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CORRUPTION AS A SHARED DILEMMA:
SURVEY EVIDENCE FROM LEGISLATORS AND CITIZENS IN THREE COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

We conduct parallel surveys of legislators and citizens in three countries to study their tolerance for corruption. In Italy, Colombia, and Pakistan legislators and citizens respond similarly to hypothetical scenarios involving trade-offs between, for example, probity and efficiency: both perceive corruption as undesirable but prevalent. These novel descriptive data further reveal that legislators generally have accurate beliefs about public opinion on corruption and understand its relevance to voters. An informational treatment updates legislators' beliefs about public opinion. The treatment produces downward adjustments among legislators who initially overestimated citizens' anti-corruption preferences. We also present descriptive data that tolerance of corruption is predicted by politician attributes, most notably motivations for entering politics. Finally, results reconfirm partisan bias by voters in evaluations of corruption. Overall, results suggest that barriers to effective anti-corruption policies are unlikely to lie with lack of information by legislators or by their deliberate commitment to corrupt activities.

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1 Introduction

Voters across the democratic world dislike it when elected representatives engage in corrupt behavior (Incerti, 2020; de Sousa, Clemente and Maciel, 2023). However, we know little about how politicians themselves perceive and judge corruption, since their views on this topic have rarely been sought. Politicians are critical actors in reducing corruption since they can enact anti-corruption legislation, reinforce the investigative and prosecutorial powers of government in pursuing corruption, and increase the salience of the issue to the public. In this paper, we report original data from three countries collected via parallel surveys of voters and legislators. Our central goal is to compare the views of politicians and citizens within each country. Drawing on numerous recent studies showing that politicians misperceive voter preferences on major policy issues (Butler and Dynes, 2016; Broockman and Skovon, 2018; Walgrave et al., 2023; Furnas and LaPira, 2024) as well as research that specifically documents differences in how political elites and voters perceive corruption (McAllister, 2000), the starting premises of our research were twofold.¹ First, we expected to observe a gap in citizen and politician tolerance of corruption, with politicians more corruption-tolerant than voters. Second, we expected politicians to have incorrect second-order beliefs about voters' corruption perceptions, and to underestimate citizens' condemnation of corruption. Evaluating these hypotheses may be helpful in understanding why successful anti-corruption policies seem relatively rare compared to the political demand for them (Johnston and Fritzen, 2020).

In contrast to our priors, we find a remarkable concordance between citizen and politician perceptions of corruption, as well as in their views on its desirability. Politicians and voters perceive their societies as experiencing high levels of corruption and both groups see this as undesirable. The average politician has well-calibrated beliefs about citizen perceptions of corruption. Across the political spectrum, voters care about corruption and politicians are aware of their views. We find modest left-right or par-

¹Hypotheses were pre-registered under Miriam Golden et al., "Survey Experiments with Citizens and Legislators Around the World: Pre-Analysis Plan," Open Science Framework, November 1, 2021, <https://osf.io/fv937>.

tisan differences in the views of voters and politicians about corruption, although irrespective of their own political orientations voters are more likely to believe that politicians affiliated with parties other than their own will accept bribes. However, in all three countries a majority of voters sampled believe that it is likely that even politicians in the party they support will take bribes. In sum, voters believe that politicians are likely to engage in corruption and politicians appear to be aware of these beliefs. Weak or ineffective anticorruption policies, therefore, seem unlikely to be based on misperceptions by politicians about its importance to voters or on an undervaluation by politicians of how pernicious voters think corruption is.

Our surveys were conducted in three countries: Colombia, Italy, and Pakistan. These choices were based on linguistic convenience and access to legislators. Country selection was designed to maximize variation in per capita GDP and geography among the world's representative democracies.² In addition, the country cases exhibit substantial differences in the frequency of corrupt transactions, according to Transparency International (TI): TI scores Italy 56, Colombia 40, and Pakistan 29, each out of 100, where higher numbers indicate less corruption.³ The three countries thus illustrate the strong cross-national relationship between GDP per capita and corruption (Fisman and Golden, 2017). Although these scores suggest that the three countries have very different frequencies of corruption, this divergence is not reflected in how common voters or politicians think that corruption is in their country. Subjects in both groups in all three countries perceive corruption as very common, which we see as one novel and unexpected descriptive finding to emerge from our surveys.

Voters and politicians are not fully aligned in all aspects of their views of corruption, however. Unlike their concordant perspectives on the actual and desirable levels of corruption, the two groups express

²According to the World Bank, in 2022 Pakistan's GDP per capita was USD 1,597; Colombia's was USD 6,630; and Italy's USD 34,158. Pakistan is classified by the World Bank as a lower-middle income country; Colombia as an upper-middle income country; and Italy as a high income country.

³Information taken from https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0_WyBhDMARIsAL1Vz8vNmilX6Hujb2Te0TAQ0kVJW9cmFmorQTNZwz31vxdV8yf-bszGfYsaAsOPEALw_wcB).

highly divergent perceptions of anti-corruption enforcement. Voters tend to believe that politicians who accept bribes will go unpunished. Politicians, by contrast, exhibit high sensitivity to the risks of engaging in bribe-taking and express fear of exposure. On this specific topic, legislators report views that are more similar to those of legislators in other countries than to those of the voters in their own country. Relatedly, we document that although politicians express disapproval of corruption, voters believe they are tolerant of it.

In addition to the various unexpected and novel results that emerge in our descriptive analyses, we also report results of two experimental manipulations of legislators, the first informational and the second behavioral. Experimental results, particularly those based on the behavioral manipulation, were less informative than expected. In the informational manipulation, we provide legislators accurate and visually compelling information about how much voters dislike corruption, expecting that this would realign politicians' underlying beliefs about corruption with those of voters. The manipulation was inspired by recent studies that use information to realign policy preferences of politicians with those of voters (Kalla and Porter, 2021; Pereira, 2021; Hjort et al., 2021; Jalland, Roth and Wohlfart, 2023), and rested on the (incorrect) premises discussed earlier that politicians perceive less corruption and are more tolerant of it than voters. We find, in fact, that the average treatment effect of providing legislators information about voters' views is to *reduce* politicians' beliefs that most voters care about corruption. Further, this effect is exclusively driven by legislators who had initially believed that a higher fraction of citizens was concerned about corruption than was observed in responses to our survey; we observe no responsiveness to information from those who initially underestimated citizens' corruption concerns. These patterns were the reverse of what we expected.

The behavioral manipulation asked all subjects — both politicians and citizens — whether they wished to receive a framed certificate should they win a lottery that would make a substantial donation on their behalf to the charity of their choice. The lottery served as an incentive for subjects to complete the survey (Butler and Pereira, 2018); we were especially concerned about completion by legislators, a notoriously difficult group to survey (Maestas, Neeley and Richardson, 2003; Fisher and Herrick, 2013; Butler and Pereira, 2018; Kertzer and Renshon, 2022). Treatment consisted of a

formulation that asked respondents if they would be willing to engage in a trivial lie (about the precise amount donated in their name). In this manipulation, results were unexpected. We had thought politicians would be more interested in receiving a framed certificate than voters and would be more willing to lie to get one. Neither proved to be the case; in fact, in two of the three countries, legislators were much less willing to lie than citizens, and in the third country, there was no difference between the two groups. Although lying is obviously more common than engaging in corruption, these results align with the descriptive finding that politicians are less tolerant of corruption than may often be believed; politicians appear less willing to lie than ordinary citizens.

Overall, our results suggest that corruption is a shared dilemma for voters and politicians. Although both groups perceive it as common across the three countries we study, corruption represents a suboptimal outcome for legislators and for voters. Tolerance of corruption does not align with their values or with what they think is best for society. One inference of our findings is a specific interpretation of the failure of anticorruption initiatives despite their apparent appeal to voters and to politicians. Because it enjoys widespread support of voters across the partisan spectrum, an anti-corruption stance cannot serve as an electorally-useful wedge issue for any particular party. As we discuss at greater length in the concluding section, a widely-endorsed valence issue such as support of anti-corruption policies is, perhaps ironically, unlikely to prove politically useful in attracting voters. Precisely because it is supported by voters across all parties, anti-corruption activity is unlikely to be given much attention by the politicians and political parties that hold office.

The remainder of this paper is organized into four major sections. First, we briefly review relevant literature and explain the hypotheses underlying the research design. Second, we present information about the surveys and treatments. Third, we present descriptive results from the surveys. We then detail the results of two experimental manipulations. A final section provides an overall interpretation of our findings and concludes with a discussion of the difficulties parties face making anti-corruption policies an electoral issue and poses questions for future research.

2 Theory

Among the prominent themes in the vast literature on corruption is that voters believe that public officials are often corrupt but rarely sanction corrupt politicians electorally (de Vries and Solaz, 2017; Dunning et al., 2019); relatedly, there is partisan bias in voters’ evaluations of corruption by politicians, such that voters tend to discount corruption by politicians affiliated with their preferred political party. Despite this focus on politicians, who are often considered primary instigators of corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 1999), we know little about their views on the topic — for instance, their views on the prevalence and acceptability of corruption, what they think voters believe, and when they will support anti-corruption policies. We are aware of only a handful of studies that analyze data collected from politicians about corruption. McAllister (2000) compares responses of citizens and elected politicians to a survey fielded as part of the Australian Election Study and reports that voters expect higher ethical standards from legislators than legislators do of themselves. Márquez Romo and Romero-Vidal (2023) analyzes data from 3,000 policymakers in 18 Latin American countries and finds that politicians associated with the party of government perceive less corruption than those associated with opposition parties. This finding accords with other studies that show that voters tend to downplay or overlook corruption by politicians affiliated with the political party they support (Anduiza, Gallego and Muñoz, 2013; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro, 2015; Cornejo, 2023). Finally, Gouvêa Maciel and Santos (2024) asks Portuguese legislators and voters to “describe” corruption and the researchers then compare the language used by the two groups. Our study contributes to this small and relatively new literature with a distinct research design and findings. In particular, the only prior study that analyzes responses by both politicians and voters to the same questions about corruption is McAllister (2000), which is limited to a single country — Australia — and was published over 20 years ago. Many studies draw on parallel surveys of voters and politicians on other topics, particularly foreign affairs (Kertzer, 2022), emphasizing the value of this kind of research design.

Based on prior research, the main sets of hypotheses that guided construction of our survey instruments were twofold. The first set draws on the theory of political ambition (Schlesinger, 1966; Mayhew, 1974). To get reelected, politicians need to accomplish policy goals and credit-claim to voters:

we hypothesized that officials would be willing to overlook some corruption to further these other aims, that they would be willing to lie more often than voters, and that politicians with greater self-serving career characteristics would be more tolerant of corruption. The core of our survey consists of five vignettes that were designed to illuminate trade-offs between corruption and other goals such as efficiency. In line with this theoretical agenda, we expected politicians to be more tolerant of corruption than voters. We also expected politicians to engage in a trivial lie in order to obtain a framed certificate if they won a lottery, and we designed an experimental manipulation to test this possible credit-claiming activity. Finally, we expected to observe some heterogeneous effects among politicians and in particular, to observe that politicians who reported self-interest rather than social motivations for seeking public office would also be more tolerant of corruption (Gulzar and Khan, 2024). Thus, this set of hypotheses probes whether politicians exhibit attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with the commonplace view that they are a self-interested and unscrupulous elite. Our guiding expectation for all these hypotheses was that we would observe systematic differences in the responses given by politicians and by voters.

The second set of hypotheses concerns how partisanship affects evaluations of corruption, and was inspired by recent research that reveals that politicians lack accurate information about voters' policy preferences (Butler and Dynes, 2016; Broockman and Skovon, 2018; Walgrave et al., 2023; Furnas and LaPira, 2024). Corruption, however, is not a left-right issue, and we expected that voters (and, to a lesser extent, politicians) across the political spectrum would express intolerance of it. To assess this, we asked whether politicians had accurate information about how much voters disliked corruption and we sought to verify that corruption represents a valence issue for voters. In addition, and line with prior research, we expected that voters would exhibit greater tolerance of corruption by representatives affiliated with their own political party. Finally, while we did not have strong priors on the relationship, it is natural to consider whether left-right preferences of voters and politicians are related to corruption concerns; we elaborate on the reasons that left- or right-leaning individuals might be less tolerant of corruption when we discuss these results in Section 4.2. This suite of partisan-related hypotheses was second-order in the construction of our survey instrument, as we viewed them as constituting a less

consequential contribution to the literature relative to the first set of hypotheses.

In what follows, we organize the presentation around descriptive and then experimental results, in order to highlight the novelty of the descriptive findings that our research produced. We take up an explicit discussion of the two groups of hypotheses we outline above in the final section.

3 Survey Design, Data Collection, and Sample

3.1 Survey Design

Our survey was designed on Qualtrics and has nine parts. After seeking informed consent, in Section 2 we tell subjects that we will make a substantial donation (the PPP equivalent of 1,000 Euros) to a non-partisan charity they choose from three options (varying by country) if they win a lottery after completing the survey. Section 3 consists of background questions, including partisanship; Section 4 presents five vignettes capturing tolerance and expectation for corruption when posed as a trade-off with another value (such as efficiency). Since these questions are central to our analysis, we provide considerably more detail on each vignette as well as its presentation when we provide our descriptive results. Section 5 includes standard questions measuring preferences for redistribution; Section 6 asks questions about perceptions of corruption and of first- and second-order beliefs about whether politicians would be exposed, charged, and convicted if they engaged in corruption; and Section 7 asks questions related to trust, toward politicians specifically and in general towards others. Section 8 asks subjects for open-ended feedback about the survey as well as whether they think the survey was biased. Finally, in Section 9, we randomize a treatment asking subjects if they wish to receive a framed certificate describing the donation if they win the lottery introduced in Section 2, with participants informed that (a) we would pay for the certificate's production and shipping; (b) that the certificate's cost would be deducted from the donation and the amount listed on the certificate; or

(c) we would deduct the cost from the donation, but not change the amount listed on the certificate.⁴

