Regional Corruption in Russia

Dataset Documentation

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Abstract

This dataset presents the annual regional statistics of bribe-taking cases in Russia during 2004-2012 as registered by the law-enforcement authorities. The data were provided by the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation. The documentation includes a summary of data, a description of the data collection process, and a brief discussion on the applicability of data.

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1. Data summary

The dataset contains annual regional statistics on the cases of bribe-taking registered by Russian law-enforcement authorities. Bribe-taking is a crime punished under Article 290 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and is defined as "the acceptance of money, securities, or other valuables by a public official (personally or through an intermediary) for his or her performance (action or inaction) for the benefit of a giver or an affiliated person, if such action implies that the public official exploits his or her position or authority or installs patronage". The definition of bribery is in line with the conventional description of corruption as "the abuse of public power for private gain" (World Bank 1997:107).

The dataset covers all of 83 Russian regions from 2005 until 2012. The statistics include the following positions:

1. A total number of bribe-taking cases under criminal investigation at the beginning of the year and cases registered during the year.

2. Cases under criminal investigation registered in the current year (a subset of 1).

3. Cases investigated in the current year (a subset of 1).

4. Cases transferred to the court with a closing indictment (a subset of 3).

5. Suspended cases due to the failure to identified the suspect.

6. Cases suspended due to the location of the suspect being unidentified or due to the inability to reach the suspect.

7. A total number of individuals who committed the bribe-taking.

8. The number of individuals who committed the major bribe-taking (a subset of 7).

Each category includes information on the change relative to the previous year that allows producing the estimates for the year 2004.

2. Data collection

The data were provided by the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation. The Ministry receives the data from regional police authorities who are responsible for keeping a record of all crimes. Local police authorities are obliged by law to register any crime within three days from the moment of detection or notification.

The Ministry of Interior has provided the data personally to me, but it has not imposed any restriction on the use or dissemination of the data. I received two waves of data as a result of several requests to different departments of the Ministry. The first wave was received in April 2011 and included data for the years 2005-2007; the second wave was received in December 2013 and included data for the years 2007-2012. The data from both waves is comparable and comes from the same registry.[2] The dataset contains the original files from the Ministry for each wave together with the Excel spreadsheet with the aggregated data assembled by me.

It is worthwhile to mention that since 2014 Russian police authorities started to publish their data on regional crime online, including the registered cases of bribe-taking. Therefore, the dataset can be extended to more recent years by adding statistics from the website ***http://crimestat.ru*** accordingly.[3]

[2] This assumption is supported by the fact that the data for the year 2007 is identical in both waves.

[3] The website does not provide data on the number of individuals who commited the crime of accepting a bribe.

3. Discussion

This section discusses the properties of the data and its ability to measure corruption in Russian regions.

The data on registered bribe-taking assembled in this dataset is the most comprehensive measure of corruption in Russian regions. Its main advantage is the extensive coverage of the Russian regions and years that allows panel analysis of data. I recommend using the within-variation of bribe-taking in the regions across time because of the region-specific differences in handling corruption by the local police but also because of other time invariant-characteristics.[4]

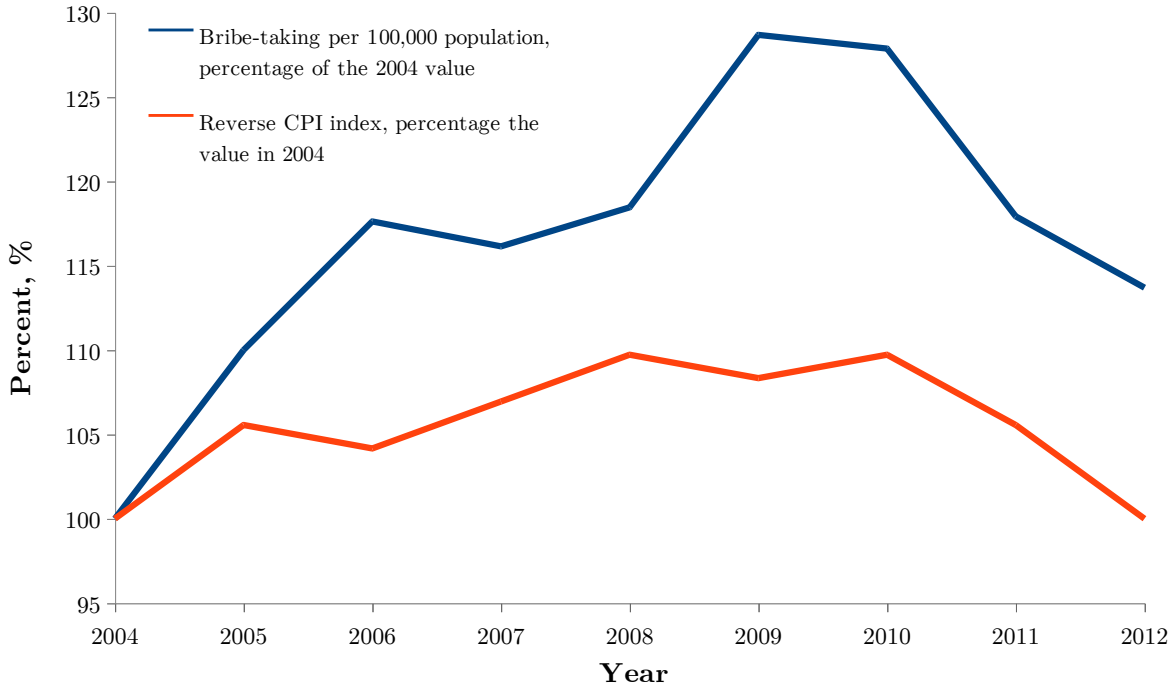
The dynamics of the bribe-taking in Russia is very similar to the trend of corruption measured by the index of Transparency International (TI). I show this in Figure 1, where I juxtapose the aggregate number of bribe-taking cases per 100 000 population to the reverse TI index for Russia (higher value means more corruption), measured in percentage to the value in the year 2004. This correlation suggests that within-variation in bribe-taking cases is positively related to the increase in corruption.

The number of registered cases of bribe-taking has several advantages over a similar measure of corruption based on the conviction rates that was extensively used for research on corruption in the USA (e.g., Glaeser and Saks 2006; Alt and Lassen 2014; Campante and Do 2014). In comparison to a conviction, the registration of bribe acceptance is only the first stage of the criminal procedure; therefore, it is less distorted by any potential corruption in the juridical process, which is often the case in many developing and even developed countries. Second, convictions refer to the number of convicted individuals independent of the number of cases, whereas each case corresponds to one detected criminal act. The number of incidents should reflect the corruption situation more precisely as it indicates the frequency of corruption acts and not the number of offenders. Third, it takes less time to register the case than to complete a criminal proceeding resulting in a conviction: the legislation for criminal procdedure

[4] Such characteristics include the cultural norms, various patterns of corruption

requires the registration of bribery cases within three days from the moment of detection or notification. This feature makes the within-variation of the bribe-taking to be a more precise measure of corruption than a rate of convictions.

Figure 1: Dynamics of corruption in Russia over the years 2004-2012



The major concern for this type of data is that it depends on the quality of law enforcement in the region. For that purpose, the analysis should include robustness checks that control for different parameters of law enforcement and judicial power such as resolution rate of major crimes or average salaries of the police.[5]

The dataset has been previously applied to study the determinants of regional corruption in Russia (Schulze et al. 2016), the resource curse (Zakharov 2020), and the effect of corruption on investment (Zakharov 2019).

[5] Schulze et al. (2016) and Zakharov (2019) provided examples of using these controls.

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