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Is the difference in consumption and income an indication of petty corruption?

Abstract. Based on micro-level data on reported household earnings, expenditures and assets, provided by the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS) for the period 2000–2013, it is found that households with workers in the public sector receive lower earnings than households with members employed in the private sector but enjoy the same level of consumption. Controlling for the reported level of earnings, private households do not show a significantly higher probability of possessing summer cottages (dachas), cars and computers, or living in better housing conditions, or having a higher level of monetary savings. The differences in assets cannot be reconciled with the sizeable expenditure-income gap found. The precautionary motives of workers are not able to reconcile these discrepancies either: neither attitude to risk, nor risk itself, differ between individuals employed in the private and public sectors. It is hypothesized that employees continue working in the public sector despite their low rate of official pay, because of unreported income they receive, or bribes.

Keywords: *petty corruption, bribery, Russian Federation, Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS).*

JEL Classification: J3, J4, D73, P2.

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1. Introduction

Corruption is one of the most significant problems of the world economy. While some researchers argue that corruption may increase efficiency ("greasing the wheels" effect (Lui, 1985)), most scientists conclude that corruption has a negative effect on economic growth and development, because it increases inequality (Gyimah-Brempong, 2002) and poverty (Gupta, 1998; Gundlach, Paldam, 2009), reduces investments (Wei, 2000) and has a deleterious effect on the allocation of government expenditures (Mauro, 1996).

Scholars and policy makers investigate the countries and regions that are the most corrupted, how corruption affects economic growth and development, should the world fight against corruption and which methods are the most efficient. In order to approach all these questions, the first step is to measure the level of corruption. But by its nature, corruption is unobserved and, hence, its measurement is the primary challenge in empirical literature. A researcher who develops quantitative measures of corruption faces the question of what should be included in such measuring, and then tries to assess something that everybody involved in the process is trying to hide.

In literature there are different approaches to measure corruption. Most approaches are based on such perceptions as surveys and expert opinions, in which individuals and firms' managers are asked to evaluate corruption in their environments. (Johnston, 2001) provided a detailed survey and

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

discussion of such measures. The most well-known index is the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (TI CPI). This index is an aggregated indicator that ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. This is an aggregated index that combines different sources of information, i.e. different surveys and assessments from independent institutions. Apart TI CPI, there are many other organizations that construct indexes of corruption, such as Business International Corporation, Political Risk Services Inc. and others.

The main advantage of perception-based measures is their scale, which makes it possible to carry large cross-countries studies. The main disadvantage of measures based on perceptions is perception bias. In most surveys, direct questions on whether individuals or firms pay bribes to government officials are asked. In such situations people tend to be afraid or, possibly be ashamed, and hide the real information, thus results distort the depth and scale of corruption. Still more, the aggregate nature of the data gives us little information about the relationship between corruption and individual agents, thus we are not able to explain the within-country variations of corruption. And finally, this measure focuses on perceptions of corruption rather than on the actual bribes paid or the actual theft of resources. This corruption index does not provide information about the type and level of corruption in a country.

(Golden, Picci, 2005) proposed to measure the difference between the physical quantities of public infrastructure and the cumulative price that governments pay for public capital stocks. Where the difference is larger between the money spent and the existing physical infrastructure, more money is being siphoned to mismanagement, fraud, bribes, i.e. the level of corruption is higher. (Golden, Picci, 2005) created the measure of corruption for 95 provinces and 20 regions of Italy. The weak point of this approach is the interweaving corruption with the efficiency.

There are studies that organize physical audits of governmental processes. For example, (Bertrand et al., 2007) followed individuals through the process of obtaining a driver's license in India, and found illegal payments made and the rules that were broken in exchange for these illegal payments. Similarly, (Barron, Olken, 2007) made a case study in which surveyors accompanied truck drivers on 304 trips along their regular routes in two Indonesian provinces. These surveyors accompanied truck drivers on their regular routes and noted the illegal payments that drivers made to the traffic police and military officers. They found that, in total, the illegal payments compiled 13% of the cost of the trip. (Sequeira, Djankov, 2010) used a similar methodology in Mozambique and South African Republic, shadowing clearing agents who processed customs for cargo as it passed through the ports. They observed bribe payments to port and border post officials, and found that on average, bribes represented 14% of shipping costs in Mozambique and 4% in South African Republic.

