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Is bribery sometimes OK? How people answered across the Americas

February 7, 2012 | 11:14 am

Is it OK sometimes to use bribes, "given the way things are" in countries that may be grappling with corruption, crime and poverty?

People in Guyana and Haiti were roughly four times as likely to say yes as people in Brazil, Chile or Guatemala, according to a recently released survey of attitudes across Latin America and the Caribbean. The Vanderbilt University study found big differences in how bribery is viewed in different countries, based on a 2010 survey of nearly 41,000 people in 24 countries.

Researchers didn't draw conclusions about why people in some countries were more likely to say bribery was justified. They did, however, find other factors that helped explain how people viewed bribery. People were more likely to believe that bribery was sometimes justifiable if they also believed that:

- the national economy had taken a turn for the worse in the past year
- crime was a threat to their future
- corruption is rampant among government officials

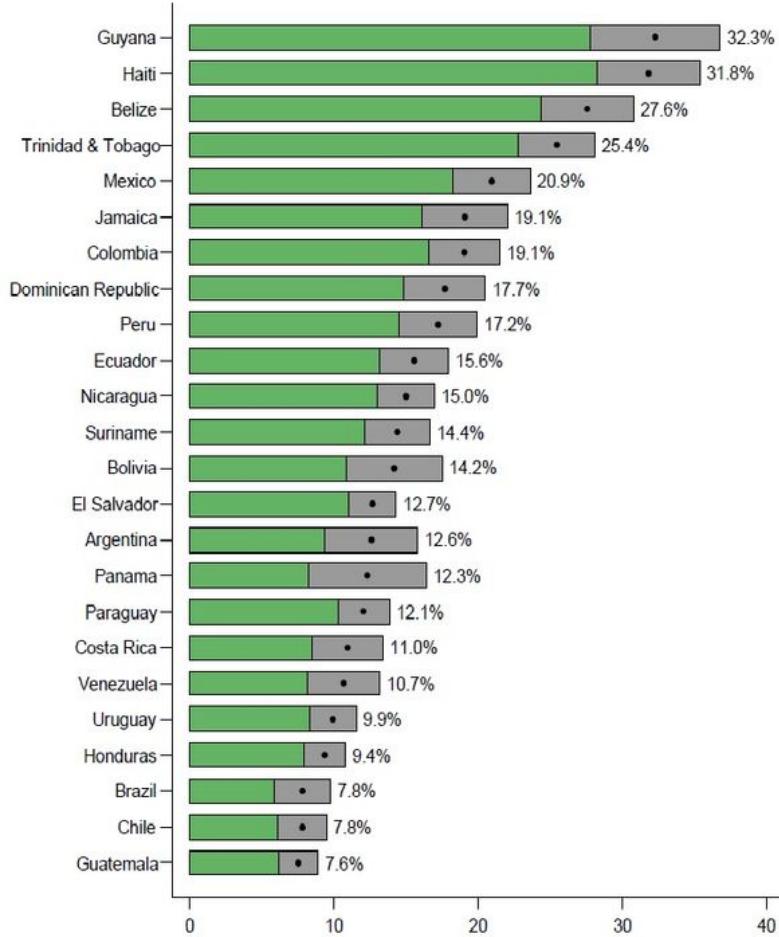
The last point may help explain why the study showed that Haitian respondents were more likely than Chileans to say bribery was justifiable. In December, the group Transparency International ranked Haiti as one of the worst countries in the world for perceived corruption, placing it 175th out of 182 countries based on surveys. Chile, where people were much more likely to shun bribery, ranked 22nd.

But the corruption rankings do not explain all of the gaps between countries when it comes to bribery: Guatemala ranked only a little better than Guyana in perceived corruption, despite vast differences in their attitudes about bribery.

The study also found that men were much more likely than women to think bribery was permissible, wealthy people were more likely to think it was OK than poorer people, urbanites were more likely to condone it than people living in rural areas, and young people justified it more easily than older ones.

Curious where other countries stack up? Here is the full list of country rankings from [the Vanderbilt report](#), sponsored by the Latin American Public Opinion Project:

Figure 1. Percentage of people thinking that given the way things are, sometimes paying a bribe is justified



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