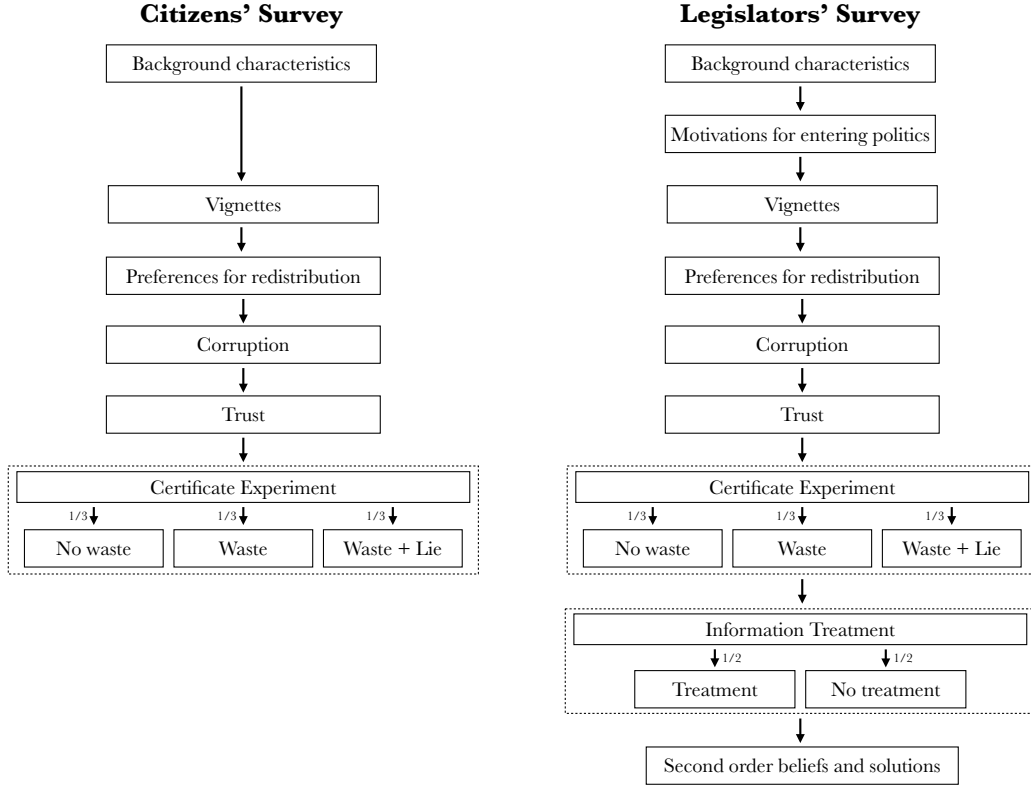
The survey that we circulate to legislators is identical to the one sent to citizens, with two additions. First, immediately after the background questions, we insert a section asking about politicians' motivations for entering public office (Section ??). Second, at the end of the survey (but before asking about bias and seeking general feedback) we randomize delivery of an information treatment (Section ??). The information treatment shows legislators pictograms of how their responses to the five vignettes compare to the average answers of voters in their country. We then ask legislators several questions to examine how they interpret the differences between their views and those of voters. Finally, we ask legislators to pledge to credit-claim on social media (control) or to post support for legislation that strengthens financial disclosures by elected officials (treatment) and we follow up on those who state they will post by examining whether they post anything. Figure 1 presents summary diagrams that show the components of the two surveys.

3.2 Data Collection and Sample

Data Collection. In 2021, we pretested the survey on 80 undergraduate students at Oxford University via the Nuffield Centre for Experimental Social Sciences. We did not pilot the survey among legislators, due to the uncertainty and difficulties that we anticipated in eliciting their responses; , we were also concerned about spillovers that might affect answers by politicians if we piloted and then altered the survey instrument. After pretesting, we began rolling out a slightly modified survey in 2022; data collection was completed in early 2024. For every country, we first ran the citizen survey

⁴The survey involved no deception. We made the donations as outlined to participants, and provided a framed certificate with the relevant donation amount if the selected participant answered that they wished to receive it. In the politician survey we offered to send a personalized report to any respondent that requested one. We followed up with an emailed document that provided a comparison of the individual's survey responses to those of politicians and citizens in their country.

Figure 1: Survey components



and following completion, the legislator survey.⁵ The citizen surveys were distributed by commercial survey companies and respondents were paid after completion. Depending on local circumstances, we used diverse methods to contact potential legislator respondents. Methods ranged from email and phone to in-person approaches. For phone calls and direct approaches, we used either undergraduate students (Colombia and Italy) or trained local enumerators (Pakistan), whom we hired so that contacts were made in the respondent's native language. The phone calls prompted legislators to complete the survey that they had already received by email. In Table 1, we report basic descriptive features of the

⁵For both the citizen and legislator surveys, the median completion time was approximately 9.5 minutes, slightly under the 10 minute estimate we provided respondents in the instructions. There was considerable heterogeneity across individuals and countries in completion time. For example, the average duration for Colombian politicians was 43 minutes, but the 75th percentile was 10,000 minutes (about a week). This was because the link was often shown to legislators during the recruitment process, and it is likely that the survey was opened – but not completed – at that point in time.

various surveys (excluding pretests).

Table 1: **Descriptive information about surveys of citizens and legislators**

Country/province	Subjects	Mode(s)	Number in pool	Response number	Response rate	Collection date
Colombia	citizens	online	NA	1,000	NA	Mar 2023
Italy	citizens	online	NA	1,998	NA	Nov 2021
Pakistan, KPK	citizens	online, in person	NA	1,484	NA	Nov–Dec 2021
Pakistan, Punjab	citizens	online, in person	NA	500	NA	Dec 2022
Colombia	Senators	in person	108	11	10	May 2023 - March 2024
Colombia	Representatives	in person	188	35	19	May 2023 - March 2024
Italy	Senators	email	461	11	2	Jun 2022–Apr 2023
Italy	Deputies	email	863	22	3	Jun 2022–Apr 2023
Italy	Regional legislators	email, phone	917	84	9	Jun 2022–Apr 2023
Pakistan	KPK MPAs	in person	145	116	80	Jun–Nov 2022
Pakistan	Punjab MPAs	in person	371	175	47	Jan–Feb 2023

Notes: NA = not applicable. KPK = Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. MPAs = Members of the Provincial Assembly. Vendors for citizens surveys: Colombia, Netquest; Italy, Lucid; Pakistan, Direct Focus Community Aid (DFCA). Surveys were circulated in Spanish in Colombia; in Italian in Italy; and in English and Urdu in Pakistan. Citizens were selected to be representative by age, gender, income, and macro-region in Colombia and Italy and rural/urban in KPK. The entire Punjab citizens' sample was collected in the province's capital, Lahore. In Italy, we surveyed Senators and Deputies elected in 2018 (to the XVIII Legislature) and also in 2022 (to the XIX Legislature), because the latter elections occurred while our survey was underway. Except for in-person citizen surveys in KPK, which were filled out on paper and subsequently input, all other in-person survey responses were collected electronically via Qualtrics on the enumerators' tablets.

Sample. Our final citizens' sample consists of 1,000 Colombians, 2,000 Italians, and 2,000 Pakistani (1,500 from the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and 500 from the province of Punjab). Respondents were sampled using quota sampling, imposing quotas on age, gender, income, and macro-regions. The final samples for all three countries are representative along these four dimensions (see Table A.1).

For the legislator sample, we targeted all national-level politicians in Colombia, all national- and regional-level politicians in Italy, and all provincial-level politicians in the Pakistani provinces of KPK and Punjab. Our final legislators' sample consists of 46 Colombian legislators, 117 Italian legislators, and 291 Pakistani legislators. Response rates ranged from 5.2% in Italy to 56.4% in Pakistan. More details appear in Table 1.

4 Descriptive Results

4.1 Tolerance of Corruption

We begin by describing the vignettes and how citizens and legislators respond to them. The scenarios we presented captured the following choices:

1. Whether a public official would/should assign a road contract to Company A, which is known to be scrupulously honest, or to Company B, which would complete the road more quickly without any sacrifice in quality, but had been rumored to have bribed officials to get contracts in the past.
2. Whether a politician would/should punish a personal assistant who accepted a gift from a businessman and then helped him get a meeting with the politician.
3. Whether a candidate would/should accept an informal offer from a supporter to pay for campaign ads on their behalf, despite being against the law, in order to compete with a much better-resourced opponent.
4. Whether a government department head would/should hire a relative or a better-qualified candidate for a job.
5. Whether citizens would/should vote for a wealthy politician who had made generous contributions to local public goods but had bribed public officials when in business before entering politics.

While it is difficult to disentangle sincere beliefs from public stances for politicians in the best of circumstances, we note that the vignettes were designed to lessen social desirability bias by making the “right” answer more ambiguous, and asking respondent to choose between two morally defensible actions. Each vignette asks the respondent to choose when there is a clear trade-off between probity and another value, such as efficiency (Vignette 1), strict law enforcement (Vignette 2), the competitiveness of a democratic election (Vignette 3), family ties (Vignette 4), or redistribution (Vignette 5).

We designed the vignettes to have no obvious right answer; perhaps it would be preferable to overlook some corruption to get public goods constructed more quickly, for instance, or to have a more competitive election. That is, the vignettes were designed to elicit whether subjects were prepared to endorse some corruption to achieve some other socially (and possibly politically) desirable goal. This design reflects the underlying idea that corruption is a valence issue — no one is likely to be pro-corruption as a matter of principle — but in real decision making, individuals may express tolerance for corruption when other values must be weighed against probity concerns.

Given their importance to our analysis, we also show the first two vignettes as they were presented to respondents in full in Figure 2, to provide a clearer sense of the survey’s layout.⁶

Figure 2: Sample vignettes

An official of the PPRA (Public Procurement Regulatory Authority) is in charge of overseeing a highway contract. Two companies have made comparable bids. **Company A** is known to be scrupulously honest. **Company B** is rumored to have bribed officials in the past to get contracts but is very efficient in its business. It is expected that Company B will complete the road much more quickly than Company A, without any sacrifice in quality.

Which company do you think the official **should** select?

Company A	Company B
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Which company do you think the official **would** select if this were to occur in Pakistan?

Company A	Company B
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(1.a) First vignette

A Member of the National Assembly discovers that his personal assistant was given a holiday gift of expensive Eid sweets by a businessman who had been trying to set up a meeting with the politician. After receiving the gift, the assistant set up a meeting for the following week, whereas it would normally have taken longer to make an appointment with the representative. Although not explicitly illegal, some people could see this as favoritism.

What do you think the legislator **should** do?

Nothing	Warn his assistant	Write up his assistant	Fire his assistant
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What do you think the legislator **would** do if this were to occur in Pakistan?

Nothing	Warn his assistant	Write up his assistant	Fire his assistant
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(1.b) Second vignette

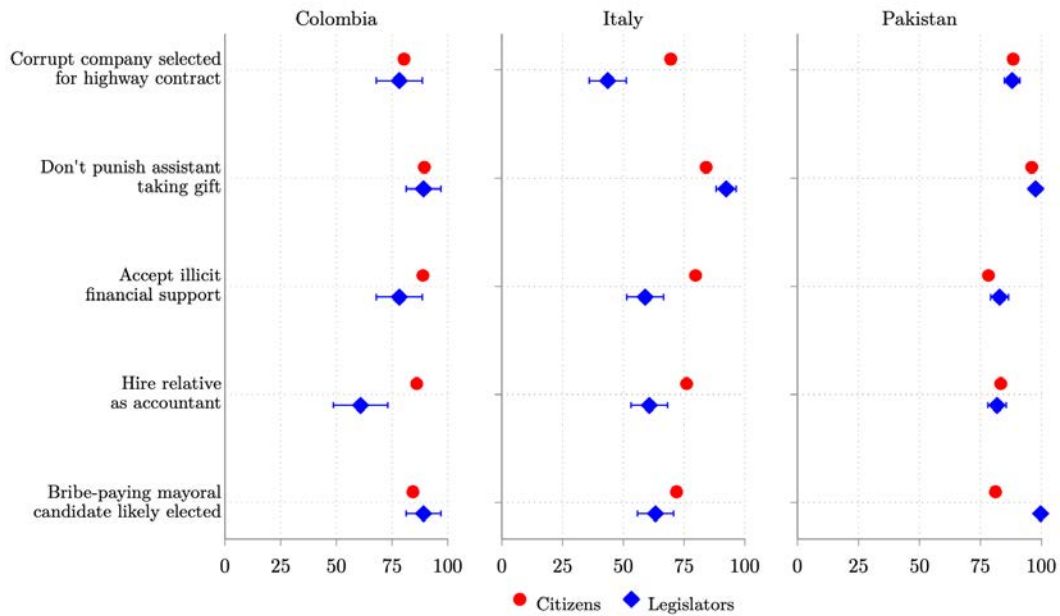
In Figure 3, we show how respondents answered the vignette questions about what subjects expect (“what would happen?”) by country and type of respondent (citizens and politicians); the corrupt option is always coded as an affirmative outcome. These capture what we label *corruption expectations*.

By large majorities, citizens think the corrupt policy option would be selected in each scenario if it were to transpire in their country. While a relatively smaller fraction of Italians think the corrupt option, even a vast majority of Italians believe the corrupt option would be selected.

Politicians are almost as likely as citizens to believe that the corrupt option will be selected. Indeed, in

⁶These particular vignettes are from the Pakistani survey’s English-language.

Figure 3: Corruption expectations: proportions of vignette responses expecting the corrupt outcome (what “would” happen if ...)



Notes: The left subfigure shows the results for the Colombian sample; the central subfigure shows the results for the Italian sample; the right subfigure shows the results for the Pakistani sample. Each subfigure depicts the share of respondents who satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval for citizens or legislators in the sample. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1.

a few cases, politicians think this is even more likely. The largest gaps between what politicians and citizens expect is in Italy, where voters generally believe the corrupt option would be selected more often than legislators. But even in Italy, in four of five vignettes a majority of politicians believe that corruption would occur. Indeed, the extent of agreement between voters and their elected representatives in all three countries is striking. It is also notable how modest the cross-country differences are across the three cases.

The patterns in Figure 3 are corroborated by data (Figure C.1) that reports citizens’ and politicians’ beliefs about the prevalence of corruption in their country. More than 80 percent of both citizens and legislators in all three countries believe that corruption is either “common” or “extremely common,” and majorities of voters in all three countries believe that it is likely that a politician would accept a bribe if offered one.

