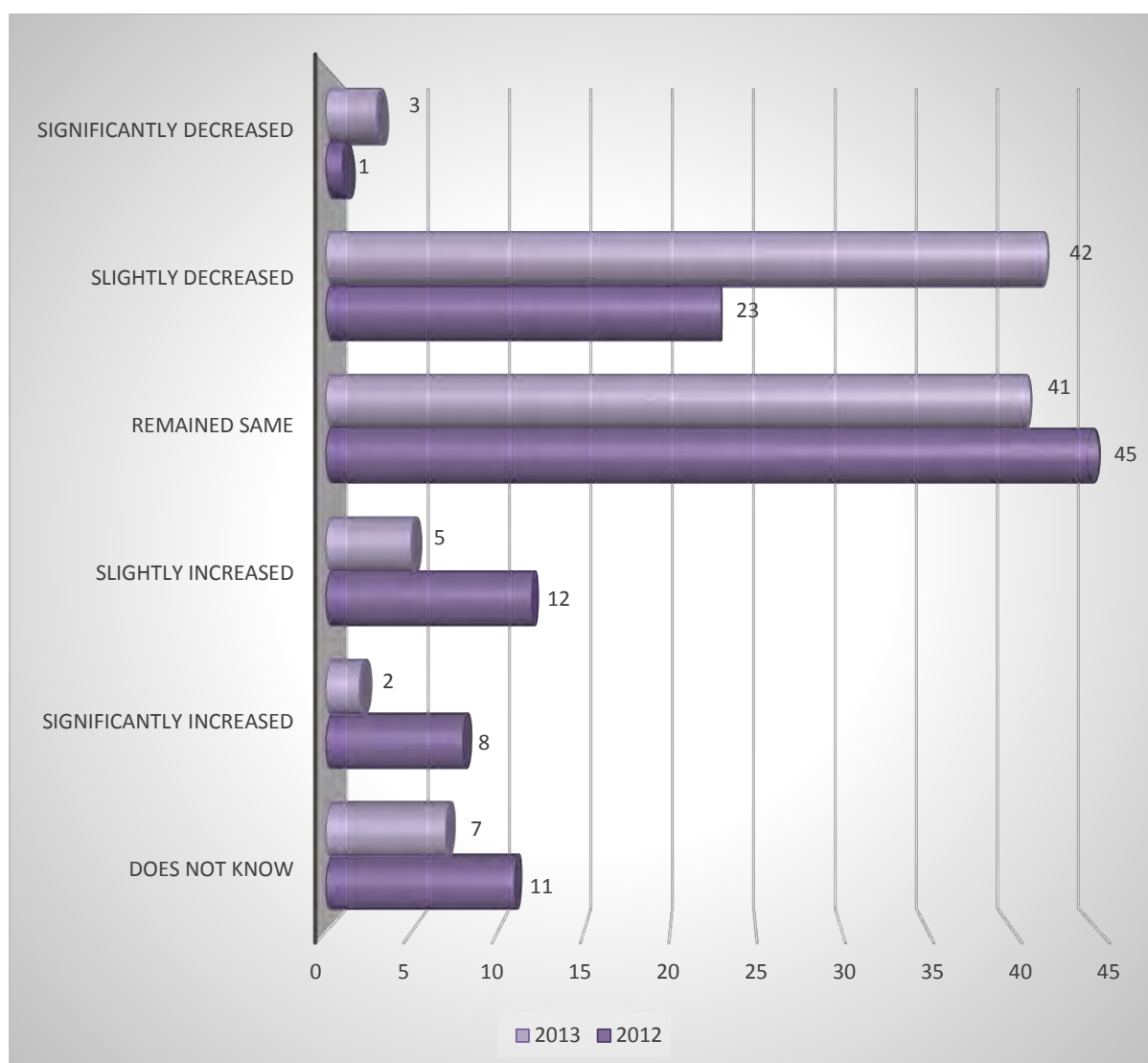
Chart 1: Level of corruption in Serbia



However, despite assessing the current situation as very bad, **42% of citizens believe that the level of corruption in Serbia slightly decreased in the past year.** That is almost double the number from last year's survey, in which only 23% of citizens stated that the level of corruption slightly decreased. Further, compared to last year, the number of citizens who believe that corruption has remained the same or increased is smaller. This mild optimism is also reflected in the attitude of more than one half of the citizens who believe that the fight against corruption has been successful so far, while one third believe that it has not been successful.

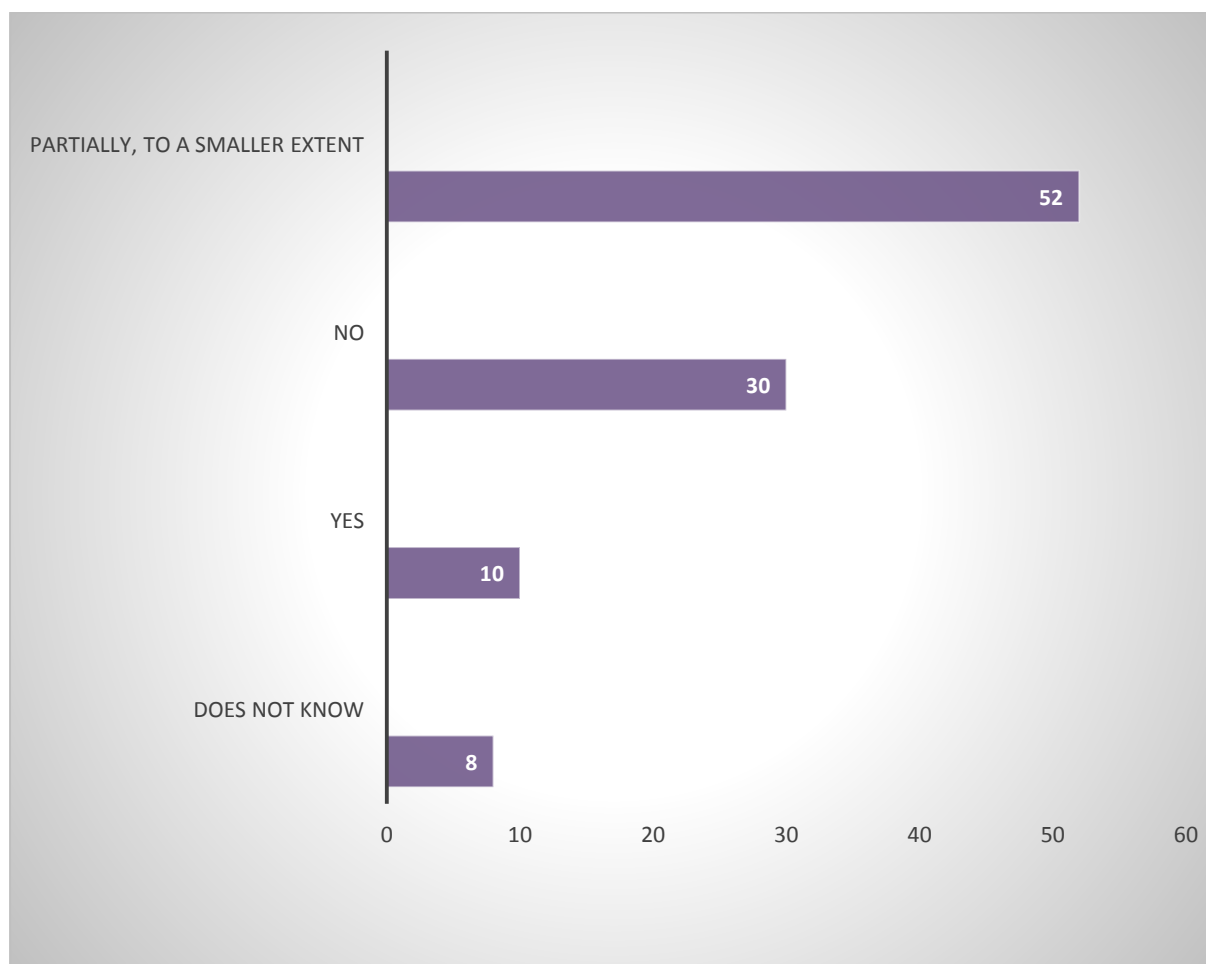
### Mild optimism: The level of corruption has slightly decreased

Chart 2: To what extent has the level of corruption changed over the past year?



## Fight against corruption partially successful

Chart 3: Has the fight against corruption in Serbia been successful in the past year?

