



MONITORING CORRUPTION IN ALBANIA 2025



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List of acronyms

ACER	Albanian Center for Economic Research
CESS	Center for Economic and Social Studies
CMS	Corruption Monitoring System
CSD	Center for the Study of Democracy
CSDG	Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance
IDM	Institute for Democracy and Mediation
HIDAACI	The High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest
CSO	Civil Society Organization
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
SELDI	Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity
SPAK	Special Anti-Corruption Structure

1. Executive Summary

Corruption is hindering Albania's faster progress toward European Union membership.

The 2025 Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) **indicates that corruption remains a serious obstacle to Albania's advancement toward the EU.** However, the growing public confidence in the success of anti-corruption efforts shows that positive change is taking place across the country. The research also reveals that corruption continues to pose a major threat to the normal functioning of public administration. It obstructs the reduction of public service costs and limits decision-making in conditions of conflict of interest.

The 2025 CMS data for Albania show that the proportion of citizens who report having paid a bribe, either directly or indirectly, to obtain services from public officials remains high (**59% of respondents**). This represents an increase of around 19 percentage points compared to 2023, signaling a deterioration of the situation. The pressure indicator follows the same upward trend: **53.9% of respondents stated that they had been asked for a bribe** a higher level than in 2021. These findings suggest that citizens' exposure to corrupt pressure from the administration remains generally high. Meanwhile, it is a positive sign that **the share of citizens who report having paid a bribe in cash**, gifts, or favors only after being directly asked by public officials **has significantly decreased** compared to CMS 2023 (26.5% in 2025 versus 44% in 2023).

The activity of SPAK in sanctioning corruption at the highest political levels **has increased public confidence in the success of the anti-corruption fight in Albania.** Civil society supports SPAK's work, provides its expertise, and remains actively engaged in raising public awareness in the fight against corruption.

From a normative perspective, the majority of citizens remain opposed to corruption. **69% of respondents state that they do not consider it acceptable** for members of parliament, the government, or public administration officials to receive gifts, money, or favors in exchange for a service. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points compared to 2023. Conversely, **only 31% of citizens consider bribery acceptable**, compared to **35% in 2023**, indicating a decline in the social normalization of corruption.

Based on the results of ACER's survey, the 2025 data show a noticeable positive shift compared to previous years, with **only 56% of respondents identifying themselves as sensitive to corruption.** Meanwhile, 18% of citizens state that they are completely insensitive to corruption. This finding is particularly significant given that, traditionally, bribery has been perceived as a common practice even for basic services.

The justice reform in Albania has reduced the negative perception of the components of the judicial system; however, delays in accessing related services remain problematic due to limited personnel and a large volume of legacy cases. In assessing citizens' perceptions of corruption across different professional groups, the 2025 CMS shows a shift in the categories of professions identified as "most corrupt" in CMS 2023. Specifically, the perception has moved from **judges, customs officers, public prosecutors**, court officials, and political leaders **toward tax officials and university professors.** Meanwhile, the groups perceived as least corrupt remain

the same as in previous years (journalists and municipal councilors), maintaining stability in public attitudes toward these actors.

Despite the achievements made so far in the fight against corruption, Albanian society remains pessimistic about the future, and confidence in the success of this fight has seen only a modest increase over the past two years. The 2025 data show that citizens display high levels of pessimism: **77% believe that the current corruption situation will remain unchanged**, while **only 22% hope for a future with lower levels of corruption**. This trend is consistent with findings from previous years and highlights a clear gap between individual attitudes and institutional developments. While at the individual level citizens are showing an increasingly lower tendency to accept corruption as a social norm, institutional actions are still perceived as insufficient to address public expectations and interests.

The deepening of reforms undertaken in the context of Albania's European Union accession is expected to curb corruption in the country. Corruption remains a serious threat to Albania's socio-economic development and is a key factor in the weakening of democracy, the deterioration of accountability, and the violation of human rights. **Progress in the fight against corruption in Albania remains a major long-term priority**, which is heavily conditioned by the institutional commitment of state agencies beyond SPAK. This is also essential to counter authoritarian tendencies in governance, prevent the country's depletion, and ensure sustainable development. In this context, the 2025 CMS highlights the need to increase the engagement of civil society organizations and to undertake concrete joint actions to address the growing sophistication of corruption in Albania.

2. Introduction

Corruption remains one of the greatest challenges for modern societies, negatively affecting governance, economic development, and social cohesion. It is often defined as the **abuse of entrusted power for private gain**, but in practice, it manifests in far more complex forms, ranging from small-scale bribes to state capture and the distortion of public policies. International reports from Transparency International, the World Bank, and the European Commission indicate that corruption is not merely a moral or legal problem, but a complex phenomenon that undermines fair competition, hinders investment, and erodes citizens' trust in institutions.

Its nature is both structural and multifaceted. Corruption is often linked to weak institutions, lack of transparency and accountability, and the absence of strong checks and balances. In countries with fragile institutions, it becomes a vicious cycle: the more widespread it is, the more it undermines the foundations of the rule of law, making it difficult to separate public interest from private gain. For this reason, measuring and monitoring corruption is not a simple task; it requires a combination of quantitative data and analyses of perceptions, behaviors, and social practices that accompany it.

At the global level, efforts to combat corruption have taken various forms, ranging from national anti-corruption strategies and institutional reforms to international monitoring mechanisms and political pressure. However, results have often been uneven. Experience shows that the most visible successes are achieved where **the fight against corruption goes beyond legal frameworks** and becomes a comprehensive process engaging civil society, the media, businesses, and citizens themselves. This demonstrates that corruption is not merely a matter of sanctions, but a phenomenon that requires both cultural and institutional transformation.

In this context, Albania represents a particularly significant case study. Recent reports from the European Commission emphasize that corruption remains a major concern for Albanian citizens and one of the primary obstacles to the European integration process. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Albania among the most affected countries in the region, while the Western Balkans Barometer of the Regional Cooperation Council shows that Albanian citizens' perception of corruption prevalence is the highest in the Western Balkans. These findings not only highlight the scale of the phenomenon but also underscore its role as a factor influencing public trust and how citizens perceive a functioning democracy.

Although the reforms undertaken, such as the Justice Reform and the establishment of new institutions like SPAK and the National Bureau of Investigation, have created high expectations, their concrete effects are still limited in public perception. Many citizens continue to believe that corruption is widespread at the highest levels of politics and public administration, fueling a sense of a **"culture of impunity."** This situation makes systematic and impartial monitoring of the phenomenon essential, as well as the development of evidence-based policies and accurate measurements that can help break this cycle.

3. Corruption Monitoring System (CMS)

Since 2001, SELDI has implemented the Corruption Monitoring System (CMS), a unique tool for measuring and analyzing corruption in the region, including Albania. The methodology, developed by the Center for the Study of Democracy in Bulgaria, has been recognized by the European Union as one of the most effective approaches for monitoring corruption. Its innovation lies in focusing on measuring citizens' real experiences as "victims" of corrupt practices, thus complementing traditional perception-based approaches.

The CMS ensures comparability across countries and tracks long-term trends in corruption. It combines indicators of individuals' actual involvement in corrupt transactions, their perceptions of officials' behavior, and citizens' attitudes and willingness to resist corrupt practices. To this end, the system uses nationally and internationally validated indicators, ensuring methodological reliability and consistency.

In Albania, to generate these indicators, a national survey was conducted with a representative sample of 1,000 citizens. The sample distribution and the number of interviews **were determined in proportion to the current population of each area of the country**, ensuring a representation as close as possible to the structure of the Albanian population. This sample allows for the generalization of results to the entire population. The survey has been conducted at regular intervals, following the same methodology, in 2001, 2002, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025, making it possible to perform longitudinal comparisons and identify key trends.

The CMS methodology (illustrated in Figure 1) is built around a set of core indicators, which are divided into two main areas: direct experience with administrative corruption and citizens' behavior toward corruption.¹

1. Experience with Administrative Corruption

This dimension measures citizens' actual contact with corrupt practices and includes two indicators:

- **Corruption Pressure** – situations in which a public official requests an informal payment from a citizen, either directly or implicitly, suggesting that the resolution of the issue depends on such a reward.
- **Involvement in Corruption** – instances where citizens have agreed to make informal payments. This indicator divides respondents into two categories: those who have paid at least once during the past year and those who have had no such experience.

