

SAKKER EL DEKKENE REPORT | Issue 01

# Are the Lebanese Corrupt?

Half the Lebanese population willing to engage in corruption and only 14% fully trust the Judiciary, according to a survey by Sakker el Dekkene

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This corruption survey was done on the eve of the launch of Sakker el Dekkene<sup>1</sup>. The purpose was to evaluate the attitude of Lebanese citizens towards corruption, their willingness to compromise on their principles, their perception of corruption levels in the public sector, their readiness to report corruption, and their trust level in the judicial sector.

1200 respondents were selected randomly using the next birthday methodology. Doors were knocked, residents whose birthday is the closest to survey day were interviewed and, if these persons were away, two attempts were made to come back and reach them before they were replaced by other persons from other households. In total, 7810 doors were knocked, 4873 persons were contacted, to obtain a sample of 1200 respondents across the entire country.

## Corruption behavior

Lebanese citizen from the 26 Caza, ages 18 and up, were surveyed. The first four questions measure respondents' willingness to compromise on values and principles in common scenarios. Those scenarios are as follows:

1/ You are at a public institution for some papers, waiting in a queue with 15 persons before you. You are in a hurry. The chief of the office is

someone you know. Would you go and talk to him to speed things up and not wait in the queue?

2/ You have been caught by a policeman, driving in the wrong way. You have powerful connections. Would you take your mobile and call your connections asking them to interfere?

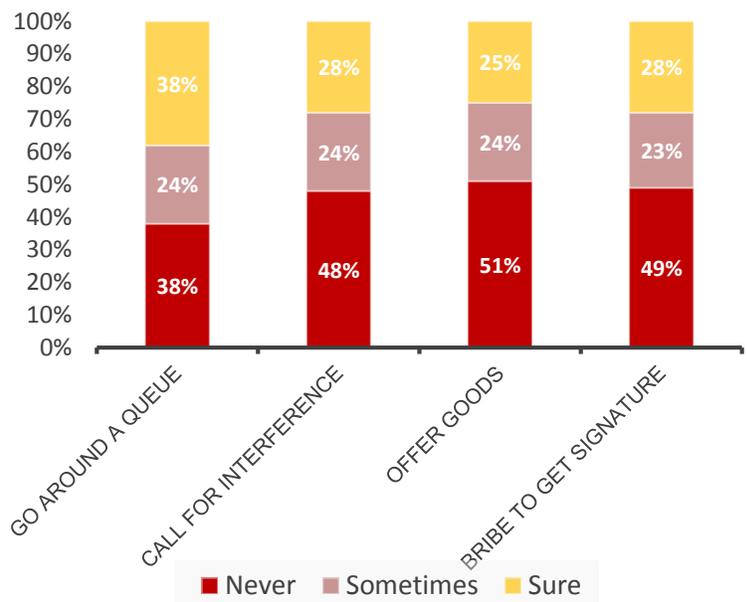
3/ You arrive at the airport from abroad. An officer tells you that you are not allowed to enter some goods you brought with you. Would you offer the officer some of these goods, so that he allows you to bring them in?

4/ You are at a public institution, presenting a set of documents for a certain formality. The public servant tells you your file still needs a paper. However, by the time you go and come back, the institution will be closed. Would you give the public servant a small amount of money to have your documents signed anyway?

*62% of the Lebanese population would not wait in line*

Answers to these questions showed that 25% of the population would certainly

compromise on values and principles to reach material objectives. Furthermore, another 25%



<sup>1</sup> This survey was funded by NI-CO (Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas) and implemented by IPSOS

*52% would call for wasta if they get a ticket*

would consider doing such thing occasionally. So half of the population in total admitted that they would go around a queue, call to get out of trouble if they are intercepted by a police officer, give a gift to a custom agent to soften him, or pay to get a premature signature on an official document.

In addition, it is a possible that some of those who took an uncompromising position on the

*Lebanese youth are even more willing to compromise on integrity than older generations*

proposed corruption scenarios simply did not want to say the truth, which makes the actual proportion of Lebanese citizens willing to compromise on integrity even higher than 50%. The implication is that corruption needs a big momentum and popular initiative.