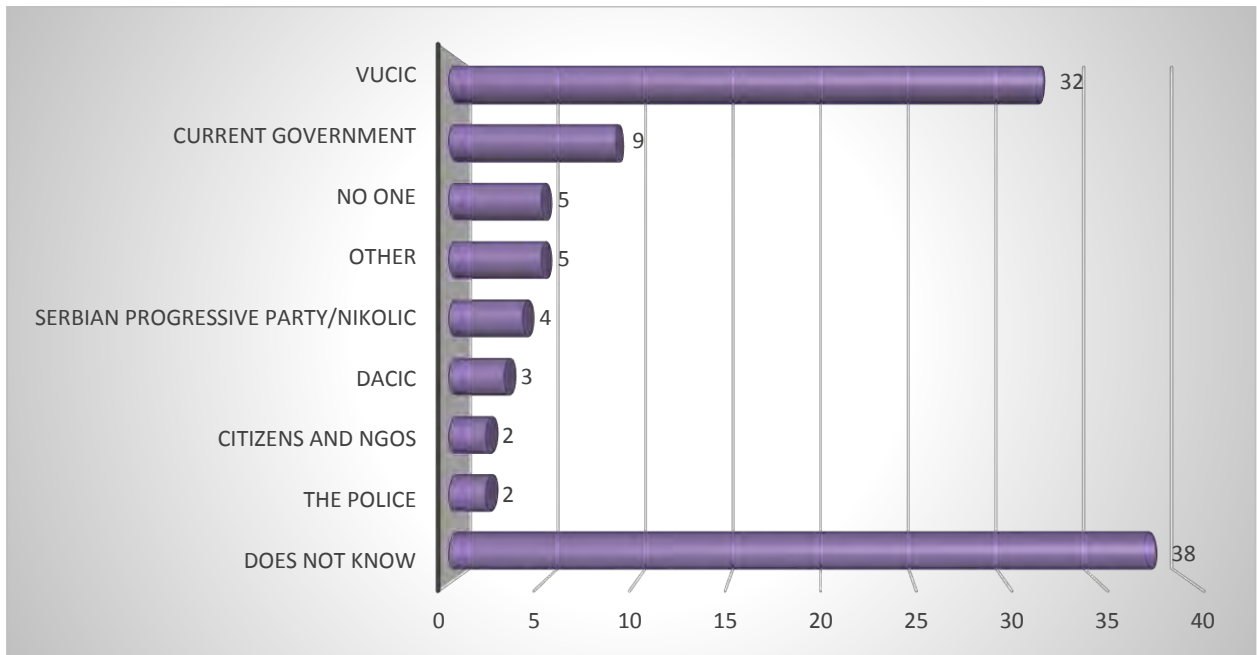


## Who contributes and who hinders the fight against corruption?

Citizens of Serbia clearly identified Aleksandar Vucic as the most deserving of success in the fight against corruption. One third of the respondents said that the Deputy Prime Minister is the most deserving of success in the fight against corruption, and only every tenth citizen gave credits for it to the Government of Serbia. On the other hand, **politicians and political parties are perceived as those who hinder the fight against corruption (12%)**. Further, **11% of the citizens believe that the fight against corruption is hindered by tycoons and those who have the influence and certain interests**, while the equal number of respondents sees the former government and the Democratic Party as those negatively affected by the fight against corruption.

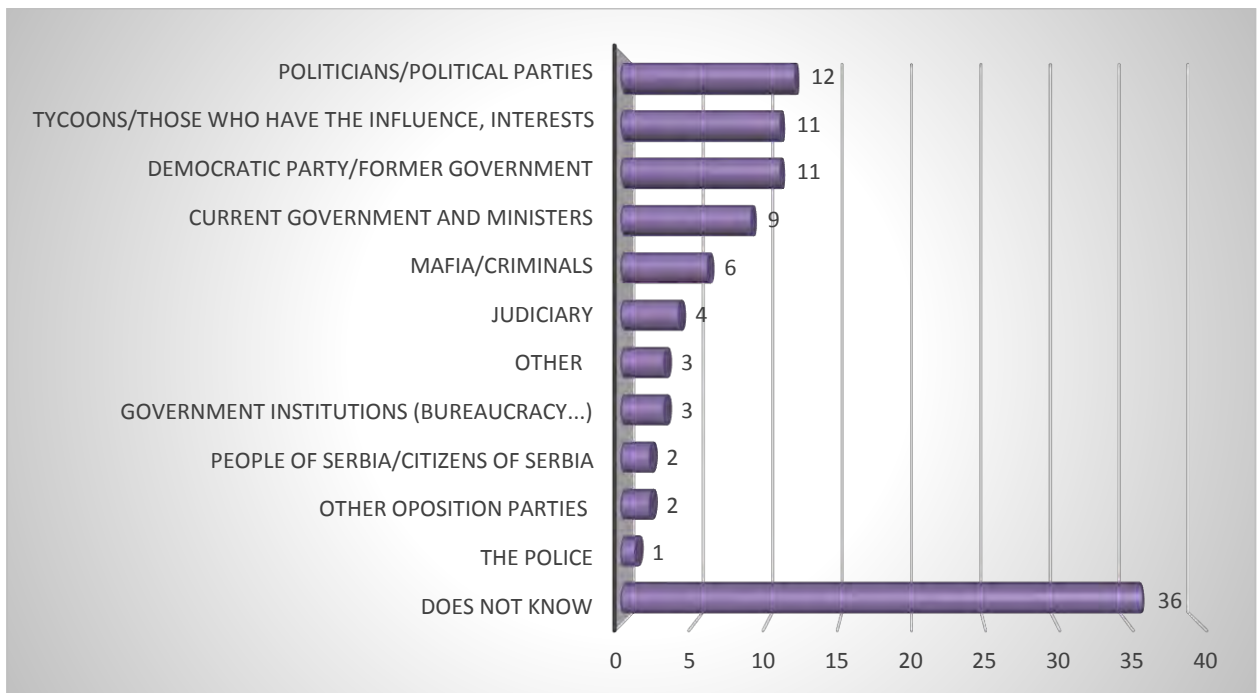
## Aleksandar Vucic is the most deserving for reducing corruption

Chart 4: Who contributed the most to the fight against corruption?



## Politicians, tycoons, former and current government are hindering the fight against corruption

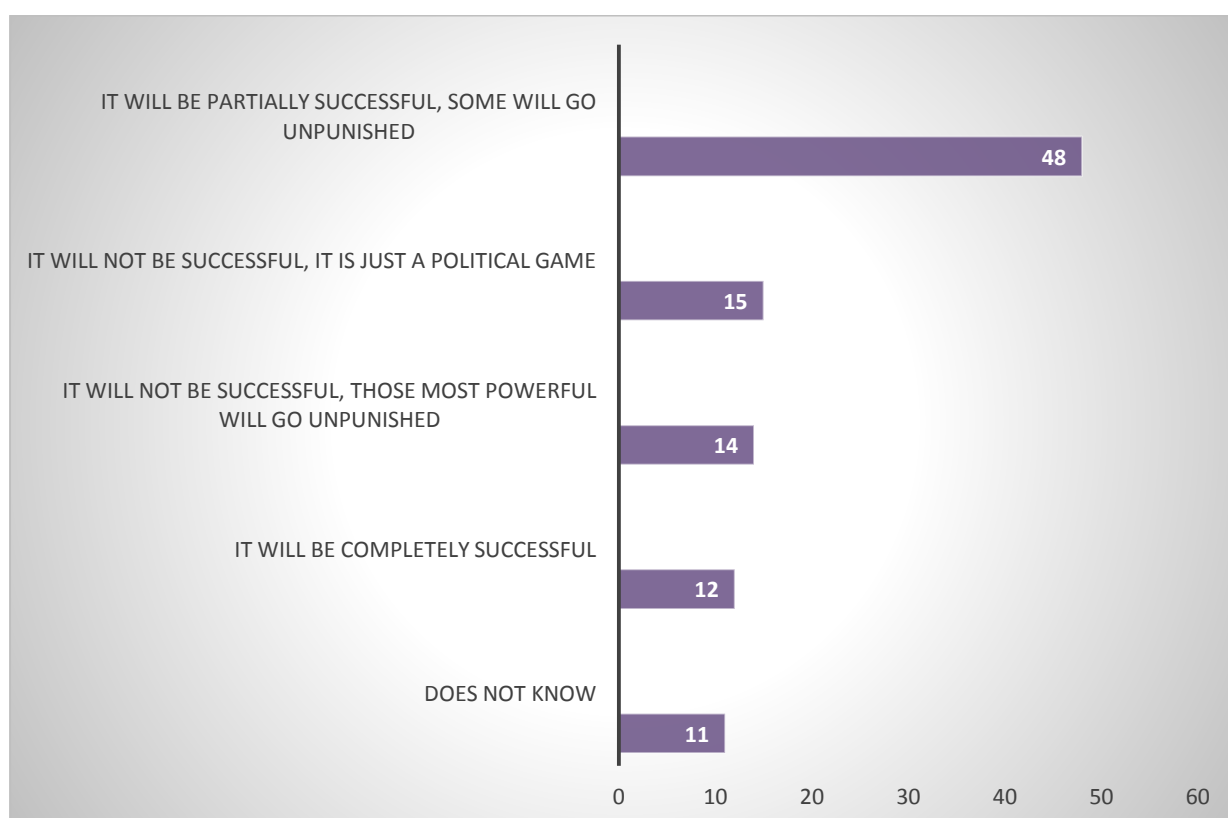
Chart 5: Who is hindering the fight against corruption the most?



## The fight against corruption will be partially successful: “some will go unpunished”

Although a significant number of respondents said that Aleksandar Vucic is the most significant fighter against corruption, this question has helped us to determine to what extent citizens of Serbia are convinced in positive results of that fight. **Citizens of Serbia assessed that Vucic’s fight against corruption will be partially successful, because some will still go unpunished. Only one in ten respondents believes that it will be completely successful**, and almost a third of the respondents believe that this fight will not be successful. As expected, supporters of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party are assured above average of the success of the fight against corruption, while voters of the Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party are of the view that this fight will not be successful since it is, above all, a political game. It is interesting to note that in partial success of the fight against corruption mostly believe the supporters of the United Regions of Serbia. In addition, less educated citizens are assured above the average of the success of the fight against corruption, while citizens with higher education believe that this is just a political game.

Chart 6: How will the fight against corruption led by Aleksandar Vucic end?





## Strengthening institutions and tightening penalties will result in successful fight against corruption

The next set of questions was on how to improve the fight against corruption, and what is the role of the European Union (EU) in it. Despite the fact that most citizens believe that Aleksandar Vucic is the most deserving for the slight decrease in corruption, **they nevertheless believe that for further success in the fight against corruption it is necessary to strengthen institutions and tighten penalties, instead of giving more power to individuals.** In regards to this issue, and in relation to education and party affiliation, citizens who have completed higher education and who support the Liberal Democratic Party, are more strongly in favour of strengthening the institutions. The respondents with the lowest level of education are of the view that powerful individuals who lead the fight against corruption are the solution to this problem. Supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party and the Democratic Party also believe that giving more power to individuals is the key to success, the voters of the Democratic Party of Serbia opted for tougher penalties, while the voters of the Socialist Party of Serbia believe that more people should be arrested in order to improve the fight against corruption. An important finding is that a considerable number of respondents (13%), mostly youth, find it necessary to encourage citizens to report corruption.

Chart 7: How to improve the fight against corruption?