2. Behavior Toward Corruption

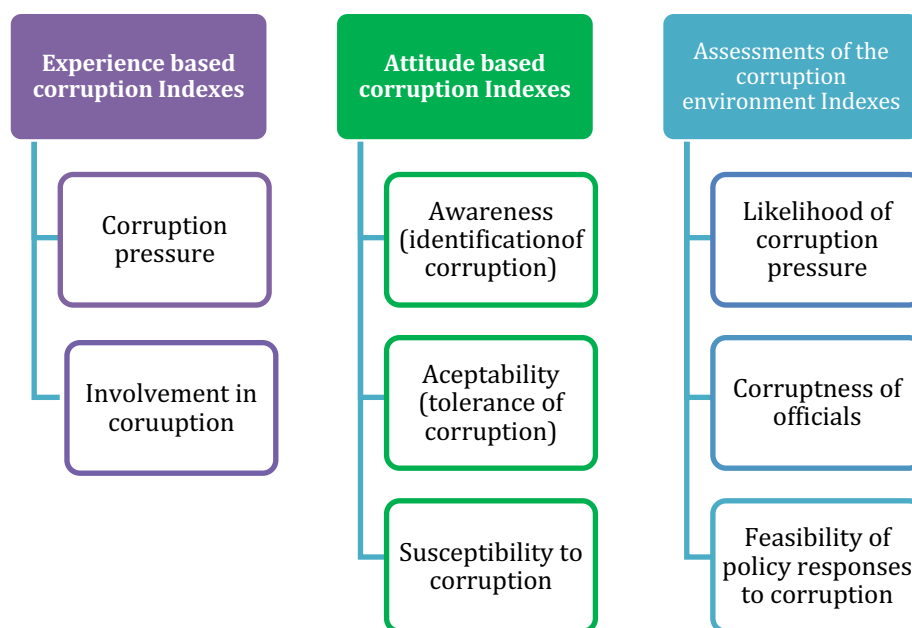
This area analyzes citizens' attitudes, knowledge, and reactions to corruption through three indicators:

- **Awareness of Corruption** – measures citizens' ability to identify corrupt practices, categorizing them into high, moderate, or low levels of awareness.
- **Acceptability of Corruption** – assesses the extent to which citizens view the receipt of gifts, money, or favors by public officials in exchange for services as justifiable.

¹ The CMS is explained in more detail in [CMS Methodology - SELDI](#)

- **Sensitivity to Corruption** – examines citizens’ responses to hypothetical situations:
 - whether, as public officials, they would accept or refuse an offered bribe, and
 - whether, as citizens, they would give a bribe when requested to resolve an important issue. Refusal of a bribe in both cases indicates complete intolerance toward corruption; acceptance in both scenarios reflects high sensitivity, while a mixed response accepting in one case but not the other indicates a partial or ambivalent behavior.

Figure 1. Corruption assessment indicators from the Corruption Monitoring System



Citizens’ perceptions of corruption are measured through three main indicators:

- **Corruption Pressure Expectation** – measures citizens’ expectations regarding the risk of encountering requests for informal payments when interacting with public administration. This indicator reflects perceptions of the overall corrupt environment.
- **Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Policies** – assesses citizens’ opinions on the effectiveness of political and governmental measures against corruption. This indicator also serves to gauge potential public support for anti-corruption policies.
- **Corruption of Public Officials** – measures citizens’ perceptions of the level of corruption among different groups of public officials. This indicator helps identify the sectors and institutions perceived as most affected by corruption.

In addition to these elements, the analysis also includes a set of socio-economic questions, which serve to complement the overall picture of citizens’ perceived reality. These additional dimensions help ensure that the findings better reflect the everyday social context, making the assessment more comprehensive and comparable with other existing studies.

4. Levels of Corruption in Albania

4.1 Sanctions related to corruption

In 2024, Albania recorded a significant improvement in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)², reaching 42 points. This result comes after a prolonged five-year period during which the perceived level of corruption remained stable within the 36–37 point range. Comparative analyses are typically conducted against Western Balkan countries, which share similar economic profiles and the same strategic objective of European integration. In this context, **Albania ranks four points above the regional** average of 38 points. However, despite this progress, the gap with the European Union average remains considerable, as the latter currently stands at around 64 points.

Annual reports from the Ministry of Justice (2004–2024)³ show that the number of individuals convicted of abuse of office in public institutions has declined significantly since 2017, reaching very low levels over the past three years. The 2024 data confirm this trend, with only 12 individuals convicted of this criminal offense by the Courts of First Instance. In comparison, 2016 represents a historical peak, with 179 individuals convicted of abuse of office.

At first glance, this decrease could be interpreted as an improvement in the institutional framework and a reduction in cases of corruption within public administration. However, a deeper analysis suggests that the decline in convictions does not necessarily correspond to a lower level of corruption, but often reflects changes in the legal classification of the offense. Following the justice reform and the establishment of the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), **there has been a shift in institutional focus**. SPAK has prioritized in-depth investigations and the prosecution of high-level corruption cases, moving away from pursuing simpler cases. For the latter, alternative measures such as suspensions, disciplinary sanctions, or administrative actions are often applied, which do not result in criminal convictions.

According to SPAK's 2024 Annual Report, a total of 33 former high-ranking officials were under investigation, two of whom were involved in two separate proceedings each. Among this group, 19 individuals were referred for trial, representing 52.9% of the cases, while final judgments were issued for 10 high-ranking public officials. These figures illustrate a clear shift in institutional focus and an intensification of efforts to address corruption and organized crime at the highest levels of public administration.⁴

The total cases of corruption-related convictions are categorized into five main areas:

- Corruption in the public sector⁵,
- Conflict of interest and asset declaration,
- High-level corruption
- Corruption in the judicial system

² [Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 - Transparency.org](https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi)

³ Ministry of Justice, Statistical Yearbook: <https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/statistika/>

⁴ <https://spak.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Raporti-vjetor-SPAK-2024.pdf>

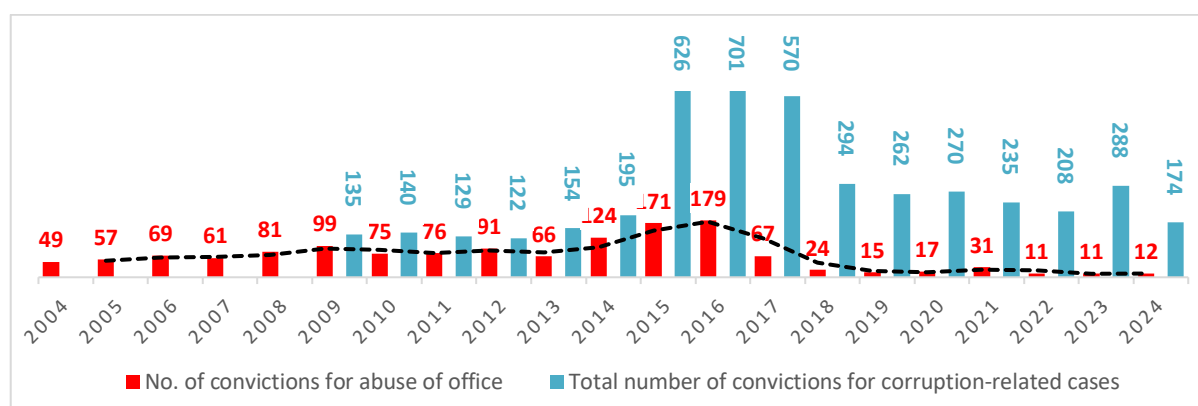
⁵ This category also includes the criminal offense of abuse of office (Article 248).

– Corruption in the private sector and forgery⁶

The total number of individuals convicted for corruption is shown in the figure below in blue. During 2015, 2016, and 2017, the number of convictions nearly tripled compared to previous years, reflecting an intensification of judicial activity and possibly a stronger political will to address the phenomenon. However, after 2018, this number declined significantly and **stabilized at much lower levels by 2024**.