Журнал НЭА, №1 (49), 2021, с. 115–136

Recently the literature turned to evaluate corruption using policy experiments by comparing the amount of transfers disbursed by the government to the amount that actually reached the intended recipient of the transfer. The pioneering study used this technique by (Reinikka, Svensson, 2004) analyzing total public expenditures on education in the mid-1990s in Uganda. They compared data from records on central government disbursements and a public expenditure tracking survey to measure the dissipation in school grants in Uganda. They found that schools, on average, received only 13% of the grants, most schools received nothing. They also found a considerable variation in grants received across schools, meaning that schools used their bargaining power to secure greater funding. There is a similar paper by (Mironov, Zhuravskaya, 2012) which provides a reliable measure of corruption by measuring the amount of cash channeled illegally out of firms about the time of regional elections, and relates it to the probability that the firms obtained procurement contracts from the government. Other literature collects data from the bureaucrat documenting how the government resources were spent in a goal of fulfilling a task, and then compare those expenditures with an objective measure of how much it should have cost to carry out the required task. The difference then is estimated as how much was «stolen». For example, (Olken, 2007) compared the official expenditure reports with an independent measure of what it had to)cost to build a road of a particular quality. To obtain independent measures, he sampled each road to determine the materials and labor used, and then used local prices for these items. He found that, on average, about 24% of expenditures across the roads were missing. Such case studies made it possible to measure corruption were rare and covered only a limited pdart of corrupt activities/ So, it is also difficult to distinguish between corruption and mismeasurement or simple bureaucratic incompetence. In (Olken, 2007) it showed that road quality was mis-measured or that the bureaucratic apparatus was not good enough in roads' construction. In (Reinikka, Svensson, 2004) it remained possible that the resources that had to go to schools were actually spent on other important programs instead of ending up in the pockets of government officials. Starting with (Abbink, Irlenbusch, Renner, 2002), corruption was also widely studied in the laboratory. Generally, experimental literature adds many new insights into studies and measurement of corruption but also showed significant limitations (see (Zhuravleva, Sukhov, 2016; Guerra, Zhuravleva, 2021)).

In this paper, I develop *a measure of petty corruption based on the income-expenditure comparison*, using micro-level data of the Russian economy for the period 2000–2013. This method was proposed for the first time by (Gorodnichenko, Peter, 2007) and applied to Ukrainian data and was not replicated in the subsequent literature. There is a conflicting evidence between developed and developing countries with respect to private-public wage differentials. (Gregory, Borland, 1999) demonstrated that public sector employees usually had a significantly higher level of earnings compared to

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

private sector workers. In transition economies, workers in the public sector commonly received lower monetary compensations (Brainerd, 2002; Adamchik, Bedi, 2000). This was usually explained by lower efforts, social status, prestige etc., but in this case lower wages had to be translated translate into lower consumption expenditures, unless public sector workers had non-reported income. But this logic may fail because of unobserved heterogeneity: for instance, private sector employees may save more, and thus consume less, since their job is more uncertain. However, if after controlling for all the potential suspects for the selection bias, the expenditure-income gap still persists, unexplained differences may be rightfully attributed to unreported income, or bribes.

According to various estimates, The Russian Federation is one of the most corrupted countries in the world, thus the issue of measuring corruption in this country is particulary acute. Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2019 ranks Russia 138 out of 180. The evidence of corruption in Russia is scarce in academic literature. There is a literature that highlights the negative effect of corruption on the development of small and medium enterprises in Russia. For example, (Safavian, Graham, Gonzalez-Vega, 2001) constructed a theoretical model to explore the mechanism through which corruption affects micro- and small firms in Russia. They conclude that corruption in Russia prevents the development of small enterprises and thus has a negative effect on investment activities and economic growth. Later (Yakovlev, Zhuravskaya, 2009) again highlighted that corruption is an obstacle to the development of small and medium enterprises in Russia. Using data on Russian state capture[1] constructed by (Slinko, Yakovlev, Zhuravskaya, 2005), the authors argue that large firms receiving privileges from the regional government, tend to be profitable and faster developing. A high state capture index reflects the political influence of large firms and implies a worse performance for small business. Other literature analyzes differences in corruption between Russian regions. (Popova, 2010) investigated the effects of regional differences in corruption on electoral results in Russia and on the voting behavior of people with different employment status. The author uses two measures of corruption: CPI of TI measured for Russian regions and the state capture index constructed by (Slinko, Yakovlev, Zhuravskaya, 2005). The authors of this paper found that corruption positively influences participation in elections, moreover, it showed that even after controlling for corruption, people with different employment status voted differently. (Dininio, Orttung, 2005) analyzed regional differences in corruption using corruption perceptions data. The authors found that corruption in Russia was a structural problem, but not the one related to its institutions. They found that within each region the amount of corruption increases as the size of regional economy grows, the GDP per capita decreases, and the population decreases. (Mironov, Zhuravskaya, 2012) proposes an innovative measure of corruption that consists of measuring the amount of cash channeled illegally out of firms around the time of regional

