



2019 Vietnam Youth Integrity Survey (YIS 2019)

Executive Summary
Supporting values and practice of integrity
among young Vietnamese

(for reference)



**TOWARDS
TRANSPARENCY**



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INTRODUCTION

Corruption remains a serious problem in Vietnam despite continued efforts and strong determination of the Communist Party and the government of Vietnam to eradicate corruption. A noticeable corruption effect seen worldwide is the public loss of trust in the government, especially by youth. Integrity, according to Transparency International (2009), means *“behaviours and actions consistent with a set of moral or ethical principles and standards, embraced by individuals as well as institutions, which create a barrier to corruption”*. It is a learned behaviour, therefore promoting and exercising integrity needs to start from education. It needs to become a social norm that is championed by society and nurtured from an early age. Thus, understanding youth perceptions toward integrity, their attitudes and actions when faced with corruption is pivotal as a first step towards building a society of integrity.

Youth are the main foundation for a country. They represent the future of society, which they shape through their attitudes and behaviours. Transparency International shows that young people know that corruption is wrong, that they are willing to report on and expose corruption, and that they aspire to live in societies that are fair, transparent and rooted in integrity. However, societies make it increasingly difficult for youth to live up to the standards of integrity when governments, education institutions, parents and other role models fail to promote an environment of integrity.

There is little research on youth perceptions toward corruption and integrity in Vietnam, where more than half the population is under the age of 30 (Vietnam GSO and UNFPA, 2016). In an effort to address this shortcoming, Towards Transparency (TT)'s Youth Integrity Survey (YIS) explores what integrity means to young people and how they experience and react to corruption. The survey, conducted in 2011 and 2014, is now in its third edition, and is one of the primary efforts by TT to contribute to promoting integrity and addressing corruption in Vietnam.

We hope that the survey results will be used as timely inputs for the government, education institutions, parents and civil society to address what could be called the integrity paradox of Vietnamese youth. By this phrase we refer to the most salient feature of the survey findings that young Vietnamese of 15 to 30 age group have strong values and aspire to live in a society that promotes and rewards integrity, yet they face more corruption in their lives, and are more willing to engage in it because they believe that it is advantageous. Over the last decade, young people's awareness of integrity initiatives has remained low and unchanged. This situation points to an integrity crisis among young people. As they rationalize

corrupt behaviour because of the circumstances they find themselves in, there is a risk that corruption, not integrity, is established as the norm in Vietnam.

METHODOLOGY

The YIS 2019 builds on the successful experience of previous editions of the YIS in 2011 and 2014, allowing comparison of key data points across time. The YIS 2019 was conducted in collaboration with Indochina Research, a known independent regional research firm, which was commissioned to conduct empirical data collection from October 2nd to November 29th, 2018. The data analysis was performed by TT with external reviews.

To allow comparative analysis the survey design of YIS 2019 kept the same 11 provinces as in the last YIS editions, to which Hanoi was added with a view to providing a better representation of one of the largest population bases in Vietnam. The YIS 2019 sample follows GSO's 2014 Census of Population & Housing data. The research covers Vietnamese youth and young adults aged 15-30 years old, which captures both the international definition of youth (15-24 years old) and the Vietnamese classification of youth (16-30 years old). The research also designed a group of adults (31-55 years old) to explore eventual differences and/or similarities, if any. The total sample size is 1,638 respondents including 1,173 youths and 465 adults. A change implemented in the 2019 edition is related to the adult group, restricted to people from 31-55 years old to focus more on the active population while previously no upper age limit were set. The final dataset was then weighted at the regional level (North, Center and South) by age group and gender at urban and rural levels to correct discrepancies and project the sample results to the represented national population of 56,310,000 people aged 15 to 55 years old.

Throughout the survey design and analysis, gender perspective has been taken into full account. While making efforts to do gender-sensitive analysis, findings show that there is no or very little disparity in response across genders.

While every effort was made to ensure that the data collected is robust, there is an issue that goes beyond the scope of this quantitative survey. That is, a number of changes over the years and differences between demographic parameters found in the survey could not be explained thoroughly for a lack of qualitative analysis. This limitation opens room for further interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research on youth integrity that incorporates qualitative data collection methods to capture the depth and magnitude of these differences.