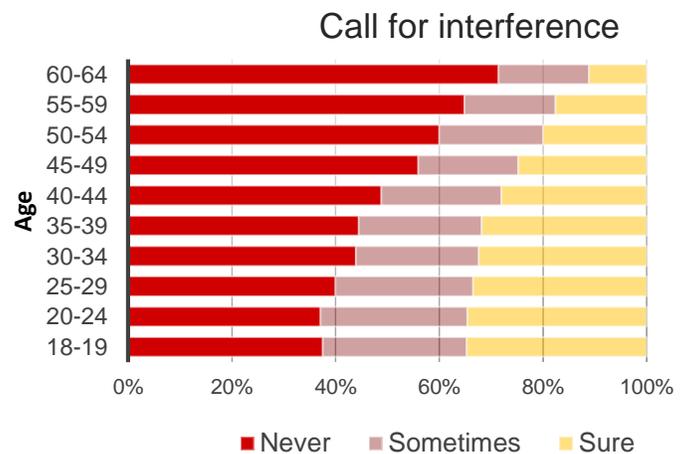
The willingness of the majority of the Lebanese to compromise or engage in corrupt behavior, like cutting in line or resorting to go-betweens, influence, gifts or bribery, stems, first and foremost, from deep-seated societal norms that can only be eradicated through administrative automation followed by the development of e-government, as is the case in the UAE which closely resembles Lebanon in social makeup and customs. Automation bypasses all direct contact between customer (citizen) and civil servant, and thus entirely prevents daily acts of corruption. It boosts the efficiency of services and administrations and saves time and money. The government is therefore called to allocate the necessary funds for automation and develop a five-year plan to generalize e-services across all public administrations, then produce services through mobile apps. 'Sakker el Dekkene', too, has developed an app, 'Sakker', to allow the public to report corruption and file complaints, as well as learn about the procedures for hundreds of administrative formalities, on their phone, allowing to save time and gain efficiency in administrative operations.

As an NGO, 'Sakker el Dekkene' cannot replace the state. Administrative automation lies

at the heart of the functions of the Ministry of State for Administrative Development. The responsibility of Minister Nabil de Freige is just as important as that of sovereign ministers, because there is no higher sovereignty than serving the people, ensuring equal treatment before administrations and reducing corruption.

## Corruption and Age

Answers were broken down by age, education level, confession, and political identity. Results indicate that first, youth are more willing to make compromising choices than older generations. While 30% of those aged 55 and above admit that they would seek outside interference against a police officer doing his job and 70% say they will never do so, 62% of those aged 18 to 24 would call for interference against a law enforcement officer on duty and only 38% of those aged 18 to 24 would refuse to do so. Similarly, youth is more likely to pay for a customs agent or a civil servant



in order to get a personal favor.

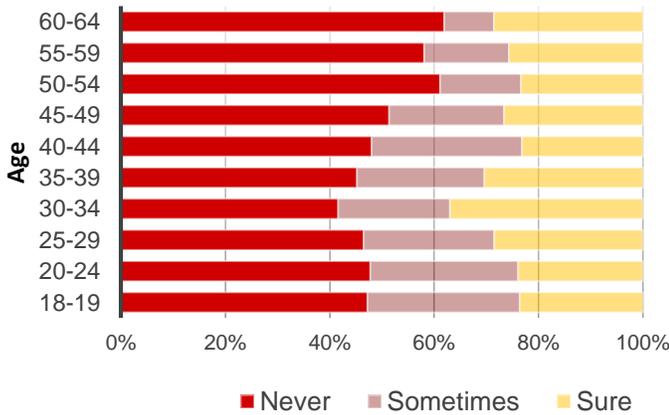
This finding means that youth are not necessarily more inclined to refuse corruption than previous generations. They would easily play the game and even more, jump ahead. The implication is that the problem is beyond generations, and change needs a 180 degree shift. Change needs educational programs and more...

'Sakker el Dekkene' is currently developing practical educational curricula to raise the awareness of students in schools about the

dangers of corruption. Our ambition is for our curricula to be officially adopted by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and we are confident in the responsiveness of HE Minister Elias Bou Saab regarding this initiative.

erodes the country’s assets, undermines its growth and limits wealth to a corrupt minority monopolizing big-scale projects, be they waste management procurement, electricity, oil, public works, roadwork, tenders, tax evasion or other issues that perpetuate Lebanon’s third-world status and push its population to emigrate and those remaining to squabble among themselves. ‘Sakker el Dekkene’ believes that corruption, which is due to the use of influence by those who have access in Lebanon, can only be fought through the implementation of the law against illicit enrichment in order to control corrupt public servants and improve the income level in public administration after activating the principle of judicial, administrative and political accountability. This implies directly to have an independent judiciary, an effective central inspection, and regular and corruption-free elections built on the law, and which allow the Lebanese people to hold their representatives accountable.