[1] To measure capture and firms' political power, they construct a database of regional laws and regulations that treat selected large firms in these regions preferentially. They deem an enterprise to be treated preferentially if it receives any of the following benefits: tax breaks, investment credits, subsidies, subsidized loans, official delays in tax payments, free grants of state property, or a special "open economic zone status" within their territory.

Журнал НЭА, №1 (49), 2021, с. 115–136

elections, and relating it to the probability that these firms obtain procurement contracts from the government. Using this measure the authors rejected the «efficient greasing» hypothesis by showing that in more corrupt regions, public procurement contracts were allocated to less efficient firms, and therefore had negative effects on economic growth.

Nevertheless, some aspects of corruption in Russia have been analyzed in literature, and the method of the measuring corruption is still not well developed. The approach to estimate corruption based on income-expenditure comparison, seems particularly well suited, given that the RLMS data provides detailed information on income, expenditures, assets and household composition.

2. Empirical analysis

2.1. Data

The data I use in this study stem from the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey from both individual and household questionnaires. Labor compensation data is taken from individual questionnaires and is aggregated to household level as the sum of the reported income of all household's earners. For a robustness check, I use three different definitions of labor compensation. *Actual wage* denotes all wages received by all household members at their primary jobs during the previous 30 days. If a household member does not have a job, his contribution is equalized to zero. *Contractual wage* denotes the sum of contractual wages of all household members at their primary jobs. Contractual wages of individuals who are on leave, including maternity leave, are also included. Contractual wage is an important indicator since it is less affected by transitory income shocks and may serve as a proxy for permanent income. All wages are net of taxes. *Total earnings* denote all actual wages received by all household members at all their jobs during the previous 30 days plus the income from selling livestock, crops, agricultural products or berries and mushrooms collected in the forest.

To account for non-labor compensation I use *total income* which is defined as the sum of total earnings and social payments that include fuel subsidies, pensions, stipends, unemployment benefits, payments for children, rents on property, interests on deposits and dividends.[2]

Household composition data is constructed using individual questionnaires. A recipient is a member of household who works or has paid (or unpaid) leave, including maternity leave. A member of the household under 18 is considered a child. An individual is a pensioner if he is older than 60 years (55 for women). The definition of the private/public household is tricky. It is clear that a household may consist of two people, one of whom is employed in the public sector, another in the private. In this situation it is difficult to assign the household to the public or private sector. I define the household to be private (public) if more than 75% of earners are employed in the private (public) sector. With this specification I lose

[2] Financial income, defined as the sum of rents on property, interests on deposits and dividends constitute a small part of the income of workers in my sample, and there is less than 2% who reports a non-zero financial income.

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

the «50/50» households, which is 19% of observations in my sample. I also employ the head of household specification: the household belongs to the sector of its head, where the head of the household is the person with the highest observed wage.

The control variables used in my regressions include age, hours of work, number of males, experience and three types of education (secondary complete, university degree and PhD degree). I also include dummy variables for urban areas and Moscow/Saint-Petersburg. All these data come from the individual dataset. For the aggregation, I compute the average age of working household members, the sum of hours of work of all earners, the sum of work experience is computed separately for males and females, the number of employed household members with complete secondary education, university degree, PhD degree.

