



# **A Nation's Struggle**

---

## **An Investigation into Graft in Somalia**

# Executive Summary

This report offers an in-depth exploration of bribery and corruption that is deeply rooted within various regions of the country. It specifically provides crucial insights into the frequency, distribution, and financial extent of bribery. This investigation was motivated by growing concerns over the government's anti-corruption actions, which have raised doubts about their genuine commitment to addressing the issue.

Marqaati's 2022 corruption report, released on 31st December 2022, highlighted the alarming misappropriation of funds, with \$5,936,316.23 of international assistance and \$4,543,045.46 of tax revenues unaccounted for.[1] These revelations intensified scrutiny on the government's anti-corruption efforts.

The situation escalated when the Auditor General was replaced with a politically exposed individual of questionable qualifications on 9th February 2023. This move was widely criticized and raised serious doubts about the impartiality of future audits. The arrest of some officials on corruption charges, seen as a performative measure, has done little to quell concerns as corrupt practices persist.

Further exacerbating the situation, in October 2022, the President dismissed the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Judicial Service Commission, two crucial institutions designed to combat corruption. This questionable move, widely seen as an effort to control these independent bodies, has cast doubt on the government's dedication to eradicating corruption. To regain trust and make genuine progress in the fight against corruption, the government must recommit to empowering and creating permanent, independent, and constitutionally anchored institutions for anti-corruption. These should replace the temporary, performative measures that serve merely to appease donors.

**marqaati**

To delve deeper into the graft challenge, a comprehensive telephone survey was conducted by Marqaati between 22nd December, 2022, and 12th January, 2023, involving 1037 randomly selected individuals. The survey revealed that bribe paying averaged more than 20% in many districts in the capital, Mogadishu, and 12% nationwide.

Another alarming finding was the startlingly low rate of complaints lodged following instances of bribery. Over 93% of respondents admitted to paying a bribe did not file a complaint. The lack of avenues for reporting such incidents was a significant issue, with over 80% of respondents unsure about where or how to report these instances. This was further exacerbated by a general belief that no meaningful action would be taken against reported incidents of bribery.

Regarding bribe trends, over 90% of bribe-payers stated that the frequency of bribe requests either remained the same or increased compared to the previous year. This persistent trend indicates a significant lack of progress in combating corruption.

Moreover, the data revealed a troubling correlation between an entity's power and involvement in bribe-taking. For instance, the Federal Government of Somalia's security forces were implicated in approximately 44% of bribery cases, suggesting systemic corruption within influential institutions.

This report underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive and effective approach to combat corruption in Somalia. By offering a nuanced understanding of the current state of bribery, it serves as a critical resource that can guide policymakers in devising robust and efficient anti-corruption strategies.

# Introduction

This study explores the prevalence and nature of bribery across different regions of Somalia, particularly South Central Somalia. It arrives in the wake of increasing concern over corruption levels in the country, highlighted by a series of recent government actions that raise serious questions about the commitment and capacity to genuinely address the issue.

On 31st December 2022, Marqaati released its 2022 corruption report that analyzed audit reports over four years, which revealed a staggering \$5,936,316.23 of international assistance funds unaccounted for, with an additional \$4,543,045.46 of tax revenue used at source without proper accountability. An alarming \$95,804,854 was not audited during that period. These revelations prompted public outcry and intensified scrutiny on the government's anti-corruption measures.

However, in a controversial move on 9th February 2023, the Auditor General, responsible for ensuring transparency and accountability in the government, was removed and replaced with a politically exposed individual with questionable qualifications. This move has been widely criticized for undermining the impartiality and integrity of future audits, thereby potentially jeopardizing donor-funded projects in the country. The close political ties and apparent lack of independence of the new Auditor General also raise considerable concerns about the government's commitment to genuinely combat corruption.

The rampant corruption in Somalia has not only led to economic and social hardships

for its citizens, but it also poses a significant threat to the stability and security of the nation. The unchecked misappropriation of funds not only impedes development but also erodes the public's trust in government institutions. As such, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive response to corruption. However, this requires a commitment to transparency and accountability from all levels of the government.

Regrettably, the government's resolve to confront corruption has been thrown into doubt with recent developments. The President's dismissal of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Judicial Service Commission in October 2022 has raised eyebrows. These actions undermine the independence of key constitutional institutions responsible for combating corruption and upholding justice. These are critical pillars in any serious effort to root out corruption, as they ensure that allegations of corruption are investigated thoroughly by independent institutions and those found guilty are held accountable.

Rather than these precipitous actions that cast doubt on the government's sincerity, what is needed is the creation and empowerment of robust, independent institutions that can confront corruption head-on. Temporary public relations measures designed to placate international donors are insufficient. The challenge of corruption in Somalia is deep-seated and systemic, and there is need for a sustained and committed response that goes beyond symbolic gestures.

For a meaningful change to occur, the government should reinstate and empower these commissions or create new, independent bodies with a clear mandate to combat corruption. There is a pressing need for structural reforms and legislation that enforce checks and balances, bolster transparency, and promote accountability. The government's willingness to undertake these necessary measures will be the true test of its commitment to eradicating corruption. This report provides the necessary insights that could help shape these strategies and inform future anti-corruption efforts.

Following the criticism, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) ordered the arrest of some officials accused of corruption. Although this action could be seen as a step in the right direction, it is largely perceived as a performative measure aimed at demonstrating concern for corruption and defusing the fallout from the removal of the Auditor General and the appointment of a less qualified individual. Despite these arrests, bribery remains widespread, illegal extortion checkpoints continue to operate, clannism is at an all-time high, nepotism is even more pervasive and applauded at the highest levels, and political cronies receive procurement contracts in exchange for kickbacks and shares.

This backdrop underscores the urgency and importance of this study. Through a comprehensive telephone survey involving a total of 1037 individuals randomly chosen from Hormuud's customer database, we aim to shed light on the current state of corruption in Somalia. The survey, conducted between 22nd December 2022, and 12th January 2023, covers Federal Member States (FMSs), Banadir Regional Administration (BRA), and the Federal

Government of Somalia (FGS) in Mogadishu but excludes Puntland and Somaliland.

The following report aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the frequency, amount, and distribution of bribe-paying across various sectors and regions.

## Methodology and Sample Selection

The methodology of this study is anchored on a comprehensive telephone-based survey approach conducted from 22nd December 2022 to 12th January 2023. We formulated and utilized an Excel sheet formula to randomly select survey participants from an estimated pool of 8 million Hormuud Telecommunications numbers, highlighting that we did not have direct access to Hormuud's proprietary database.

From the estimated pool of 8 million Hormuud numbers, 4 million were noted to be active users. Our Excel formula generated a random sample of 5,162 numbers, to which we attempted outreach. Of these, 732 did not respond, 379 declined participation or were underage, and 3,015 were unresponsive after multiple attempts or out of service. The remaining 1,037 individuals, who were of age and agreed to participate, were successfully interviewed.

With 2,147 of the attempted 5,162 numbers being active, this yields a 42% activity rate, consistent with Hormuud's own estimation that about 50% of the numbers they issue are active. This indicates that our sample is representative of Hormuud's overall customer base.

## Geographic and Demographic Coverage

Geographically, our survey extended to all regions serviced by Hormuud, including all southern Federal Member States (FMSs), the Banadir Regional Administration (BRA), and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in Mogadishu. Regions excluded from the survey were Puntland and Somaliland.