In addition to seeing corruption as prevalent, citizens do not anticipate exposure or legal sanction for politicians who take bribes. This is evident in the data depicted in Figure 4, where we report

respondents' beliefs about how likely a politician who took a bribe would be (a) exposed in public, (b) charged with a crime, and (c) convicted if charged. Well over half of voters believe that it is unlikely, very unlikely, or not likely at all that a bribe-taking politician would be exposed for wrongdoing, charged, or convicted; the only exception is in Pakistan, where most voters believe that a bribe-taking politician would not be exposed and charged but that if they were, they would go on to be convicted. This may reflect events in the country that took place just prior to the survey period, when a small number of very prominent politicians were convicted of corruption. Overall, voters in all three countries are highly skeptical of legal enforcement of anti-corruption legislation and of the media's ability to expose this kind of political malfeasance.⁷

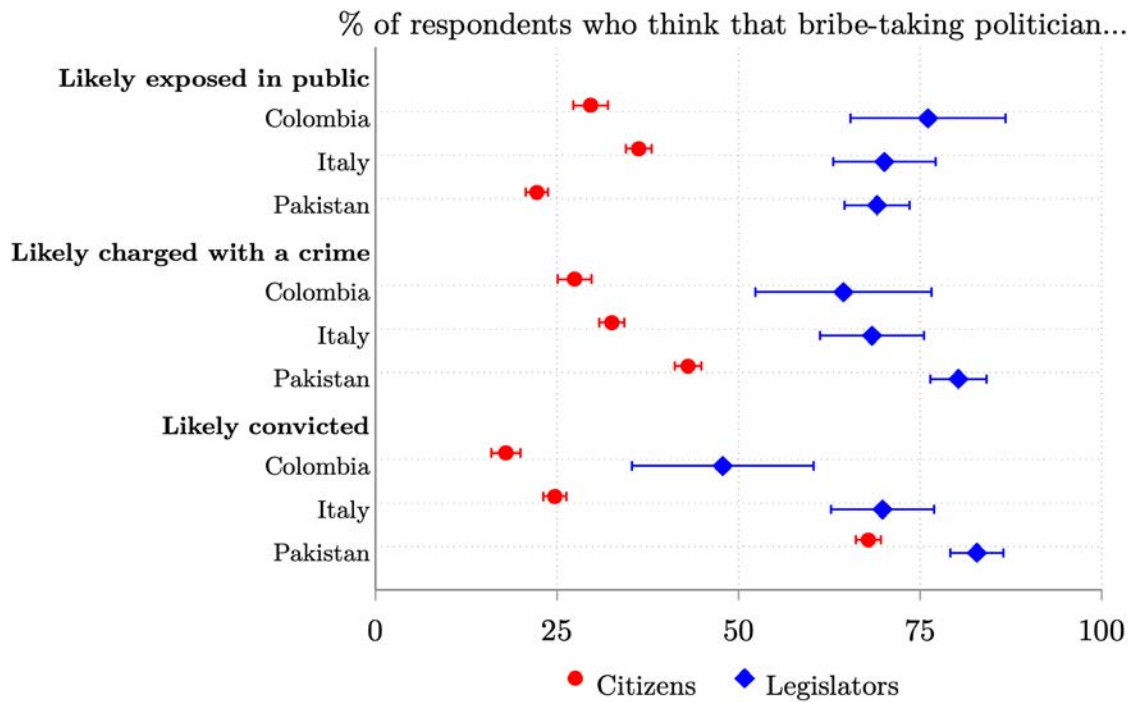
These beliefs contrast sharply with those expressed by politicians in all three countries, who generally believe that a bribe-taker would be exposed, charged, and convicted. The data thus suggest that politicians as a group are highly sensitive to the public and judicial risks of engaging in illicit behavior. With the exception of Colombian legislators — only about 48% of whom believe they would be convicted if exposed and charged with bribe-taking — more than 70% of legislators believe that if they took a bribe, they would be exposed, charged, and convicted. Assuming these reported beliefs are sincere, it seems that most legislators would hesitate to accept a bribe in these countries since doing so presents professional and personal risks of which legislators are well aware.⁸

We now turn from respondents' beliefs about expectations about what *would* happen in the vignettes to what they think the protagonist *should* do. In Figure 6, we show the distribution of responses to the vignette questions about what subjects think ought to occur ("what should happen?"). These

⁷Belief in a lack of sanction does not follow directly from a belief in corruption's prevalence. For example, the public may believe that corruption is both common and likely to be exposed but that there is little electoral penalty for bribe-taking (Fernández-Vázquez, Barberá and Rivero, 2015; Klačnja, Lupu and Tucker, 2021).

⁸If legislators express the view that they would be exposed, indicted, and convicted for accepting a bribe yet also believe corruption to be commonplace in their country, it means that they define corruption more broadly than mere bribe-taking and/or they suspect others of frequent bribe-taking.

Figure 4: Respondent beliefs of likelihood that a bribe-taking politician would be exposed, charged, or convicted

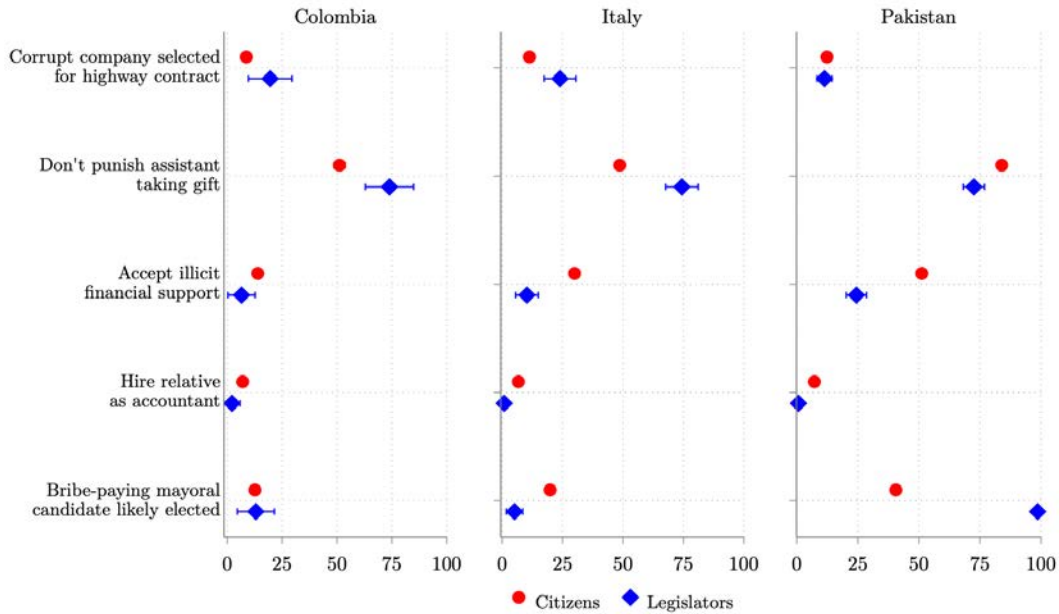


Notes: The figure depicts, by country, the share of respondents who satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval, for citizens and legislators in the sample. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1.

questions measure what we call *corruption tolerance*. We see that — with one exception on which we comment shortly — both politicians and citizens generally favor the non-corrupt choice in the hypothetical scenarios. Fewer than a quarter of respondents endorse allowing an efficient but corrupt company to be awarded a construction contract (Vignette 1); and more than 80 percent of respondents support hiring an experienced candidate over a relative (Vignette 4). More than half of respondents in all three countries also support strict enforcement of campaign finance laws (Vignette 3) even when doing so erects an obstacle to a level playing field in democratic electoral competition. The consistent exception occurs in response to Vignette 2, for which majorities of both legislators and voters say they believe that a politician’s assistant should be free to accept a small gift in exchange for allowing someone to jump the queue to meet with a politician.

On two questions in Figure 6, we see relatively large discrepancies between the responses of Pakistani citizens and legislators. Pakistani legislators are considerably more tolerant of a wealthy and socially-

Figure 5: Corruption tolerance: proportions of vignette responses that endorse the corrupt outcome (what “should” happen if ...)



Notes: The left subfigure shows the results for the Colombian sample; the central subfigure shows the results for the Italian sample; the right subfigure shows the results for the Pakistani sample. Each subfigure depicts the share of respondents who satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval, for citizens and legislators in the sample. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1.

minded political candidate even if he is known to be corrupt (Vignette 5); conversely, more of them prefer strict enforcement of campaign finance laws than voters (Vignette 3).⁹

Overall, responses depicted in Figure 6 reveal that politicians and voters express values that are more alike than different. In particular, politicians are not more tolerant of corruption than voters, and furthermore, both groups are generally more tolerant of corruption under comparable circumstances;

⁹Note, however, that Pakistani politicians' responses to Vignette 5 may have been the result of confusion over the presentation of the vignette, which asked whether they would support the corrupt candidate, “apart from party allegiances.” According to enumerators who conducted the surveys on our behalf, the diction we employed in the English version of the question (as well as its translation into Urdu) may have been interpreted by politician-respondents as asking whether their party allegiance was such that they would support a candidate from their own party, despite his corruption. We believe this interpretation is likely, given that almost all politicians said they would support the corrupt candidate.

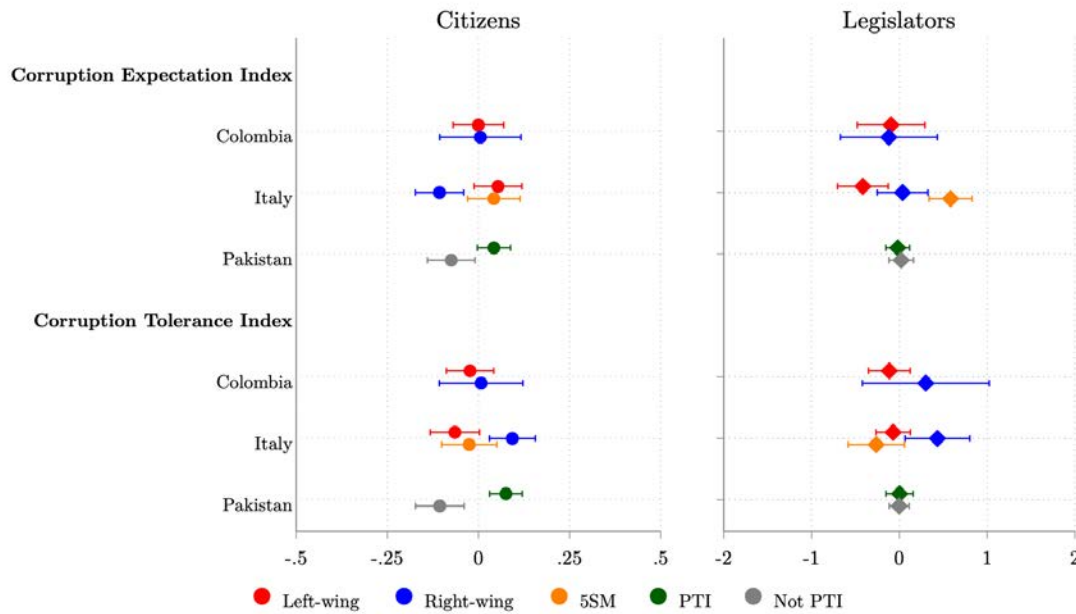
for instance, both voters and politicians generally are accepting of a politician's assistant receiving a gift in Vignette 2. This disapproval of corruption contrasts sharply with perceptions of its frequency which, as we saw in Figure 3, both politicians and voters believe is quite likely to occur in all vignettes.

One natural concern with any corruption-related survey is whether responses are sincere or whether subjects instead answer questions the way that they believe is socially acceptable. This issue is particularly relevant for elected politicians, who may be aware (as we show shortly) that voters dislike corruption. As we have already noted, the vignettes were designed to avoid social desirability bias, and politicians do not always choose the non-corrupt option. A majority in all three countries do not believe a politician's assistant should be punished for accepting a gift in exchange for giving someone earlier access to the politician, whereas respondents do not condone the other types of corruption in the vignettes (with the exception of Pakistani legislators, who endorse electing a bribe-paying candidate as mayor). Thus, respondents appear willing to openly express tolerance of corruption in some scenarios but not others. While we cannot rule out insincere responses to the others, we are reassured by the fact that politicians are clearly willing to express high tolerance of corruption in some circumstances.

4.2 Partisan Affiliations and Corruption Tolerance

To explore the characteristics of citizens and politicians who are more tolerant of corruption, we create two standardized indices (z-scores) based on responses to all five vignettes. Specifically, for each country and politician/citizen group, we normalize each set of vignette responses to have mean zero and standard deviation one, and take the mean of the resulting normalized responses as index values (Kling, Liebman and Katz, 2007). The first index is based on responses to questions about what subjects think *would* happen in their country under each hypothetical scenario. The second index is based on responses to questions about what subjects think *should* happen under each hypothetical scenario. In what follows, we refer to the former as the *Corruption Expectations Index* and latter as the *Corruption Tolerance Index*. Higher standardized values indicate higher perceptions or greater tolerance of corruption. Based on self-reported responses to questions about their electoral behavior, we then

Figure 6: Vignette responses: what “would” and “should” happen by party affiliation



Notes: The left subfigure shows the results for the citizens sample; the right subfigure shows the results for the legislators sample. Each subfigure depicts, by country, the average value of the *Corruption Expectation Index* (top three rows) and the average value of the *Corruption Tolerance Index* (bottom three rows) by party affiliation. In Colombia, *Left-wing* defined as voting/being part of Pacto Historico, Partido Liberal, or Alianza Verde; *Right-wing* defined as voting/being part of Partido Conservador, Centro Democratico, Partido de la U, or Cambio Radical. In Italy, *Left-wing* defined as voting/being part of Partito Democratico, +Europa, Liberi e Uguali; *Right-wing* defined as voting/being part of Forza Italia, Lega, Fratelli d'Italia, or Noi con l'Italia - UDC; *5SM* defined as voting/being part of Movimento 5 Stelle. In Pakistan, *PTI* defined as voting/being part of PTI; *Not PTI* defined as voting/being part of any other party. All indices defined in Appendix Section I.2.

divide voters according to their partisan orientations or affiliations. In Colombia, we class parties as leftwing or rightwing; in Italy, as leftwing, rightwing, or populist (the Movimento Cinque Stelle [5SM], or Five Star Movement¹⁰); and in Pakistan as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) or other. The PTI was elected into national office in 2018 on a populist and strongly anti-corruption platform, not entirely unlike that of Italy's M5S; the parties do not naturally array on the left-right spectrum in that country. In Figure 6, we depict the association between where legislators and voters in each country appear on the two indices and their reported partisan preference or affiliation.

Figure 6 shows few differences between partisan supporters in their views of corruption, e.g., we cannot distinguish Colombian leftwing from rightwing voters or Colombian leftwing from rightwing politicians in their corruption tolerance or expectation. Heterogeneous partisan effects for what re-

¹⁰While 5SM is now broadly considered a left-wing party, its platform explicitly renounces placement on the left-right spectrum and instead calls out “the corrupt elite.”

spondents both expect and think should happen are visible only for Pakistani voters. Perhaps unexpectedly, PTI supporters express both greater perceptions and greater tolerance of corruption. Italian rightwing voters also stand out; they express distinctly higher corruption expectations and lower corruption tolerance than leftwing voters or supporters of the Five Star Movement.

