



UNIVERSITY OF GUAM  
REGIONAL  
CENTER  
FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE UOG-RCPP'S *2015 GUAM CORRUPTION PERCEPTION REPORT*

As the leading economy in the Western Pacific region, Guam has much to gain when it ensures that its institutions are free of corruption. Like other small island economies, Guam is highly susceptible to corruption incidences that prevent the economy from reaching its full growth potential. These incidences can be countered or minimized by an intensive effort and authentic leadership that increase transparency, encourage reporting and establish and implement effective accountability mechanisms. Modeled after the Global Corruption Barometer surveys by Transparency International (<http://www.transparency.org>), this report is based on the results of a survey that engaged our island community and called for their participation so that we can measure our island residents' perceptions of corruption on Guam. It is hoped that this report will provide the public with a deeper understanding of the loss of public trust in government, start a dialogue on this complicated and sensitive issue and empower our citizenry to report corruption incidences and hold our government accountable for addressing these incidences.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- CORRUPTION IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN GUAM. The results of this study indicate that about two thirds of respondents believed that corruption was a very serious problem in Guam and that corruption levels were perceived to have increased in the two-year period 2013-2015 and ten-year period 2005-2015.
- POLITICAL PARTIES WERE VIEWED AS MOST CORRUPT. The results of this study indicate that respondents saw political parties as being affected by corruption the most, while religious and military institutions and non-profit organizations were viewed as least corrupt.
- PERSONAL CONTACTS ARE IMPORTANT. The results of this study indicate that respondents saw personal contacts as very important when dealing with agencies and entities of the Government of Guam. Although also true, personal contacts were seen to be comparatively less important when dealing with the Federal Government based in Guam.
- PEOPLE PREFER LESS RISKY ACTIONS AGAINST CORRUPTION. The results of this study indicate that, although respondents agree that ordinary citizens can make a difference in the fight against corruption, respondents often choose the more passive approach and the actions that carry the least risk, including the risk of retaliation for reporting a corruption incident.
- REDUCE CORRUPTION BY INCREASING TRANSPARENCY, ENCOURAGING REPORTING AND ENFORCING ACCOUNTABILITY. Based on the results of the survey, recommendations to reduce

corrupt actions in Guam include increasing transparency, encouraging reporting, and requiring and sustaining accountability mechanisms.

- REALITY VERSUS PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION. Reality of corruption helps to form policy and make convictions based on hard evidence, while perceptions of corruption help to illustrate the amount of confidence and trust a community has in their government and private sector.

## COMPARING GUAM'S RESULTS WITH THOSE OF THE U.S. AND 100+ COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES

In addition, some preliminary attempts were made to compare the results of Guam's Global Corruption Barometer survey with those of the U.S. and 100+ countries. Doing so puts the Guam results in perspective when it can be shown that, in general, Guam ranks in the middle of the group of countries and territories and, in some questions, fared better than the U.S.

## WORDS OF CAUTION

Although one can provide objective definitions (such as those provided to survey participants), it must be acknowledged that the topic of corruption and perceptions of it lean toward being subjective. People may perceive corruption differently based on how "corrupt" actions may affect their daily lives and if said actions work to a person's benefit or disadvantage.

Measuring and surveying a population's perceptions of corruption yield results that provide the opportunity for government officials and agencies to see factors affect the public's perceptions of corruption and to consider actions aimed at gaining the public's confidence. Perceptions should help to improve transparency and accountability of actions for those in positions of power.

With multiple types of corruption, it becomes even more difficult to draw the line between reality and perceptions and whether survey participants were able to consider this sentiment and reflect them on their responses. Hence, although attempts were made in this study to measure the perceptions of corruption as objectively as possible, the resulting measures reported as survey results are inherently subjective and far from being ideal measures. However as Treisman (2000) states, "(w)hile the complexity of the issues and the weakness of available statistical techniques..." (in this case, in the sampling) "... makes it essential to be cautious, the analysis does suggest some interesting results" (cited in RCPP's Casimbon et al., 2018).

**One would be hard-pressed to find one ideal measure of corruption that standardizes the concept and allows for comparison. Whether or not an ideal measure can be found, the Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) creates an opportunity for a dialogue about corruption and an exploration for possible accountability mechanisms. This report acknowledges that GCB limits attention to the role that local politics, policy and governance play against the backdrop of Guam's colonial history. It is also important to note that factors such as Guam's current political status as an unincorporated territory, its colonial history, and power structures along with Guam's economic and human resources limitations may be factors to consider for future studies on perceptions of government corruption.**