Bribe to get signature



## Corruption and income level

When it comes to income levels, results are also surprising. Those who are from a lower income level are more resistant to corrupt acts. For instance, they are less inclined to seek wasta in order to go around a line. On a more aggressive front, 38 % of the higher income level respondents say they will sure bribe to get a public servant’s signature on a formality to avoid delay in their paperwork, while only 16% of the lowest income level respondents would do the same. Does this imply that citizens who are wealthier are more corrupt? Does it further imply that, as citizens get more access, they will become

*Rich people may be more corrupt than the poor*

wealthier because of corruption? In short, it seems that those who have the means tend to get around the law, and pay the required amounts to get their formalities done,

taking advantage of low salaries in the public sector.

As statistical figures indicate, the real corruption plaguing the country is that which occurs through influential individuals who take advantage of their influence through big monetary deals. This level of corruption gradually

## Corruption and political identity

Finally with regards to political identity, there does not seem to be any difference between respondents from March 14<sup>th</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup> coalitions. Yet, independents seem to be less sensitive to bribery than politicized

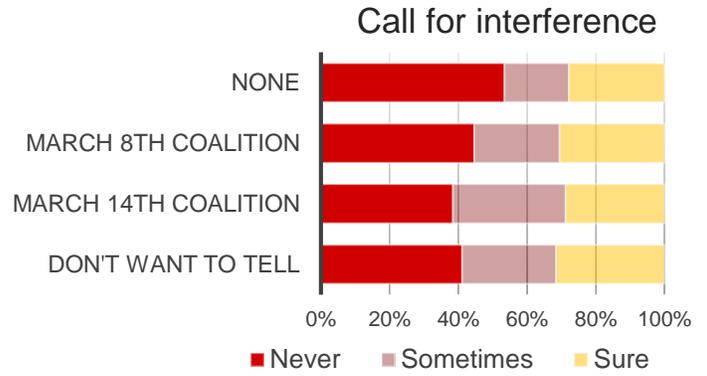
*No difference between political sides with regard to corruption*

respondents (whether they are from March 8<sup>th</sup>, March 14<sup>th</sup>, or not willing to state what side they belong to). One of two things, either people are more compromising because they are politically networked, or they take political sides because they need to get by with opaque business... All in all, those who have political affiliations are more prone to corrupt behavior. That’s why Sakker El Dekkene is at equal distance from all.

*Independents have more resistance to compromise about integrity*

‘Sakker el Dekkene’ also believes that political action and identity are healthy and sacred endeavors although there are corrupt and non-corrupt individuals in the rank of all political parties. It is our duty to commend the honest, whatever political camp they belong to, and to denounce the corrupt, expose them before the public and bring them to justice regardless of their political orientation.

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**Perceived Corruption levels in public institutions**

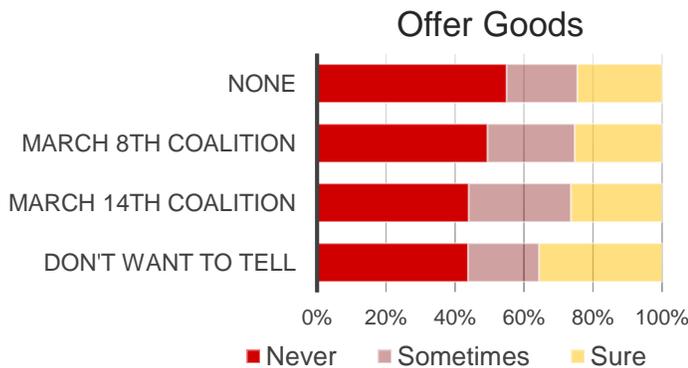
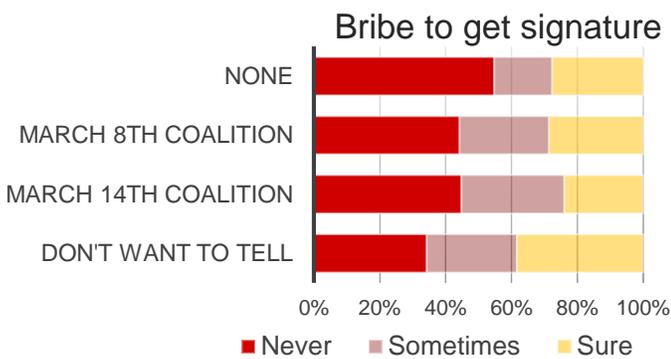
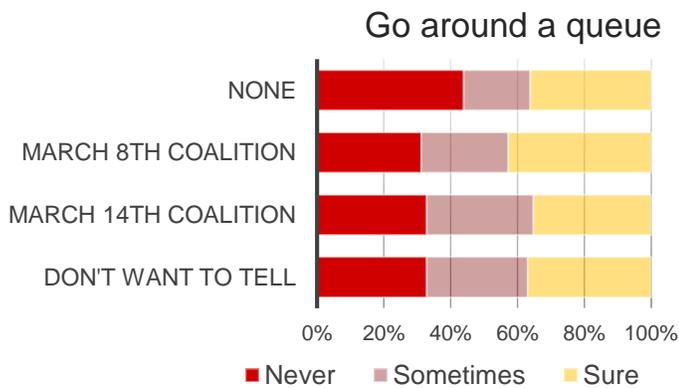
Besides their behavioral preference, respondents were asked to estimate whether corruption is frequent in various institutions, including: Ministries, Municipalities, Public institutions like port, social security, EDL, etc.