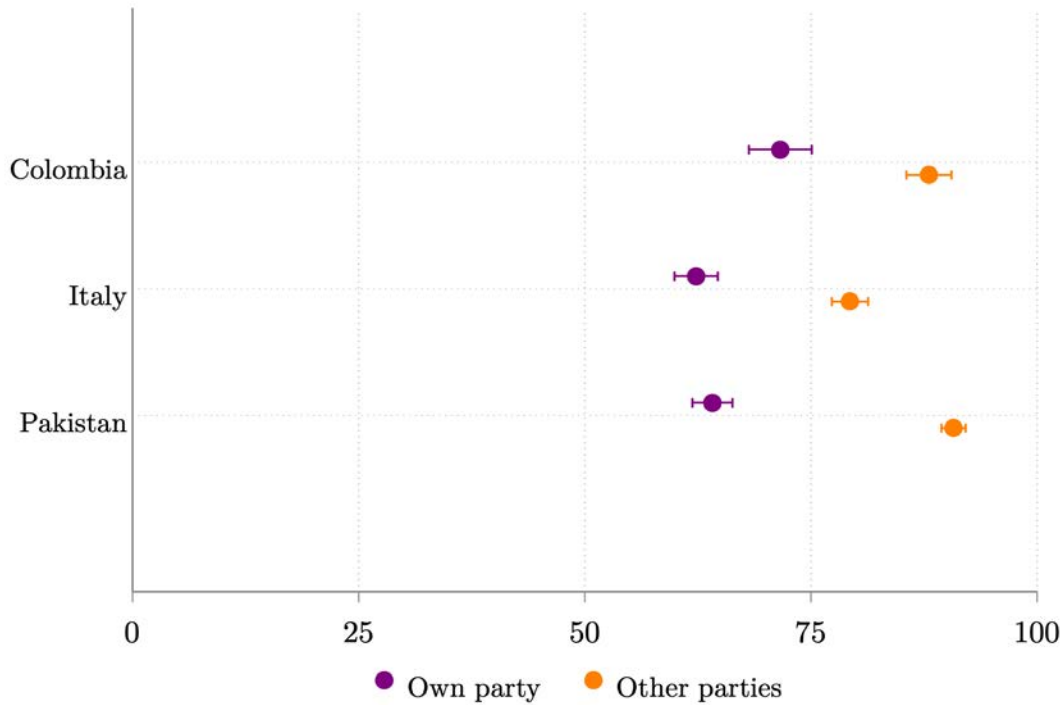
The general pattern of these results is consistent with the view that corruption is a valence issue; voters and legislators perceive similar amounts of corruption regardless of their partisan location on the political spectrum and they express comparable values with respect to corruption. Even in Pakistan, where the then-governing PTI campaigned heavily on an anti-corruption platform, legislators from all political parties share similar corruption tolerance and expectations. PTI voters, by contrast, exhibit apparently contradictory views about the commonness and acceptability of corruption (see Table B.1).

While voters across all political parties exhibit comparable concern for corruption, they may view politicians from their own party as less corrupt than those from other parties (Anduiza, Gallego and Muñoz, 2013). To explore this possibility, we use responses to questions on our survey that asked about the likelihood (on a 6-point scale) that a politician from a particular party would accept a bribe, ranging from “never” to “certain.”¹¹ Our focus in these analyses is the subsample of citizens who reported voting in the last election for one of their country’s three main parties. We compare their responses to their beliefs about bribe-accepting amongst their own party’s politicians relative to their average responses about politicians from each of the other main parties. For ease of exposition, we convert both own-party and other-party responses into binary variables based on whether they are above or below 3, which corresponds to the view that a politician is “likely” to accept a bribe on our 0–5 scale. This comparison appears in Figure 7.

We first note that, even for their own party, a majority of voters think that politicians will accept a bribe if offered, and these expectations are in similar ranges across countries, from 62% in Italy to 72% in

¹¹We did not ask politicians the same questions because of time concerns (the politician survey was already longer than the citizen survey) and on the supposition that doing so could antagonize them. We also suspected that they would naturally respond that politicians affiliated with other parties were more likely to engage in corruption than those affiliated with their own.

Figure 7: Share of respondents who believe it is likely that a politician accepts a bribe



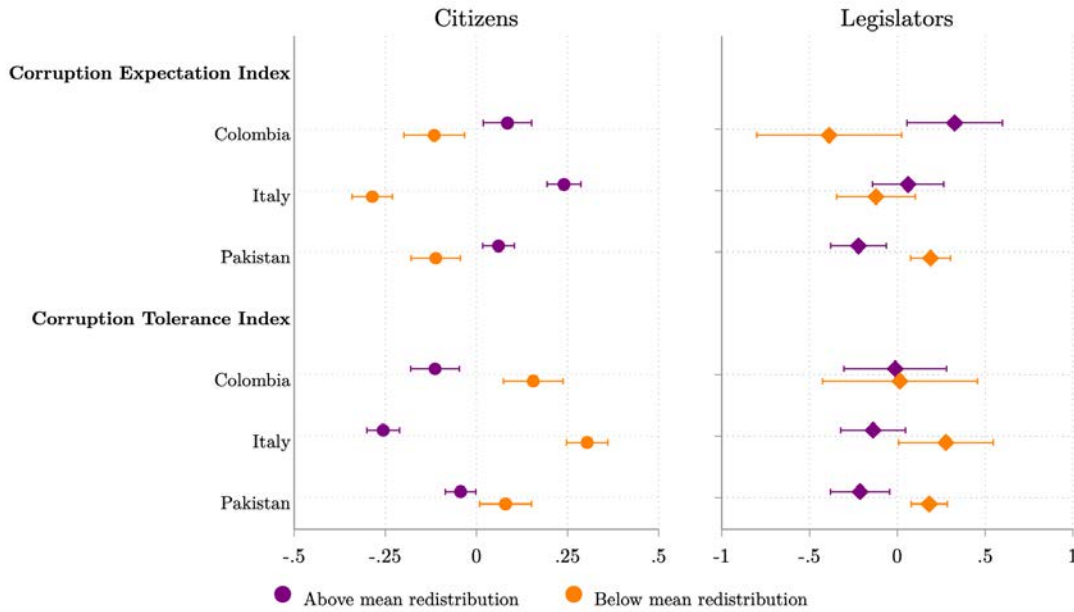
Notes: The figure depicts, by country, the share of respondents, with its associated 90% confidence interval, who believe it is likely for a politician from their party, in purple, and from other parties, in orange, to accept a bribe. Citizen sample only. Variable defined in Appendix Section I.1.

Colombia. Voter expectations of other-party politicians accepting a bribe is substantially higher in all cases and again quite similar across countries, ranging from 79% in Italy to 91% in Pakistan. In Figure C.2, we report results by party affiliation.

Party affiliation is both an imperfect measure of “left-right” political orientation (e.g., Italy’s Five Star Movement insists it cannot be placed on the left-right spectrum), and also confounded by the loyalty concerns alluded to above. In Figure 8, we therefore take a distinct approach to exploring whether anti-corruption beliefs and preferences vary with left-right political differences, based on attitudes toward redistribution, which is commonly taken as capturing the left-right political spectrum separate from partisan allegiances. Interestingly, the figure shows that pro-redistributive citizens are far more likely to believe that corruption is commonplace and are much less tolerant of it. This pattern is observed across all three countries, although the differences among legislators are smaller.

While we cannot offer a decisive interpretation, these findings rule out some hypothetical links between redistributive preferences and corruption. In particular, citizens who believe that corruption

Figure 8: Vignette responses: what “would” and “should” happen by preferences for redistribution



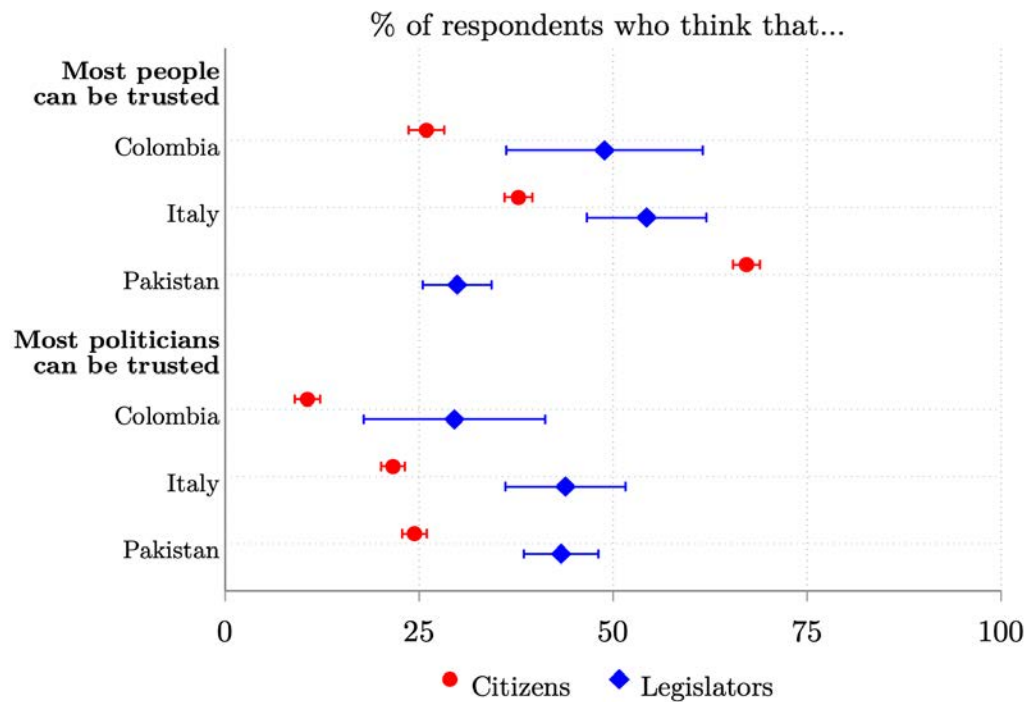
Notes: The left subfigure shows the results for the citizen sample; the right subfigure shows the results for the legislator sample. Each subfigure depicts, by country, the average value of the *Corruption Expectation Index* (top three rows) and the average value of the *Corruption Tolerance Index* (bottom three rows) by preferences for redistribution. *Above mean redistribution* is defined as being above the mean of the *Preferences for Redistribution Index*; *Below mean redistribution* is defined as being below the mean of the same index. All indices defined in Appendix Section I.2.

is pervasive might be less supportive of providing government the necessary resources to engage in redistribution (cf. Peyton, 2020). This would generate a negative correlation between concern for corruption and support for redistribution. The positive relationship we observe instead suggests that we might look at whether left-wing voters associate economic elites with corruption; for example, some voters may see inequality as the result of rent capture, and therefore favor more redistribution. We emphasize that these findings are particularly surprising given that cross-party differences in corruption expectations and tolerance are muted, corroborating that corruption represents a valence issue that would be difficult for any single party to weaponize electorally; this is the case even though voters’ anti-corruption views align with the fundamentals of the left-right spectrum. We hope that further research can shed light on the mechanisms underlying these patterns.

4.3 Trust in Politicians and Others

We now ask whether voters hold politicians responsible for the considerable corruption that they believe surrounds them. To do so, we examine answers to a question about whether politicians can be trusted, benchmarked against responses to a question about trust in “most people.” We present these responses in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Responses to trust questions

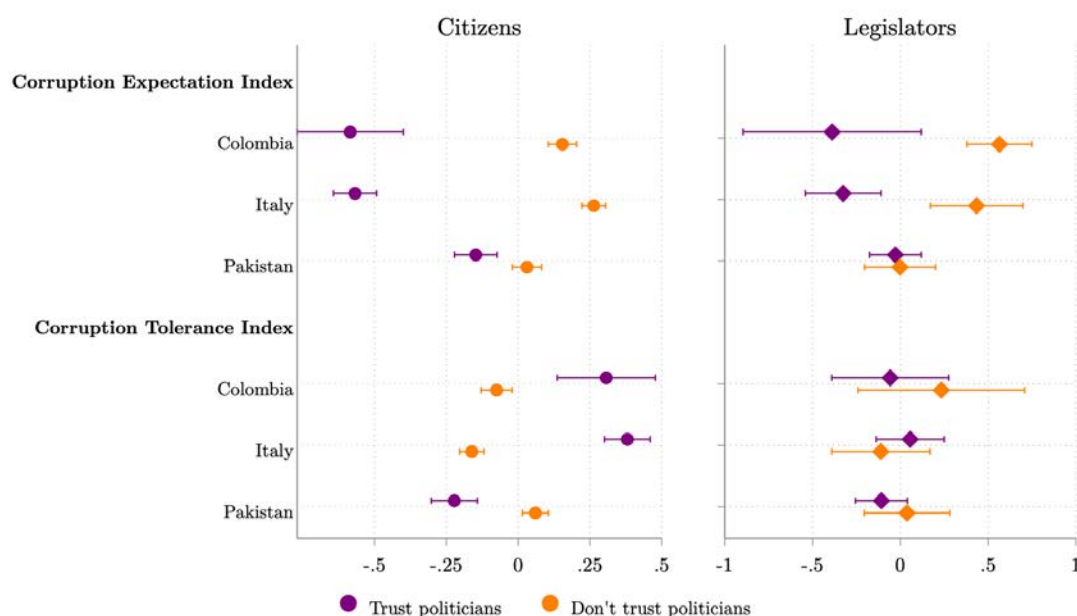


Notes: The figure depicts, by country, the share of respondents who satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval, for citizens and legislators in the sample. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1.

The data show that citizens are less trusting than politicians in general, except in Pakistan, where citizens express high rates of trust in others.¹² In Colombia and Italy, both citizens and politicians express lower trust in politicians than in “other people.” However, in Pakistan, there is a slightly higher rate of trust in politicians relative to others amongst politicians themselves. Overall, voters trust each

¹²Other surveys have similarly found very low rates of generalized trust in Colombia. The trust rate amongst Pakistani citizens is higher than we might have anticipated, given the patterns in, e.g., the World Values Survey (see <https://ourworldindata.org/trust>).

Figure 10: Vignette responses: what “would” and “should” happen by trust level towards politicians



Notes: The left subfigure shows the results for the citizen sample; the right subfigure shows the results for the legislator sample. Each subfigure depicts, by country, the average value of the *Corruption Expectation Index* (top three rows) and the average value of the *Corruption Tolerance Index* (bottom three rows) by trust towards politicians. *Trust politicians* is defined as having answered 6 or more on a 10-point scale on whether most politicians can be trusted; *Don't trust politicians* is defined as having answered 4 or less. For indices' construction, see Appendix Section I.2.

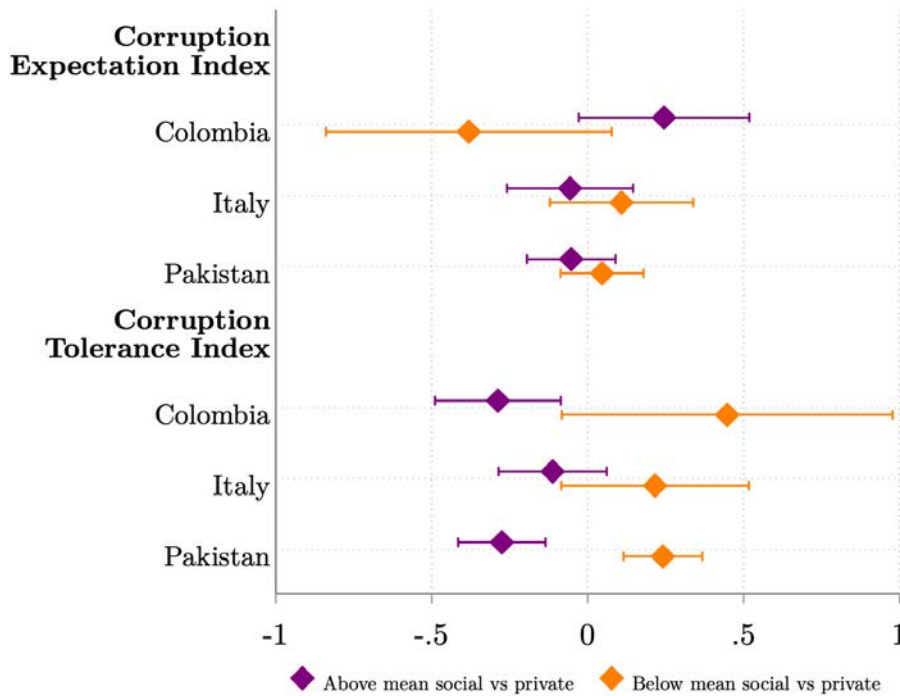
other more than their elected representatives. The relatively high rate of trust that legislators express towards each other in Pakistan may suggest that it is a political environment that requires particularly frequent interactions and deal-making, though this is just one interpretation and another area for further research.

