

Shocking SA graft revelation in survey

Traffic cops reel in most bribes, tenders are costly

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MOST bribes paid for in the past year by South Africans are to traffic officers.

Other bribes are by people paying to get jobs, driving licences, tenders, discounts, theft from businesses and to get out of criminal charges.

This was revealed in the first South Africa Citizen's Bribery Survey, conducted by the Ethics Institute of South Africa and sponsored by Massmart. The survey results were released yesterday on International Anti-Corruption Day.

There were 6 380 South Africans interviewed inside Massmart stores in Gauteng, Cape Town, Durban and Polokwane about their experiences with bribery. Respondents were from a wide socio-economic

background and across all age groups. It was found that nearly twice as many people were approached for a bribe in Limpopo (48 percent) compared to the other provinces.

Bribes were paid to avoid traffic offences (34 percent), to get jobs (29 percent), driving licences (13 percent), tenders (7 percent) and illicit discounts from business (4 percent).

The results showed there was a disconnect between people's perception of bribery and reality.

Only 26 percent said they know of someone who was asked to pay a bribe in the past 12 months, but when approached for a bribe, 77 percent of respondents indicated that they paid it and 78 percent said they believe it is not possible to get through life without paying a bribe in South Africa.

Ethics SA chief executive

Deon Rossouw said while most people reckon bribery takes place mainly in the public sector, the survey found the crime is just as prevalent in the private sector, particularly when it came to paying bribes to get a job.

The construction industry was singled out as the industry with the most bribery.

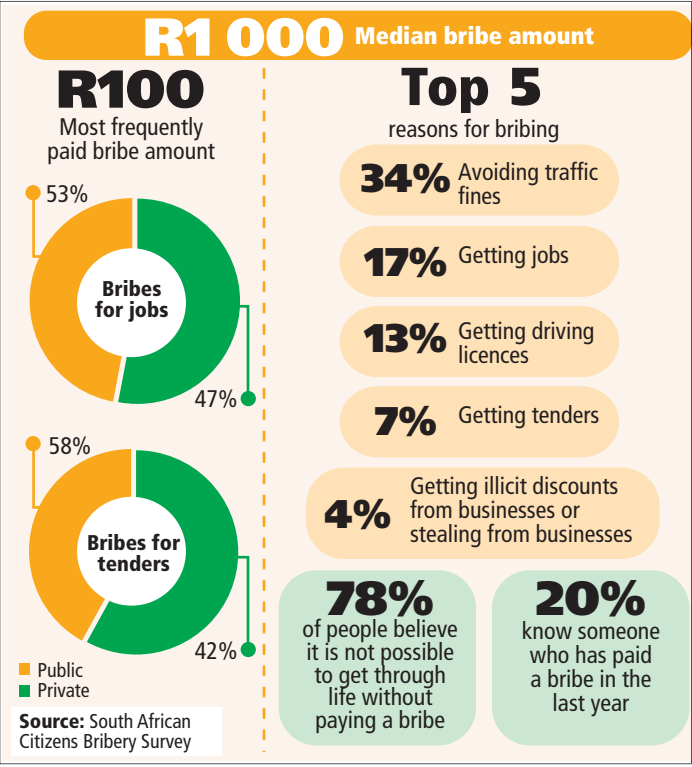
"Some findings are as expected, but others challenge common perceptions and put things in a new light," said Kris Dobie, manager of organisational ethics development at Ethics SA.

"The finding of the prevalence of bribery for jobs is a case in point. While it is not unknown that there is sometimes payment for getting employment, the scale of the phenomenon as reported by survey respondents is surprising. And while there are examples of more senior positions for sale, it is the pervasiveness of bribery for unskilled labour that is most poignant."

When asked why the person they knew had paid a bribe, there were a number of different responses. Some cited "to get away with a murder case", "to avoid being arrested for selling drugs" and "to get electricity and not be cut off". Others said it was "to get help at the hospital", "moved up on the waiting list for her child to get into a public high school", "to be a teacher", "to be a nurse" and "to adopt a child".

R100 notes were most frequently used to pay bribes, while to get a tender the average cost was R100 000, a job R3 000 and a driving licence R2 000.

But Rossouw believes it's not all doom and gloom, because citizens aren't helpless victims and can do something to put a stop to this type of crime.