Household expenditures data comes from the family questionnaire. In the survey the responsible person in the family answers the question about the total expenditures of the household during last 30 days. In my analysis, I use different subsets of permanent[3] expenditures:

1) food – both for eating at home and away from home;
2) clothes – both for adults and children;
3) services including transport, repairs, laundry, hairdressing, mobile phone, Internet;
4) leisure – including travels, cinema, theater;
5) all medical.

Other expenditures include insurance and loan payments, alimony and taxes. Total expenditures on non-durables are computed as the sum of all the above.

Household assets data also comes from the family questionnaire. I have the information about housing conditions, including value of housing (evaluated by the household) and housing space; the presence of computer, car and summer cottage ("dacha").

2.2 Household income estimates

First, I estimate the following income equation.

$$\ln Y_h = \beta_0 + \beta_1 N_h^{PR} + \beta_2 N_h^{TOT} + \beta_3 N_h^{EAR} + \beta_4 N_h^{CH} + \beta_5 N_h^{PN} + \gamma \bar{X}_h + \varepsilon_h , \qquad (1)$$

where Y_h is a vector of various estimates of household income defined above; N_h^{PR} denotes the number of household members employed in the private sector; N_h^{TOT} is the total number of household members. N_h^{EAR}, N_h^{CH} and N_h^{PN} denote the number of household earners, children and pensioners[4], respectively. $\bar{X}_h$ is a vector of Mincerian covariates (age, hours of work, gender, urban area, education, experience), aggregated to the household level as described above. For the elimination of the inflation effect all income measures are considered in year 2000 prices (Table 1).

[3] I do not have data on expenditures for durable goods, but I have information about the presence of these goods in the household which is used later for robustness checks.

[4] If a pensioner is employed, there are 8% of working pensioners in the sample, he/she in counted in both household earners and pensioners.

Журнал НЭА, №1 (49), 2021, с. 115–136

Table 1

Household income estimates, 2000–2013

Variables	Actual wage	Contractual wage	Total earnings	Total income
Earners	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.06
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Pensioners	–0.09	–0.09	–0.09	0.17
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Children	–0.01	–0.01	0.03	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Average age of working household members	–0.01	–0.01	–0.01	–0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Hours	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.02
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Number of working household males	0.27	0.27	0.23	0.21
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Urban	0.42	0.41	0.28	0.28
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Moscow/St.Petersburg	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.42
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Complete secondary	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.06
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
University degree	0.27	0.25	0.27	0.24
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
PhD (Cand. /Doct.) degree	0.28	0.23	0.31	0.21
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Experience of working household males	0.007	0.007	0.008	0.005
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Experience of working household females	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.005
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Year	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.12
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Private sector	0.127	0.123	0.126	0.116
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
N	25 282	25 679	25 986	25 034
R^2	0.49	0.69	0.56	0.57
F-statistics	1442.29	3540.91	2093.22	2195.22

The table reports the $\hat{\beta}_1$ estimate of the eq. (1) for different income measures (defined in the text) which are all used in logarithmic form. All covariates are also defined in the text. Robust standard errors are given in parentheses. I exclude households if at least one member does not report his income or sector (10% of observations).

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

Table 1 reports results. As it is shown in the previous literature (Zhuravleva, 2015), the income premium associated with the household member working in the private sector is large and statistically significant. If one member of household working in the public sector was in the private sector this would increase the total household income on average by 12%. This result holds for all considered income measures. The coefficients for other covariates are consistent with economic theory, for instance we observe a positive and statistically significant return on all levels of education and experience of both males and females. Estimates state that one working male brings on average 25% of the additional income to the household. The revenues of families in urban areas are significantly higher, especially in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. The presence of pensioners and children in the household reduce their total earnings but positively affect total income because of social payments (pensions, child support).

In the Table 2 I present various robustness checks. The first line OLS(1) provides the $\hat{\beta}_1$ estimate of the eq. (1) discussed above. The second line OLS(2) provides the estimates of the equation with the dummy for a private household instead of the number of members employed in the private sector:

$$\ln Y_h = \hat{\beta}_0 + \hat{\beta}_1 Z_h + \hat{\beta}_2 N_h^{TOT} + \hat{\beta}_3 N_h^{EAR} + \hat{\beta}_4 N_h^{CH} + \hat{\beta}_5 N_h^{PN} + \hat{\gamma}\overline{X}_h + \hat{\varepsilon}_h, \qquad (2)$$

where $Z_h = 1$ if more than 75% of earners are employed in the private sector, and $Z_h = 0$, if more than 75% of earners are employed in the public sector. All the other variables are defined as above.