MAIN FINDINGS

Paradoxical conception of integrity and associated values

At the conceptual level, and similarly to YIS 2011 and 2014 findings, the large majority of youth surveyed have a good grasp of the concept of integrity, with clear views on what they consider right and wrong. Yet, when youth face moral dilemmas and have to weigh their values against challenges, personal gains or advantages for themselves and their family, they would be willing to compromise their integrity principles. In particular,

- 98% of youth surveyed consider a person of integrity to be someone who never accepts nor gives bribes and 96% of them agree that a person has integrity when he/she never breaks a law (under any circumstances).
- However, more than half of youth surveyed (52%) say that a person could be lying and cheating and still have integrity, if it could help resolve difficulties for themselves or their family.
- A substantial portion of youth surveyed (37%) do not perceive petty corruption to be problematic, while 16% of youth believe that one has a greater chance of success in life if he/she is ready to lie, cheat, break laws and act corruptly.

Youth understand that corruption is harmful to all facets of life and society but are poorly informed about anti-corruption regulations and integrity building initiatives

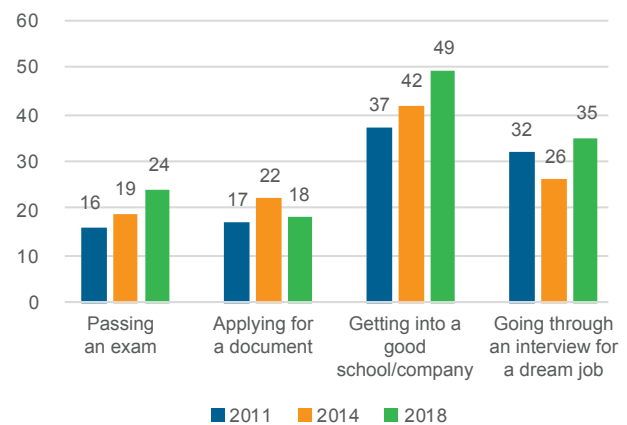
- Nearly all youth surveyed believe that corruption and lack of integrity is harmful to their generation (96%), the economy (95%) and the development of Vietnam (97%).
- But more than three quarters of them (81%) report having no or very little information on integrity and anti-corruption rules and regulations.
- The proportion of youth reporting having no information on this topic significantly increased from 41% in 2011 to 50% in 2014 and to 57% in 2018.

Youth willingness to engage in corruption is on the rise

- Approximately a third of young people surveyed are willing to engage in unethical or corrupt practices to gain an advantage for themselves (e.g. to pass an exam, apply for a document, to get into a good school or get a job);

- Worryingly, the number of young people who show willingness to engage in corrupt transactions (except when applying for a document) increased in 2018 compared to the 2011 and 2014 YIS results. For example, as figure 1 below shows, in 2018, almost half of youth (49%) are willing to take decisions that violate integrity in order to get into a good school or company, versus 42% in 2014 and 38% in 2011.

FIGURE 1
Percentage of young people who stated that they are willing to take decisions that violate integrity in one or more of the situations presented to them: 2011 - 2014 - 2018