This change is not merely a quantitative indicator but raises questions about how institutions function and how corrupt acts are classified. Improvements in the rule of law and justice reforms may have contributed to the reduction in cases, but an equally important factor is the shift in institutional focus toward more severe and complex cases.⁷ After 2018, the decline in the number of corruption convictions coincided with the establishment of new institutions under the justice reform. These institutions have prioritized criminal prosecution of high-profile cases, shifting the focus from minor administrative corruption to senior officials and phenomena related to state capture. This reorientation has resulted in fewer court decisions overall, but with greater political and social significance, explaining why the decline in statistics should not be interpreted as a reduction in the phenomenon itself, but rather as a reflection of a fundamental change in the institutional approach to corruption.⁸ Within this context, the decrease in convictions should not be interpreted linearly as a reduction in corruption, but rather as a **reflection of changes in institutional architecture**, criminal policy priorities, and the orientation of anti-corruption strategies in Albania.

Figure 2. Number of individuals convicted for corruption cases and in particular for abuse of office (2004-2024).



Source: Ministry of Justice (2024)⁹

The main factor influencing the progress of investigations and convictions in corruption-related cases over the years is closely linked to Albania's European Union integration process. In 2014, when Albania was granted candidate status, the Council of Europe identified five key priorities

⁶ For more detailed specifications of the legal articles, see the "Statistical Yearbook 2024" (pp. 92–94)-
[Vjetari-Statistikor-2024.pdf](#)

⁷ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en

⁸ <https://spak.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Raporti-vjetor-SPAK-2024.pdf>

⁹ No information could be found regarding the total number of cases before 2009.

that the country needed to meet before the start of accession negotiations. Among these priorities, the rule of law and **the fight against corruption and organized crime were highlighted as critical issues**. In 2016, based on achievements in these areas, the European Commission proposed for the first time that the Council begin accession negotiations with Albania, conditional upon concrete progress in implementing the justice reform particularly the “vetting” process of judges and prosecutors and efforts against corruption. For this reason, Albanian institutions demonstrated significant mobilization and engagement in combating corruption and implementing justice reform, aiming for tangible results to advance the integration process.

During the 2017–2019 period, the evaluation process for judges and prosecutors (Vetting) influenced an increase in cases related to conflicts of interest and asset declarations, leading to a rise in convictions. This progress in reform also contributed to the opening of EU accession negotiations in March 2020, increasing pressure on institutions to demonstrate concrete results. Following the vetting process, over 300 judges and prosecutors were dismissed¹⁰, an extraordinary step that not only removes a significant portion of corruption within the judiciary but also demonstrates that institutional capacities can function effectively when properly applied.

Albania’s current goal of EU membership by 2030 appears more realistic, offering a positive perspective that corruption can be gradually reduced. This integration objective acts as a “green light,” enhancing confidence in the effectiveness of reforms and institutional commitment toward a more transparent and accountable administration.

¹⁰ [Mbyllet procesi i vetingut, mbi 300 gjyqtarë e prokurorë të shkarkuar në 7 vjet - Kronika](#)

5. Results of the Corruption Monitoring System 2025

5.1 Experience with corruption

5.1.1 Corruption pressure and involvement in corruption

Citizens' experiences with corruption are closely linked to two key indicators of administrative corruption: **involvement**, which relates to giving bribes, and **pressure**, which refers to being asked for a bribe. Historical data show that these indicators have fluctuated considerably over the years.

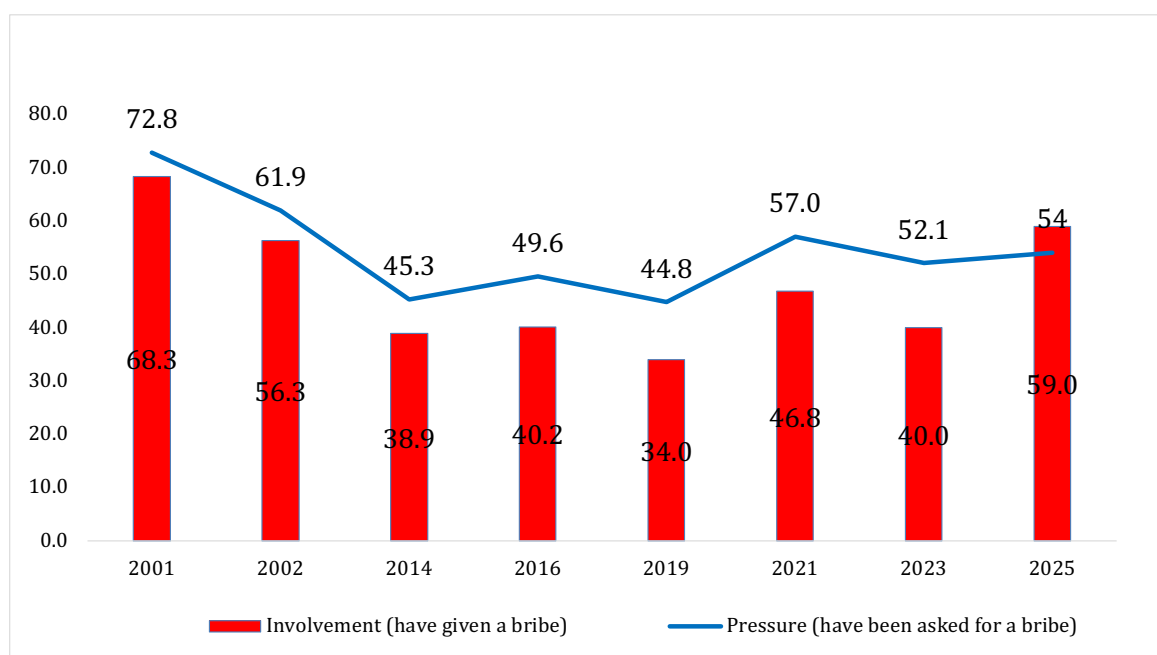
According to 2025 data, **59.0% of citizens admit to having given a bribe**, marking an increase of about 19 percentage points compared to 2023 (40.0%). The pressure indicator has also risen, with 54% of respondents reporting that they were asked for a bribe, although this figure is only slightly higher than in 2023 (52.1%).

An important element is the narrowing of **the gap between pressure and involvement**. In previous years, for example in 2023, pressure (52.1%) was significantly higher than involvement (40.0%), whereas in 2025 citizens are participating more broadly in corrupt practices even when pressure is not higher. This indicates a **gradual normalization of bribery as a means to expedite or resolve administrative matters**.

Long-term trend analysis shows that parliamentary election years are associated with increases in corruption. For instance, 2017 and 2021 recorded notable rises in both indicators, reflecting greater use of public resources and efforts to influence citizens for electoral reasons. The year 2025 continues this trend, approaching the high levels recorded in 2001 (involvement 68.3%, pressure 72.8%). This underscores that progress against corruption is not sustainable and remains sensitive to political and electoral developments.

Furthermore, according to the *Corruption Risk platform*, Albania continues to face high levels of corruption risk. This is primarily related to the discretionary allocation of public funds and the lack of strong oversight in public procurement and finance. This indicates that, even though the number of convictions has decreased, the conditions enabling corruption persist, influencing the continued acceptance of bribery as a common practice in interactions with the administration.¹¹