Table 2

Household income estimates, 2000–2013, alternative specifications

Variables	Actual wage	Contractual wage	Total earnings	Total income
OLS(1)	0.13***	0.12***	0.13***	0.12***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
OLS(2)	0.18***	0.17***	0.17***	0.15***
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
OLS(3)	0.19***	0.19***	0.18***	0.16***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
FE	0.08***	0.07***	0.06**	0.06**
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.02)
N of obs.	25282	25679	25986	25034

Robust standard errors are given in parentheses. ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. The specifications OLS(1), OLS(2), OLS(3) and (FE) are defined in the text.

OLS(3) provides the $\hat{\beta}_1$ estimates of the eq. (2), where $Z_h = 1$, if the head of household is employed in the private sector, $Z_h = 0$ otherwise (later this is called the head of household specification).

Журнал НЭА, №1 (49), 2021, с. 115–136

To control for the unobserved variables which can affect household income (preferences, friends influence etc) I use fixed effect estimates which control for all time-invariant omitted variables

$$\ln Y_{ht} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_{ht} + \beta_2 N_{ht} + \gamma X_{ht} + \alpha_h + u_{ht}, \quad (3)$$

where N_{ht} combines the variables of the household composition, and α_h denotes individual fixed effect. The estimates β_1 of the eq. (3) are reported in the last line of the Table 2.

OLS(2) and OLS(3) estimates indicate that if we switch from the public household to the private one having the same composition (the number of earners, children, pensioners) we will observed an 17% increase in the household income. FE estimates confirm these results, but with a smaller premium. I conclude that the private sector premium is economically large and statistically significant.

2.3. Expenditure-income comparisons

I found that households with workers in the private sector are associated with a large and significant premium in observed income (it is a common result for economies in transition, see (Brainerd, 2002; Adamchik, Bedi, 2000)). This is usually explained by the public sector requiring less effort, bonuses, social status, prestige etc. However in this case lower wages must be translate into lower consumption expenditures[5]. In other words, the sectoral gap in expenditures should be equal to the gap in earnings, unless public sector workers have unobservable, non-reported income.

To verify this hypothesis I estimate the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \ln E_h - \ln Y_h = \beta_0 + \beta_1 N_h^{PR} + \beta_2 N_h^{TOT} +, \\ + \beta_3 N_h^{EAR} + \beta_4 N_h^{CH} + \beta_5 N_h^{PN} + \gamma \overline{X}_h + \theta Y_h + \varepsilon_h \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where N_h^{PR} follows the head of household specification. E_h are the household total expenditures. I control for the level of earnings Y_h. As the measure of income Y_h I use contractual wages rather than actual wages because they are less affected by transitory income shocks and thus may be a proxy for permanent income. All other variables are defined as above.

The strong property of this specification is that it controls for any omitted variable which affects household income and consumption. The weak property is that it involves identical specifications of household income and household consumption. β_1 denotes the expenditure-income gap. For example, $\dot{\beta}_1 = -0.1$ means that if we consider two identical private and public households (identical in the sense of the same household composition and Mincerian covariates), private households consume a 10% smaller share of their income.

The main criticism of this method is unobserved heterogeneity, in particular the fact that public and private sector employees may have different consumption-saving behavior that may be due to different risk in two sectors. Private sector employees may save more, and thus consume less,

[5] Unless private sector employees save more because of risk and wage uncertainty, this is discussed later.

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

because they feel less job security. Since I have a panel data set, fixed effect estimates may provide a partial treatment. In the following section I explorer further consumption-saving behavior, comparing assets and wealth between sectors.

Table 3 reports the results. I observe that the expenditure-income gap is negative and significant. It means that workers with comparable levels of earnings consume the higher part of their income if they are employed in the public sector. Let us consider two identical families consisting of two adults, husband and wife, and two children. In both families men have a university degree and a full-time job with 10-years experience, the women do not work. Both earn 50,000 RuR per month. The only difference is that the first one is employed in the public sector, while the second one works in the private sector. My estimates: if the second family periodically spend 40,000 RuR of their income for current expenditures, the public one will spend 10% more, i.e. 44,000 RuR[6]. I explain this by the fact that workers in the public sector systematically have «additional», non-reported compensation, and thus are able to increase their expenditure.