In Figure 10, we next draw a direct connection between trust in politicians and attitudes toward corruption. We find that for both citizens and legislators, those who express lower trust in politicians also expect to observe more corrupt decisions. This pattern is evident for both Colombia and Italy, though muted (citizens) or non-existent (legislators) for Pakistan. The overall finding is as expected, given prior work documenting a negative trust-corruption association (see, e.g., Fisman and Golden, 2017). It is interesting that we observe a similar pattern based on whether respondents trust other people *in general*, suggesting a broader undermining of trust as a result of perceiving frequent corruption (see Figure C.3).

4.4 Motivations for Entering Public Office and Tolerance of Corruption

In our final descriptive exercise, we focus on our politician sample to assess whether their motivations for seeking public office are correlated with their tolerance of corruption. The survey provided six possible motivations for entering public office, and asked politicians to report the importance of each. We distinguish between social motivations (“to work on public policy and legislation” and “to help those in need or serve others in my community”) and those reflecting private and/or ego interests (“the salary,” “career opportunities or pension after holding office,” “less appealing opportunities in the private sector,” and “to get the admiration of others”). We then calculate a “social motivation index” by taking the (normalized) difference between social motivations and private/ego interests. In Figure 11, we break legislators in each country into those with below and above the mean of this social motivation index, and compare their tolerance of corruption via their responses to the vignettes.

Figure 11: Vignette responses: what “would” and “should” happen by social vs private motivations for seeking public office



Notes: The figure depicts, by country, the average value of the *Corruption Expectation Index* (top three rows) and the average value of the *Corruption Tolerance Index* (bottom three rows) by social vs private motivations for seeking public office. *Above mean social vs private* is defined as being above the country mean of the *Social Motivation Index* as defined in the text; *Below mean social vs private* is defined as being below the country mean of the *Social Motivation Index*. Legislator sample only. All indices defined in Appendix Section 1.2.

While any given legislator generally expresses a variety of motivations for entering politics, we observe a substantially greater intolerance for corruption amongst politicians with stronger social motivations. This is true across all three countries, though the difference is significant only for Pakistan (most plausibly because of the larger sample of legislator respondents). In the upper half of Figure 11, we again compare socially- versus privately-motivated legislators, focusing this time on corruption expectations. Overall, these results suggest that encouraging the right type of person to seek public office — someone driven more by social rather than private motivations — might increase support for anti-corruption policies (Gulzar and Khan, 2024).¹³

5 Experimental Results

The survey contained a single experimental manipulation of all respondents and an additional information treatment exclusively for legislators.

5.1 The Information Treatment of Legislators

Our information treatment shows each treated legislator how their answer to each vignette question compares to those from citizens in their country. In Figure 12, we provide an example (from Pakistan, where the survey was available in English) of how we present the information to treated legislators.

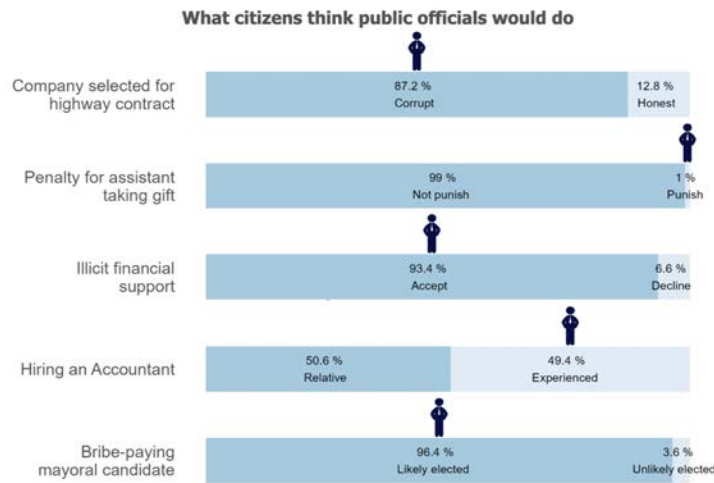
In the pictograph, the primary information that is conveyed is that citizens expect politicians to make corrupt decisions under all scenarios, as indicated by the fact that the percentage of citizens who thought legislators would choose the corrupt option is always greater than half. Whether this information affects a legislator’s beliefs depends on whether or not he already holds the same view of what citizens believe. If the information is new, the direction of updating depends on whether the legislator had over- or underestimated citizens’ beliefs about the extent of corruption.

¹³Details on the proportions of legislators in each country who listed each of the six motivations as important or very important are presented in Figure C.4.

Figure 12: Sample treatment infograph

The following figure compares the answers that you provided in response to the various scenarios that we presented to you a few minutes ago to those provided by a random sample of adults in Pakistan. The bars show the distribution of responses about what people expect politicians would do in each scenario and the little figure shows what you thought the official should do.

As you can see, **in 2 scenarios out of 5**, a majority of voters think that public officials will make decisions that are different from what you believed to be appropriate.



After presenting information about what voters expect politicians to do, we ask legislators five questions. In this section, we focus on the post-treatment question with the clearest link to citizens’ beliefs about the likely occurrence of corruption: “Do you think that voters’ views about how serious corruption is in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan] are accurate?” Respondents answered on a five-point scale from “underestimate its serious a lot” to “overestimate its seriousness a lot.” Responses to the question reflect a politician’s beliefs about voters’ beliefs (hence, second-order beliefs) about corruption’s seriousness compared to the politician’s belief about the true level of corruption. The treatment provides information on the true value of citizens’ beliefs (holding constant each legislator’s beliefs about the true extent of corruption). The sign (and extent) of updating for whether legislators think citizens overestimate corruption — the object measured in our survey — depends on the respondent’s initial beliefs. Our expectation is that legislators will update in the direction of the signal they receive about citizens’ perceptions.

To assess each legislator’s initial belief about what citizens believe, prior to the information treatment we ask each legislator: “Out of 10 adult citizens in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan], how many do you

think would answer [that corruption is] common or extremely common?” The median response was 8. Thus, legislators’ initial typical second-order beliefs were that citizens thought corruption was relatively common.

In the initial specification reported in Table 2, we present results that pool responses from legislators from all three countries. These show the overall treatment effect on legislators, independent of their initial beliefs or their country. Our outcome variable is *CitizenBias_l*, which captures legislator *l*’s response on a 5-point scale of the extent to which citizens under- or overestimate corruption. The median legislator’s response is that citizens hold accurate views of corruption, neither under- nor overestimating it. The coefficient on the treatment variable, *InfoTreatment_l*, is -0.26 and significant at the 5% level, indicating that the information treatment causes legislators to believe that citizens believe that corruption is uncommon, relative to legislators’ initial beliefs. In Column 2, we collapse the outcome variable into a binary measure that takes the value of one if a legislator believes citizens overestimate corruption and zero otherwise. Dichotomizing the dependent variable simplifies the interpretation of how the treatment affects legislator second-order beliefs independently of the scale on which those beliefs are measured. In this specification, the treatment variable’s coefficient remains negative and significant at the 5% level; its value (-0.11) implies a 35% reduction in the likelihood that a legislator believes that citizens overestimate corruption relative to the baseline of 0.31.

Our main conjecture is that legislators who initially believe that most citizens see corruption as common will adjust their beliefs downward *relative* to those who had already held the view that citizens see corruption as less common. We thus allow for a different treatment effect for legislators whose initial beliefs (*second order beliefs*) are above the mean overall — the 37% of legislators who responded in the survey that 8, 9, or 10 out of 10 citizens believe corruption is common or very common — versus other legislators; we consider other parameterizations below. To implement this, we include the interaction terms $InfoTreatment * I(CitizenBeliefs < 8)$ and $InfoTreatment * I(CitizenBeliefs \geq 8)$ in predicting *CitizenBias*. We report results in columns 3 and 4 for the binarized version of *CitizenBias*; in both cases, the negative treatment effect comes entirely from those with initial high beliefs about citizens’ corruption perceptions adjusting their second-order beliefs downward. The treatment effect

Table 2: Information treatment effects on belief that citizens overestimate corruption

	Continuous (1)	Binary (2)	Binary (3)	Binary (4)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)				
All Legislators mean	3.01	0.31	0.31	0.31
Above threshold mean			0.37	
Below threshold mean			0.22	
Panel B: All Legislators				
Treatment	-0.26** (0.11)	-0.11** (0.05)		0.20 (0.22)
T x More than 80% corruption as common			-0.17*** (0.06)	
T x Less than 80% corruption as common			-0.03 (0.08)	
T x Second-order belief on corruption common				-0.04 (0.03)
Second-order belief on corruption common				0.04** (0.02)
Observations	352	352	352	352
R ²	0.051	0.026	0.039	0.044

Notes: The dependent variable in column (1) is a 5-point scale variable on the extent to which citizens under- or overestimate corruption, the dependent variable in columns (2) to (4) is an indicator variable for whether legislators believe that citizens overestimate the extent of corruption. All regressions include controls for gender, age group, education, and country fixed effects. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who were assigned to the control group (no information treatment) and separately for believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country. Panel B reports the coefficients from four different specifications. The first and second column shows the treatment effects of the information treatment. The third column shows the treatment effect on respondents believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country separately. The fourth column shows the treatment effect interacted with the second order belief on how many people believe that corruption is very common. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

for those with initially low beliefs is close to zero and statistically insignificant ($p = 0.707$). When we use a continuous measure of initial beliefs (Column 4), legislators with higher initial second-order beliefs adjust downward relative to those with lower initial beliefs, but this interaction is not significant, which is expected given the non-responsiveness of those with initially low expectations.

In Appendix Table D.1, we present results disaggregated by country.

We also examine whether exposure to accurate and visually evocative pictograms depicting voters' corruption beliefs impacts legislators' beliefs and perceptions through their responses to four other post-treatment questions (though as noted earlier, the post-treatment question discussed above is most

clearly linked to the information presented in the pictograph). We report full results to the following questions in Appendix Tables D.2–D.5. The questions asked are:

1. whether politicians and voters hold similar views on corruption;
2. whether voters see corruption as a major concern relative to other issues;
3. whether voters’ views of corruption undermine trust in government;
4. whether legislators are willing to support legislation aimed at strengthening financial disclosure laws.

The results reported in Appendix Tables D.2–D.5 are mixed. The question whether politicians and voters hold similar views captures information that is similar to whether citizens overestimate corruption, though in a manner that makes it harder to make clear directional predictions; it depends on our assumptions about politicians’ prior beliefs. The patterns reported in Appendix Table D.2 go in the same direction as those reported in Table 2, with treatment generally shrinking the politician-citizen gap in perceptions; the treatment effect is (weakly) stronger for those who believe initially that voters see corruption as very common.

The most striking results involve legislators’ beliefs about how corruption affects trust in government (Appendix Table D.4). The average treatment effect is zero. However, we observe opposite-signed effects (in the expected directions) for legislators with high versus low initial second order beliefs: the treatment reduces the belief that corruption undermines trust in government among politicians whose priors were that most voters see corruption as common whereas it increases this belief for those with more optimistic priors. We observe no treatment effect on willingness to support financial disclosure legislation, in part because the vast majority of legislators already express such support (as seen in Appendix Table D.5, the control group mean is 91 percent).

The information treatment is thus effective in that it better aligns the second-order beliefs of legislators with the actual corruption concerns of voters. However, it does so in an asymmetric manner that is surprising and goes against our initial expectation, which was that the information we provided would prompt legislators to adjust their second-order beliefs upwards. This deviation from the an-

anticipated treatment effect stems in part from the fact that legislators' priors differed from those we expected when we designed the survey: legislators already believed that citizens thought corruption was common. However, our new data show also that legislators who underestimate citizens' corruption concerns do not adjust their beliefs in response to the information treatment — the adjustment comes from legislators who initially believed that citizen corruption concerns were near-ubiquitous, and are surprised to learn that at least some do not see it as common.

5.2 The Certificate Experiment

We asked all respondents if they wished to receive a framed certificate should they win the lottery that would make a donation on their behalf to a charity of their choice. We randomly separated respondents into three groups: a control condition, in which we stated that we would cover the cost (equivalent to 60 Euros) of producing and shipping the certificate; T1, which stated that we would deduct the cost from the 1,000 Euro (calibrated to each country's currency and purchasing power parity) donation so the certificate would report a 940 Euro donation; and T2, which stated that we would deduct the 60 Euro cost from the 1,000 Euro donation but that the certificate would state the winner made a 1,000 Euro donation. Relative to the control, T1 measures whether respondents are willing to waste some of the charitable contribution to receive the certificate; and T2 whether they are willing to engage in a small lie to receive the certificate. In Appendix Figure C.5, we depict proportions of voters and legislators by country in each condition who want the certificate even if it means wasting (T1) or lying (T2).

Contrary to our expectations, in all countries far more voters than legislators wished to receive a certificate. While we designed the experiment with the thought that legislators would find a framed certificate reporting a substantial charitable donation to be electorally valuable, presumably they have other opportunities to receive public expressions of thanks. Voters, by contrast, are often eager to receive a certificate and usually do not mind if obtaining one generates waste or involves a lie. We find no significant treatment effects for either legislators or citizens in Colombia or Italy; in Pakistan, voters display sensitivity to both waste or to lying and legislators display sensitivity to lying.

5.3 Behavioral Prompt for Legislators

As a follow-up to the information treatment, we also include a behavioral prompt in the survey. We randomly divide all legislators (regardless of whether they received the information treatment) into two groups. The treated group was asked to make a public announcement (on the social media platform of their choice) of their support for legislation that strengthens financial disclosures for those running for elected office. The control group was asked to make a public announcement (again, on the social media platform of their choice) regarding some recent legislative accomplishment. We studied the social media announcements of legislators in the week following their survey completion, and none posted any relevant content; it is thus impossible to assess the efficacy of the corruption prompt.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we have described the results of one of the first parallel surveys of legislators and citizens on the topic of corruption, and the first to survey respondents in multiple countries. We find that, to a remarkable degree, in all countries legislators and citizens share similar views on the acceptability as well as prevalence of corruption: both see corruption as common but also undesirable. This interpretation – which ran counter to our initial hypothesis that politicians would be relatively untroubled by corruption – is based on responses to hypothetical scenarios that involve real policy trade-offs (e.g., between probity and efficiency), which we hope minimizes experimenter demand effects. A gap does appear, however, in citizens’ second-order beliefs of legislators’ tolerance of corruption versus politicians’ own stated tolerance, as well as the extent to which citizens believe politicians will be caught and punished for taking bribes. Politicians, by contrast, have accurate perceptions of citizen concern for corruption. This final result also ran counter to the hypotheses we formulated based on prior work.