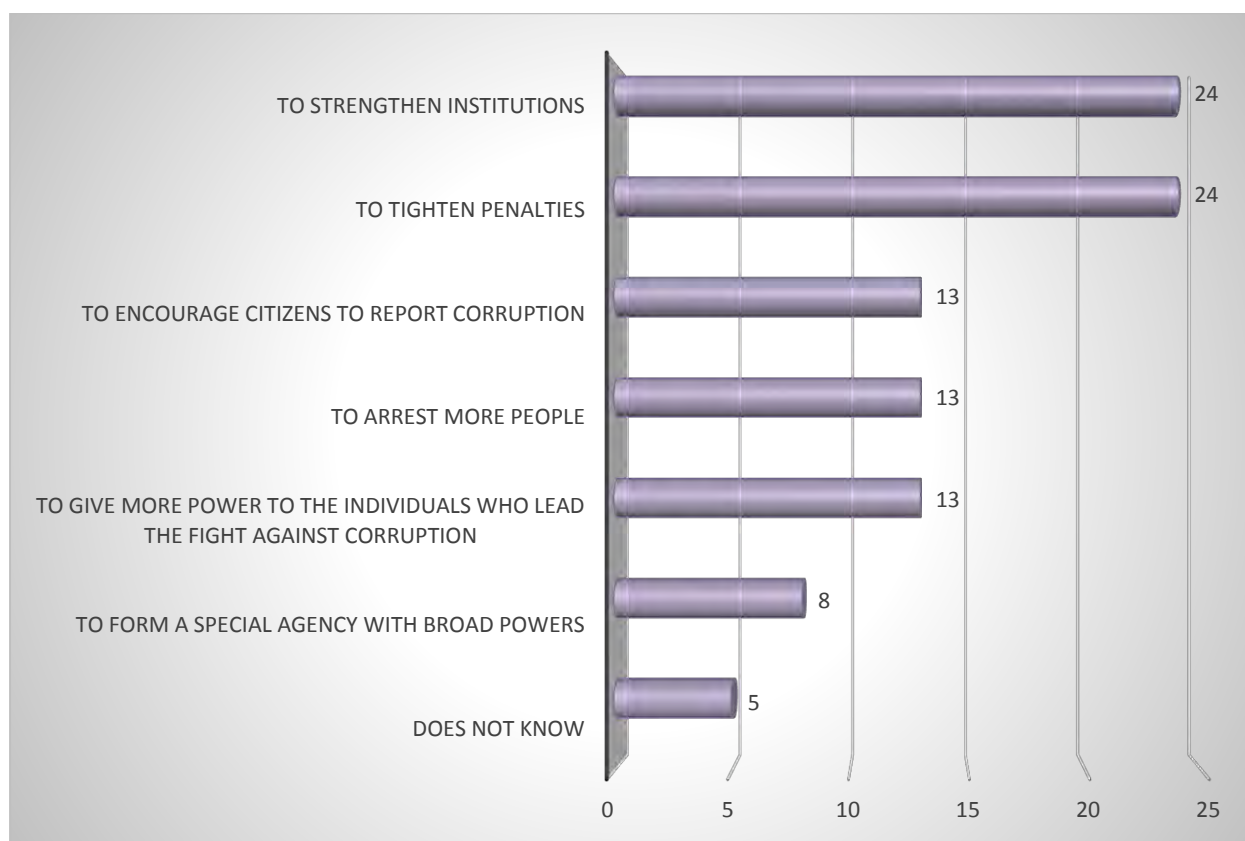
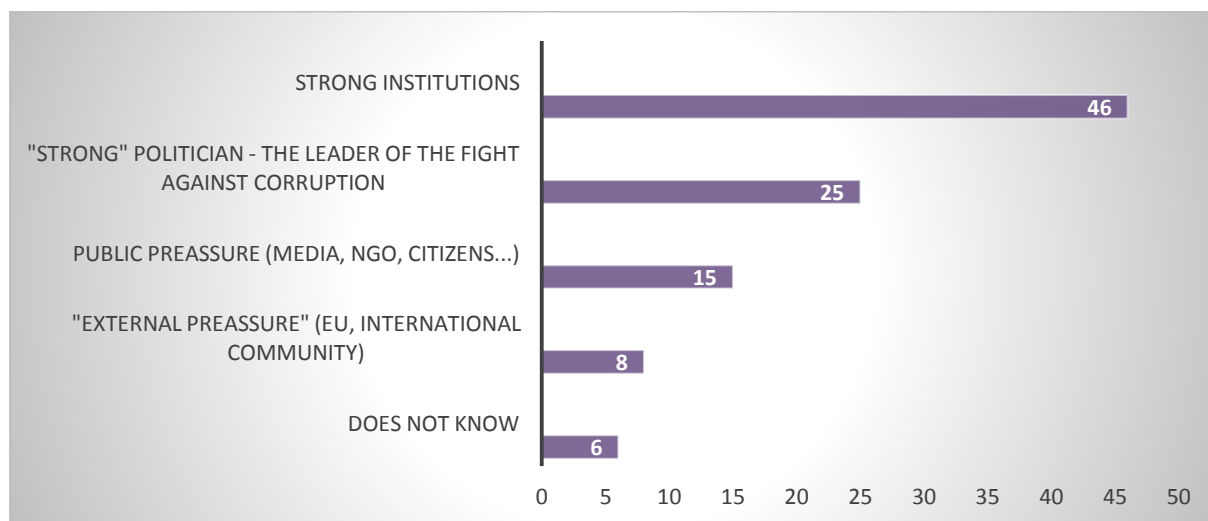


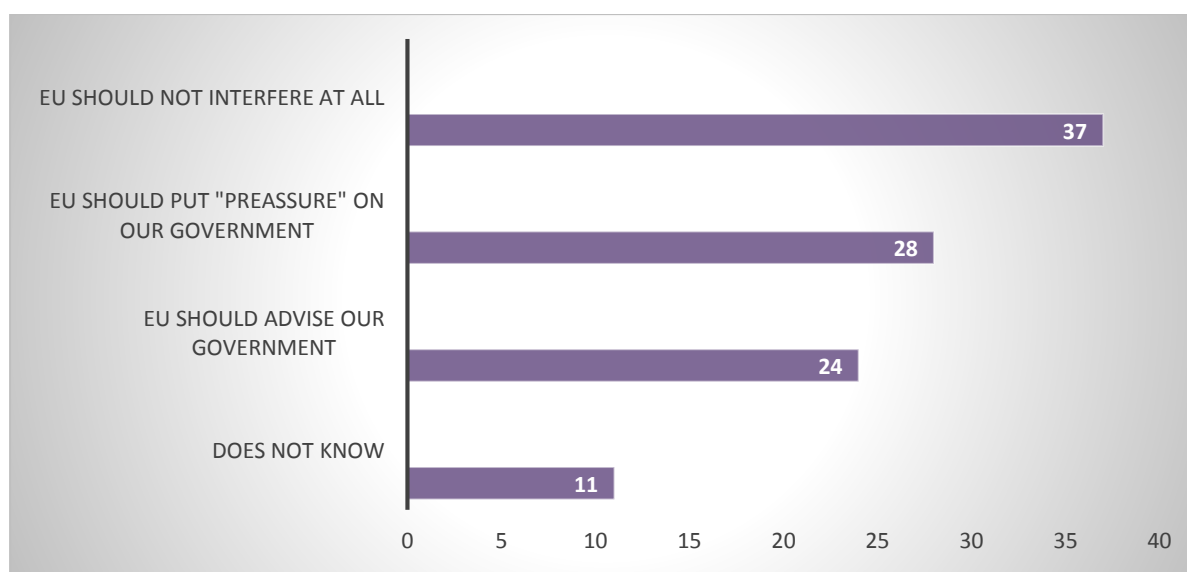
Chart 8: What is the most important in the fight against corruption?



It is interesting to note that **respondents do not see the EU as an important factor in advancing the fight against corruption**. Only 8% of the respondents see the external pressure (the EU and the international community) as the most important factor in this fight. To further examine the role of the EU in our country, citizens of Serbia were asked how the EU can help the country in the fight against corruption. **Over one third of the respondents believe that the EU should not interfere in the fight against corruption in Serbia**. On the other hand, 28% believe that the EU should put pressure on our politicians in order to make the fight more effective, while one in four respondents believes that the EU should assist by providing advice to our government.

### The EU should not interfere in the fight against corruption in Serbia

Chart 9: How can the EU assist Serbia in the fight against corruption?