¹¹ <https://corruptionrisk.org/country/?country=ALB&utm>

Figure 3. Corruption Pressure & Involvement in corruption

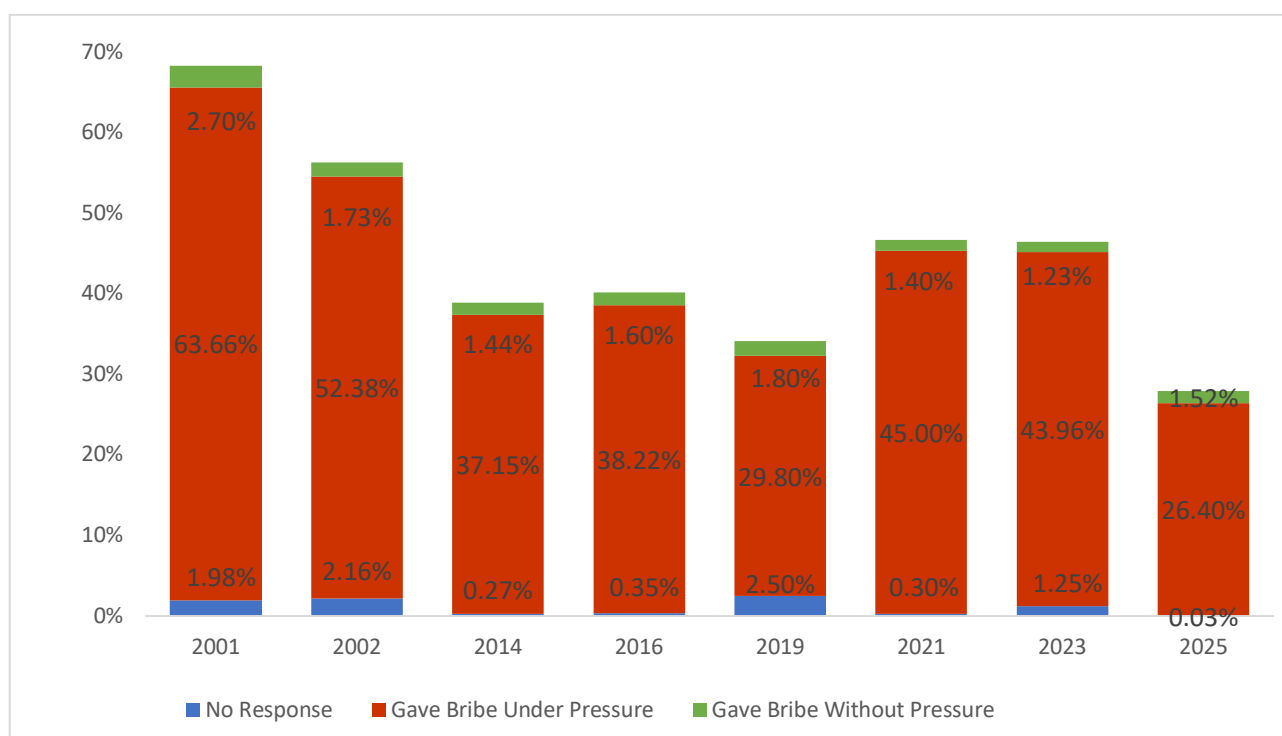
5.1.2 Resistance to corruption pressure

Bribery continues to be the most visible form of corruption between citizens and public officials, but the way it occurs has changed this year. The data show that direct pressure from officials forcing citizens to pay bribes to obtain the required service **has significantly decreased compared to 2023**.

About 26.5% of respondents reported giving some form of bribe, such as money, gifts, or favors, only when it was directly requested by the official. This percentage represents a significant decline compared to 2023, when the rate stood at around 44%. A key reason for this decrease is that citizens are increasingly turning to alternative ways of resolving their issues without paying bribes and without engaging in corrupt practices. This trend is also reflected in the fact that about 50% of respondents stated they **would prefer to pursue legal channels** if such an option were viable.

On the other hand, in cases where the official did not request a bribe and the citizen did not feel pressured, only 1.5% reported having paid a bribe. This behavior is linked to the low level of trust in reporting mechanisms and the government's anti-corruption policies, as well as to the perception that there is no other alternative for obtaining the required service.

This year marks a noticeable decline compared to previous years, suggesting that if institutional mechanisms function properly, most citizens would not engage in corruption. In most cases, it is the pressure exerted by officials that compels citizens to take part in corrupt practices.

Figure 4. Resilience to corruption pressure

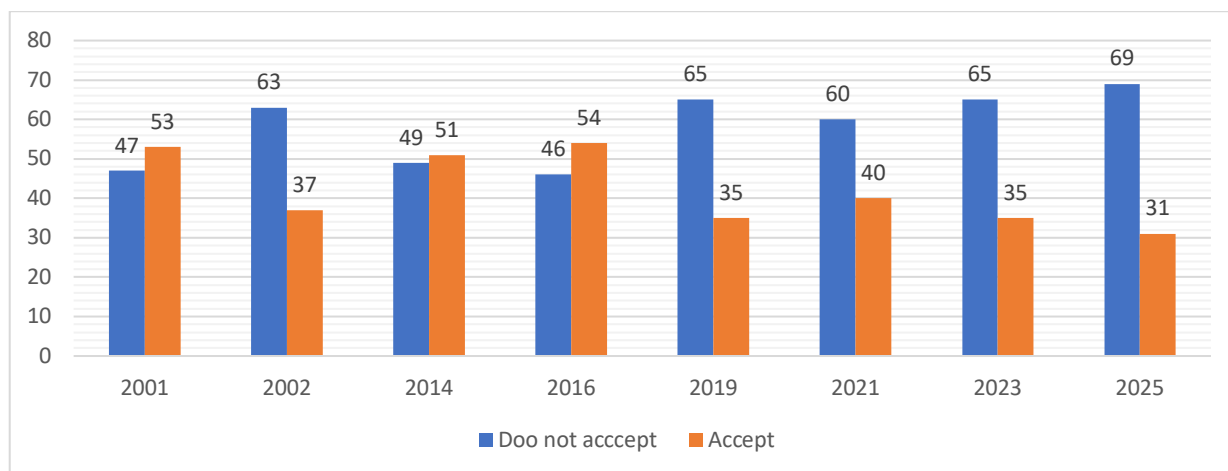
5.2 Attitudes towards Corruption

As part of the survey, citizens were asked whether they consider it acceptable for members of parliament, the government, or officials in ministries and municipalities to receive gifts, money, favors, or free meals in exchange for resolving a citizen's personal issue.

The results show that, although **the majority of citizens (69%) consider bribery unacceptable**, a significant segment of society continues to view it as an acceptable practice. Although this share has declined by 4 percentage points compared to 2023, the fact that **31% of respondents still justify bribery indicates that corruption remains normalized** within an important segment of society.

This normalization reflects a reality in which, for many citizens, bribery is still perceived as an alternative means of solving problems, particularly in contexts where trust in institutions is low and legal procedures are considered ineffective. This suggests that changes in attitudes are slow and fragile, and that tolerance toward corrupt practices remains deeply embedded in everyday institutional and social life.

Nevertheless, this result is important, as it signals a step toward meritocracy and improved institutional functioning. The more citizens reject corruption and seek legal solutions to their problems, the stronger the foundation becomes for a fairer and more sustainable society one that gradually aligns with European standards and strengthens trust in public institutions.

Figure 5. Acceptability of corruption

Sensitivity to corruption shows the tendency of respondents to react in two hypothetical situations.

To understand how sensitive the respondents are towards corruption; they were asked how they would react if they were faced with two situations:

- If they are in the place of public official and someone offered them a bribe, would they accept it?
- - If they are directly asked for a bribe by the public official to whom they are directed to receive a service, would they give a bribe or not?

The responses allowed for the categorization of respondents into three groups:

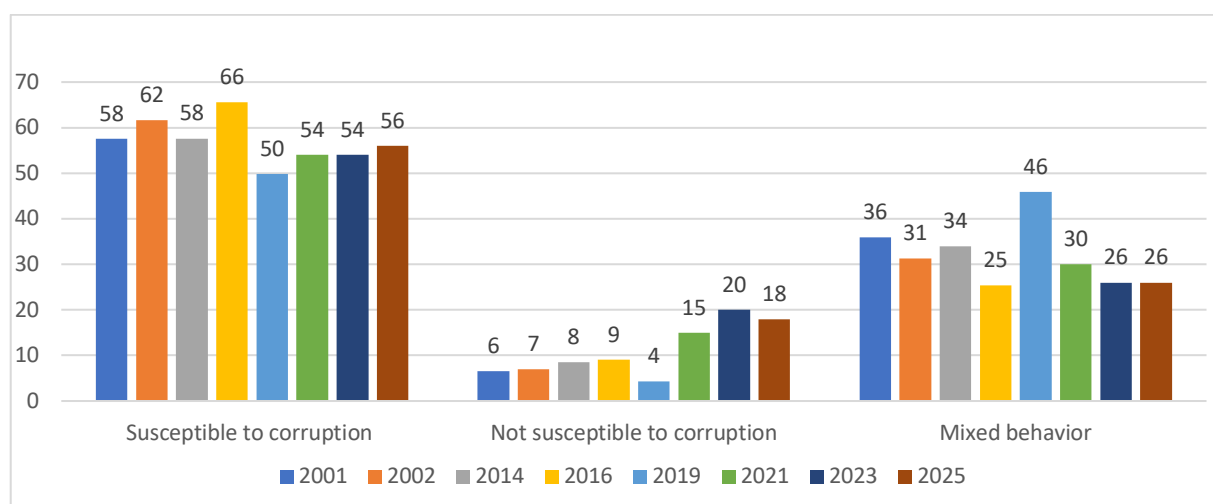
- **Corruption-sensitive:** those who admit they would give or accept a bribe.
- **Corruption-resistant:** those who state they would neither give nor accept a bribe.
- **Mixed behavior:** those who would give a bribe but not accept one, or vice versa.