Our results do not provide corroboration of the view that politicians comprise a distinct and isolated elite whose opinions are unrepresentative of those of ordinary voters on the issue of corruption. In-

stead, they suggest that both voters and politicians perceive corruption as an undesirable but prevalent phenomenon, one that no one actively endorses.

The patterns that emerge from our descriptive analysis thus suggest that politicians accurately perceive voters' corruption, so that correct information about the electorate's priorities does not represent a primary barrier to promoting government anti-corruption programs. Further reinforcing this overall view, while an information treatment on citizen concerns results in causal effects on politicians' beliefs about citizens' concerns among those who overestimate electorates' beliefs about the pervasiveness of corruption, our intervention has no effect on stated support by politicians for anti-corruption policies. What emerges is thus a potentially self-reinforcing loop of politicians failing to act on their corruption concerns and voters, on observing this lack of responsiveness, interpreting it as a lack of concern. A charitable interpretation — and we think not an unrealistic one — is that many politicians *do* see corruption as harmful but also see no easy solutions or no ready political coalition to pursue an anti-corruption agenda. The resulting inaction is misperceived by voters as indifference.

A secondary suite of hypotheses related to partisanship corroborates that voters downplay corruption by politicians in the parties they support but, nonetheless, most voters believe even politicians they support will engage in corrupt behaviors. Corruption is a valence issue that cuts across the partisan divide; ironically, voters generally distrust politicians from all parties and suspect politicians in general of engaging in corruption.

These results do not provide any anticorruption prescription. If the above interpretation has some merit, it will require political entrepreneurs who can build the requisite support for reform from across the political spectrum. Encouraging voters to support such candidates may be a step in the right direction — note our results that show that motivations for entering politics is a predictor of corruption tolerance — though prior research suggests that getting voters to prioritize anti-corruption is itself a challenging task.

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Appendices

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A Sample Characteristics

In Table A.1, we report basic characteristics of the citizen samples in each country.

B Demographic and Partisan Correlates Among Voters and Legislators of Tolerance of Corruption

In this section, we report associations for voters by country between some demographic variables (gender, age, and education) and their tolerance of corruption as well as between partisan inclinations and tolerance of corruption. We divide voters by gender, age, education, and by party supported.

Table A.1: Characteristics of citizen samples by country

	Colombia		Italy		Pakistan	
	Population (1)	Sample (2)	Population (3)	Sample (4)	Population (5)	Sample (6)
Gender						
Male	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.51	0.49
Age						
18-24 years old	0.24	0.24				
25-34 years old	0.23	0.23				
35-44 years old	0.19	0.17				
45-54 years old	0.16	0.16				
55-64 years old	0.12	0.12				
65-74 years old	0.07	0.07				
18-29 years old			0.16	0.16	0.37	0.29
30-39 years old			0.18	0.18	0.25	0.26
40-49 years old			0.23	0.23	0.18	0.22
50-59 years old			0.24	0.24	0.12	0.18
60-69 years old			0.19	0.19	0.07	0.04
Income						
Estrato 1	0.16	0.16				
Estrato 2	0.29	0.29				
Estrato 3	0.34	0.34				
Estrato 4	0.11	0.11				
Estrato 5	0.07	0.07				
Estrato 6	0.03	0.03				
€0- €17,999			0.27	0.27		
€18,000- €29,999			0.28	0.28		
€30,000- €39,999			0.19	0.19		
€40,000- €44,999			0.14	0.14		
€45,000+			0.12	0.12		
0 PKR - 29,000 PKR					0.40	0.36
30,000 PKR - 39,999 PKR					0.40	0.27
40,000 PKR - 49,999 PKR					NA	0.22
50,000+ PKR					NA	0.15
Macro-Regions						
Amazonia + Orinoquia	0.05	0.05				
Andino	0.41	0.40				
Bogota	0.17	0.17				
Costa Norte	0.19	0.20				
Pacifico	0.17	0.17				
Northwest			0.27	0.27		
Northeast			0.20	0.20		
Center			0.20	0.20		
South			0.23	0.23		
Islands			0.11	0.11		
Sample size		1,000		1,998		1,984

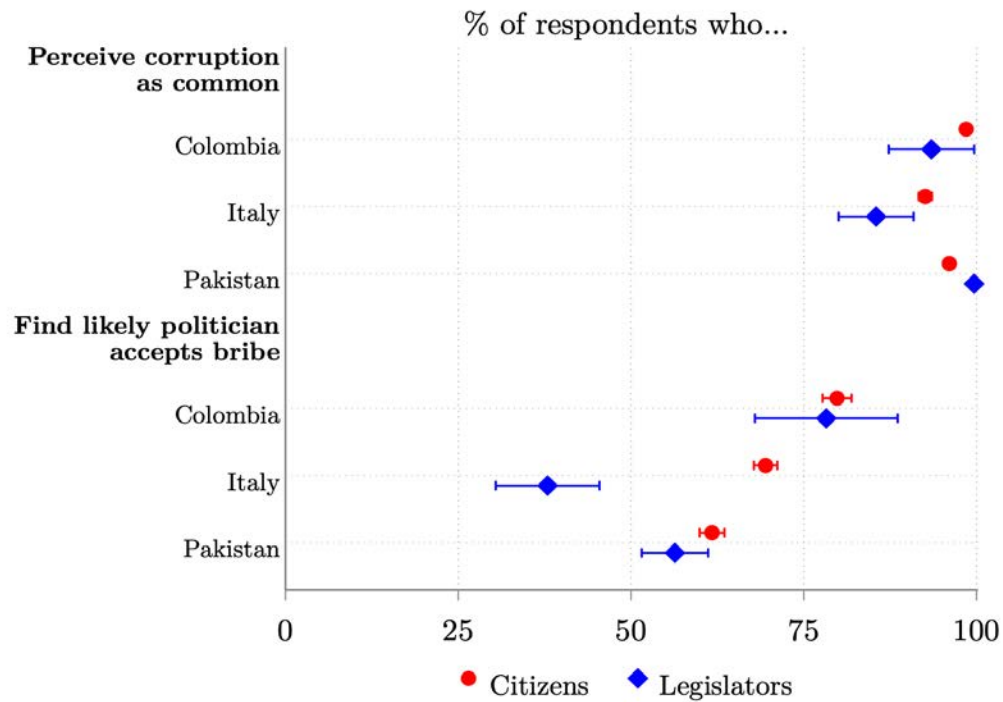
Table B.1: Factors related to whether respondents think corrupt vignette outcomes would/should occur

	Colombia			Italy			Pakistan			All Countries
	Citizens (1)	Legislators (2)	Full Sample (3)	Citizens (4)	Legislators (5)	Full Sample (6)	Citizens (7)	Legislators (8)	Full Sample (9)	Countries (10)
Panel A: Corruption Expectation Index										
Male	-0.04 (0.06)	0.06 (0.29)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.12** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.20)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.13)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.07*** (0.03)
Aged 35-49	-0.18** (0.09)	-0.88** (0.37)	-0.21*** (0.08)	0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.35)	0.04 (0.06)	0.11** (0.05)	-0.19 (0.21)	0.08 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)
Aged 50 or more	0.07 (0.08)	0.10 (0.34)	0.09 (0.08)	0.14*** (0.06)	0.13 (0.36)	0.14** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.15 (0.20)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.12*** (0.03)
Medium income	-0.03 (0.08)		-0.03 (0.08)	0.08 (0.06)		0.08 (0.06)	0.11** (0.06)		0.11** (0.05)	0.06 (0.03)
High income	0.08 (0.10)		0.10 (0.10)	-0.06 (0.07)		-0.05 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.06)		-0.07 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)
High school degree	0.03 (0.09)		0.04 (0.09)	0.23*** (0.08)		0.23*** (0.07)	-0.00 (0.07)		-0.02 (0.06)	0.11*** (0.04)
College degree	0.28*** (0.09)	-0.31 (0.29)	0.26*** (0.09)	0.20** (0.08)	0.27 (0.24)	0.21*** (0.08)	0.00 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.22)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.16*** (0.04)
Legislator			-0.60*** (0.17)			-0.53*** (0.11)			0.77*** (0.09)	0.05 (0.05)
Pakistan										0.06* (0.04)
Italy										-0.50*** (0.04)
Rural							0.08 (0.05)			
Left-wing Party	0.02 (0.08)	0.10 (0.40)	0.03 (0.08)	0.15*** (0.06)	-0.54** (0.25)	0.11** (0.06)				
5 Stars Movement				0.15*** (0.06)	0.47* (0.25)	0.18*** (0.06)				
PTI							0.08 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.12)	0.08* (0.04)	
Observations	985	45	1030	1976	112	2087	1942	291	2233	5414
R ²	0.034	0.246	0.045	0.023	0.199	0.038	0.015	0.003	0.057	0.070
Panel B: Corruption Tolerance Index										
Male	0.08 (0.06)	0.46 (0.29)	0.09 (0.06)	0.10** (0.05)	0.51*** (0.18)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)	0.19 (0.14)	0.03 (0.04)	0.08*** (0.02)
Aged 35-49	-0.29*** (0.08)	-0.76* (0.42)	-0.32*** (0.08)	-0.22*** (0.06)	-0.35 (0.25)	-0.23*** (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.16 (0.21)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Aged 50 or more	-0.41*** (0.08)	-0.57 (0.46)	-0.41*** (0.08)	-0.35*** (0.06)	-0.39 (0.25)	-0.35*** (0.06)	-0.17*** (0.06)	-0.26 (0.21)	-0.15*** (0.06)	-0.23*** (0.03)
Medium income	-0.14 (0.09)		-0.13 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.06)		-0.02 (0.06)	-0.25*** (0.06)		-0.25*** (0.06)	-0.12*** (0.03)
High income	-0.18* (0.11)		-0.19* (0.11)	0.15** (0.07)		0.13* (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)		0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)
High school degree	-0.06 (0.09)		-0.06 (0.09)	-0.09 (0.07)		-0.10 (0.07)	0.07 (0.06)		0.06 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.04)
College degree	-0.17* (0.10)	0.38 (0.36)	-0.16 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.08)	0.43* (0.22)	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.14** (0.06)	-0.16 (0.17)	-0.16** (0.06)	-0.15*** (0.04)
Legislator			0.22 (0.17)			-0.19* (0.09)			0.40*** (0.07)	0.21*** (0.05)
Pakistan										0.94*** (0.04)
Italy										0.26*** (0.04)
Rural							0.02 (0.05)			
Left-wing Party	-0.14* (0.08)	-0.23 (0.42)	-0.15* (0.08)	-0.19*** (0.06)	-0.59** (0.25)	-0.20*** (0.06)				
5 Stars Movement				-0.12** (0.06)	-0.64** (0.27)	-0.15*** (0.06)				
PTI							0.16*** (0.05)	-0.02 (0.12)	0.14*** (0.05)	
Observations	985	45	1030	1979	112	2090	1941	291	2232	5416
R ²	0.054	0.148	0.053	0.033	0.172	0.036	0.034	0.012	0.041	0.189

Notes: The dependent variable in every column of Panel A is the *Corruption Expectation Index*; the dependent variable in every column of Panel B is the *Corruption Tolerance Index*. All indices defined in Appendix Section I.2. Regressions reported in all panels include controls for gender, age group, income group, political affiliation, education, being a legislator, country fixed effects, and being from rural area. Omitted categories are being female, being younger than 35 years old, having a low income, not having completed high school, being a citizen respondent, being from Colombia, being from a urban area (for Pakistan citizens), voting/being from a right-wing party (for Colombia and Italy) or not voting/not being from PTI (for Pakistan). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

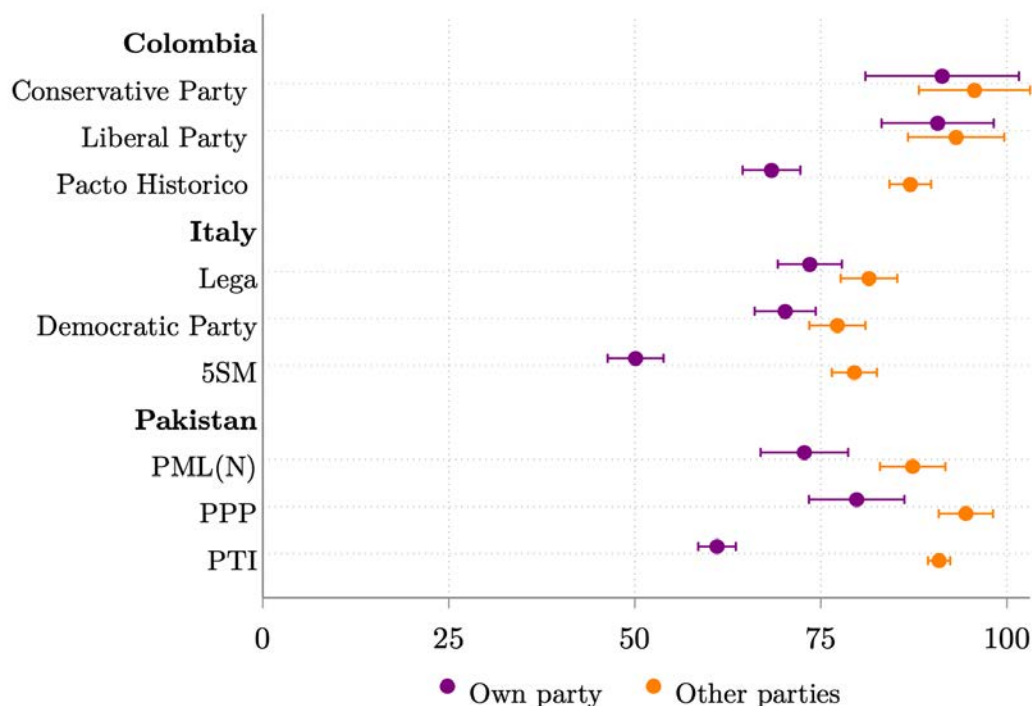
C Additional Figures

Figure C.1: Respondent perceptions of corruption and bribe-taking



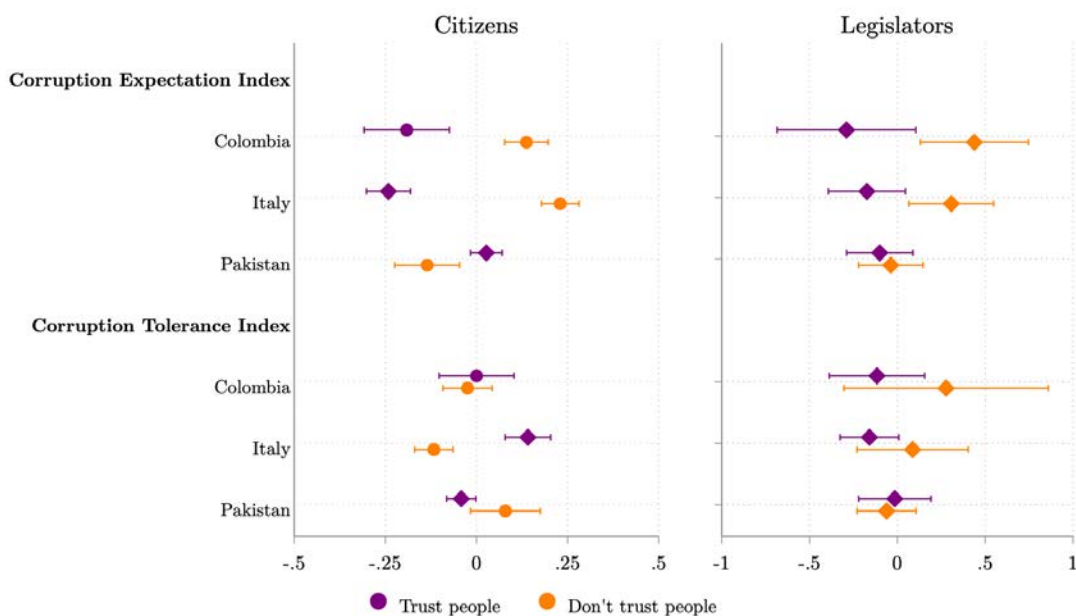
Notes: The figure depicts, by country, the share of respondents who satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval, for citizens and legislators in the sample. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1.