The port was rated as the most corrupt (widespread or frequent corruption mentioned by almost 93% of the respondents), followed by cadaster (86% considered corruption widespread or frequent in this institution). ISF and Ministry of Finance also scored poorly, with 85% of the respondents considering corruption widespread or frequent there. Then comes Vehicle registration (84%). The judiciary came right after the top 5 with more than 70% considering

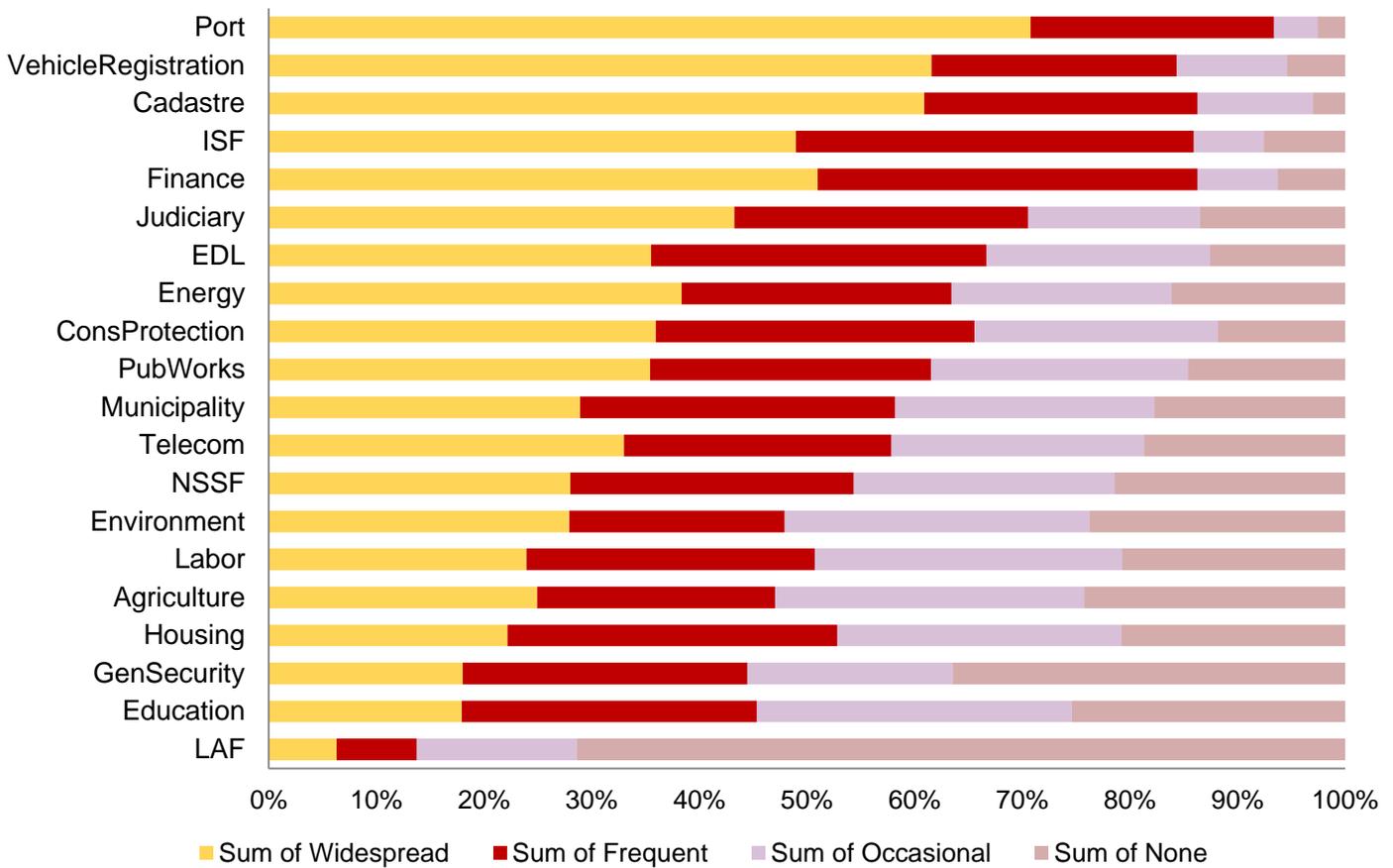
*93% of the respondents consider corruption widespread at the port and 86% in the cadaster*