Based on respondents' answers (Figure 6), 2025 represents a continuation of the trend observed in 2023, without significant structural changes in attitudes toward corruption. **56% of respondents are classified as sensitive to corruption**, reflecting a critical and rejecting stance toward corrupt practices, consistent with the gradual consolidation of this group in recent years.

At the same time, **18% of respondents remain insensitive to corruption**, indicating that a segment of society continues to exhibit tolerance or indifference toward these practices. Although this percentage has not increased, its presence signals a structural problem that persists over time.

Mixed-behavior respondents make up 26% of those surveyed, confirming the existence of an intermediate group with ambivalent attitudes, shifting between rejection and justification of corruption depending on the circumstances. This category, which remains relatively stable compared to 2023, suggests that the normalization of informal practices has not been fully overcome, and that interventions aimed at changing attitudes require time and consistency.

Figure 6. Susceptibility to corruption



5.3 Perceptions on Corruption

The following analysis is based on citizens' direct assessment of corruption levels across different professional groups. Citizens were asked to share their opinions to identify which of the listed groups are perceived as being most affected by corruption. The data reveal that the perceived association of corruption with specific individuals or professions has decreased significantly compared to previous years. On a four-point scale, where 4 represents the highest level of corruption, the top categories this year reached a maximum score of only 2.6.

However, this year also marks a notable shift from previous trends. In past years, citizens identified judges, **customs officers, public prosecutors, court officials, and political leaders** as the most corrupt groups. This year, the last two categories have been replaced by **tax officials and university lecturers**.¹²

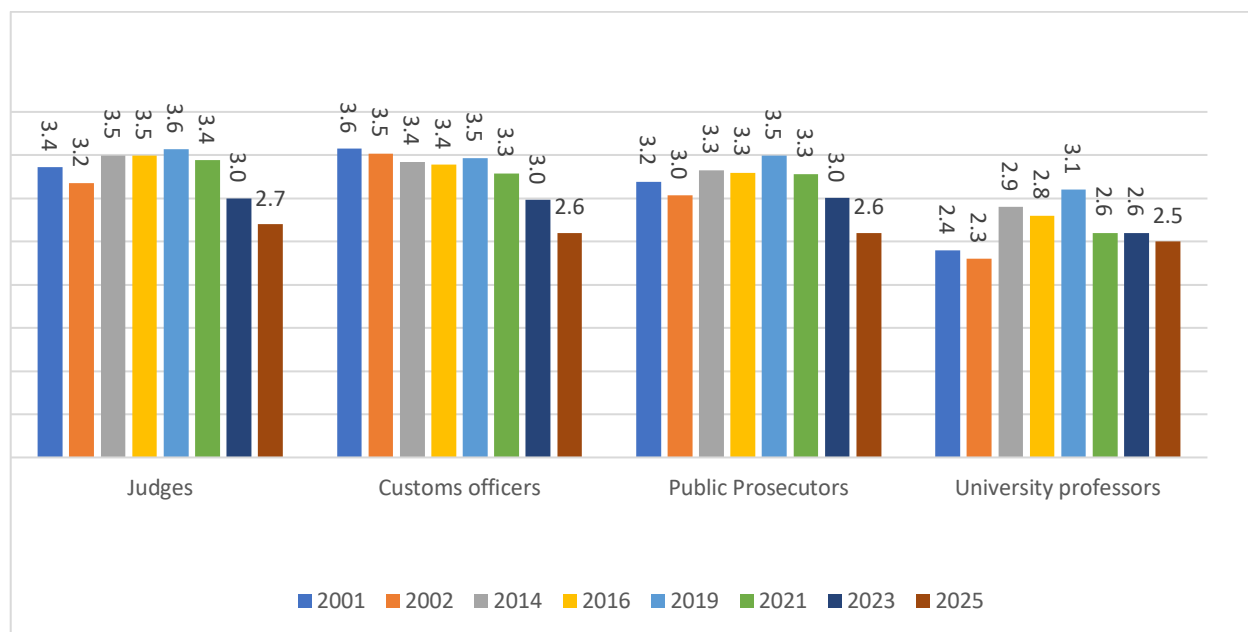
This change is significant and represents a distinctive phenomenon, as university lecturers were previously perceived as one of the groups least affected by corruption. In recent years, several reported scandals in the education sector have influenced public perception, portraying lecturers as more vulnerable to corrupt practices. Such cases include the arrest of professors at the University of Elbasan¹³ for soliciting bribes from students, investigations by SPAK into procurement abuses at the Agricultural University of Tirana¹⁴, and procedural violations at the School of Magistrates. These incidents highlight the presence of corrupt practices within the academic community and demonstrate citizens' sensitivity to information, which directly shapes public perception of lecturers. This suggests that public perception can shift rapidly, depending on recent events and the level of transparency in reporting.

¹² According to analyses conducted by the A.L.T.R.I. Center, judges and prosecutors continue to rank among the groups with the highest levels of corruption [Analiza-mbi-hetimin-administrativ-te-korrupsionit-2024.pdf](#)

¹³ <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/elbasan-shoqerohen-ne-polici-disa-pedagog-te-universitetit-aleksander-xhuvani>

¹⁴ <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/spak-mbyll-hetimet-per-abuzim-me-tenderat-te-universiteti-bujqesor-i-tiranes-merr-28-te-pandehur-dosja-drejt-gjikko>

Figure 7. Perceptions of corruption for public officials – the most corrupt



The groups perceived by citizens as the least corrupt remain **journalists and municipal councilors**, maintaining the same classification as in previous years. However, this year the group also includes two new categories, replacing teachers and university lecturers: **bankers and leaders of non-governmental organizations**. As shown in the figure, these groups have experienced a significant decline in scores compared to previous years, registering values between 2.4 and 2.5 on a scale of 4.