Demographically, we focused on individuals aged eighteen and above, in alignment with the demographic profile of Somalia, which shows approximately 54% (3.65 million people) within this age group. Given the high mobile phone ownership, estimated to be at least 97% among adults in our survey regions, we considered this demographic as a significant contributor to the representation of our sample.

## Confidence Level, Margin of Error, and Data Analysis

With a 95% confidence level, we can confidently assert that our survey results accurately reflect the opinions of our target demographic, with a 3% margin of error.

We meticulously analyzed the responses to discern trends and correlations pertaining to bribery in Somalia. The data was stratified by state, district, gender, and employment status. We examined the percentage of participants admitting to paying bribes, their rationales for not lodging complaints, and temporal trends in bribe payments.

## Population Distribution Considerations

The distribution of survey respondents generally aligns with the population ratios of the surveyed areas, albeit with some discrepancies. These may result from changes in population distribution since the Population Estimation Survey for Somalia (PESS) was last conducted in 2014 and the influence of economic factors. For example, the Banadir Regional Administration (BRA), encompassing the Mogadishu area, appears overrepresented compared to the Southwest State (SWS), implying that a higher proportion of individuals in Banadir have access to phones than in the Southwest State.

The following section presents data from the 30 districts that contributed the highest number of interviews. Together, these districts accounted for 867 interviews, representing 83.69% of the total interviews conducted. Notably, these districts also contributed 90.83% of all reported corruption incidents.

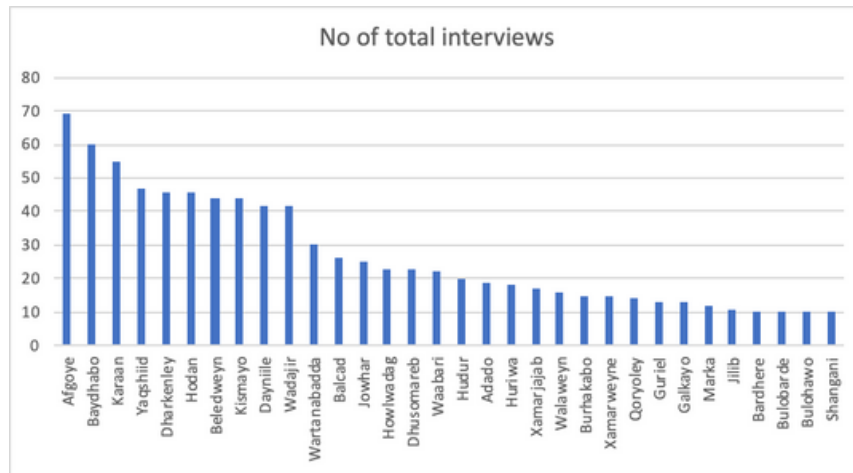


Figure 1 The diagram shows the 32 districts with the most interviews.

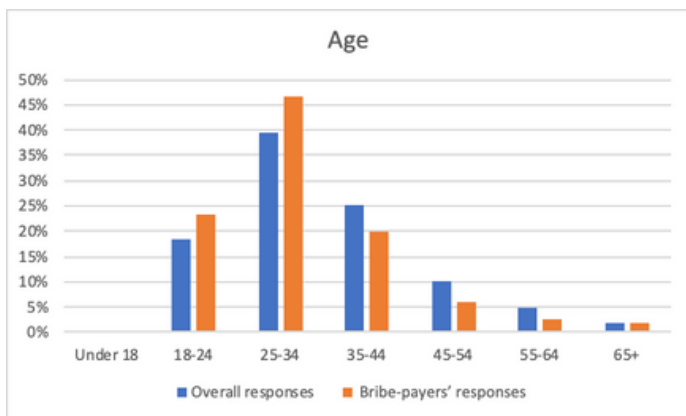


Figure 2 Overall responses and Bribe-payers' response

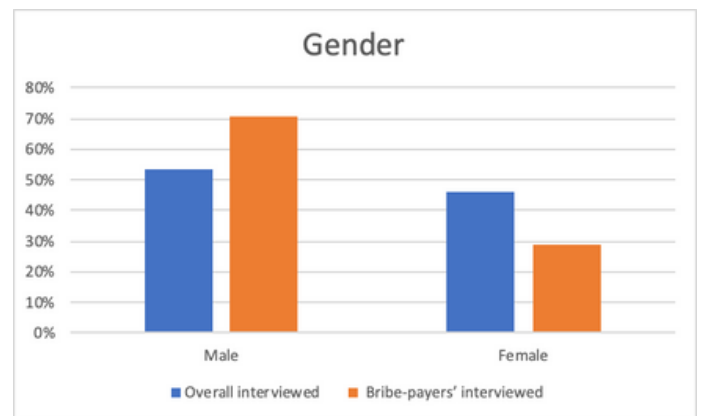


Figure 3 Overall response and Bribe-payers'

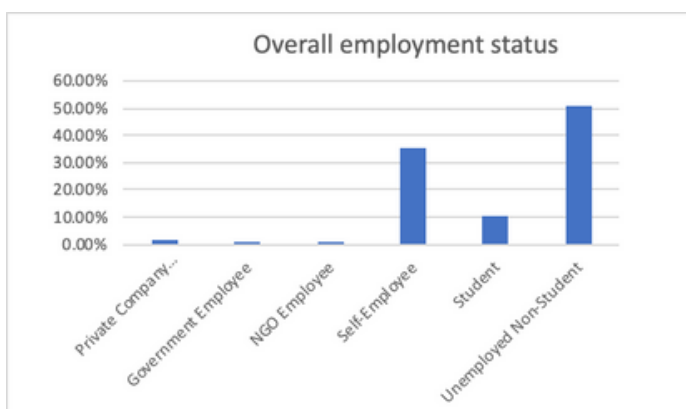


Figure 4 Overall response

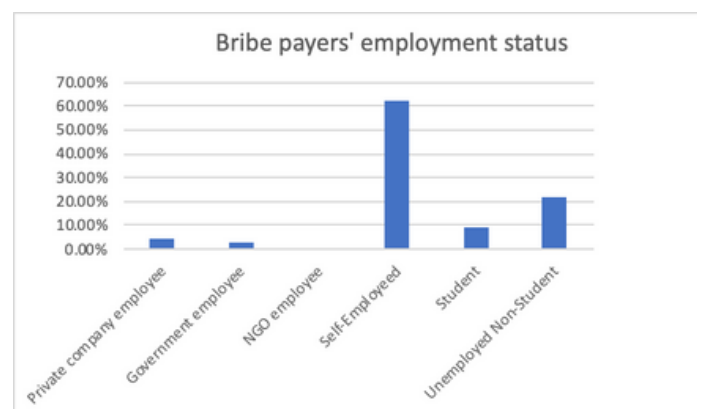


Figure 5 Bribe-payers response

There was a slight over-representation of men compared to women. Again, this appears to be because of economic reasons.



## Payment of Bribes

A total of 12% of the respondents admitted to paying a bribe in the last year, underscoring the deeply ingrained and persistent issue of corruption within the country. At first glance, this figure might appear relatively low, considering Somalia's reputation for high levels of corruption. However, when we zoom into the district level, a more worrying picture emerges. Some districts reported a significantly higher incidence of bribery, with up to a third of the people admitting to paying bribes.

These localized spikes could be attributed to several factors. For instance, higher bribe rates might be connected to the power and presence of government or security forces in these regions. In particular, the districts of Karan and Huriwaa in Mogadishu reported significantly higher instances of bribery, with more than 20% of respondents admitting to having paid a bribe. These districts are on the fringes of the city, where the state's presence is felt primarily through security forces, which are often unaccountable for their actions.