corruption widespread or frequent in this area.

Finally the army remains the most trusted institution with regards to its integrity. So, public trust is nil in all public administrations, except the Army, hence the imperative for our ministers to launch a serious campaign to fight corruption and punish the corrupt, otherwise incurring the downfall of the state.



## Level of corruption perceived by citizens



Reducing corruption will provide funds to cover public debt, to raise wages and improve services. By resigning themselves to the status quo, politicians admit either to their complicity or to their impotence and despair; and we should not turn a blind eye.

That is why ‘Sakker el Dekkene’ has reached out to the public to report corruption, in a bid to gauge the magnitude of corruption and lobby politicians to fight and reduce such acts. Otherwise, the public would also be an “accomplice” to corruption and a contributor to the mass suicide of the country and that of their own families and selves. It is high time that the Lebanese state, headed by HE Prime Minister Tammam Salam, devised a national anti-corruption plan and identified the priorities of each ministry in developing administrations to end corruption.

## Trust in the Judiciary

A separate question asked respondents whether they trust the judicial sector, which is the pillar of the fight against corruption. Only 14 percent said they have full trust in the judiciary, 46% have some trust, and 32% have no trust at all.

When asked why they don’t trust or don’t trust fully the judiciary, 64% of the respondents mentioned spontaneously political interference, and 49% mentioned corruption.

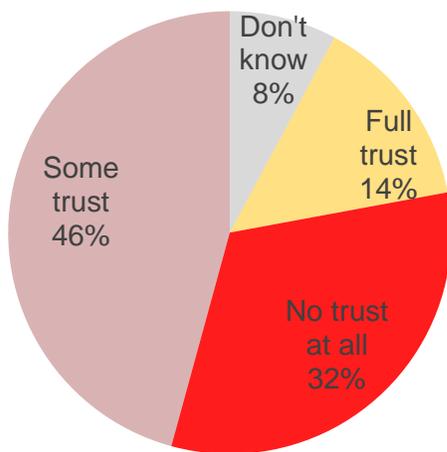
*Only 14% of the population trusts the judiciary*

Nonexistent or weak public trust in the judiciary is an indicator of the dissolution of the state since the absence of justice and accountability perpetrates the law of the jungle,

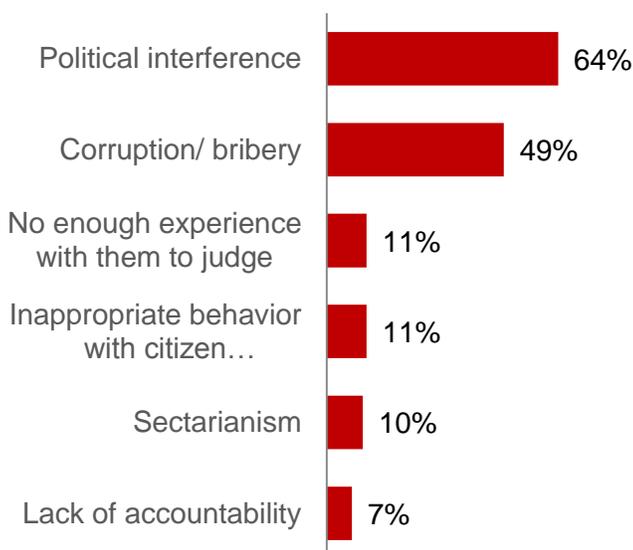
## Causes of distrust in judiciary: politics and corruption

poverty and wars. The time has come for an independent judiciary, for efficient judicial inspection, for speedy trials and for regulating the relationship between public prosecution offices and police stations to end the arbitrary use of authority and corruption which touch all the Lebanese population. And so, our expectations are high for Minister of Justice Major General Ashraf Rifi and Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council Judge Jean Fahd.