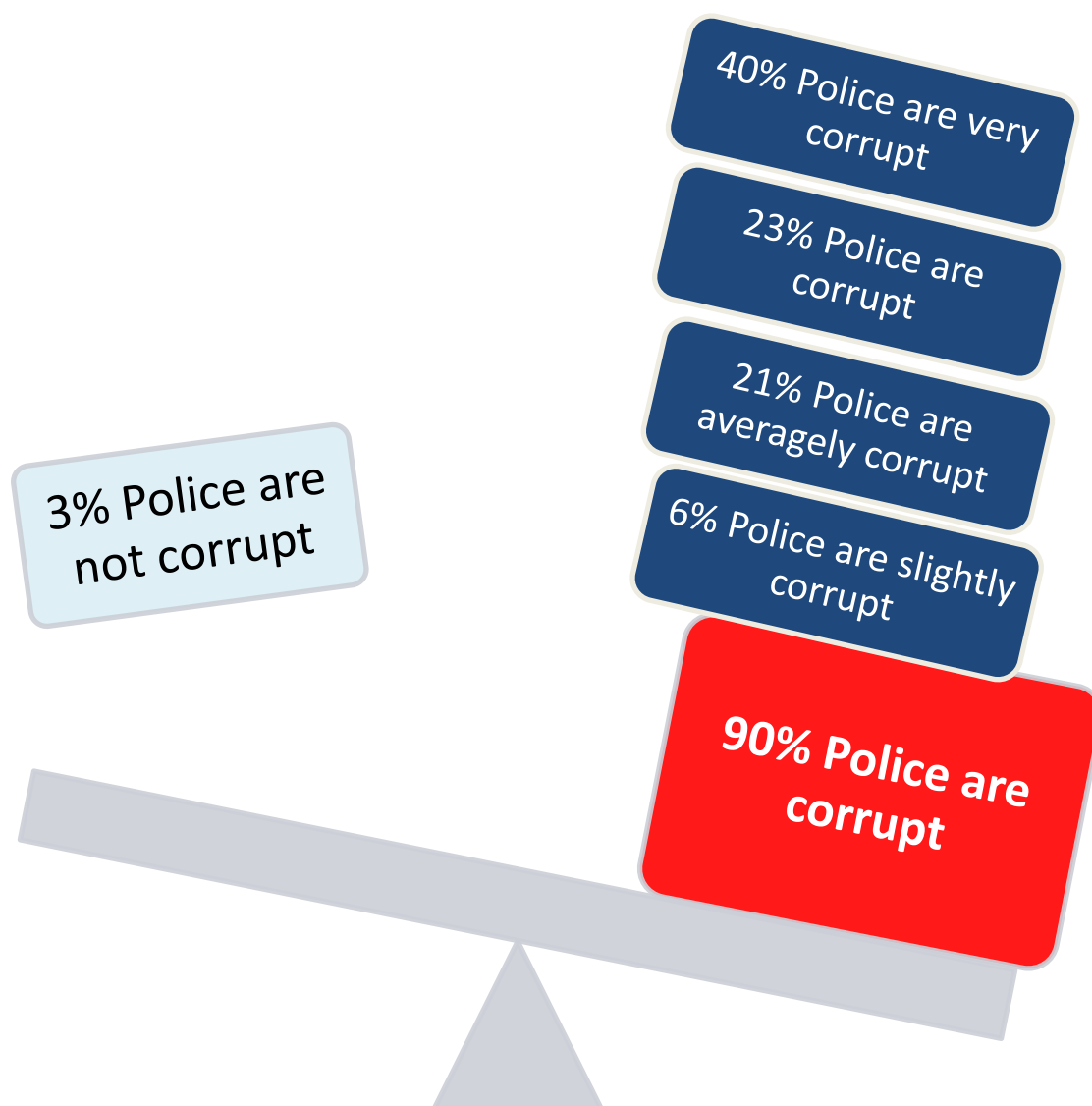


## POLICE CORRUPTION

### How do citizens of Serbia perceive police corruption?

In Serbia, 90% of the citizens believe that the police are corrupt to certain extent. Only 3% of the citizens of Serbia are of the view that the police are not corrupt at all. 40% of the citizens think that the police are very corrupt, 23% that they are corrupt, 21% that they are averagely corrupt, and 6% that the police are slightly corrupt (Chart 10).

Chart 10: Are the police corrupt?



The perception of the police as corrupt does not contribute to the fulfilment of citizens' expectation that the police should have the leading role in the fight against corruption in Serbia.<sup>1</sup> An additional problem is that people do not see a big difference between the police and other institutions in terms of their susceptibility to corruption. **It is, therefore, not surprising that nearly a quarter of the citizens of Serbia (22%) believe that police reform is the most necessary in the fight against corruption.**

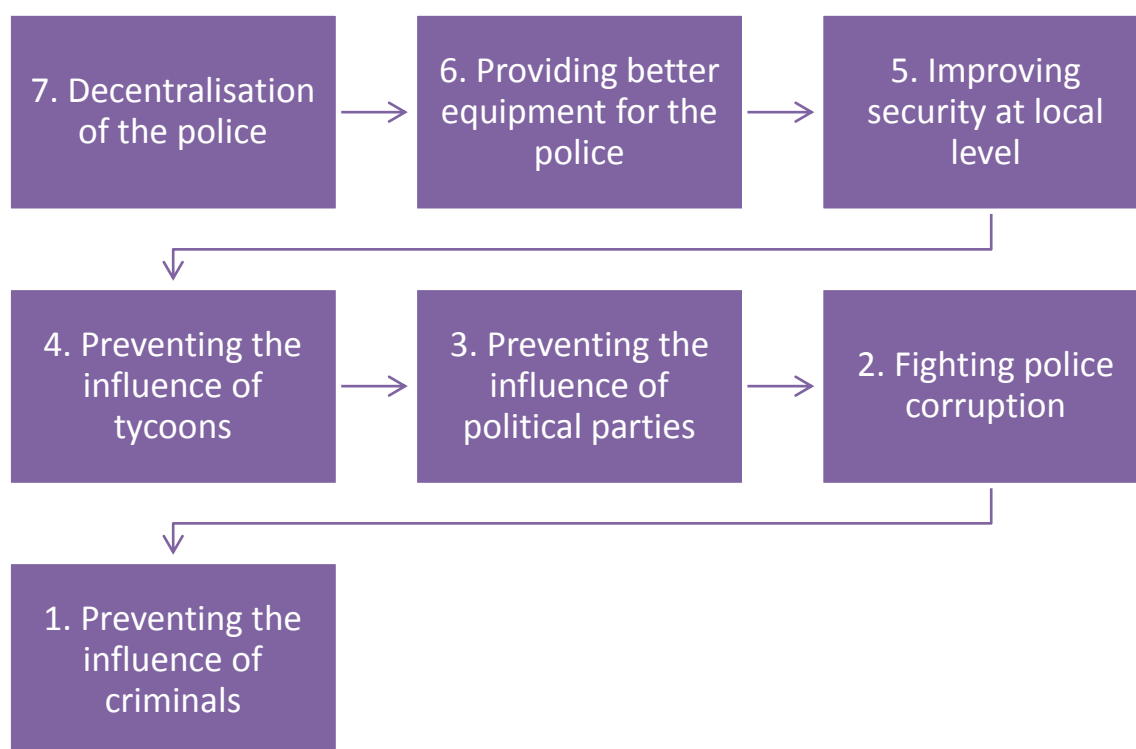
**The major weaknesses of the police**

According to citizens of Serbia, the police is heavily influenced by:

- 1) Criminal groups;
- 2) Political parties;
- 3) Tycoons.

According to citizens, the reform is very much needed or needed in the following areas: 78% - preventing influence of criminals to the police, 77% - fight against corruption and reducing the impact of political parties to the police, 76% - reducing the influence of tycoons to the police (Chart 11).

Chart 11: What are the priorities in the police reform?



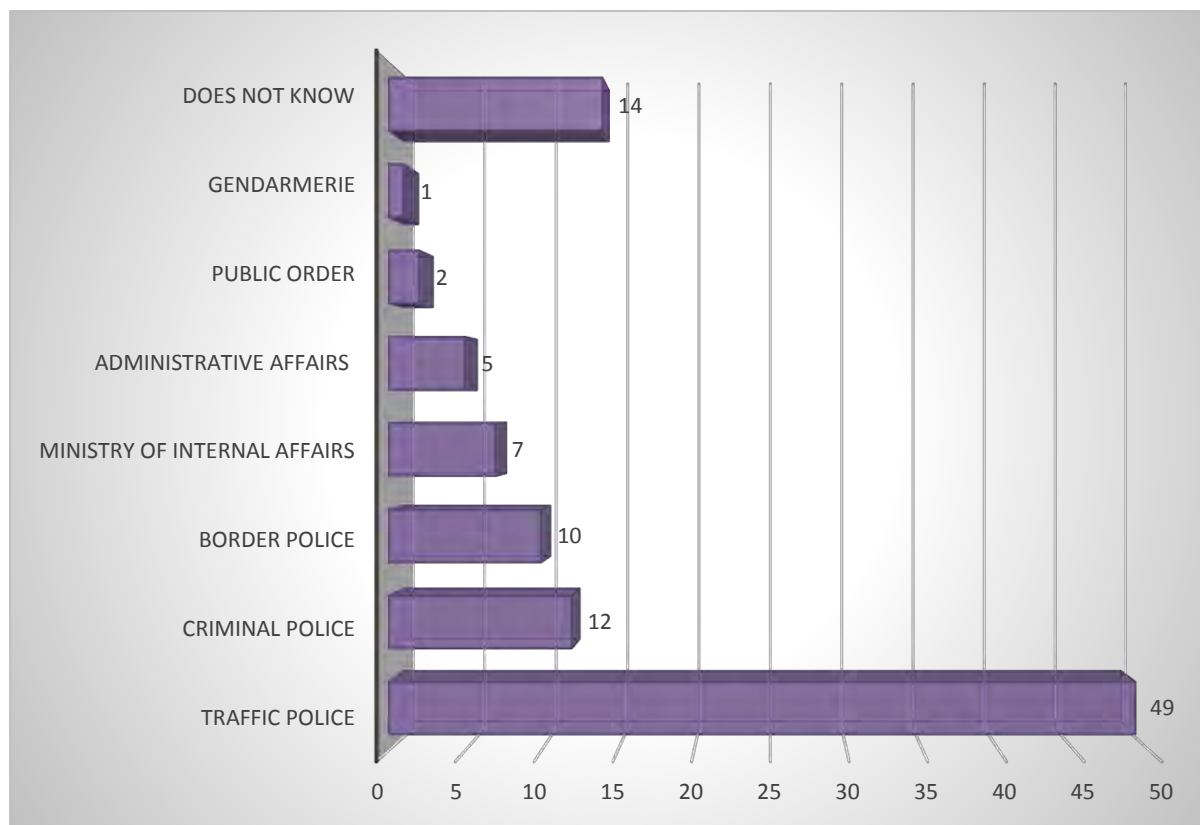
<sup>1</sup> CeSID, UNDP. 2012. The attitudes of Serbian citizens towards corruption: Public opinion poll from December 2012. Belgrade: CeSID, p. 25.

## Who is the most corrupt in the police?

The citizens of Serbia estimates that the most corrupt are traffic police, criminal police and border police. Parts of the police which are the most often in contact with citizens scored the lowest.