The high bribery rate in these areas may suggest a correlation between the presence of unregulated security forces and the prevalence of corruption. This lack of accountability could create an environment where bribery becomes commonplace, serving as an unofficial 'tax' paid by citizens for security or other basic services.

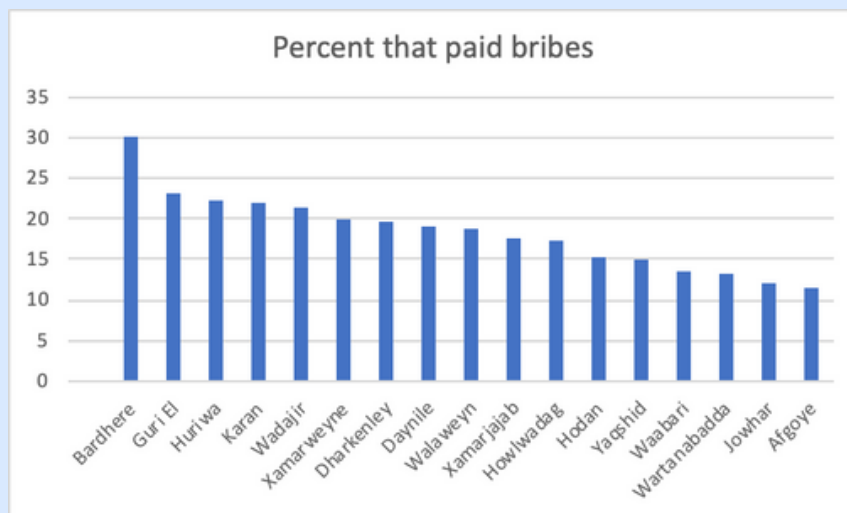


Figure 6 Highest bribe-paying districts

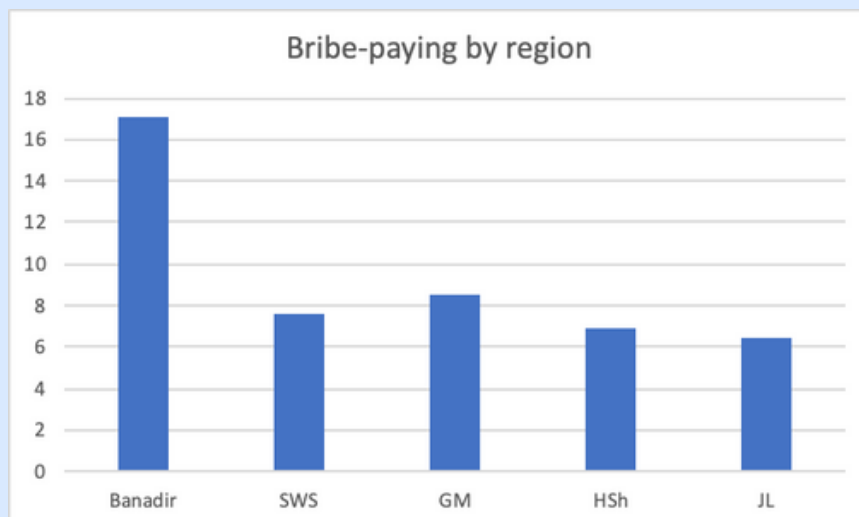


Figure 7 Percent that paid a bribe by region



## Bribe-Takers

As seen in the survey, the distribution of bribe-taking among different entities presents a deeply concerning pattern. The data suggest a direct relationship between the power and presence of an entity across the country and its involvement in bribe-taking. The entities with the most substantial reach and influence were found to be the most involved in corrupt practices.

Strikingly, approximately 44% of bribes were taken by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) security forces: the Somali Police Force alone was responsible for 33% of all bribe-taking. As entities responsible for maintaining law and order, this high percentage raises critical questions about the integrity of these forces and the impact of their actions on public trust.

Security forces are typically pervasive across the country, and their extensive interaction with the public offers numerous opportunities for corruption. This corruption can take many forms, from extorting bribes at checkpoints to demanding illegal fees for providing routine services.

Ultimately, the survey data highlights an urgent need for thorough reforms within the FGS security forces and improved accountability mechanisms to reduce corruption. Anti-corruption strategies should focus on creating strong institutional safeguards, promoting transparency, and cultivating a culture of integrity within these forces. They also need to ensure that individuals found guilty of corruption face appropriate punitive measures, which would serve to deter others from engaging in similar activities.

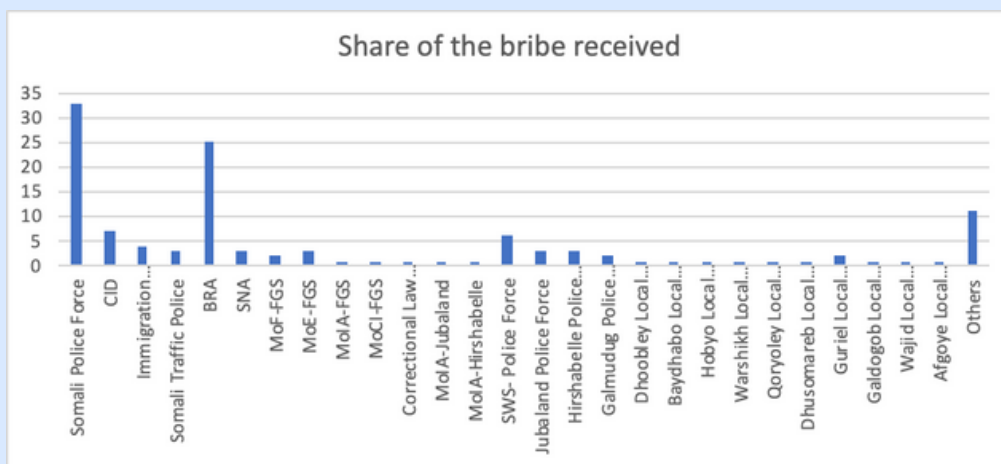


Figure 8 Share of each entity in bribe-taking

## Complaints About Bribery

A significant issue revealed in our survey pertains to the low levels of complaints lodged following instances of bribery. The data suggests a startling trend: more than 93% of respondents who paid a bribe admitted that they did not file any complaint about the bribe they were coerced into paying.

A deeper analysis of the reasons behind this trend unveils a two-pronged issue. Firstly, respondents conveyed a strong lack of awareness regarding the correct avenues for lodging such complaints. Specifically, over 80% of these respondents disclosed that they were unaware of where or how they could report bribery incidents.

Secondly, a notable concern is the perceived lack of action taken against reported instances of bribery. Respondents voiced fears that reporting such incidents would not lead to any meaningful repercussions against the culprits. This perceived futility in reporting, coupled with a lack of knowledge about complaint procedures, contributes to the low reporting rates of bribery incidents.

This reveals a serious problem in the anti-corruption framework in the regions surveyed. The lack of clear and accessible reporting mechanisms and doubts about the effectiveness of legal actions against bribery significantly impedes efforts to tackle corruption. These issues highlight the need for systemic changes that assure residents of their ability to report corruption safely and the assurance that their complaints will be addressed effectively.