Figure C.2: Share of respondents who believe it is likely for a politician, by party, to accept a bribe



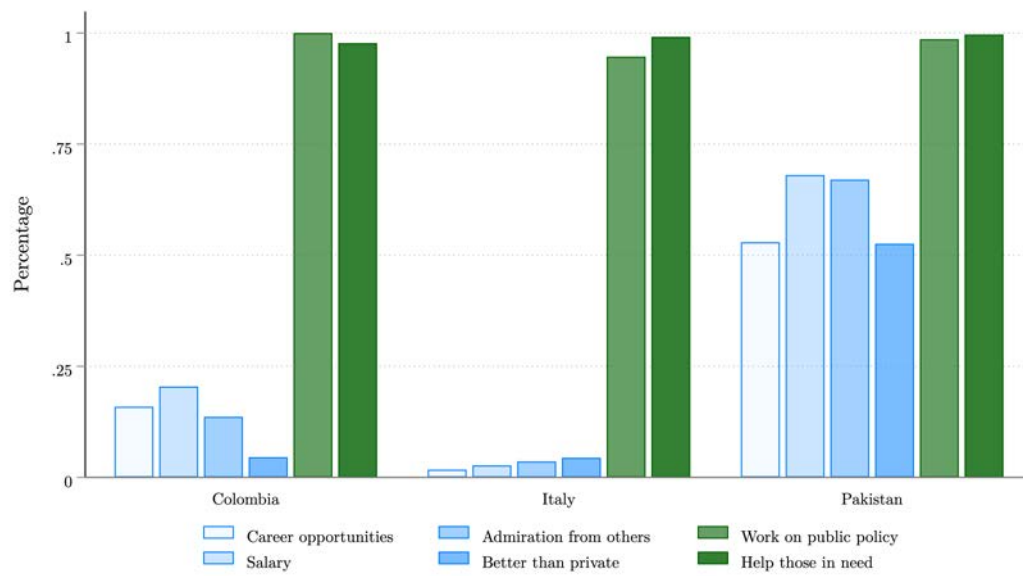
Notes: The figure depicts, by country and by party, the share of respondents, with its associated 90% confidence interval, who believe it is likely for a politician from their party, in purple, and from other parties, in orange, to accept a bribe. Citizen sample only. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1.

Figure C.3: Vignette responses: what would and should happen by trust level towards people



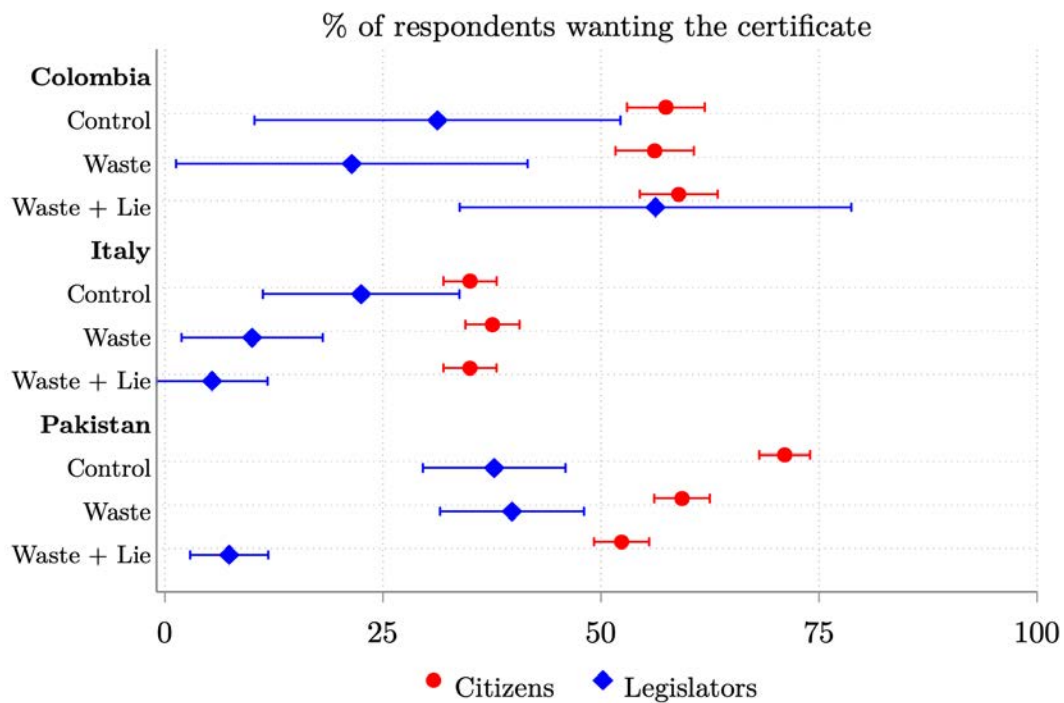
Notes: The left subfigure shows the results for the citizen sample; the right subfigure shows the results for the legislator sample. Each subfigure depicts, by country, the average value of the Corruption Expectation Index (top three rows) and the average value of the Corruption Tolerance Index (bottom three rows) by trust towards people. *Trust People* is defined as having answered 6 or more on a 10-point scale on whether most people can be trusted; *Don't Trust People* is defined as having answered 4 or less. All indices defined in Appendix Section I.2.

Figure C.4: Shares of legislators reporting specific motivations for seeking public office



Notes: The figure depicts, by country, the share of respondents who report as important or very important every motivation for entering public office.

Figure C.5: Proportions of respondents wanting a certificate and willing to waste or lie to obtain one



Notes: The figure depicts, by country and by treatment arm, the share of respondents wanting the certificate with its associated 90% confidence interval, for citizens and legislator in the sample.

D Information Treatment Effects

Table D.1: Treatment effects on belief that citizens overestimate corruption by country

	Colombia				Italy				Pakistan			
	Continuous (1)	Binary (2)	Binary (3)	Binary (4)	Continuous (5)	Binary (6)	Binary (7)	Binary (8)	Continuous (9)	Binary (10)	Binary (11)	Binary (12)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)												
Legislators mean	3.14	0.29	0.29	0.29	2.70	0.33	0.33	0.33	3.13	0.30	0.30	0.30
Above threshold mean			0.25				0.38				0.39	
Below threshold mean			0.33				0.22				0.20	
Panel B: Treatment Effects												
Treatment	-0.84*** (0.26)	-0.26* (0.13)		-0.62 (0.68)	-0.12 (0.27)	-0.07 (0.10)		0.14 (0.37)	-0.23** (0.11)	-0.11* (0.06)		0.38 (0.27)
T x More than 80% corruption as common			-0.28* (0.16)				-0.11 (0.12)				-0.19** (0.08)	
T x Less than 80% corruption as common			-0.09 (0.24)				-0.01 (0.17)				-0.02 (0.08)	
T x Second-order belief on corruption common				0.05 (0.09)				-0.03 (0.05)				-0.06* (0.03)
Second-order belief on corruption common				-0.03 (0.05)				0.05 (0.03)				0.07*** (0.03)
Observations	36	36	36	36	97	97	97	97	219	219	219	219
R ²	0.466	0.235	0.239	0.250	0.075	0.021	0.041	0.045	0.087	0.049	0.069	0.087

Notes: The dependent variable in columns (1), (5), and (9) is a 5-point scale variable on the extent to which citizens under- or overestimate corruption, the dependent variable in columns (2) to (4), (6) to (8), and (10) to (12) is an indicator variable for whether legislators believe that citizens overestimate the extent of corruption. All regressions include controls for gender, age group, and education. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who were assigned to the control group (no information treatment) and separately for believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country. Panels B reports the coefficients from four different specifications for Colombia, Italy, and Pakistan. For every country, the first and second column shows the treatment effects of the information treatment. The third column shows the treatment effect on respondents believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country separately. The fourth column shows the treatment effect interacted with the second order belief on how many people believe that corruption is very common. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table D.2: Treatment effects on belief that citizens and legislators hold similar views on corruption

	Continuous (1)	Binary (2)	Binary (3)	Binary (4)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)				
All Legislators mean	2.68	0.62	0.62	0.62
Above threshold mean			0.65	
Below threshold mean			0.57	
Panel B: All Legislators				
Treatment	-0.49*** (0.08)	-0.29*** (0.05)		-0.01 (0.25)
T x More than 80% corruption as common			-0.37*** (0.06)	
T x Less than 80% corruption as common			-0.15 (0.09)	
T x Second-order belief on corruption common				-0.04 (0.03)
Second-order belief on corruption common				0.02 (0.02)
Observations	352	352	352	352
R^2	0.128	0.110	0.121	0.114

Notes: The dependent variable in column (1) is a 4-point scale variable on whether politicians and voters hold similar views on corruption, the dependent variable in columns (2) to (4) is an indicator variable for whether legislators believe that citizens and legislators hold similar views on corruption. All regressions include controls for gender, age group, education, and country fixed effects. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who were assigned to the control group (no information treatment) and separately for believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country. Panel B reports the coefficients from four different specifications. The first and second column shows the treatment effects of the information treatment. The third column shows the treatment effect on respondents believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country separately. The fourth column shows the treatment effect interacted with the second order belief on how many people believe that corruption is very common. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table D.3: Treatment effects on belief that citizens are concerned with corruption

	Continuous (1)	Binary (2)	Binary (3)	Binary (4)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)				
All Legislators mean	3.02	0.27	0.27	0.27
Above threshold mean			0.28	
Below threshold mean			0.26	
Panel B: All Legislators				
Treatment	0.11 (0.09)	0.08 (0.05)		-0.03 (0.22)
T x More than 80% corruption as common			0.10* (0.06)	
T x Less than 80% corruption as common			0.00 (0.08)	
T x Second-order belief on corruption common				0.01 (0.03)
Second-order belief on corruption common				0.03 (0.02)
Observations	351	351	351	351
R^2	0.220	0.079	0.087	0.092

Notes: The dependent variable in column (1) is a 5-point scale variable on whether voters see corruption as a major concern relative to other issues, the dependent variable in columns (2) to (4) is an indicator variable for whether legislators believe that citizens are more concerned with corruption than with other issues. All regressions include controls for gender, age group, education, and country fixed effects. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who were assigned to the control group (no information treatment) and separately for believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country. Panel B reports the coefficients from four different specifications. The first and second column shows the treatment effects of the information treatment. The third column shows the treatment effect on respondents believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country separately. The fourth column shows the treatment effect interacted with the second order belief on how many people believe that corruption is very common. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table D.4: Treatment effects on belief that corruption undermines citizens' trust in government

	Continuous (1)	Binary (2)	Binary (3)	Binary (4)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)				
All Legislators mean	3.03	0.76	0.76	0.76
Above threshold mean			0.87	
Below threshold mean			0.61	
Panel B: All Legislators				
Treatment	-0.02 (0.07)	0.00 (0.05)		0.39 (0.25)
T x More than 80% corruption as common			-0.08 (0.05)	
T x Less than 80% corruption as common			0.06 (0.09)	
T x Second-order belief on corruption common				-0.05* (0.03)
Second-order belief on corruption common				0.07*** (0.02)
Observations	351	351	351	351
R^2	0.104	0.027	0.083	0.078

Notes: The dependent variable in column (1) is a 4-point scale variable on whether public perceptions of corruption undermines trust in government, the dependent variable in columns (2) to (4) is an indicator variable for whether legislators believe that public perceptions of corruption undermines a moderate amount or a lot trust in government. All regressions include controls for gender, age group, education, and country fixed effects. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who were assigned to the control group (no information treatment) and separately for believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country. Panel B reports the coefficients from four different specifications. The first and second column shows the treatment effects of the information treatment. The third column shows the treatment effect on respondents believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country separately. The fourth column shows the treatment effect interacted with the second order belief on how many people believe that corruption is very common. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table D.5: Treatment effects on support for financial disclosure legislation

	Binary (1)	Binary (2)	Binary (3)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)			
All Legislators mean	0.91	0.91	0.91
Above threshold mean		0.87	
Below threshold mean		0.95	
Panel B: All Legislators			
Treatment	-0.08** (0.04)		-0.18 (0.18)
T x More than 80% corruption as common		-0.05 (0.05)	
T x Less than 80% corruption as common		-0.11* (0.06)	
T x Second-order belief on corruption common			0.01 (0.02)
Second-order belief on corruption common			-0.01 (0.01)
Observations	352	352	352
R^2	0.057	0.062	0.061

Notes: The dependent variable in all columns is an indicator variable for whether legislators are willing to support legislation aimed at strengthening financial disclosure laws. All regressions include controls for gender, age group, education, and country fixed effects. All variables defined in Appendix Section I.1. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who were assigned to the control group (no information treatment) and separately for believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country. Panel B reports the coefficients from four different specifications. The first column shows the treatment effects of the information treatment. The second column shows the treatment effect on respondents believing that less or more than 80% of citizens believe that corruption is very common in their country separately. The third column shows the treatment effect interacted with the second order belief on how many people believe that corruption is very common. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

E Ethics Statement

The research reported in this paper was deemed exempt by the Institutional Review Board of Boston University, Protocol #6193X on September 22, 2021 and Protocol #6539X on June 1, 2022.

The research did not involve deception. After each sample was collected (Italian voters, Italian legislators, Pakistani voters, Pakistani legislators, etc.), we randomly selected one subject as the lottery winner, informed that individual of his winning status, and made an anonymous donation on his behalf to the charity of his choice. If the individual had requested a framed certificate, we printed and delivered it to him. Additionally, as promised, we emailed legislator participants personalized reports of our findings about their country following the close of data collection in all three countries.

F Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest on the part of any of the authors.