Table 3

Expenditure-income gap estimates, 2000–2013

Variables	Food	Cloths	Leisure	Medicine	Total current expenditures
Earners	–0.34	–0.29	–0.31	–0.37	–0.35
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Pensioners	0.16	–0.09	0.08	0.23	0.12
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Children	–0.07	0.04	–0.30	–0.08	–0.04
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Average age of working household members	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Average age of working household males	–0.16	–0.36	–0.21	–0.26	–0.20
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Urban	0.14	–0.26	0.02	–0.24	0.08
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Moscow/St.Petersburg	0.06	–0.38	0.35	–0.10	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Complete secondary	–0.06	0.02	0.05	–0.01	–0.04
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.00)
University degree	–0.1	–0.02	0.07	–0.01	–0.07
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.00)

6 This method allows us to capture monetary bribes, and ignores bribes in kind.

The end of table 3

Variables	Food	Cloths	Leisure	Medicine	Total current expenditures
PhD (Cand. /Doct.) degree	–0.12	0.02	0.09	0.23	–0.07
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.1)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Experience of working males	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Experience of working females	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Year	0.06	0.01	0.12	0.08	0.07
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
The gap	–0.093	–0.082	–0.16	–0.11	–0.092
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	
N	24372	18386	4546	17151	24372
R^2	0.24	0.19	0.17	0.14	0.27
F-statistics	486.15	235.82	57.30	166.21	514.45

The line "the gap" reports the β_1 OLS estimate in the eq. (4). The log of contractual wage is an income measure. Robust standard errors are given in parentheses. Expenditure measures are defined in the text.

All the other variables are consistent with economic intuition. For instance, I observe that one additional pensioner in the household decreases the expenditures for clothes by 9% but increases medical consumption by 23%; one additional child decreases expenditures for leisure by 30%. Interestingly, households in urban areas spend more money for buying food (that may be related to the fact that in rural areas people have land, can raise cattle and produce food), but less for buying clothes and medicine. As expected the net effect of hours of work and work experience on consumption is nil.

I can extend this analysis by exploring the consumption-income gap in the eq. (4) across different occupational subgroups (managers, professionals etc.) and subsectors (education and health care). If the bribery hypothesis holds, then the groups that receive more bribes should detect larger discrepancies between expenditure and income (Table 4).

It is known that health care and education are the most corrupted industries in Russia. These industries provide services that have highly inelastic demand and, thus, create the greatest opportunities for bribery. Healthcare is supposed to be free in Russia, but Russians know that every hospital has its under-the-table price list, and for the care of quality you have to pay. It is common to pay bribes to get false medical papers and certificates or to get served faster at the expense of other patients. Corruption in education may take many different forms. The state registration and accreditation of higher education institutions is carried out through bribes. A common practice for teachers, both in school and especially higher educational insti-

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

Table 4

The expenditure-income gap by subsector and occupational group, head of household specification, 2000–2013

Expenditure-income gap	All sectors, all occupations	–0.09***
		(0.00)
		[24372]
The gap by subsector	Health care	–0.15**
		(0.05)
		[2030]
	Education	–0.13**
		(0.04)
		[1744]
The gap by occupation	Managers	0.02
		(0.04)
		[1136]
	Professionals	–0.14***
		(0.01)
		[6226]
	Service	–0.08**
		(0.03)
		[1402]
	Clerks	–0.12***
		(0.04)
		[885]

The table reports the β_1 OLS estimate in the eq. (4). Standard errors are given in parentheses, number of observations is given in brackets. Among 2030 observations in healthcare industry 184 individuals are employed in private sector; among 1744 individuals in educational industry 105 are employed in private sector. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

tutions, is to «suggest» to students that in order to improve grades or guarantee certain exam marks, they must receive extra tutoring, so the income of professor in prestigious university for one private lesson may exceed his monthly salary. The statistical evidence of my analysis is consistent with these views. I find that the consumption-income gap is considerably higher in education and health care: 0.13 and 0.15 log points respectively, versus 0.09 found overall. Table 4 also provides the estimates of the gap across occupations. I do not find evidence of a gap among managers (it may be due to an insufficient number of observations), but I find that expenditure-income differentials between private and public sectors are large and significant for professionals, service workers and clerks.