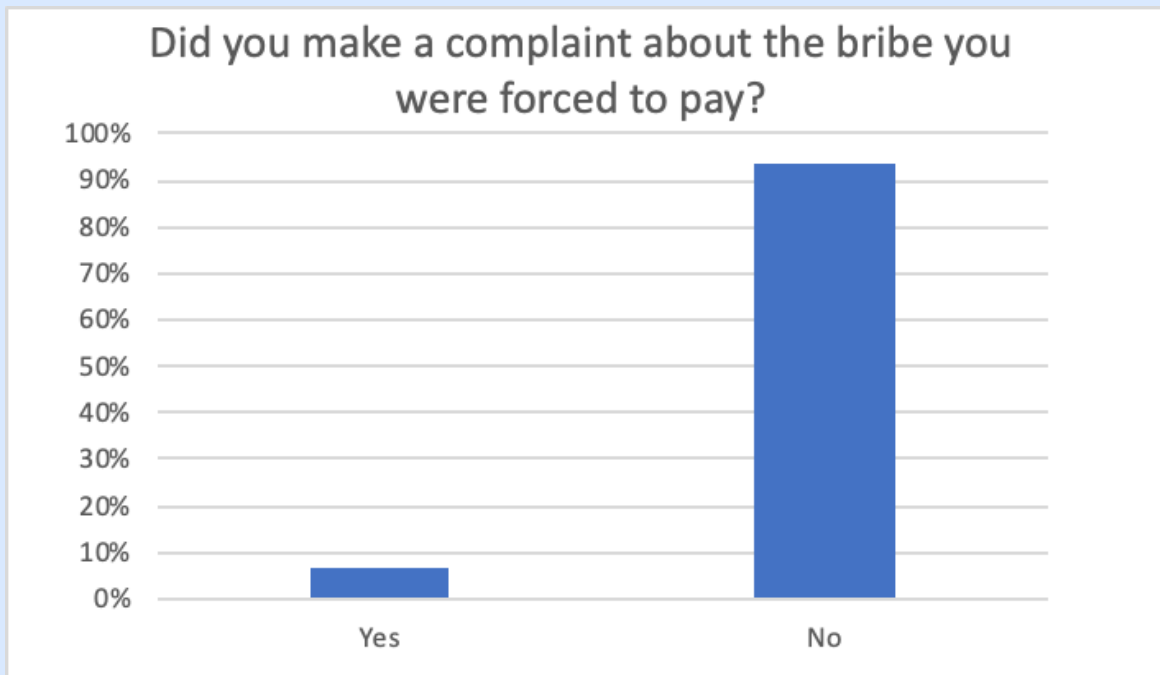


Figure 9 Bribe-payers 'response

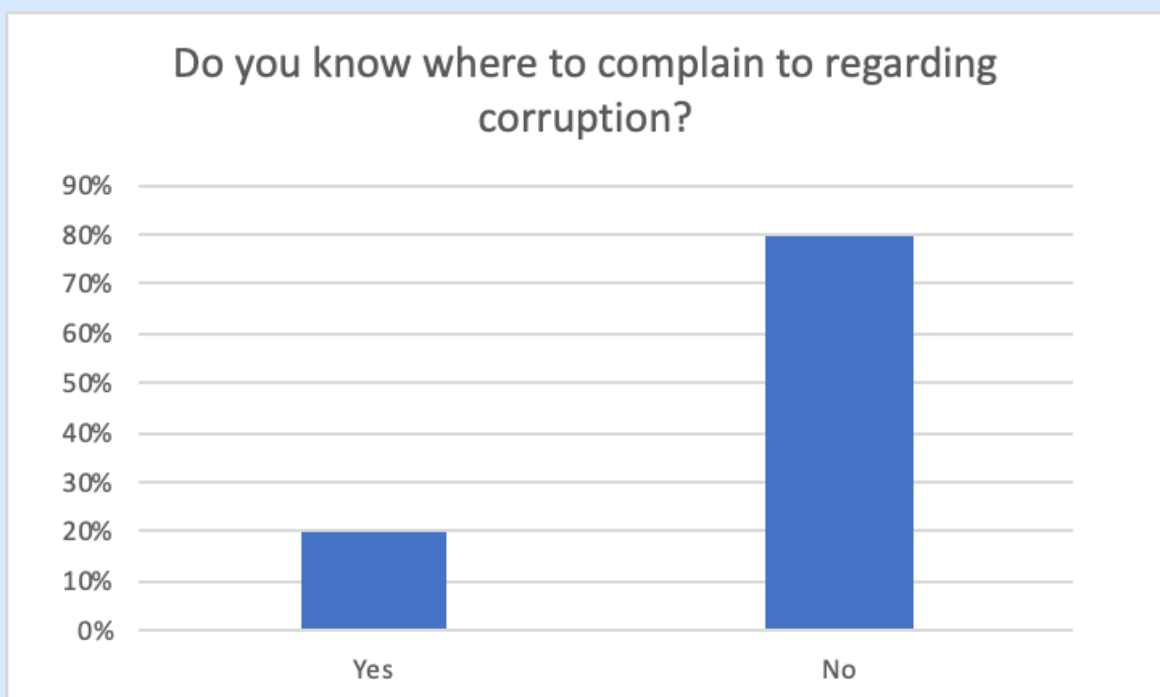


Figure 10 Bribe-payers response

## Trend in Bribe Payments

An alarming trend noted in the data is the persistence and apparent growth of bribery practices. Over 90% of respondents who had paid a bribe indicated that the frequency of bribe requests either remained the same as the previous year or increased.

This trend signals a concerning lack of progress in curbing corruption practices. Persistent or growing bribery rates suggest that the barely existing anti-corruption measures are not effectively deterring corrupt practices. It indicates a deeply embedded culture of corruption that resists reform efforts or a lack of adequate enforcement or punitive actions against those found guilty of corruption.

This pattern of unchanging or increasing bribe payments underlines the urgency of addressing corruption at multiple levels. Policymakers need to reassess and intensify their anti-corruption strategies, implementing a comprehensive approach that not only includes stricter law enforcement but also focuses on social and economic reforms, educational initiatives, and transparency in government procedures.