Figure 8. Perceptions of corruptness of public officials – least corrupted

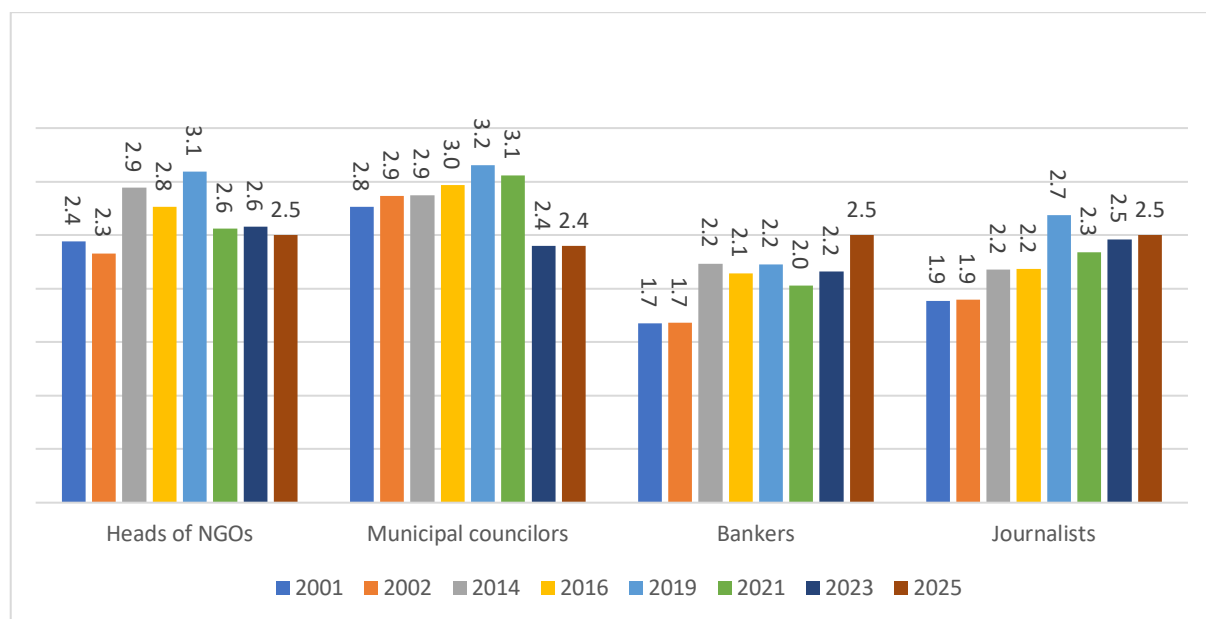
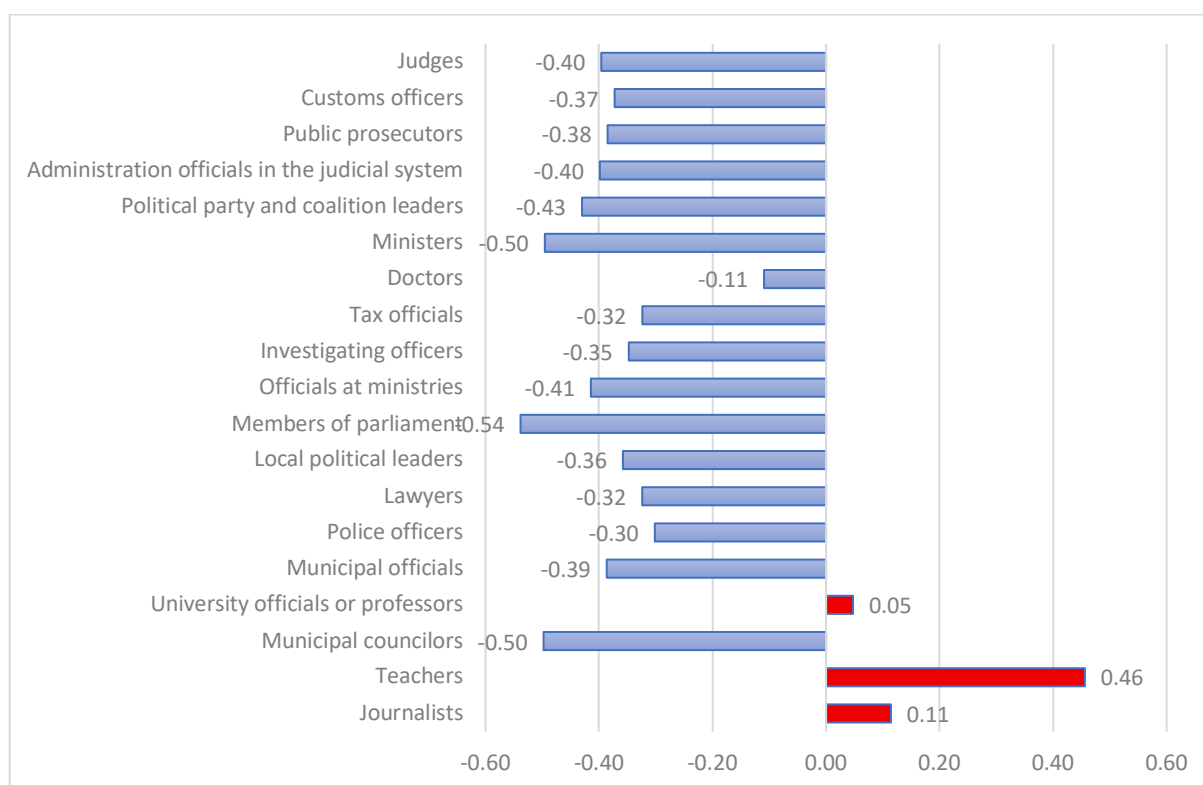


Figure 9 below provides a clear overview of changes in the perception of corruption across different professional groups from one year to the next. For most groups, indicators show a decline in perceived corruption compared to 2023.

An exception is represented by university lecturers, teachers, and journalists, who show an increase in public perception regarding their involvement in corruption. Among these, **teachers register the most significant increase**, with a rise of 0.46 points. This result underscores the importance of continuous monitoring of public perception and the impact that recent events or scandals can have on citizens' assessment of professional groups.

These findings are supported by a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in Albania, where citizens express high confidence in some institutions, while others face low levels of trust. At the top of the list of most trusted institutions is the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), with 76% of citizens expressing confidence in this body. This high level of trust reflects citizens' positive expectations, which align with our current assessment. Conversely, some other institutions register low levels of trust. For example, political parties and the Parliament of Albania are ranked among the least trusted institutions, with citizens expressing low confidence. This trend reflects public concerns over potential links between these institutions and corruption or personal interests.¹⁵

Figure 9. Change in the perception of corruption regarding public officials (2023–2025)



To continue the analysis of corruption, this section focuses on the likelihood of corruption occurring. Respondents were asked to assess the probability that they would engage in one of the forms of bribery, such as giving money, gifts, or favors to a public official.

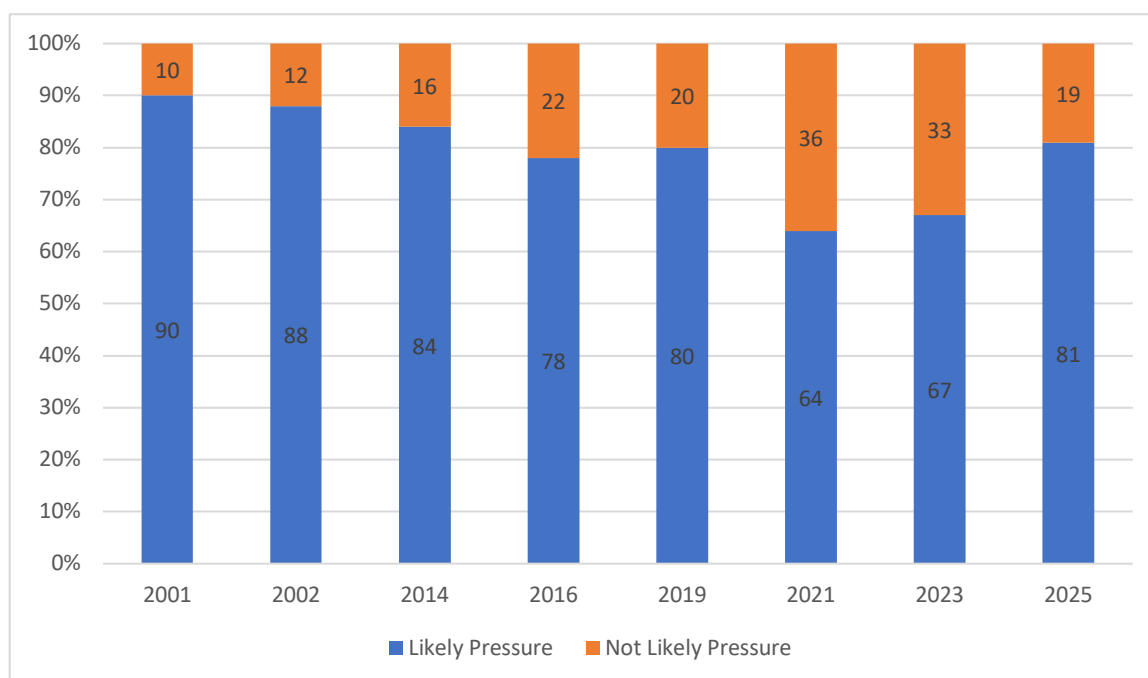
¹⁵ <https://www.iri.org/resources/national-survey-of-albania-oct-nov-2024/?utm>

Based on their responses—“likely,” “very likely,” “unlikely,” and “not at all likely”—it is possible to analyze the probability of involvement in corrupt practices. As shown in Figure 10, **this year a significant increase in the likelihood of corruption has been recorded, rising by 14% compared to 2023 (from 67% in 2023 to 81% in 2025).**

A parallel trend is the decline in the share of respondents who do not consider using bribery to obtain necessary services, **from 33% in 2023 to 19% in 2025**, indicating an increased likelihood of exposure to corruption pressure.

The rise in the probability of using bribery and the decline in confidence that services can be obtained without corrupt involvement highlight the need for a strengthened institutional framework.