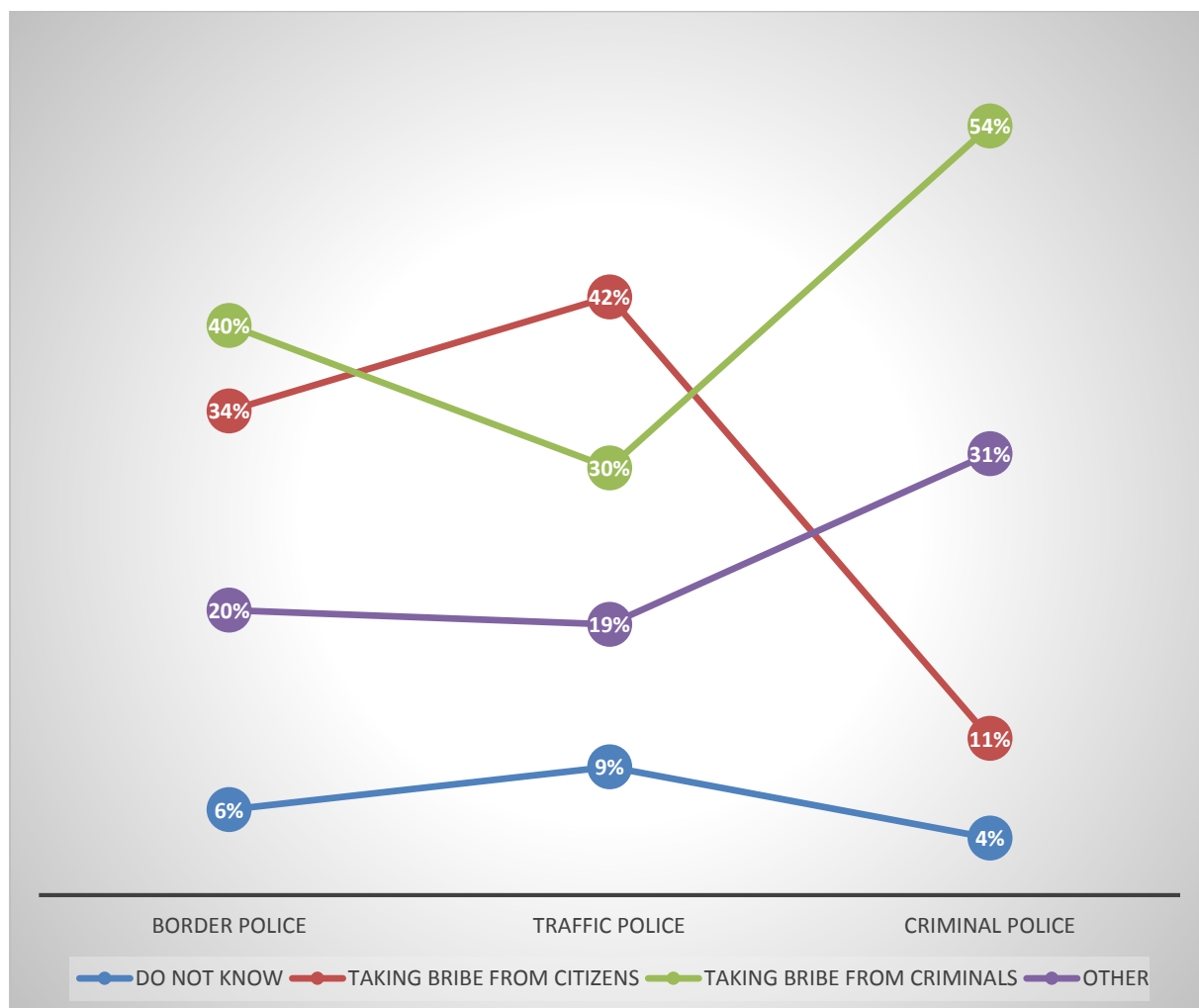
In public opinion surveys on police in Serbia, traffic police is generally at the top of most corrupt police sectors, and this has been confirmed by this study. However, the situation is quite different in regards to criminal police, which has not been ranked so highly until now. **This could be the consequence of the recent affairs which indicated the connection between the top of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and organised crime groups, but these attitudes could also be based in the previous experience of citizens.**

Chart 12: Which sector of the police is the most corrupt?



Cross referencing data resulted in an interesting comparison; in the traffic police, the very common corrupt behaviour is defined as taking bribe from citizens, while in the criminal police, it is identified as taking bribe from criminals or criminal groups. In the border police, the most common corrupt behaviour is taking bribe from criminals (Chart 13).

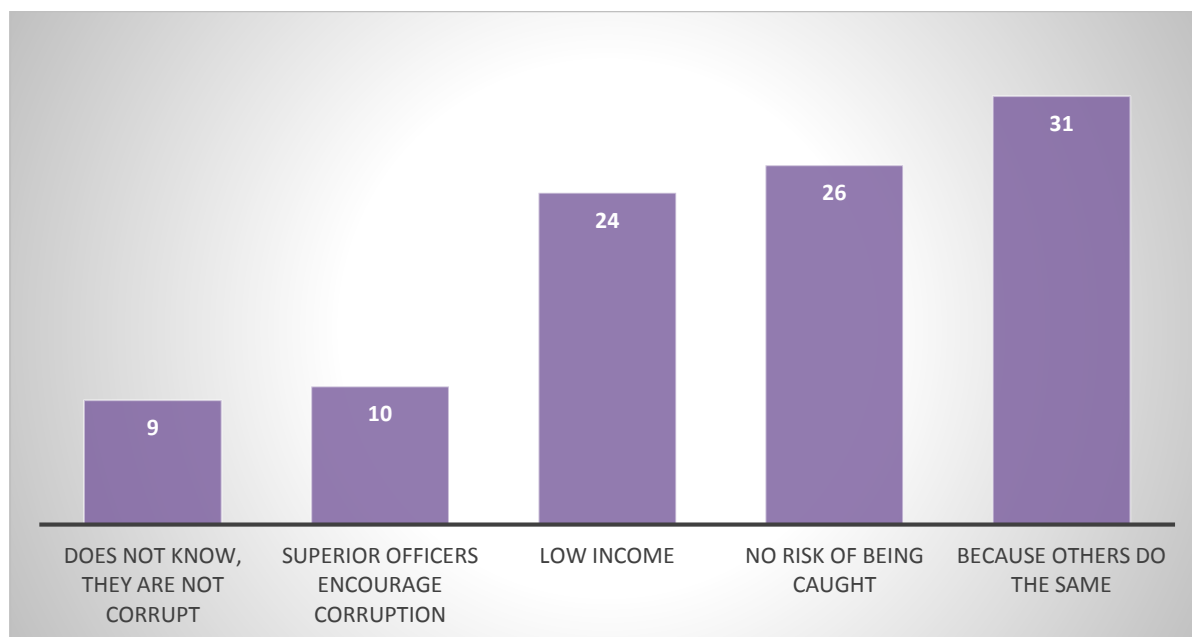
Chart 13: What corrupt behaviour is characteristic for the most corrupt parts of the police?



In regards to the reasons why the police are corrupt, none of the attitudes was prevailing – citizens were divided into three groups (Chart 14):

- 1. Nearly one third (31%) of the citizens believe that the main motivation of police officers to participate in corrupt practices is that other police officers do the same.**
- 2. 26% of the respondents believe that the risk of being caught is small, and that it is the main reason for the police being corrupt.**
- 3. 26% of the respondents think that low income of police officers is the main cause of corruption.**

Chart 14: What are the reasons for police corruption?



These three types of motives for corruption standing out among the majority of citizens indicate that the police are a favourable environment for corruption. However, it is interesting that one in ten respondents believes that **police corruption is produced by superiors who encourage “ordinary” police officers to engage in such behaviour**. It is important to note that the head of the unit is responsible for conducting proceedings against police officers from the unit, in cases of citizens’ complaints (eg. for corruption). It is, therefore, not surprising that one third of the citizens of Serbia (33%) believe that the superiors are the most corrupt, while 27% think that “ordinary” police are the ones most corrupt.

It is interesting to note that administrative officers, who predominantly work in the issuance of personal documents, and who are generally considered to be prone to corruption, according to this study do not represent a corrupt part of the police.

### Who fights against police corruption and how?

Confronting the problem and defining it is the first step to its solution. **In Serbia, only 2% of citizens believe that the police talk openly about the problem of police corruption.** Half of the

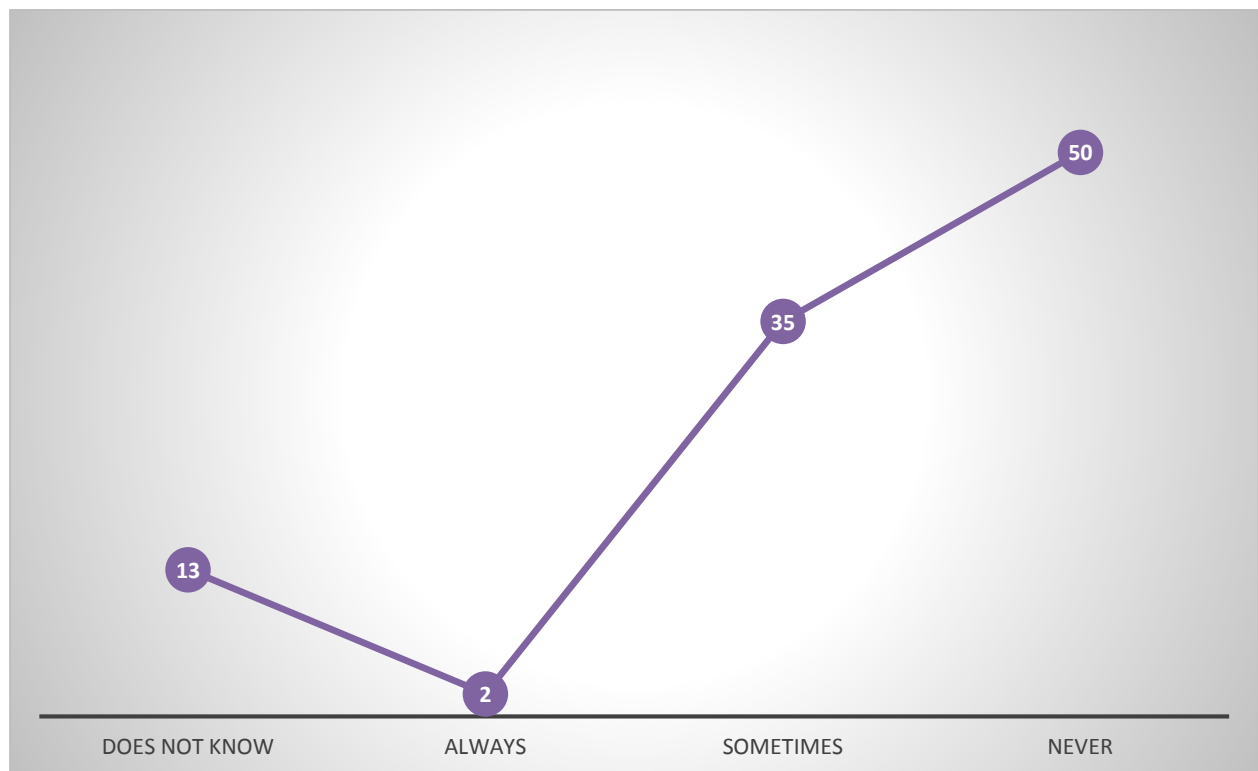
**Voters of the Socialist Party of Serbia on the party leaders**