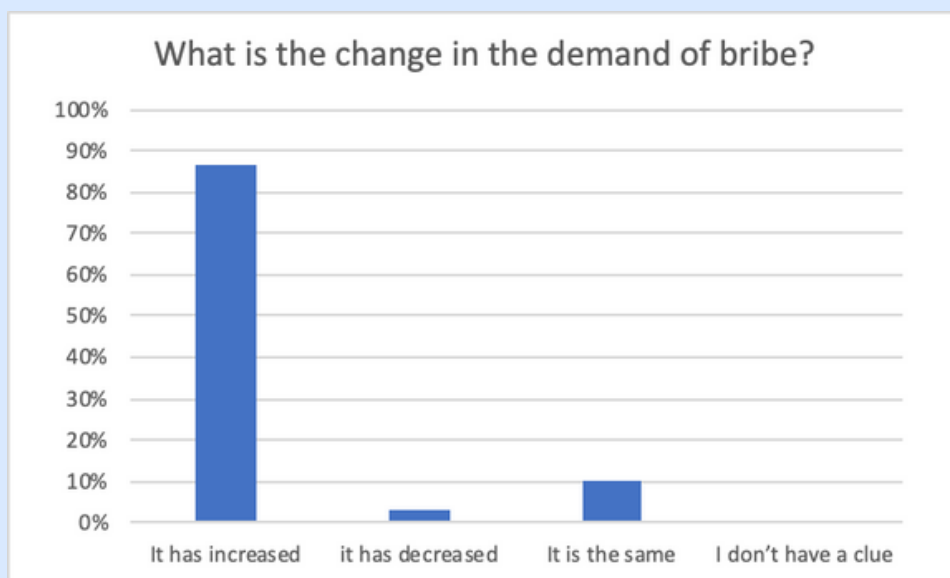


Figure 11 Bribe-payers' response

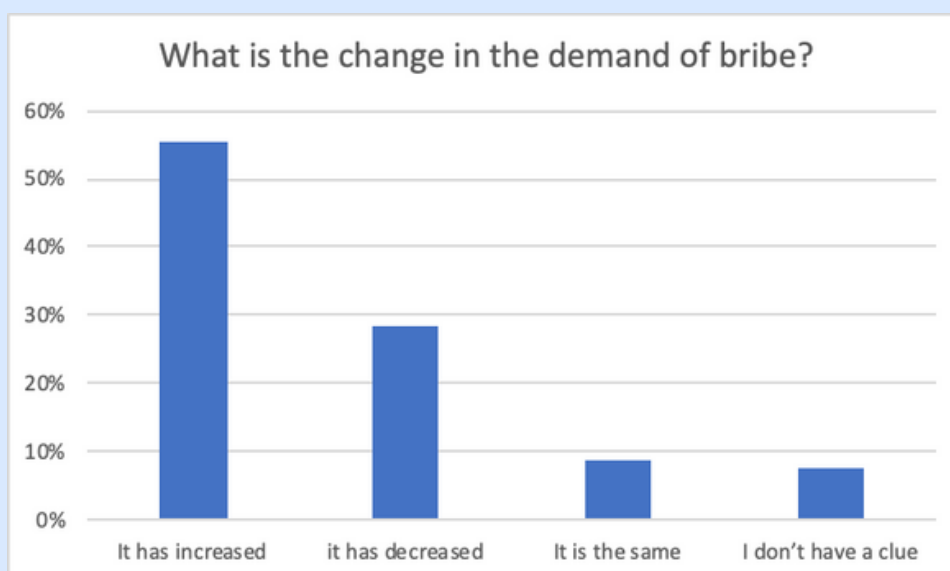


Figure 12 Overall response

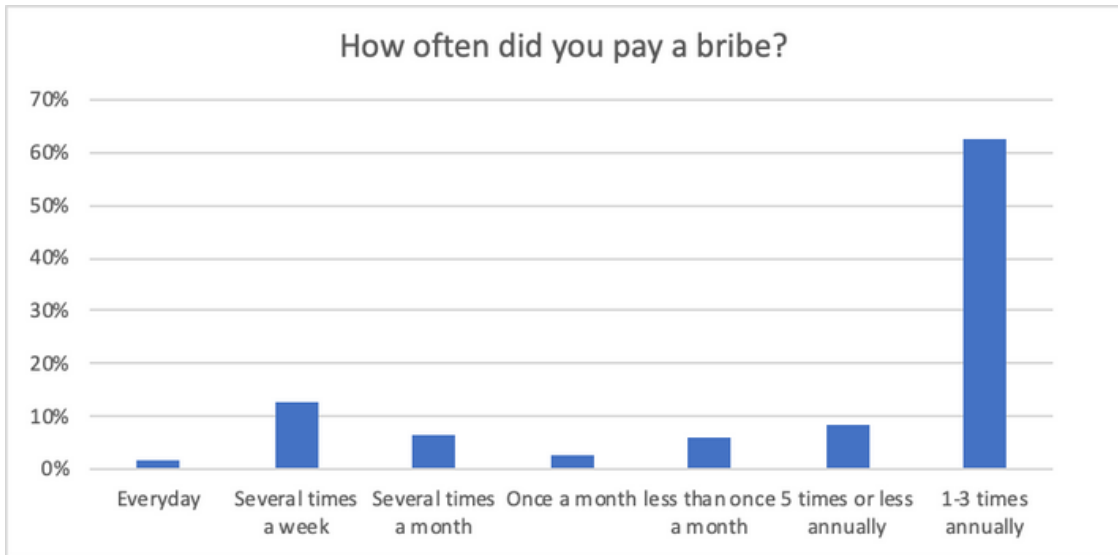


Figure 13 Frequency in bribe payments

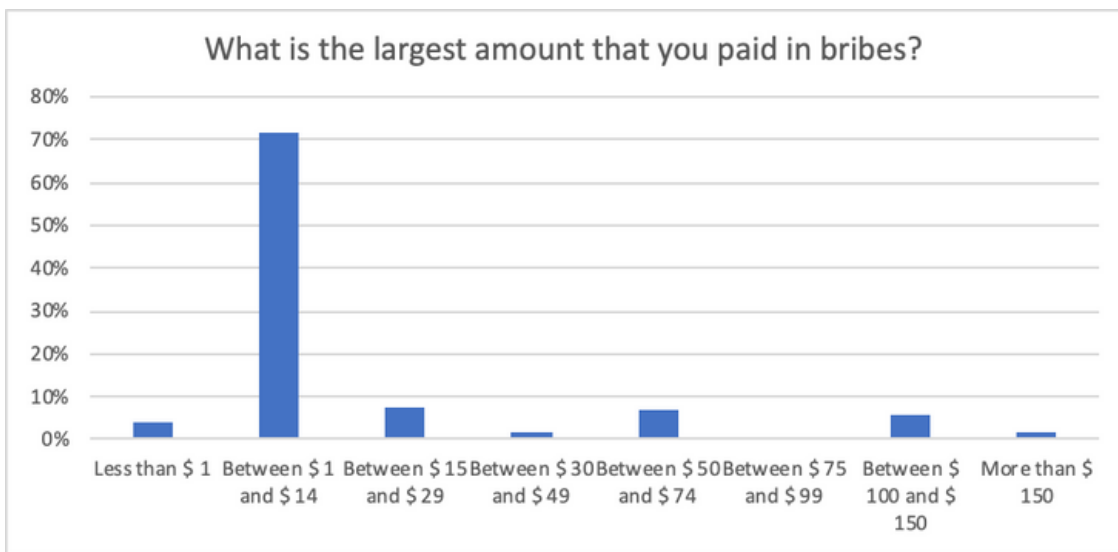


Figure 14 Largest amounts paid

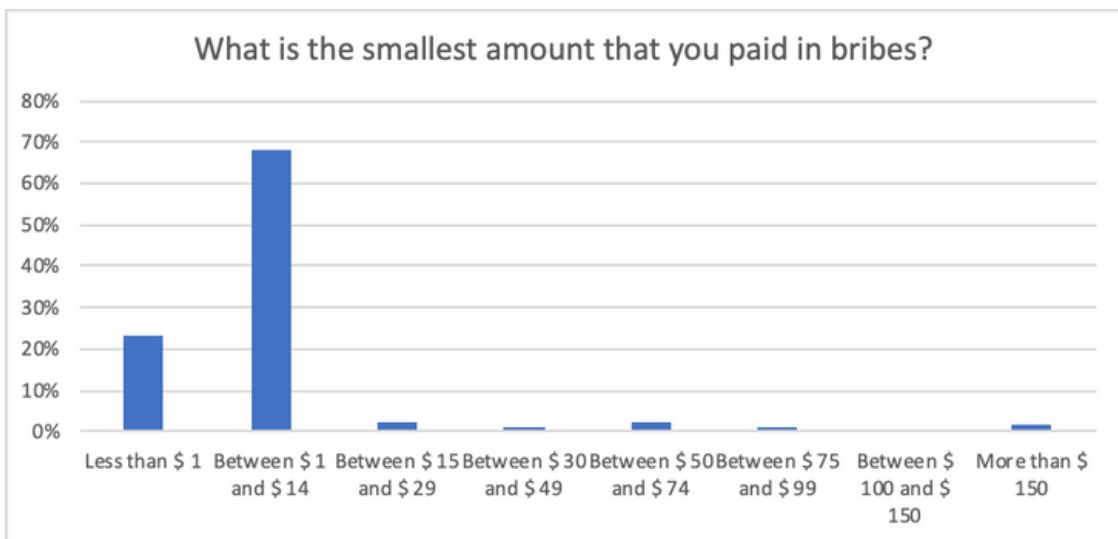


Figure 15 Smallest amounts paid

## Regional Analysis of Bribe Payments

The data reveals a distinct regional disparity in the frequency of bribe payments. Specifically, Banadir and the Southwest State (SWS) exhibited the highest rates of bribe-paying among the regions studied. This pattern can be attributed to various socio-economic and political factors unique to these regions.