My findings clearly suggest that workers with the same level of income and other characteristics consume less if they are employed in the private sector.

But in principle, private sector employees having the same level of true earnings as their public sector counterparts could save more (and, thus, consume less) because of their perceived job uncertainty. I provided a partial treatment to this effect using contractual wage as a measure of income that is less affected by income shocks. To take one more step in this direction, I analyze the volatility of wages in both sectors and compare savings and wealth (accumulated savings) of households employed in the public and private sectors.

2.4. Robustness of the previous results

2.4.1. Savings and wealth comparison

The discrepancies found could be explained by different consumption-saving behavior. The family questionnaire contains questions about current household monetary savings. Using these data I compute the share of savings S / Y using two different measures of household income: total income and total earnings. Table 5 reports the results.

Analyzing the descriptive statistics I do not find support for the claim that households with workers in the private sector have higher current savings. The paired T-test predicts that there is no significant difference between two subsamples. Moreover, I observe that 85% of households report not to have monetary savings. Among those with positive savings families in both sectors on average save 30% of their income. I conduct OLS and FE regressions with the same controls as in the eq. (4) and do not find that sector significantly affects the share of monetary savings in earnings.

The survey also contains information about accumulated monetary savings, i.e. wealth including deposits (both in a household and in a bank)

Table 5

Households current savings, pooling 2000–2013

Households current savings	Private sector		Public sector	
	N = 7983		N = 12 653	
	$S_{cur} / Earn_{tot}$	S_{cur} / Inc_{tot}	$S_{cur} / Earn_{tot}$	S_{cur} / Inc_{tot}
Share of households with no savings, %	84.6		85.3	
Share of households with no answer, %	1.3		1.2	
Min	0.02	0.002	0.002	0.0002
Max	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.9
Mean	0.31	0.28	0.34	0.28
Standard deviation	0.2	0.19	0.21	0.19

Note. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) are computed for the subsample of households who report non-zero monetary savings.

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

Table 6

Households accumulated savings, 2006–2013

Households accumulated savings	Private households	Public households
	N = 7983	N = 12653
Share of households with no savings (%)	72	71.9
Share of households with no answer (%)	10	11
Min	0	0
Max	902 000	1200 000
Mean	9369	8988
Standard deviation	31037	29020

Note. All numbers are given in Russian rubles. For information on average (1$ = 32 RUR) in 2006–2013.

in rubles or other currencies, securities and bonds. This question appeared in the questionnaire in 2006, thus I have 8 years of data. Table 6 makes an overview of the descriptive statistics. I compare the means of accumulated savings in the two sectors using the paired T-test. The test predicts that there is no significant difference between two subsamples. As well as with current savings I observe that the majority of households (70%) report not having wealth. I estimate the eq. (4) restricting the sample only to households with zero wealth. Previous results hold, I find a significant expenditure-income gap of 9% between private and public sectors. It means that these discrepancies can not be attributed to the differences in savings.

It is possible that private sector workers convert quickly their savings into assets. I have information about the value of housing and housing space. Also the dataset provides information on whether the family has a dacha, a car (domestic or foreign) and a computer. To evaluate the differences in possessing these assets I estimate OLS and probit regressions where asset measure is the dependent variable. Controls are the same as in the basic equation (4).

Table 7

Household assets estimates, pooling 2000–2013

Household assets	Private sector	University degree	Earnings	N
Total wealth	0.07	0.27***	0.45***	2390
/OLS/	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.04)	
Value of housing	0.01	0.15***	0.24***	15275
/OLS/	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	
Housing space	0.007	0.06***	0.05***	23815
/OLS/	(0.006)	(0.01)	(0.00)	
Country houses ("dachas")	–0.004	0.03***	0.03***	24967

The end of table 7

Household assets	Private sector	University degree	Earnings	*N*
/Probit/	(0.006)	(0.01)	(0.00)	
Car	–0.02*	0.06***	0.09***	24683
/Probit/	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	
Car, foreign brand	–0.01	0.02***	0.05***	24683
/Probit/	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	
Computer	0.01	0.11***	0.10***	24670
/Probit/	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	

The household is the unit of observation. Value of housing, total earnings and total wealth are used in the logarithmic form. Private household: more than 75% of earners are employed in the private sector. Standard errors are given in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. All specifications include covariates from the eq. (4). Marginal effects are reported for the probit estimates.

