

Friday, October 26, 2012

Corruption in the South Caucasus

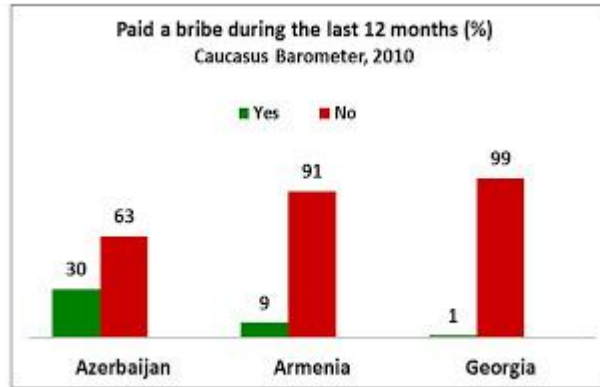
Corruption and paying a bribe was not uncommon in the former Soviet Union. However, following the collapse of the USSR, rampant corruption began to permeate virtually every aspect of daily life in newly independent Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia ([Sandholtz and Taagepera 2005](#)). Reports by international organizations, such as [Transparency International](#) and [International Alert](#), have revealed perceptions about the high level of corruption that has affected political, social, and economic life throughout the South Caucasus. Since the late 1990s, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have engaged in several anti-corruption campaigns (e.g., the Anti-Corruption Strategy and Implementation Action Plans in Georgia and Armenia, USAID Mobilizing Action Against Corruption (MAAC) in Armenia, and the 2012-2015 National Action Plan to Combat Corruption in Azerbaijan) that have yielded varying results. Bribing is one form of corruption that CRRC's Caucasus Barometer has addressed. Since 2007, CRRC has been conducting the Caucasus Barometer (CB) survey on social, political, economic, and cultural processes in the South Caucasus region, and has asked several questions on bribing over the years. This blog explores data on these questions in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia based on the 2008, 2010 and 2011 surveys. The 2009 CB did not include any questions on bribes.

According to the 2008 CB survey data, 34% of the Azerbaijani population said that they, or members of their household, had been in a situation during the last 12 months when they had to pay a bribe in order to get a service or preferential treatment. In Armenia, 9% of the adult population said that they or their relatives had to pay a bribe during the last 12 months, and 4% of Georgians said the same.

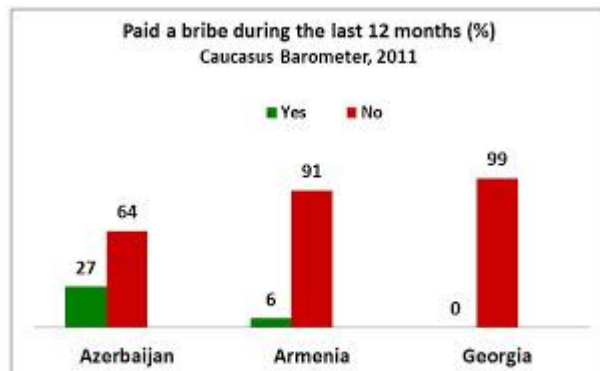


Figures may not sum to 100% due to “Don’t Know” and “Refuse to Answer” responses.

Data from the 2010 CB survey show some change in corruption rates for Azerbaijan and Georgia. In 2010, 30% of Azerbaijanis said they had paid a bribe during the last 12 months. The rate for Armenia remained unchanged (9%), while only 1% in Georgia reported paying a bribe within the previous year.



The 2011 CB reveals decreasing rates for all South Caucasian states. Based on the most recent CB survey, 27% of the Azerbaijani population said they paid a bribe during the last 12 months, followed by 6% of people in Armenia. Georgia seems to have been the most successful in fighting corruption with no person saying they had paid a bribe during the last 12 months.



Even though corruption persists in many forms in the South Caucasus, the CB data show that between 2008 and 2011 the percentage of people who reported paying bribes decreased in the South Caucasus. With such a sensitive question, it is important to pay attention to the proportion of responses between the countries. What factors do you think have contributed to such differences in the region?