Banadir, being the largest economy, inherently hosts a multitude of financial transactions and interactions between businesses, government, and individuals. These interactions offer numerous opportunities for corruption to occur, particularly where regulatory oversight is insufficient or where individuals can exploit their position for personal gain.

Similarly, SWS, having the largest population and significant aid recipients, naturally involves substantial public interactions and transactions. Notably, Lower Shabelle, which is connected to the Banadir economy, saw higher levels of corruption. Such interactions could include the distribution of aid, public services, and resources related to the region's vast farmlands. Where governance and oversight are weak, these interactions can become breeding grounds for corrupt practices.

Moreover, the heavy security presence in both Banadir and SWS could contribute to higher bribery rates. As noted earlier, security forces represented a significant proportion of bribe-takers, likely due to their pervasive presence and frequent interactions with the public.

More granularly, the data shows that the top 22 bribe-paying districts represent 87.5% of all bribe-payers in the country. This concentration of bribe-payers in specific districts could suggest localized hotspots of corruption, which might be linked to specific institutions, practices, or individuals in these areas. Identifying these hotspots is a critical first step towards targeted anti-corruption interventions.

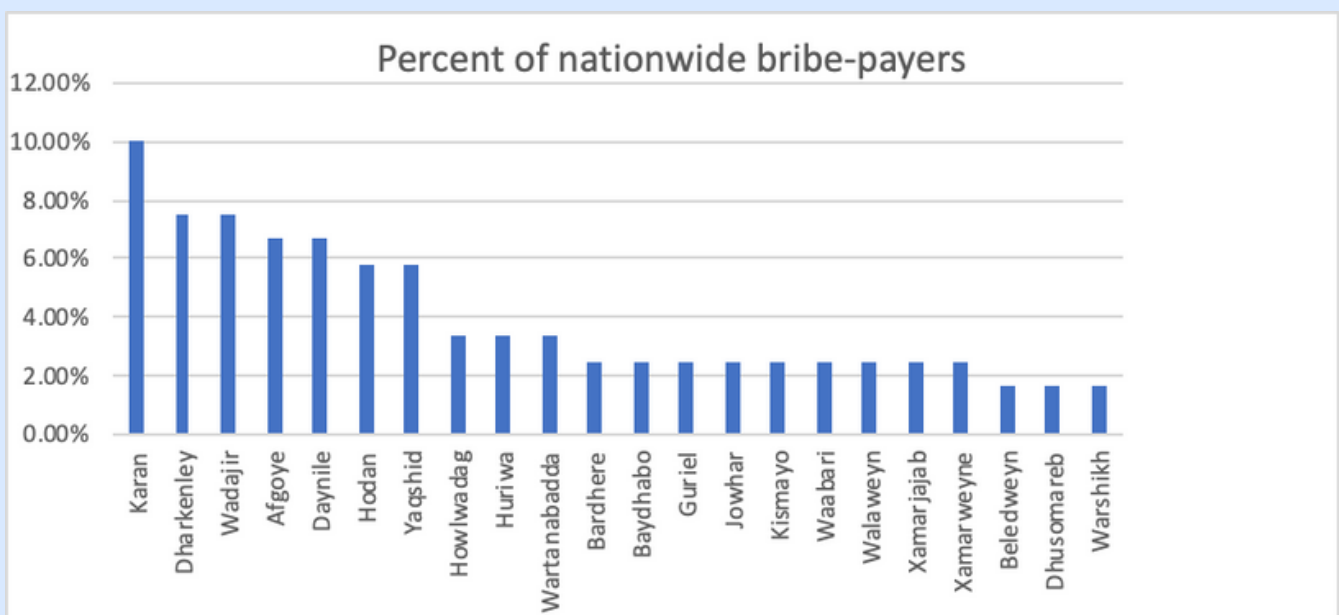


Figure 16 District share of nationwide briber payers

As evident from the above figures, smaller districts that have only a few reports tend to show a higher rate of bribe-payers. For example, in a district with only one bribe-payment report, the bribe-payment rate could misleadingly appear as 100%. Given that the sample size for such districts is too small, we have chosen to disregard these rates as they may not accurately reflect the overall situation.

## South West State

Most reports from SWS are from its main cities of Afgoye and Baidoa.