Figure 10. Perceptions of the likelihood of corruption pressure (%)



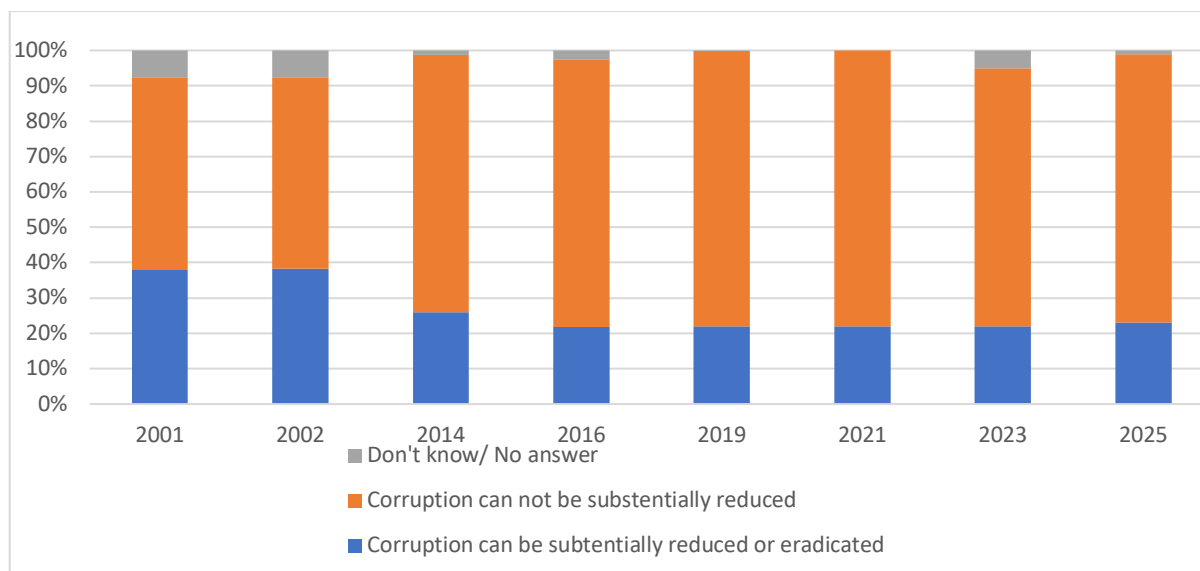
An important aspect of assessing corruption is citizens’ perception of the future. By analyzing current trends, individuals form expectations and ideas about how this phenomenon may evolve. In this context, we asked citizens how they think the corruption situation in Albania will develop: whether it will decrease significantly or remain at current levels. This question also serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies to date.

The results show that citizens remain quite pessimistic about the future: **77% believe that the current situation will continue, while only 22% hope for a future with lower levels of corruption.** This trend aligns with assessments from previous years and highlights a gap between improving individual citizen behavior and institutional actions, which still appear insufficient to fully meet citizens’ expectations and interests.

This perception is further confirmed by a study conducted by the Institute for Development, Research, and Alternatives (IDRA) in August 2024, which found that 91% of Albanian citizens

perceive corruption as a serious problem in the country. One of the main findings of this study is that citizens view corruption as a deeply entrenched phenomenon that is difficult to eliminate. They identify low salaries and weak law enforcement as the primary contributing factors. These concerns are closely linked to citizens' perception of the future of corruption in Albania.¹⁶

Figure 11. Perceptions of feasibility of policy responses to corruption (%)



5.4 Extent of Corruption

The CMS results were collected across all 12 administrative counties of Albania, taking into account each county's proportion of the total population. While this report presents a national-level corruption index, it also provides detailed regional data. The analysis shows that central counties such as Tirana, Durrës, Fier, and Elbasan exhibit lower and more stable levels of perceived corruption, **averaging 2.3 points on a 4-point scale**. In contrast, peripheral counties report significantly higher perceptions, exceeding 3 points out of 4.

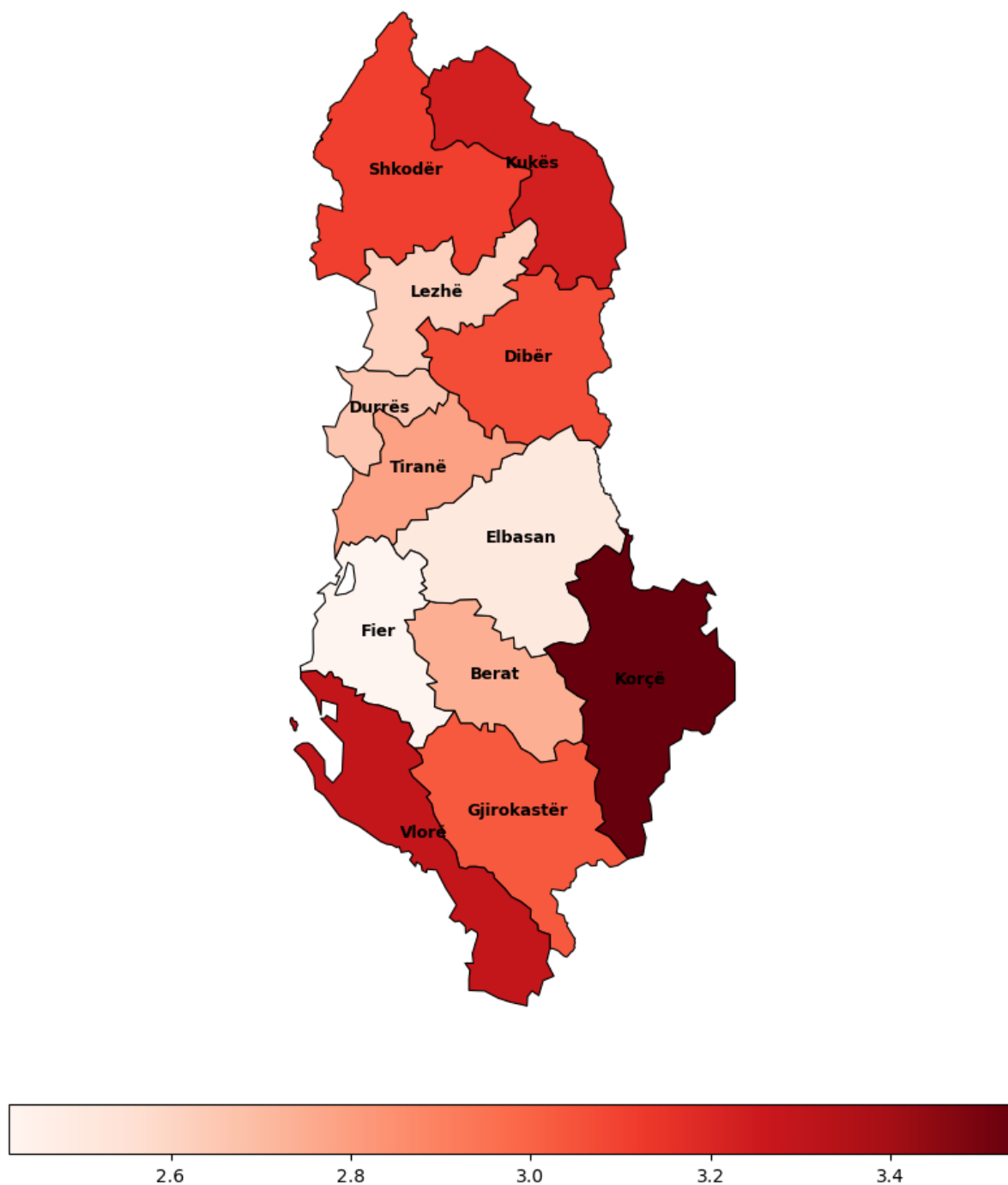
This finding contradicts the traditional expectation that corruption would be higher in central areas, where public funds circulate and political decisions are made. On the contrary, the data suggest that anti-corruption **measures have produced more visible effects in central regions**, where institutions are more consolidated, control and transparency mechanisms are stronger, and monitoring by the media and civil society is more active. Meanwhile, in peripheral areas, enforcing uniform application of the law is more challenging due to limited institutional capacity, lack of effective oversight, and reduced access to active media or civil society.

From an economic perspective, this situation may be linked to the "**center-periphery effect**": central areas, where administrative and civic culture is more aligned with Western standards, enjoy higher levels of transparency and control, reducing opportunities for corrupt practices. Conversely, in peripheral areas, citizens often feel compelled to offer bribes even for basic services, reflecting a widespread mentality in interactions with public administration.