Although the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia is the head of the Ministry of Interior, one third of this party voters believe that the top people in the Ministry of Interior are the most corrupt.

citizens of Serbia are of the view that police never speak about the police corruption, while 35% think that they do sometimes speak about it (Chart 15).

This attitude of citizens points out two facts. Police are reluctant to speak about corruption, and there is general tendency not to go in public with corruption cases, but to solve them “in house”.

Chart 15: Do the police talk openly about corruption?



When it comes to political orientation of the respondents, the findings are even more interesting. Respondents inclining to two parties located at the political right in Serbia (Democratic Party of Serbia and “Dveri”) expressed above average negative opinion of Dacic as the Minister of Interior. Supporters of other opposition parties (Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party) have the attitude towards the Minister of Interior which is similar to the national average.

It is expected that supporters of the Socialist Party of Serbia have a more positive attitude than the national average and partly than those who are close to the Serbian Progressive Party. They also think that Dacic’s leadership has reduced police corruption to certain extent.

Citizens of Serbia have the same opinion about the fight against corruption at the national level and in the police - institutions should lead the fight, not individuals. Citizens have the highest expectations



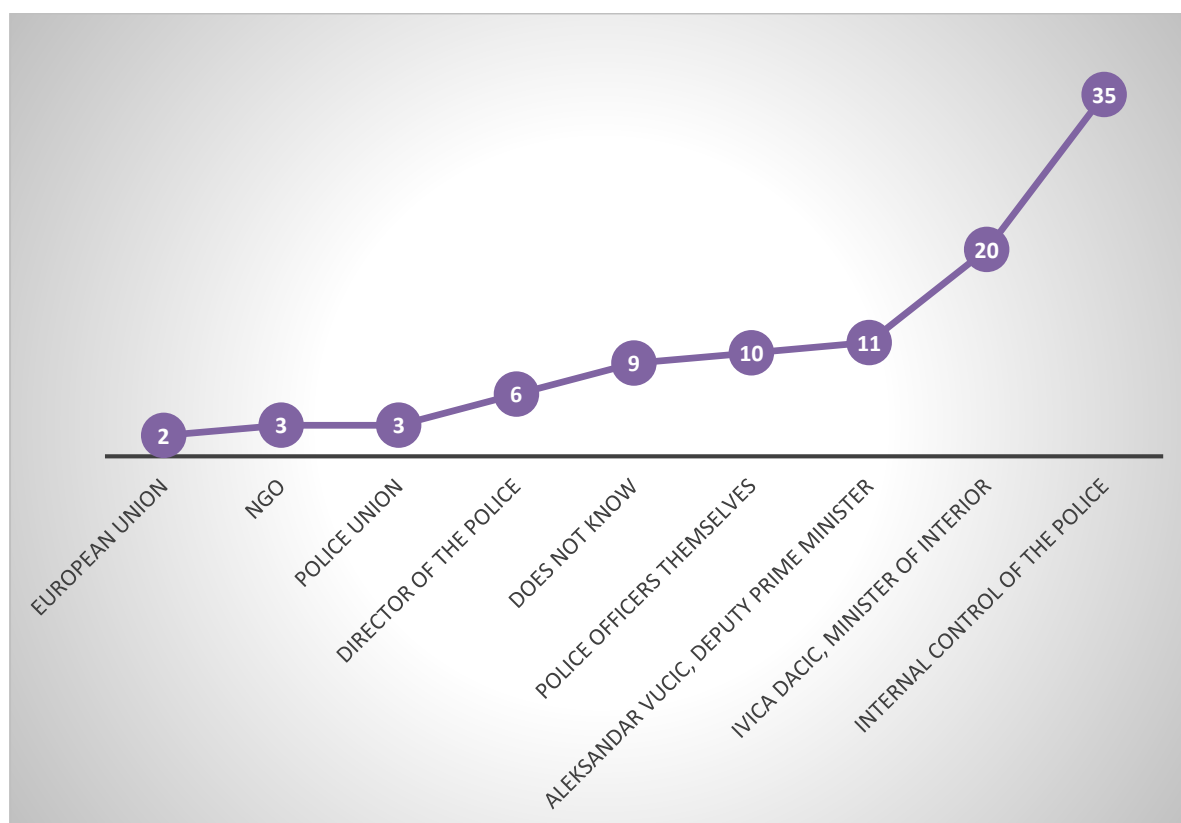
of internal control of the police to combat police corruption. **More than one third of citizens (35%) think that the internal control of the police is in charge of fighting police corruption.** To this percentage of citizens who are in favour of institutionalisation, we should add 10% of those who believe that police officers themselves should be in charge for this fight, and 6% who think this is the job for the director of police (Chart 16).

**Political orientation**

As expected, supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party and the Serbian Socialist Party see Dacic and Vucic as the main actors in the fight against corruption, while voters of the Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party opted for internal control.

However, the opinion of the majority of citizens is that police officers are not yet willing to report corrupt colleagues (62%), or that they will do so only when they are faced with negative consequences (19%). Nevertheless, this is certainly a positive sign, because it shows that citizens understand the power and the role of internal organisational units of the police in relation to the political power of individuals in the fight against corruption.

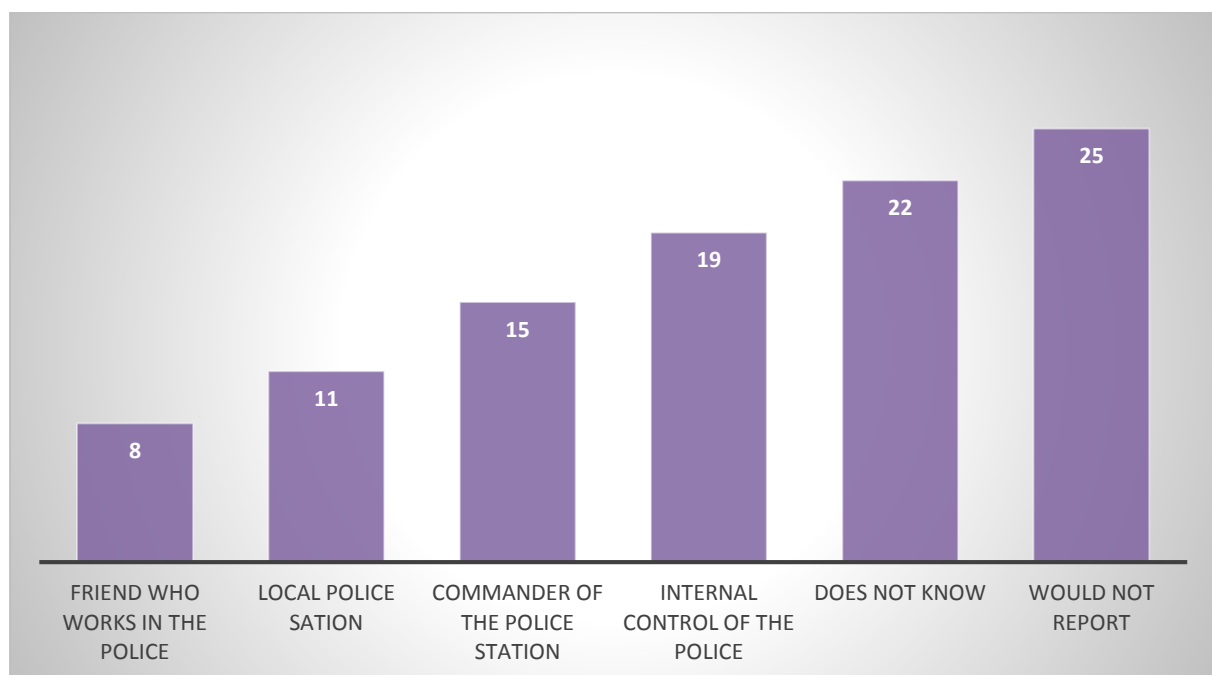
Chart 16: Who should be fighting police corruption?



The role of internal control in the fight against corruption has been affirmed by the answer to the question: what is the main job of this part of the police? While other activities that internal control is

responsible for are also listed, the majority of respondents believe that the priority activity of internal control should be the fight against police corruption. In regards to the realisation of this priority, 70% of respondents think that it is necessary to strengthen the powers of the internal control. It is also interesting that the majority of citizens who would report police corruption, would report it to the internal control (Chart 17). Also, it is in line with the attitude of the majority of the citizens of Serbia (85%) that it is necessary to increase control and supervision over the police in order to increase the sense of security of the citizens.

Chart 17: Who would you report to a case of police corruption?



**Citizens identified severe punishment measures as the main method of fighting police corruption.** It is primarily important to punish perpetrators of corrupt practices (71%), but also to punish corrupt superiors in the police (66%). This is consistent with previous findings that police superiors are the most corrupt, or that they even encourage the involvement of police officers in corruption.