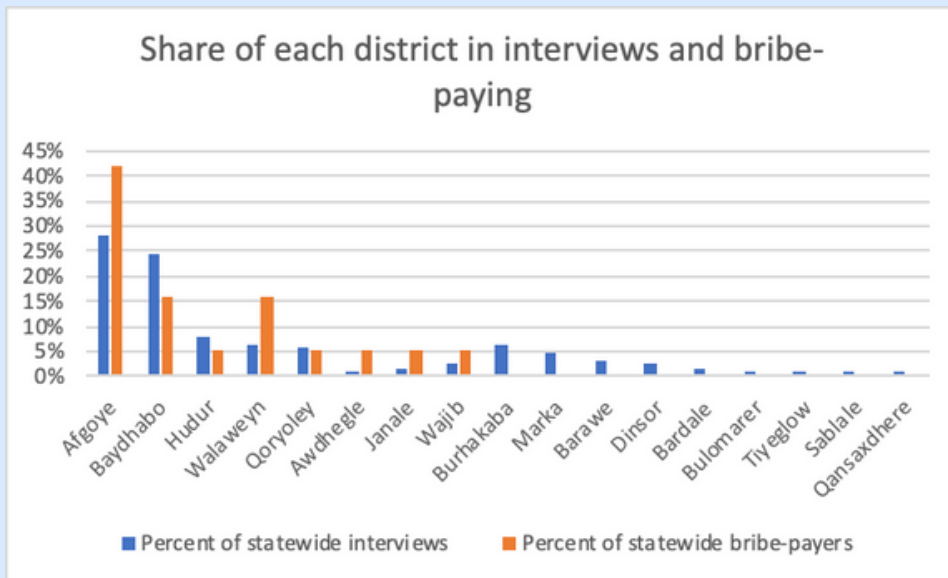


Figure 18 Southwest state interviews and bribery reports

## Jubaland State

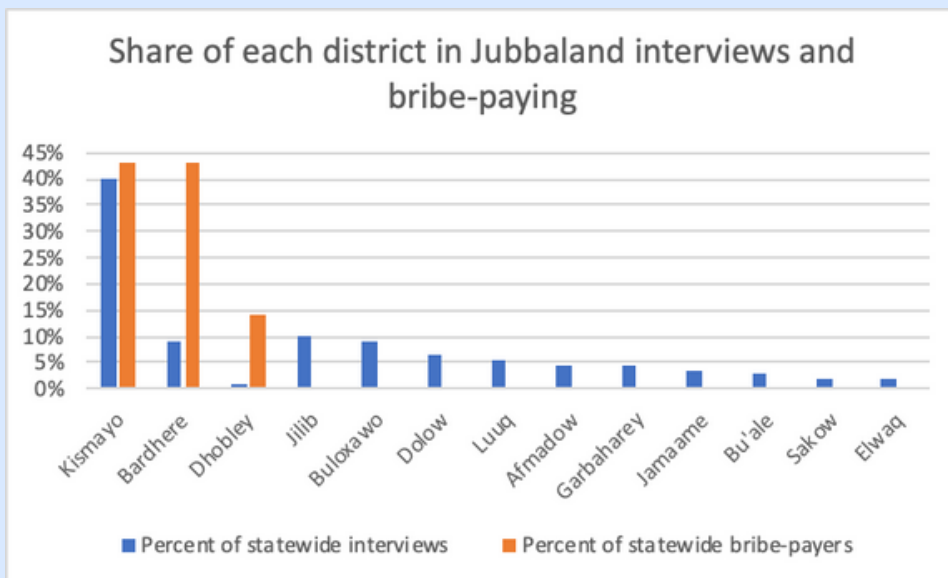


Figure 19 Jubbaland state interviews and bribery reports

## HirShabelle and Galmudug

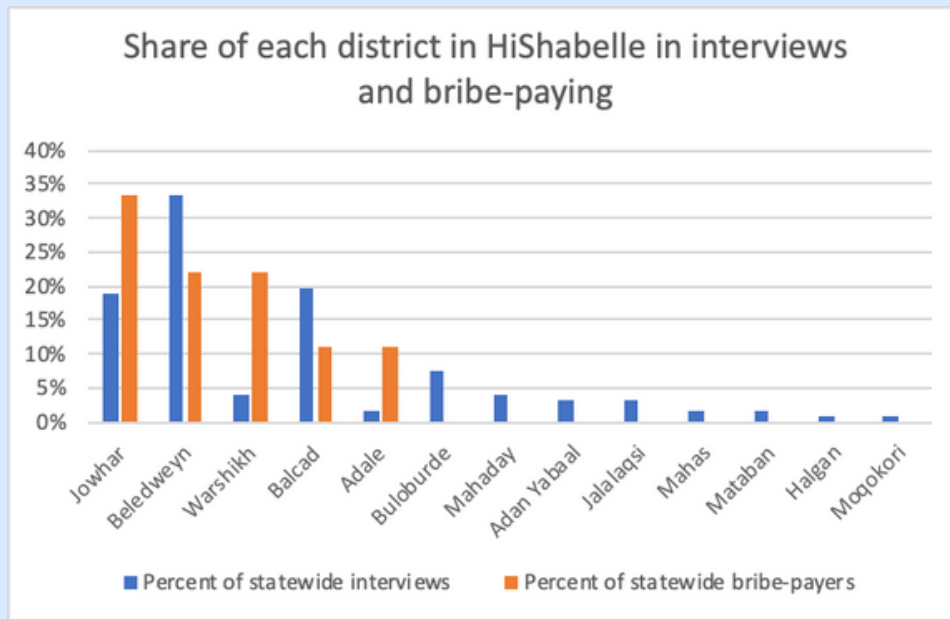


Figure 20 HirShabelle state interviews and bribery reports

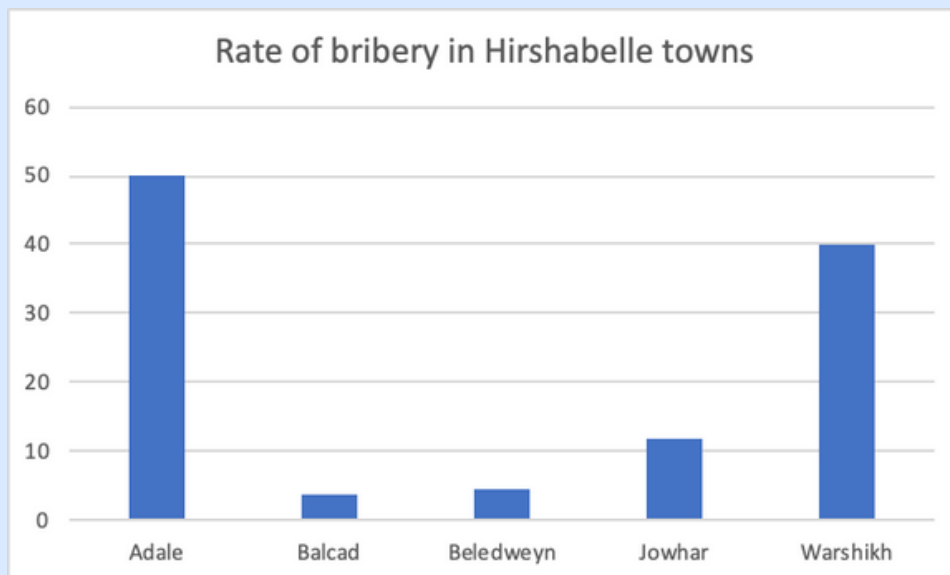


Figure 21 Bribe-paying rate in Hirshabelle districts: biased towards smaller samples.