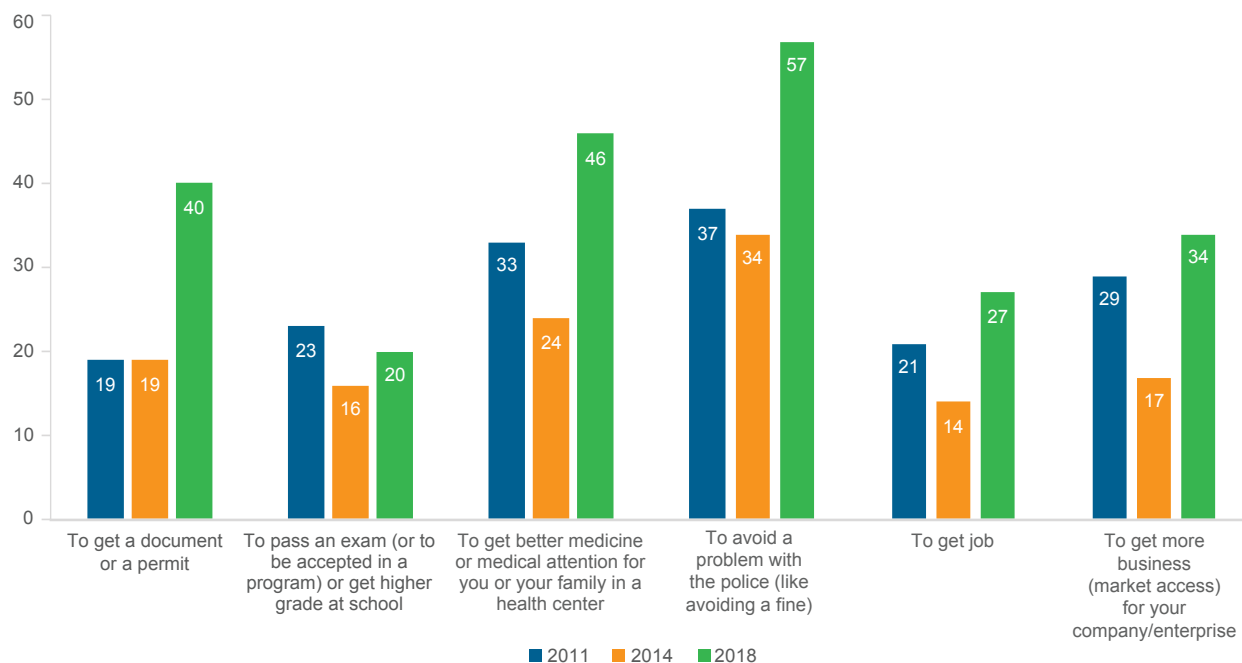


Youth increasingly experience corruption when accessing public services

- The levels of corruption experienced by young people in the surveyed key public services increased substantially in 2018 compared to the results of 2011 and 2014.
- In 2018, among the surveyed youth who were exposed to public services during the year prior to the survey, between 20% and 57% of them experienced corruption:
 - 57% of youth who had contact with the police experienced corruption.
 - 46% of youth who accessed medical treatment encountered corruption.
 - 40% of youth who had tried to obtain a document or permit faced corruption.

FIGURE 2

Youth’s experiences of corruption (%): 2011 - 2014 - 2018



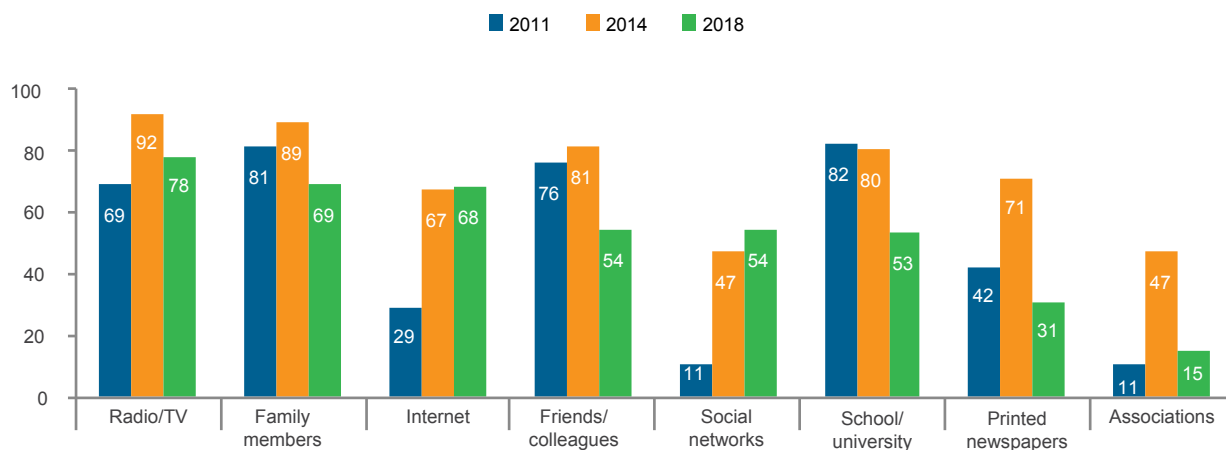
Youth commitment to fighting corruption is eroding

- Though 80% of young people surveyed believe that youth can take action against corruption and play a role in promoting integrity-building, only 50% of youth surveyed say that they would be willing to report corruption.
- Compared to the 2011 and 2014 surveys, the proportion of youths who are committed to reporting corruption decreases noticeably, from 60% in 2011 down to below 50% in 2018.
- The most cited reason for not reporting is that “youth do not think reporting would do any help”, followed by “fear for personal security” and being “none of their business”.

The role of family and education institutions as shapers of youth’s integrity is declining

- In 2018, family, school/university, along with media and friends/colleagues, continue to be good examples of integrity (refer to Figure 34 in the report).
- However, their role as sources of information shaping youth views on integrity, as shown in Figure 3, is declining since 2014.
- Unsurprisingly, 2 sources of information play an increasing role in shaping youth views on integrity: Internet (for 69% of youth in 2018 versus 29% in 2011) and social networks (for 54% of youth in 2018 versus 11% in 2011).