DOWN WITH GRAFT



The National Prosecuting Authority in Cape Town came out in force to commemorate International Anti-Corruption Day yesterday, with a march by prosecutors and NPA staff members outside their building in the Mother City.

PICTURE: BRENTON GEACH

Varsity slammed as students face charges

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AS THE year draws to a close, the lives of three students suspended by the University of Johannesburg remain in limbo after their hearing was postponed yesterday.

Claire Ceruti, Xhamle Songwevu and Tshoarelo Mahloko face charges including inciting violence and participating in unauthorised protest action during the outsourcing protest that came on the heels of #FeesMustFall.

Their suspensions could have devastating effects on their academic careers, finances and perceptions in their communities.

"Where we come from it's not only a matter of you. The community is involved. If I can't write, I can't motivate the children back home," said



'PLAYED FALSE': Claire Ceruti, Xhamle Songwevu and Tshoarelo Mahloko face charges of 'inciting violence'. PICTURES: DUMISANE DUBE

Songwevu. "My family expect me to get home with results." He said he was the first person from his village to get a higher education.

Ceruti's PhD funding depends on her finishing the year, or she may have to pay back R80 000.

Mpho Letlale, the deputy vice-chancellor for strategic services, explained the univer-

sity's policy: "If people get in the system and don't come out, we can't accommodate additional people."

She said she would provide more details about the postponed hearing today. Students had asked for deferments at previous meetings, she said, but the students disagreed, saying it was the university that kept rescheduling.

Six students were originally suspended. In a YouTube video dated November 19, deputy vice-chancellor Professor Tshilidzi Marwala appears to say suspensions would be "unconditionally lifted."

Written statements from the university contradict this verbal pledge. In a signed document dated November 18, the university agreed to temporarily lift suspensions provided the students signed statements agreeing to certain conditions.

Letlale said the video doesn't show Marwala speaking of the conditions for lifting suspensions. The students maintain he promised it to them unconditionally.

"The management seem to think they can do anything they like and get away with it. It's beyond bad-faith negotiation," Ceruti said.

Three students signed the

letters and were reinstated. Ceruti didn't want to sign because "it required us to make an apology and we don't know what we're apologising for".

Tracey Lomax, who represents the three students, said UJ wanted to postpone the hearing for lack of evidence. She submitted a formal objection to the suspensions, disciplinary hearings and refusal to defer exams during the morning's meeting.

"The suspensions were imposed in a discriminatory manner; out of a group of hundreds of students who participated in protest action, the varsity suspended only six students," the statement said, according to the copy obtained by The Star, adding that the suspensions were based on unlawful university regulations.

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INTIMIDATING: Fidelity security guards on campus at the University of Johannesburg in this file picture. PICTURE: MATTHEWS BALOYI

I was escorted off UJ's campus by Fidelity muscle

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WHEN I showed up with a photographer to report on the disciplinary hearing, I was almost immediately escorted off campus by University of Johannesburg (UJ) bouncers.

After receiving information from a concerned activist organisation that the hearing would take place yesterday morning, I asked one of the professors, who said he would be testifying, if the media could attend.

He said he thought we should be allowed in and we could make the case for it, so we decided to try. I felt it was important to be at the hearing to avoid the he-said-she-said that plagues reporting on crucial events that take place behind closed doors.

When we arrived at the campus gate, a Fidelity security guard inspected our car's boot. He instructed me to get out, walk through the gate and wait for the photographer to drive through as part of their screening. We found the building for the hearing and took a lift to the third floor.

More Fidelity guards than comfortably fit in the narrow corridor met us as the elevator doors opened. They stopped us as we walked down the hall. After consulting with management, they told us that we had to leave the campus.

Two of the bouncers escorted us to our car and then to the gate. They were so muscular that they took up almost the entire lift when we got inside. Their black shirts seemed specially cut to make clear just how much power they had in their arms.

"They are disciplining those who were in front," one of them said. As we left, another Fidelity guard searched a woman's bag at the gate.

Tracey Lomax, the lawyer for the suspended students, told me she had also been intimidated by bouncers assigned to escort her. "Both times the UJ attorney knew I was coming, but they stick bouncers on me," she said. "(Vice-chancellor Professor Ihron) Rensburg learnt from apartheid, just all the wrong things," she added.

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