G Data Availability

The data, code, and additional materials required to replicate all analyses in this article will be made available at the Harvard Dataverse Network.

H Preregistration and Pre-Analysis Plan

This project was preregistered with the AEA RCT Registry, AEARCTR-0008331, October 25, 2021. A Pre-Analysis Plan was filed on the EGAP Registry, ID 20211101AB, November 1, 2021.

I Variables' Definitions

I.1 Variables based on survey questions

- **Motivations for entering politics**

- *Career opportunities*: the question asks “We have been talking to a lot of politicians like you and heard them describe many reasons for entering politics. What are the reasons you decided to become a politician? Please tell us how important each of these was in your thinking. Career opportunities or pension after holding office.”, answer options range from 1=“*Not important at all*”, to 4=“*Very important*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=important or 4=very important).
- *Salary*: the question asks “We have been talking to a lot of politicians like you and heard them describe many reasons for entering politics. What are the reasons you decided to become a politician? Please tell us how important each of these was in your thinking. The salary.”, answer options range from 1=“*Not important at all*”, to 4=“*Very important*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=important or 4=very important).
- *Admiration from others*: the question asks “We have been talking to a lot of politicians like you and heard them describe many reasons for entering politics. What are the reasons you decided to become a politician? Please tell us how important each of these was in your thinking. To get the admiration of others.”, answer options range from 1=“*Not important at all*”, to 4=“*Very important*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=important or 4=very important).
- *Better than private*: the question asks “We have been talking to a lot of politicians like you and heard them describe many reasons for entering politics. What are the reasons you decided to become a politician? Please tell us how important each of these was in your thinking. Less appealing opportunities in the private sector.”, answer options range from 1=“*Not important at all*”, to 4=“*Very important*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=important or 4=very important).

- *Work on public policy*: the question asks “We have been talking to a lot of politicians like you and heard them describe many reasons for entering politics. What are the reasons you decided to become a politician? Please tell us how important each of these was in your thinking. To work on public policy and legislation.”, answer options range from 1=“*Not important at all*”, to 4=“*Very important*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=important or 4=very important).
- *Help those in need*: the question asks “We have been talking to a lot of politicians like you and heard them describe many reasons for entering politics. What are the reasons you decided to become a politician? Please tell us how important each of these was in your thinking. To help those in need or serve others in my community.”, answer options range from 1=“*Not important at all*”, to 4=“*Very important*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=important or 4=very important).

- **Vignettes questions - Corruption Expectations (“Would”)**

- *Corrupt company selected for highway contract*: the question asks “An official in the national procurement office is in charge of overseeing a highway contract. Two companies have made comparable bids. Company A is known to be scrupulously honest. Company B is rumored to have bribed officials in the past to get contracts but is very efficient in its business. It is expected that Company B will complete the road much more quickly than Company A, without any sacrifice in quality. Which company do you think the official would select if this were to occur in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan]?”, answers are 1=“*Company A*”, or 2=“*Company B*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(2=Company B).
- *Don’t punish assistant taking gift*: the question asks “A member of the [COL: Chamber of Representatives] [IT: Parliament] [PAK: National Assembly] discovers that his personal assistant was given a holiday gift of expensive chocolates [PAK: Eid sweets] by a businessman who had been trying to set up a meeting with the politician. After receiving the gift, the assistant set up a meeting for the following week, whereas it would normally

have taken longer to make an appointment with the representative. Although not explicitly illegal, some people could see this as favoritism. What do you think the legislator would do if this were to occur in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan]?", answer options range from 1="Nothing", to 4="Fire his assistant". Indicator=1 if answer=(1=nothing or 2=warn his assistant).

- *Accept illicit financial support*: the question asks "In a small town, a wealthy local businessman has announced that he intends to run for mayor. His main opponent lacks comparable financial resources but has received an offer from a supporter to pay for local television and radio advertising on his behalf. Imagine that this informal offer runs counter to campaign finance laws, but is unlikely to be uncovered by authorities, and without the additional funding the businessman's opponent has little chance of winning. What do you think the opponent is likely to do if this were to occur in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan]?", answers are 1="Accept the offer", or 2="Decline the offer". Indicator=1 if answer=(1=Accept the offer).
- *Hire relative as accountant*: the question asks "There is an opening for an accountant in the public works department of a small city. The short-list of candidates has been narrowed to two individuals. While both have appropriate qualifications and are legally eligible for the job, Candidate A has additional years of relevant work experience and is thus likely to transition into the position more smoothly; Candidate B is a relative of the head of the department, who has the ultimate decision on who gets the job. Whom do you think the head of the department is likely to hire if this occurred in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan]?", answers are 1="Candidate A", or 2="Candidate B". Indicator=1 if answer=(2=Candidate B).
- *Bribe-paying mayoral candidate likely elected*: the question asks "A small town has recently elected a new, very wealthy businessman as its mayor. Prior to running for office, the businessman donated some of his personal wealth to help build a health facility in the city. Now evidence has emerged that before he entered politics, his company paid bribes

to secure some of the government contracts. How likely do you think it is that this candidate would be re-elected if this occurred in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan]?", answer options range from 1="Never", to 6="Certain". Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).

- **Vignettes questions - Corruption Tolerance ("Should")**

- *Corrupt company selected for highway contract*: the question asks "An official in the national procurement office is in charge of overseeing a highway contract. Two companies have made comparable bids. Company A is known to be scrupulously honest. Company B is rumored to have bribed officials in the past to get contracts but is very efficient in its business. It is expected that Company B will complete the road much more quickly than Company A, without any sacrifice in quality. Which company do you think the official should select?", answers are 1="Company A", or 2="Company B". Indicator=1 if answer=(2=Company B).
- *Don't punish assistant taking gift*: the question asks "A member of the [COL: Chamber of Representatives] [IT: Parliament] [PAK: National Assembly] discovers that his personal assistant was given a holiday gift of expensive chocolates [PAK: Eid sweets] by a businessman who had been trying to set up a meeting with the politician. After receiving the gift, the assistant set up a meeting for the following week, whereas it would normally have taken longer to make an appointment with the representative. Although not explicitly illegal, some people could see this as favoritism. What do you think the legislator should do?", answer options range from 1="Nothing", to 4="Fire his assistant". Indicator=1 if answer=(1=nothing or 2=warn his assistant).
- *Accept illicit financial support*: the question asks "In a small town, a wealthy local businessman has announced that he intends to run for mayor. His main opponent lacks comparable financial resources but has received an offer from a supporter to pay for local television and radio advertising on his behalf. Imagine that this informal offer runs counter

to campaign finance laws, but is unlikely to be uncovered by authorities, and without the additional funding the businessman's opponent has little chance of winning. What do you think the opponent should do?", answers are 1="Accept the offer", or 2="Decline the offer". Indicator=1 if answer=(1=Accept the offer).

- *Hire relative as accountant*: the question asks "There is an opening for an accountant in the public works department of a small city. The short-list of candidates has been narrowed to two individuals. While both have appropriate qualifications and are legally eligible for the job, Candidate A has additional years of relevant work experience and is thus likely to transition into the position more smoothly; Candidate B is a relative of the head of the department, who has the ultimate decision on who gets the job. Whom do you think the head of the department should hire?", answers are 1="Candidate A", or 2="Candidate B". Indicator=1 if answer=(2=Candidate B).
- *Bribe-paying mayoral candidate likely elected*: the question asks "A small town has recently elected a new, very wealthy businessman as its mayor. Prior to running for office, the businessman donated some of his personal wealth to help build a health facility in the city. Now evidence has emerged that before he entered politics, his company paid bribes to secure some of the government contracts. Setting aside any concerns about party allegiance, how likely do you think it is that you would vote for this candidate if he ran for re-election?", answer options range from 1="Never", to 6="Certain". Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).

- **Preference for redistribution questions**

- *Support progressive tax system*: the question asks "Do you agree with the following statement? Rich people should pay a larger share of their incomes in taxes than poor people.", answer options range from 1="Strongly disagree", to 5="Strongly agree". Indicator=1 if answer=(4=agree or 5=strongly agree).
- *Support government intervention to reduce unequal opportunities between rich and poor*

children: the question asks “On a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 means the government should not concern itself with making the opportunities for children from poor and rich families less unequal, and 7 means that the government should do everything in its power to reduce this inequality of opportunities) which score comes closest to the way you feel?”, answer options range from 1 to 7. Indicator=1 if answer=(5 or 6 or 7).

- *Support government intervention to reduce income differences*: the question asks “On a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 means that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences between rich and poor people, and 7 means that the government should do everything in its power to reduce income differences between rich and poor people) which score comes closest to the way you feel?”, answer options range from 1 to 7. Indicator=1 if answer=(5 or 6 or 7).

- **Corruption questions**

- *Perceive corruption as common*: the question asks “How common do you think corruption is in your country?”, answer options range from 1=“*Not common at all*”, to 4=“*Extremely common*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(4=extremely common).
- *Second-order belief on corruption common*: the question asks “Out of 10 adult citizens in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan], how many do you think would answer common or extremely common?”, answer options range from 0 to 10. Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).
- *Likely exposed in public*: the question asks “If a [COL: member of the Chamber of Representatives] [IT: deputy] [PAK: member of the National Assembly] were to take a bribe, what is the likelihood she or he would be exposed in public?”, answer options range from 1=“*Never*”, to 6=“*Certain*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).
- *Likely charged with a crime*: the question asks “If a [COL: member of the Chamber of Representatives] [IT: deputy] [PAK: member of the National Assembly] were to take a

bribe, what is the likelihood she or he would be charged with a crime?”, answer options range from 1=“*Never*”, to 6=“*Certain*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).

- *Likely convicted*: the question asks “If a [COL: member of the Chamber of Representatives] [IT: deputy] [PAK: member of the National Assembly] were to take a bribe, what is the likelihood she or he would be convicted?”, answer options range from 1=“*Never*”, to 6=“*Certain*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).
- *Find likely politician accepts bribe*: the question asks “How likely do you think it is that the average member of the [COL: Chamber of Representatives] [IT: Parliament] [PAK: National Assembly] would be willing to accept a bribe?”, answer options range from 1=“*Never*”, to 6=“*Certain*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).
- *Likely that a politician accepts a bribe - Own party*: the question asks “How likely do you think it is that the average member of the [COL: Chamber of Representatives] [IT: Parliament] [PAK: National Assembly] affiliated with [COL: Liberal Party/Conservative Party/Pacto Historico] [IT: Lega/Democratic Party/5 Stars Movement] [PAK: PTI/PML(N)/PPP] would be willing to accept a bribe?”, answer options range from 1=“*Never*”, to 6=“*Certain*”. Indicator=1 if answer to own party=(4=likely or 5=very likely or 6=certain).
- *Likely that a politician accepts a bribe - Other parties*: the question asks “How likely do you think it is that the average member of the [COL: Chamber of Representatives] [IT: Parliament] [PAK: National Assembly] affiliated with [COL: Liberal Party/Conservative Party/Pacto Historico] [IT: Lega/Democratic Party/5 Stars Movement] [PAK: PTI/PML(N)/PPP] would be willing to accept a bribe?”, answer options range from 1=“*Never*”, to 6=“*Certain*”. Indicator=1 if average answer to other two parties $\geq$ (4=likely).

- **Trust questions**

- *Most people can be trusted*: the question asks “Generally speaking, would you say that

most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell us what you think by moving the slider below. The slider goes from 0 to 10, where 0 means You cannot be too careful in dealing with people and 10 means Most people can be trusted.", answer options range from 0 to 10. Indicator=1 if answer=(6, 7, 8, 9, or 10).

- *Most politicians can be trusted*: the question asks "Generally speaking, would you say that most other politicians can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with them? Please tell us what you think by moving the slider below. The slider goes from 0 to 10, where 0 means You cannot be too careful in dealing with other politicians and 10 means Most other politicians can be trusted.", answer options range from 0 to 10. Indicator=1 if answer=(6, 7, 8, 9, or 10).

- **Post-treatment questions**

- *Belief that citizens and legislators hold similar views on corruption*: the question asks "Do you believe citizens and politicians share the same views on how public officials will behave in the five scenarios we presented earlier?", answer options range from 1="Very similar", to 4="Very different". Indicator=1 if answer=(2=somewhat similar or 3=very similar).
- *Belief that citizens are concerned with corruption*: the question asks "How concerned do you think citizens in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan] are with political corruption relative to other major policy issues, such as the economy, social unrest, or public health?", answer options range from 1="Much less concerned", to 5="Much more concerned". Indicator=1 if answer=(4=somewhat more concerned or 5=much more concerned).
- *Belief that citizens overestimate corruption*: the question asks "Do you think that voters' views about how serious corruption is in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan] are accurate?", answer options range from 1="Voters underestimate its seriousness a lot", to 5="Voters overestimate its seriousness a lot". Indicator=1 if answer=(4=voters overestimate its seriousness a little or 5=voters overestimate its seriousness a lot).

- *Belief that corruption undermines citizens' trust in government*: the question asks “How much do you think that public perceptions of corruption undermine trust in government by voters in [Colombia/Italy/Pakistan]?”, answer options range from 1=“*Not at all*”, to 4=“*A lot*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(3=a moderate amount or 4=a lot).
- *Support for financial disclosure legislation*: the question asks “Would you be willing to support legislation that strengthens financial disclosure by persons running for elected office?”, answers are 1=“*Yes, I am willing to take this position*”, or 2=“*No, I am not willing to take this position*”. Indicator=1 if answer=(1=yes, I am willing to take this position).

I.2 Indices

The following indices are z-scores constructed following the methodology in [Kling, Liebman and Katz \(2007\)](#). Each index consists of an equally weighted average of the z-scores of its components with signs oriented consistently within domain. Variables are transformed into z-scores by subtracting the control group mean and dividing by the control group standard deviation, so that each z-score has mean 0 and standard deviation 1 for the control group. Once the average is computed, we standardize the index once more by computing its z-score. All indices described below are built using variables presented in the previous subsections. To build the indices we used the variables in their discrete or continuous form. Indicator variables were used only when a given question had only two answer options.

- **Corruption Expectation Index**: index increasing in *Corrupt company selected for highway contract* - *Would*, *Don't punish assistant taking gift* - *Would*, *Accept illicit financial support* - *Would*, *Hire relative as accountant* - *Would*, and *Bribe-paying mayoral candidate likely elected* - *Would*.
- **Corruption Tolerance Index**: index increasing in *Corrupt company selected for highway contract* - *Should*, *Don't punish assistant taking gift* - *Should*, *Accept illicit financial sup-*

port - Should, Hire relative as accountant - Should, and Bribe-paying mayoral candidate likely elected - Should.

- **Preferences for Redistribution Index:** index increasing in *Support progressive tax system*, *Support government intervention to reduce unequal opportunities between rich and poor children*, and *Support government intervention to reduce income differences*.
- **Social Motivation Index:** difference between an index increasing in *Work on public policy* and *Help those in need*, and an index increasing in *Career opportunities*, *Salary*, *Admiration from others*, and *Better than private*. Difference standardized once more by computing its z-score.