FIGURE 3
Sources of information shaping youth views on integrity: 2011 - 2014 - 2018 (%)



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Corruption remains a serious problem in Vietnam despite continued efforts and strong determination of the Communist Party and the government of Vietnam to eradicate corruption. The YIS 2019 findings highlight a conflict between young people’s desire to live in a society rooted in integrity and their willingness to accept or commit corrupt acts for their or their family’s sake.

As the survey reveals, a substantial proportion of youth would indeed be willing to violate standards of integrity to deal with difficulties or to gain an advantage for themselves. Moreover, the surge in youth willingness to engage in corrupt transactions in 2018 is alarming. There is an urgent need for all stakeholders to accept joint responsibility and take action to create an environment where integrity can take root and grow, and where young people can experience and uphold integrity.

In light of this situation, Towards Transparency recommends a specific set of actions addressed to different stakeholders.

To the government and anti-corruption agencies

- To develop concrete plans and measures to address the identified challenges outlined in the 2016 Government Inspectorate (GI)’s “*Review Report after two-year implementation of the Prime Minister’s Directive Nr. 10*” (in the framework of project 137).¹
- Encourage youth-led initiatives at national and sub-national levels by providing resources and creating an enabling environment to practice and promote integrity. Role models of integrity for youth should be promoted, for example through rewarding youth initiatives, and empowering youth networks to promote integrity and fight corruption.
- To effectively implement the Prime Minister’s new decision 861/QĐ-TTg approving the national programme on “propaganda, dissemination and education of on anti-corruption legislation, period 2019-2021 with a view to instilling the value of integrity in a wider society.
- Provide an effective and secure whistleblowing system where youth can report on corruption and unethical behaviour without fear.

¹ Government Inspectorate’s Review Report after two-year implementation of the Prime Minister’s Directive Nr. 10 regarding the integration of anti-corruption content into the national education and training programmes, from the school years 2013-2014, dated 29 April 2016.

- Prioritise efforts to improve key public services where youth are most likely to encounter corruption, namely, law enforcement (traffic police), healthcare, education and administrative service institutions (responsible for issuing official documents).
- Make use of social media as a channel to communicate and engage youth in promoting integrity and anti-corruption.

To the education institutions (ministry of education and related agencies, schools/ universities)

- Address challenges in existing teaching curriculum (outlined in Prime Minister’s Directive Nr. 10) and design/implement an improved programme content focusing on issues of ethics and integrity.
- Renovate pedagogical approach to integrity with a view to inspiring youth for integrity learning and changing attitudes and mind-set regarding corruption. The methodology of teaching anti-corruption should be interactive and include significant discussions.
- Provide tailored training to schools and educators: teachers’ lack of appropriate pedagogical strategy and skills contributes to making the subject ineffective.
- Build actions to enhance academic integrity at school/universities. Actions to reduce cheating in schools and universities, such as platforms to encourage students to take personal pledge in not cheating should be established.

To youth organizations

- Include integrity in the agenda of youth focused organizations such as the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, taking into consideration YIS 2019 results.
- Conduct further studies to understand the role of youth integrity.



To youth

- Start integrity initiatives, such as discussing about corruption and integrity with friends and/or on social networks.
- Encourage friends to stop giving bribes.
- Play an active role in monitoring corruption with demonstrated effects, for example through using innovative social media tools.

To parents, media and other actors

- Parents to support their children to act with integrity by setting example.
- Media to increase awareness and understanding of the integrity concept, thus inspiring youth positive attitudes, in particular targeting more vulnerable youth.
- Companies to develop code of conduct and training on integrity.
- Research institutes, development partners and other stakeholders to conduct further studies and research (especially qualitative) to better understand youth’s integrity perception and practices, including its gender dimension.
- Non governmental organizations and youth groups to promote youth integrity through online integrity campaign or online training.



Translation of the text: "I hope that no one has to suffer because of upholding integrity."

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We guarantee that the content of the English and Vietnamese reports are the same.

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www.transparency.org

Towards Transparency (TT) is a Vietnamese non-profit consultancy company founded in 2008 to contribute to the prevention of and fight against corruption. In March 2009, TT became the official National Contact of Transparency International (TI). TT's vision is a Vietnam free of corruption where people enjoy social justice, accountability and transparency in all aspects of life. TT's mission is to reduce corruption in Vietnam by increasing demand and promoting measures for transparency, accountability and integrity in government, business and civil society at large.

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