### Do you trust the Judiciary?



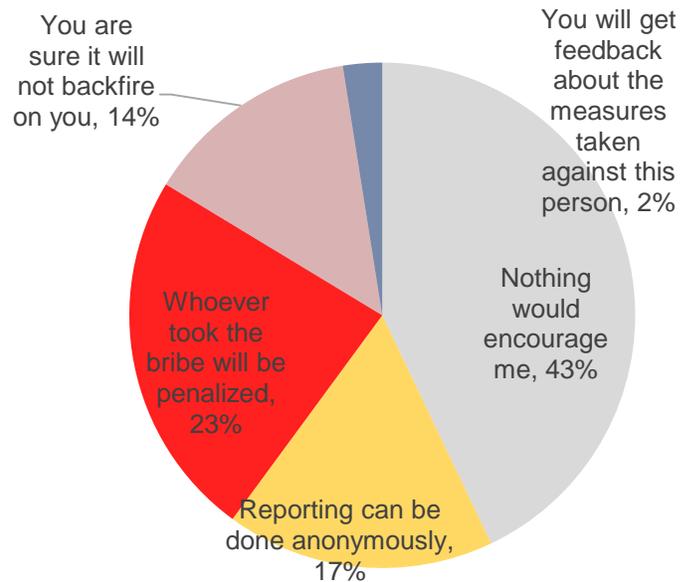
### Reasons for Lack of Trust



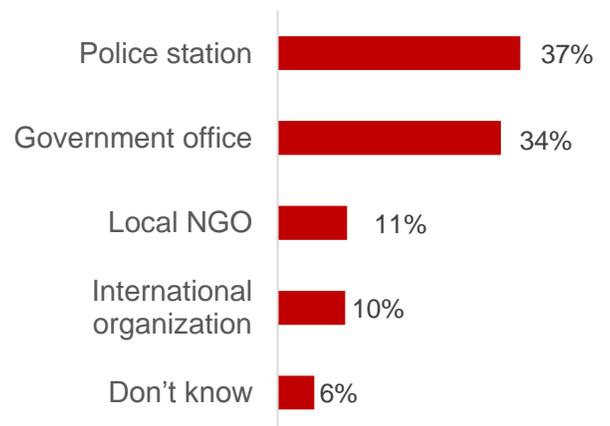
## Doing something about corruption

*Almost half the population has lost hope*

Last but not least, in order to measure respondents' readiness to change, they were asked what would encourage them to report corruption. 43% said they will not report. This means that almost half the population has lost hope. Most of those willing to report corruption stated that they would do so if the corrupt person is penalized, or if their anonymity was respected. This reflects citizens' interest in actual change as opposed to just promises, and the importance of the issuing of the whistleblower protection law.



### Preferred entity to report bribery



In addition, when asked where they would report, most of the respondents mentioned police stations and government offices. This means that, despite the lack of trust, and despite rampant corruption in most public sector, more than 70% of the Lebanese citizens will look up to their institutions and see them as their savior.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, this report shows some of the dynamics behind corruption. It reveals the importance of education, as youth seems to be victim of the system. It further shows the value of the support from all social backgrounds, and the importance of staying at equal distance from political forces.

Public opinion locates corruption in Port, Vehicle Registration, Cadaster, Ministry of Finance and the legal sector as top targets. In addition, trust in the legal sector is extremely low, and this is blamed on political interference; this reflects the importance to build judicial independence and make it a top priority.

Finally, half the citizens are willing to report corruption, as long as it does not backfire on them, and as long as it leads to results. The Lebanese population is overwhelmed by corruption, all sides, ages, income levels included, and ready to see change.

Against this background, 'Sakker el Dekkene' believes that police stations and the Internal Security Forces play a key part in enforcing the law, and should not compromise on their role. We trust that Minister of Interior and Municipalities Nohad Machnouk will give this matter due attention, on a par with political security, as corrupt acts such as false drivers licenses, arm permits, bad food, and illegal constructions, leaving hundreds dead in the streets each year, impacting people's health, destroying the environment, and wasting fortunes.

Sakker El Dekkene, January 29, 2015