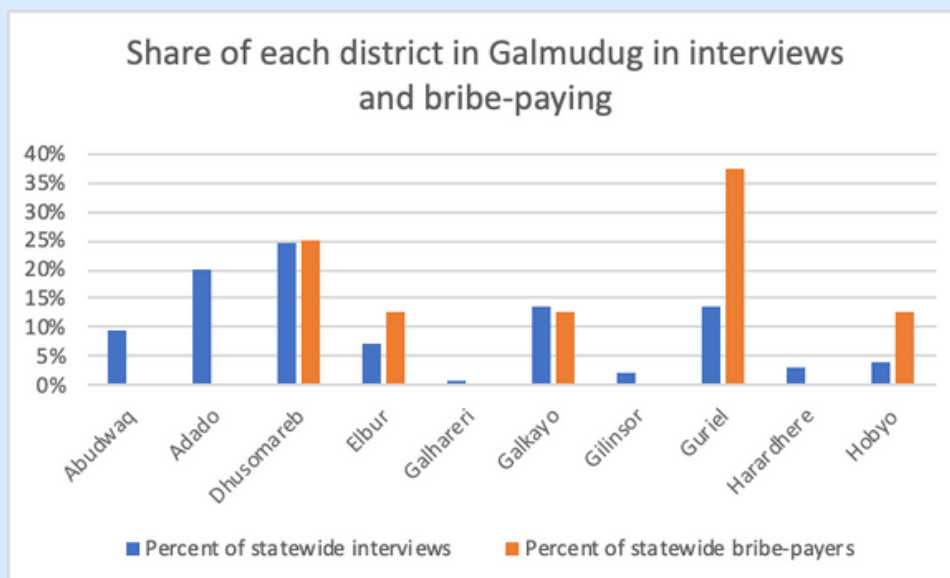


Figure 22 Galmudug state interviews and bribery reports



# Banadir

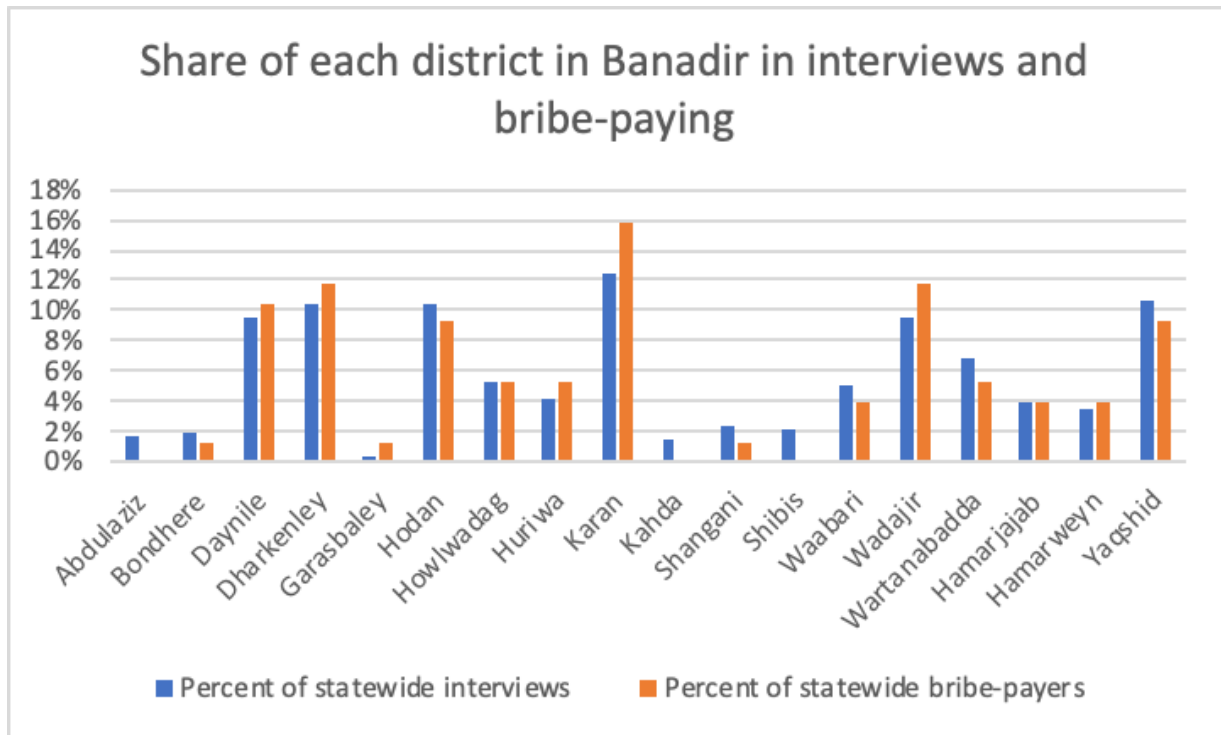


Figure 23 Banadir interviews and bribery reports

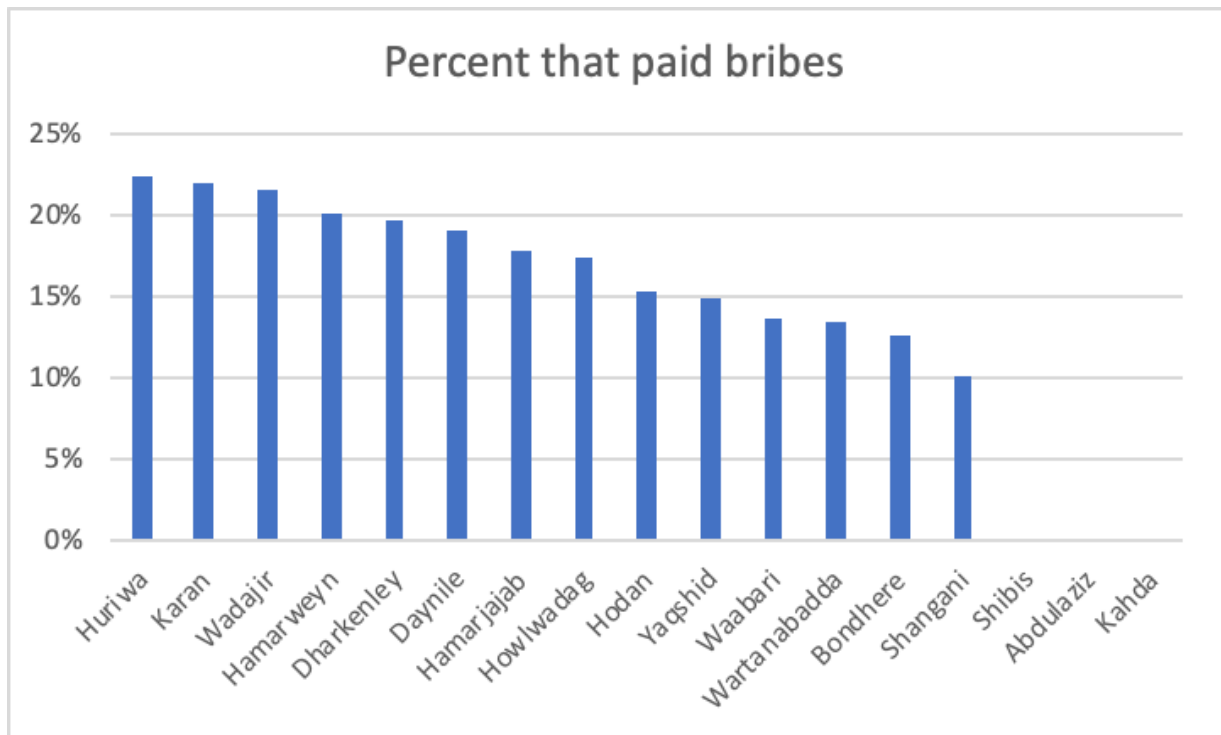


Figure 24 Bribe-paying by districts in Banadir

From the above figure, we excluded Garasbaley because of the small sample we got.

# Conclusion

The alarming figures unveiled in this study provide a distressing snapshot of the rampant corruption permeating multiple layers of Somalia's institutions and society. From the overall 12% of respondents admitting to having paid a bribe in the past year to the shocking revelation of over 20% bribery incidence in the districts of Karan and Huriwaa, the impact of corruption on Somali citizens' lives is profound and far-reaching.

These findings underline the entrenched corruption facilitated by a lack of accountability, particularly within the security forces operating in fringe districts. However, the incidence of corruption goes beyond just these pockets, with almost half of the bribes taken by security forces spread across the nation.

Furthermore, the survey exposes a deeply concerning lack of action on corruption complaints. A staggering 93% of those who paid a bribe did not lodge a complaint, primarily due to a lack of awareness about the procedures or a deeply ingrained belief that no meaningful action would result from their complaint. This suggests a breakdown of trust in the system and a perceived futility in pushing for justice.

The recent political developments, specifically the removal of the Auditor General and replacement with a politically connected individual, have heightened concerns over the Federal Government of Somalia's commitment to tackling corruption. Such actions undermine public trust and risk derailing international aid and support, which are critical for Somalia's development and stability.

In light of these revelations, it becomes imperative to confront this systemic issue head-on. The Somali government must exhibit a genuine and sustained commitment to reducing corruption, starting with restoring faith in the accountability of key institutions, such as the Auditor General's office. Reform within the security forces is a must, with a clear need for improved accountability mechanisms, integrity-building, and punitive measures against those involved in corruption. Equally important is a broad-based effort to raise public awareness about the complaint mechanisms and ensure their effective functioning to help restore citizens' faith in justice.

These findings underline the urgency of a multi-faceted, coordinated response to combat corruption. This would involve not just policy and institutional reforms but also an overhaul of attitudes and behaviours to foster a culture of integrity and accountability. The road ahead is challenging, but the stakes are high. Ignoring corruption or treating it as a norm would continue to undermine Somalia's prospects for peace, stability, and development. The time for action is now.

**marqaati**

---

MOGADISHU  
[www.marqaati.org](http://www.marqaati.org)