It is also significant that one half of the respondents believe that it is necessary to encourage citizens to report police corruption. However, a major obstacle for the realisation of this goal is that **72% of citizens would not, or are not sure about whether to report corruption if they are required to give their personal data.** This finding indicates that there is still a lack of confidence in the police, as well as the conviction among citizens that their personal data will be misused or used for pressure. It should be added that more than 70% of citizens do not know who they should report to a case of police corruption.

## TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE CITIZENS WILLING TO FIGHT CORRUPTION?

### “Citizens' self-confidence” in the fight against corruption

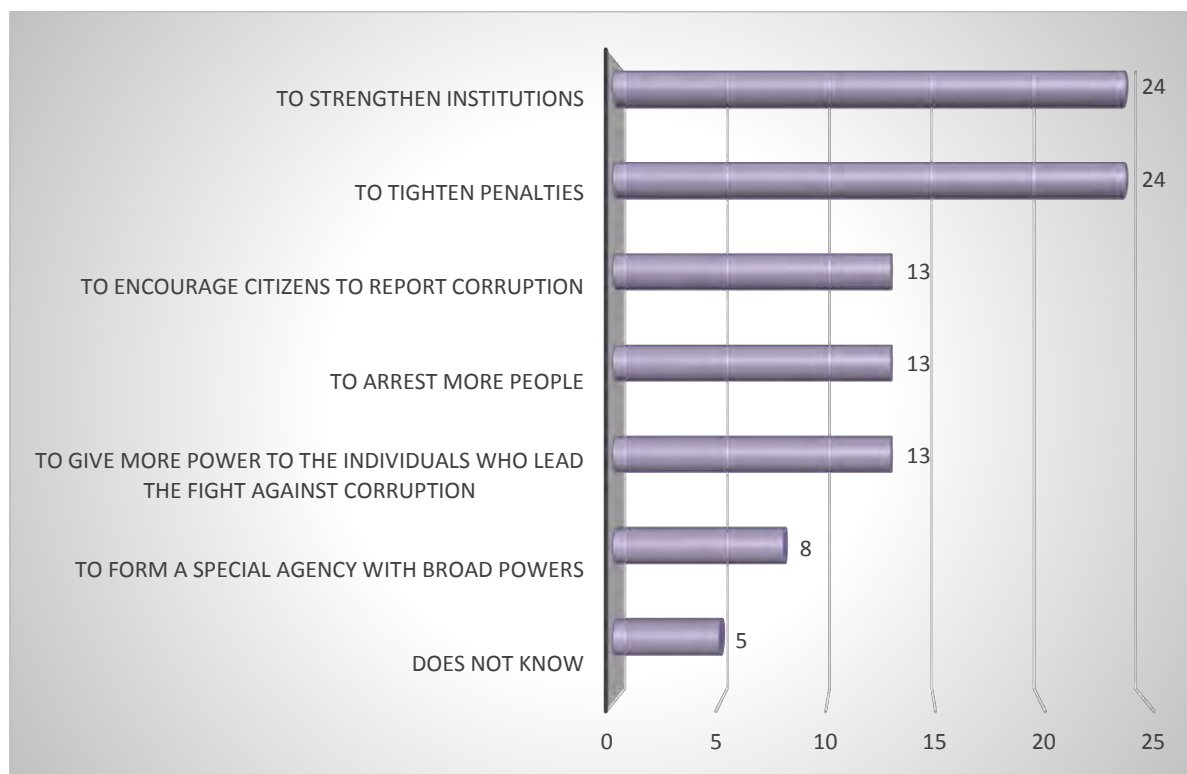
Even without the public opinion survey, it is obvious that corruption in the Serbian society is widespread. The real question is whether the society has the potential to continuously suppress corruption. Therefore, in the third part of the survey, we attempted to find out to what extent the citizens are willing to fight corruption.

Successive opinion polls that BCSP has carried out since 2011 indicate that citizens, when their security is at stake, rely primarily on themselves. When it comes to the fight against corruption, the findings are different. In this regard citizens are of the view that the first logical steps are “to strengthen institutions” (24%) and “to tighten penal policy” (24%). The answers which follow are: “to arrest more” (13%), “to give more power to individuals who lead the fight” (13%) and, finally, “to encourage citizens to report corruption” (13%).

*The younger respondents have different views. They believe that encouraging citizens to report corruption is the most effective way of combating it. At the same time, young people have the least confidence in the institutions as carriers of the fight against corruption. We believe that this finding is encouraging, and in contradiction with frequent assessments that young people in Serbia are apathetic and disinterested in broader social changes.*

If we take into account education and party affiliation, we find that the respondents with completed higher education and the voters of the Liberal Democratic Party are the most in favour of strengthening institutions in order to fight corruption. It is interesting that the citizens with lower education and the supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party and Democratic Party think that “powerful individuals” are the solution to the problem of corruption. Finally, while the supporters of the Democratic Party of Serbia opt for tougher penal policy, the supporters of the Socialist Party of Serbia believe that more people should be arrested. This finding indicates that people actually trust in leaders of the parties they vote for – for instance, the voters of the Socialist Party of Serbia believe that Dacic will “arrest more” and that it will give positive results.

Chart 18: How to improve the fight against corruption?



The citizens' trust in the (prominent) role of the civil society and the general public is low. This has been confirmed by the answer to the question: what is the most important in the fight against corruption? Only 6% of the respondents opted for "public pressure (media, NGOs, citizens)".

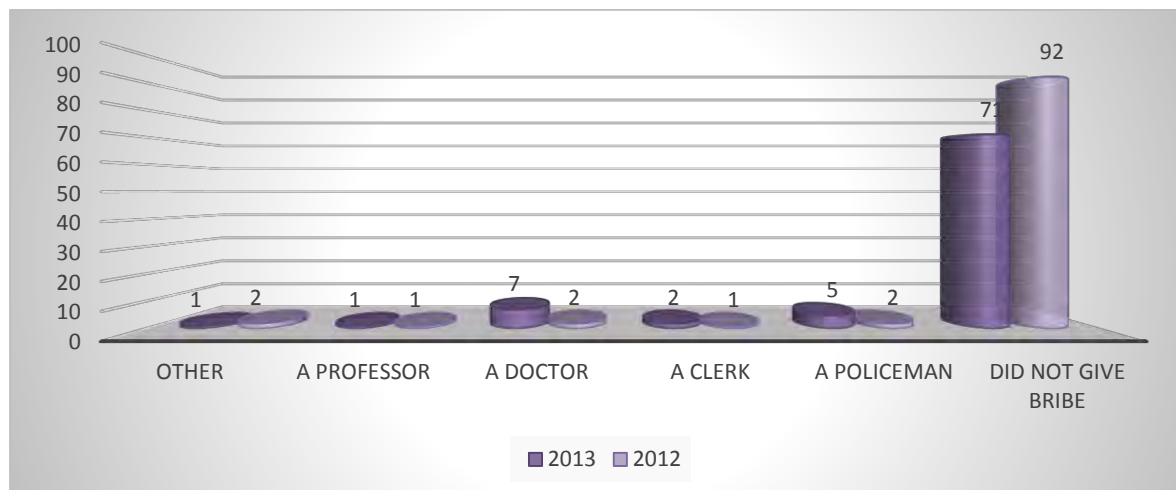
One of the obstacles to a broader involvement of citizens in the fight against corruption is the attitude that police corruption is not talked about openly, namely "even when something goes public, the police strive to cover it up." The fact that 35% of the respondents share the view that "the police sometimes talk about problems within the organisation" is encouraging. However, the citizens remain convinced that corruption is a topic that the police are *reluctant to talk about*. This gets us to the question – which was not posed during the survey – who is the most deserving of the corruption being discussed in public?

### Personal experience of giving bribe

Any personal experience should be taken "with a grain of salt" - as an indication rather than as a firm fact. However, it is discouraging that, in comparison with data for 2012, the number of those who have not bribed at all decreased significantly. In fact, during the first three months of 2013, three out

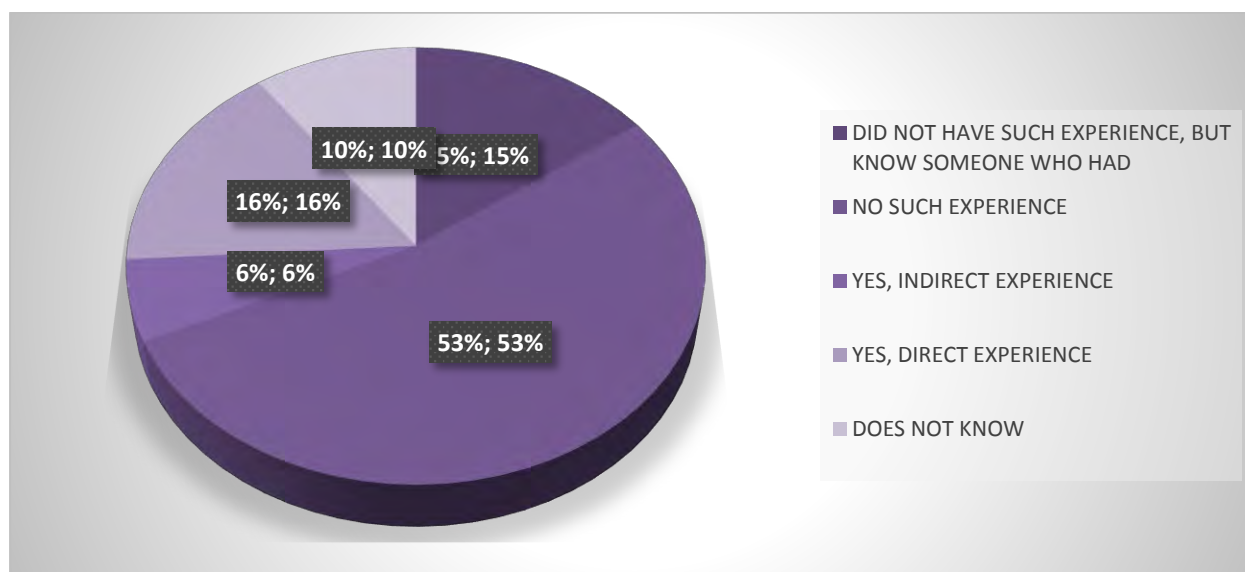
of ten citizens of Serbia bribed someone. The number of those who had bribed an employee of an institution, primarily doctors and policeman, has increased.