¹⁶ <https://api.idracompany.com/asset/pdf/key-20250325093909-Korrupsioni-Krimi-Organizuar-ne-Shqiperi-2024.pdf>

Figure 12. Corruption Distribution Across the 12 Counties

The level of corruption among officials

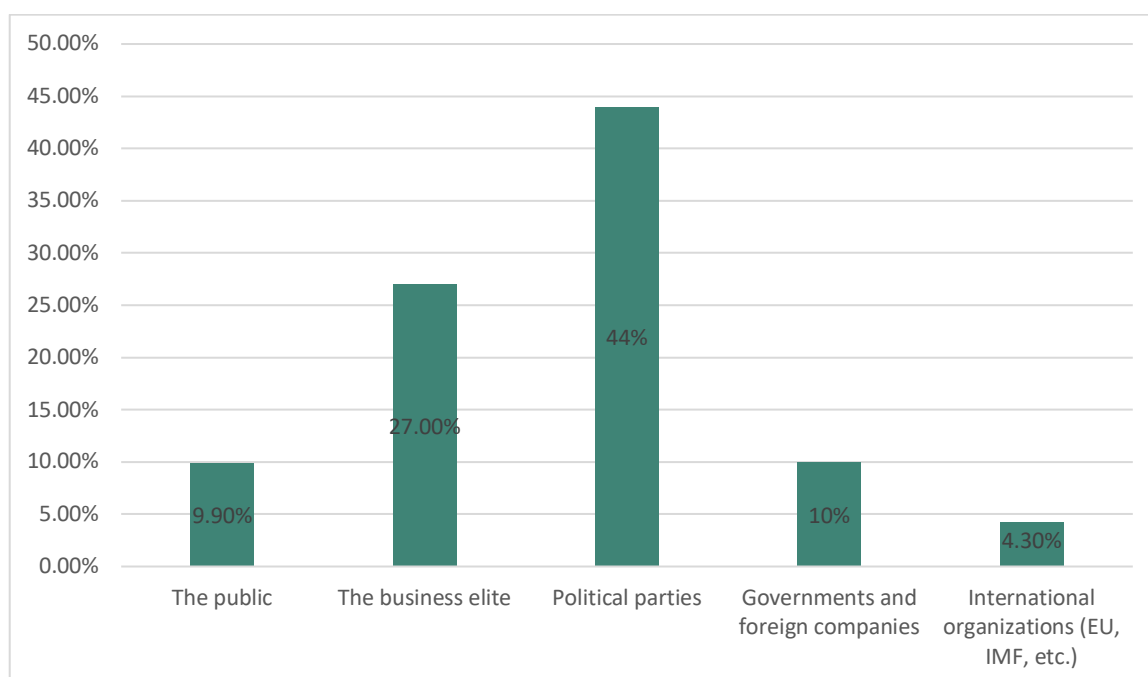


When citizens assess the decision-making process in their country, the majority appear skeptical about the representation of public interest (Figure 13). Only **10% believe that government decisions reflect citizens' needs**, while the largest share, **around 44%, thinks that decisions**

favor political parties. Business elites follow closely, being perceived as actors with significant influence over the shaping of public policies. This indicates a clear perception that decision-making is not focused on the general interest but rather on the private interests of the most powerful groups in society.

This perspective is closely linked to citizens' responses regarding the main reasons why corruption remains high in Albania. According to them, the primary source of this phenomenon is **political corruption and the capture of public institutions by private interests.** This finding reinforces the notion that corruption is not seen merely as an individual deviation, but as a structural problem, deeply rooted in the relationships between politics and privileged economic actors. In this context, the results highlight a crisis of trust in institutions and underscore the need to increase transparency and to establish a clearer separation between public and private interests.

Figure 13. Government decisions serving private interests



6. Key Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Key conclusions

The report on **corruption monitoring in Albania** provides a detailed overview of the scope, forms, and public perceptions of corruption in the country. Data analysis indicates that Albanian citizens are demonstrating higher awareness and a greater willingness to challenge corrupt practices, aiming for the functioning of society in accordance with the law and institutional frameworks. The study highlights a noticeable shift in civic culture, where critical attitudes and the rejection of corruption are gaining ground. However, a clear gap remains between this social progress and the response of local institutions, which have yet to fully reflect the changes in citizens' norms and expectations. The analysis detailedly highlights that:

A. *Experience with Corruption:*

- Significant increase in involvement in corruption: **59% of citizens reported giving a bribe**, directly or indirectly, compared to 2023, indicating a worsening of the situation.
- Direct pressure from officials remains high: **54% of citizens stated that they were asked for a bribe**, showing sustained exposure to corrupt practices.
- Notable change in the way bribes are given: only **26.5% gave a bribe following a direct request**, compared to 44% in 2023, suggesting that corruption is being normalized or mediated through alternative forms.
- **26% of citizens exhibit mixed behavior**, confirming the existence of an intermediate group with ambivalent attitudes, which shifts between rejecting and justifying corruption depending on the circumstances.
- Exposure to corruption remains highest in critical sectors such as healthcare, taxation, and education, where citizens frequently report requests for bribes.

B. *Attitudes Toward Corruption:*

- The majority of respondents display a resistant stance toward corruption: **69% do not consider the giving or receiving of bribes by public officials acceptable**, representing an increase of 4 percentage points compared to 2023.
- The social normalization of corruption has declined significantly: **only 31% of citizens consider bribery acceptable**, compared to 35% in 2023.
- **56% of citizens are sensitive to corruption**, while only 18% are insensitive, indicating a positive shift in civic culture.
- This result is particularly significant given that, traditionally, bribery has been perceived as a common practice even for basic services.
- Citizens demonstrate greater awareness of corruption's consequences across different sectors and adopt a more critical stance toward unfair practices by politicians and public officials.

C. *Perceptions of Corruption:*

- Significant shift in perception of affected professional groups: **University lecturers and tax officials** are perceived as the most corrupt in 2025, replacing court officials and political leaders.

- Least corrupt groups remain **journalists and municipal councilors**, maintaining stability in public perceptions.
- Citizens display pessimism about the future of corruption: **77% believe that corruption will remain unchanged**, while only 22% hope for its reduction.
- The gap between individual attitudes and institutional actions indicates that, while citizens are becoming more resistant to corruption, institutions still fall short in fully meeting public expectations and interests.
- The rotation of professional groups perceived as corrupt reflects citizens' sensitivity to recent events, media transparency, and reporting of scandals.

6.2 Key Recommendations

In 2025, Albania has taken significant steps in the fight against corruption by improving prevention mechanisms, strengthening institutions, and enhancing transparency. However, to achieve more tangible and sustainable results, coordinated efforts focused on several key areas are necessary:

- **Strengthening whistleblower protection and fostering a supportive culture**
Legal measures must be adopted to ensure the protection of whistleblowers, including safeguards against retaliation and the creation of anonymous reporting channels for corruption cases. Responsible institutions should provide legal and psychological support to individuals reporting corruption, creating a safe and supportive environment for those who come forward.
- **Active participation of civil society and the media**
Civil society and the media play a crucial role in monitoring institutional activities and raising public awareness. Therefore, awareness campaigns should be encouraged, and investigative media initiatives supported. Media independence must be ensured, along with conditions for impartial and reliable reporting.
- **Judicial reform and institutional capacity building**
Judicial reform should continue with a focus on merit-based appointments and the strengthening of institutional capacities within the justice system. SPAK should further develop its investigative skills, utilizing modern technologies and collaborating with international agencies to combat high-level corruption. Vetting processes must also be fair and transparent.
- **Citizen education and awareness**
Educating citizens about the consequences of corruption and how to report it is essential. State institutions and NGOs should develop educational programs and awareness campaigns to promote a culture of zero tolerance toward corruption, fostering a more engaged and responsible society.

- **Continuous monitoring and evaluation**

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of anti-corruption measures are critical. This can be achieved through independent reports, data analysis, and the involvement of civil society in monitoring processes. Results from these assessments should be used to improve current policies and practices.

- **Focus on peripheral regions**

Implementation of control and transparency mechanisms should be strengthened in counties where perceptions of corruption are highest. Intensive training for local officials and performance monitoring of institutions can help reduce corrupt practices in these areas.

- **Reducing the bribery mentality for basic services**

Administrative services, such as property registrations and building permits, should be provided through online channels and automated procedures to minimize direct contact with officials and reduce opportunities for bribery.

- **Direct focus on high-contact public services**

Public services requiring direct citizen interaction such as property registrations, building permits, and social services are most vulnerable to bribery. An effective strategy includes creating automated and online channels, combined with regular field inspections and specialized training for officials who work directly with citizens. This approach can reduce pressure for gifts or bribes for basic services, targeting the most sensitive sectors and regions.