Chart 19: Who did you bribe in the past three months?



16% of the respondents had a direct experience with corrupt policemen, and another 6% had an indirect experience, which is in total 22% of the respondents who had contacts with corrupted police. To this percentage we should add 15% of the respondents who said that they had no direct or indirect experience with police corruption, but know people (family, friends, acquaintances) who had such an experience. *The positive thing is that quite a few people want to talk about their own, or at least about someone else's "corrupt" experience.* This opens the "door" for future researchers.

Chart 20: Experience with police corruption



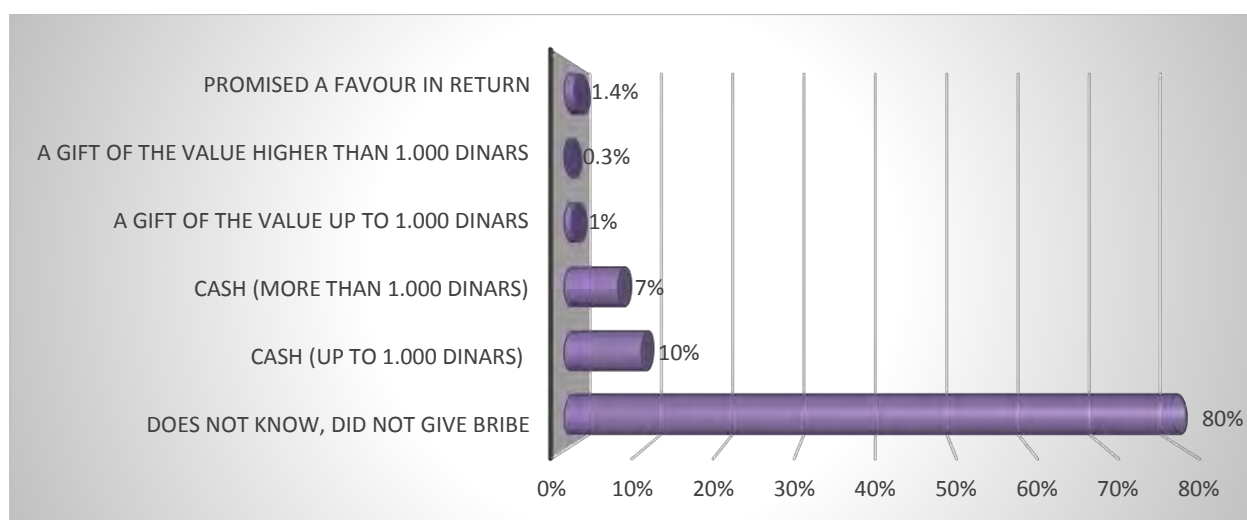
## CITIZENS OF SERBIA ON POLICE CORRUPTION

### Public opinion poll results

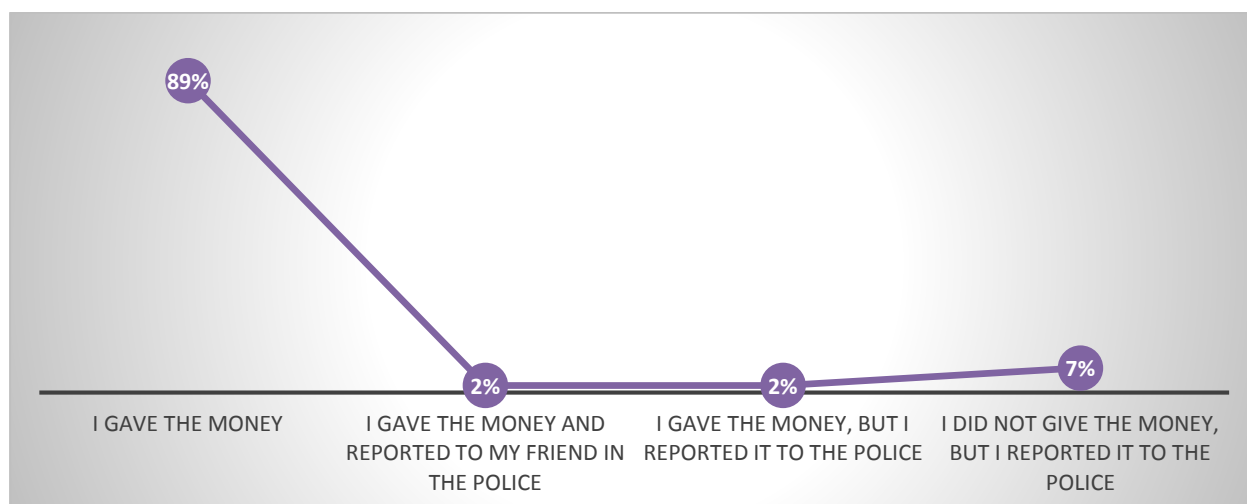
As expected, the majority of citizens gave bribe to avoid penalties (14%). Significantly fewer did it because police officers insisted on it (4%), or because they believed that it would speed up the business they had to do in the police (3%).

Among those who admitted giving bribe (20% of the respondents), the corruption of police officers or other employees commonly takes a form of giving cash to them, most often the amount of 1,000 dinars (10%). The number of those who gave more than 1.000 dinars is also remarkable (7%). Gifts and favours are significantly less likely to be given or promised.

Chart 21: The amount of money or value of gifts in the process of corruption



The answers to the question “what do you do when you are asked for money by the police?” also show that, in the circumstances in which they lack support, it is not realistic to expect that citizens will start to report police corruption more actively.



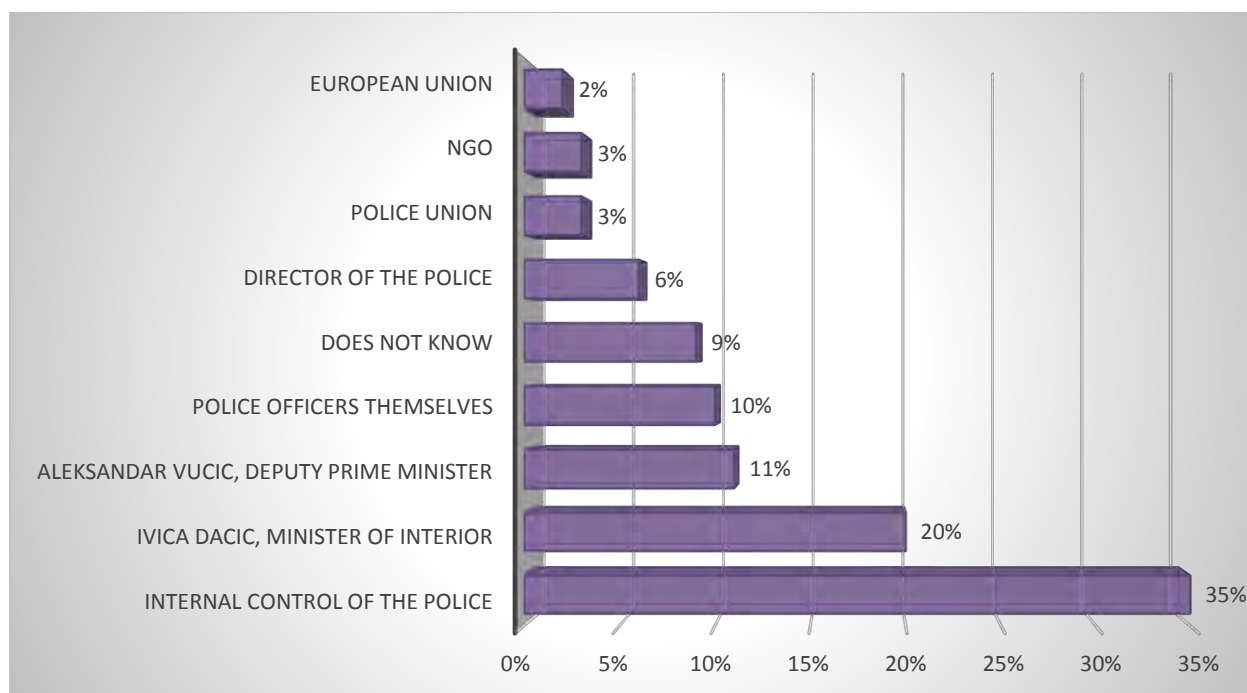
In that sense, citizens may be discouraged by the threats made by policemen. Among 20% of the respondents who admitted giving bribe, 8% said that they had been threatened to be severely penalised, or even arrested.

The ultimate proof of the unwillingness of citizens to report corruption is provided by the answer to the question: would you report police corruption if it meant giving personal data? Only 28% of the respondents - less than one third - answered positively, while 72% would not do so, or are not sure if they would do so (58% would not, 14% do not know). It is reasonable to assume that this is caused by the low level of trust in the police to deal with police corruption.

### Recognising civil society as an actor in the fight against corruption

As repeatedly pointed out, citizens are increasingly in favour of “moving” the fight against corruption from powerful individuals to the institution. This is certainly an encouraging finding, which indicates that citizens are aware of the inevitable transience of political elites. On the other hand, despite all the activities of the civil society, and the presence of the issue of corruption in the public sphere, only 3% of the respondents see “the NGOs” as the “key actors in the fight against police corruption”.

Chart 22: Who should be the key actor in the fight against police corruption?



Citizens, however, have a rather clear position on how the civil society and civil society organizations (CSOs) could contribute to the fight against corruption – they could “research and propose recommendations”, “promote ethical work of public institutions”, “provide assistance to the victims of corruption” and, finally, “cooperate with the government in the fight against corruption”. This indicates that, despite the predominantly negative perception and reputation of CSOs, citizens still see CSOs as experts in the public sphere.