Table 7 reports the results. Households with workers in the private sector do not show a significantly higher probability of possessing dachas, cars and computers or living in better housing conditions. The coefficients of other covariates are consistent with standard theoretical predictions: education and earnings increase the probability of having each of those goods. These results are verified when I apply the head of household specification. Thus, differences in assets cannot reconcile the expenditure-income gap.

2.4.2. Volatility of income

It is important to verify that attitude to risk and risk itself do not differ between individuals employed in the private and public sectors. Otherwise, lower job security in one sector may induce workers in this sector to save more and thus explain the expenditure-income gap.

The ideal comparison of the risk between two types would be the volatility of earnings for the lifetime of two identical individuals initially employed in different sectors. But such data are not available and I am restricted by a 14-year period. There are 1,487 individuals in the sample, aged between 18 and 47 (42 for women) in 2000, who I can follow for the whole period 2000–2013[7]. For each individual I compute the mean and the variance of their contractual wages for the period 2000–2013. The variance of income is the approximation for risk. Then I estimate a regression where I take the variance of income for the period 2000–2013 as a dependent variable and the sector of employment in 2000 as an explanatory variable, together with other Mincerian controls. I do not find that evidence that sector of employment in 2000 has a significant effect on the volatility of income of the worker in the subsequent 13 years.

Finally, to account for potential differences in consumption-saving behavior, I estimate the expenditure-income gap equation including the

[7] Ideally, one should compare the volatility of income of workers who stay in the same sector, however in the RLMS data there are less than 100 individuals who do not change the sector of employment and are present in the dataset the whole period 2000–2013, thus, insufficient number of observation for the estimation.

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

proxy of income uncertainty defined as the volatility of the total household earnings during the last eight years of the observational period

$$\ln E_h - \ln Y_h = \beta_0 + \beta_1 N_h^{PR} + \beta_2 N_h + \gamma \bar{X}_h + \theta Y_h + \lambda R_h + \xi V_h + \varepsilon_h, \quad (5)$$

where N_h denotes the composition of households defined above; $\bar{X}_h$ is the aggregated set of Mincerian covariates; N_h^{PR} follows the head of household specification. I also control for the level of earnings Y_h; the risk aversion R_h defined through the participation in insurance programs; and the income uncertainty V_h defined as the volatility of the total household earnings during the last eight years of the observational period. Thus, this equation may be estimated only for the period 2006–2013.

Table 8

Expenditure-income gap estimates, 2006–2013

Expenditure-income gap	(I)	(II)
The gap	-0.091^{***}	-0.087^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.02)
Risk aversion		0.09
		(0.12)
Volatility of income		0.00
		(0.00)
N	11 000	10 972
R^2	0.29	0.31
F-statistics	255.00	267.00

The specification (I) includes all the covariates from the eq. (4). The specification (II) also includes the risk aversion measure and the volatility of income defined in the text. Standard errors are given in parentheses.

Table 8 reports results. Neither risk aversion nor wage volatility have significant coefficients in the regressions. The expenditure-income gap stays large and significant after controlling for these two phenomena. I performed various robustness checks. To compute volatility, I used different income measures (actual wages, contractual wages, total earnings, total income); for the computation of the gap I used food and cloths expenditure separately along with total current expenditure. These modifications did not alter the results, meaning that uncertainty cannot serve as an explanation to the observed differences in expenditures.

To confirm the bribery hypothesis I studied the question of risk and uncertainty in the private and public sectors. Potentially sectoral differences in job security may induce private sector workers to save more, and that can explain the observed expenditure-income gap. But I found that households with workers in the private sector do not have more monetary savings or assets. I confirmed that employees in the private and public sectors have identical probabilities of possessing houses, dachas, cars and computers;

neither risk aversion nor volatility of income explains differences in expenditures. Therefore the precautionary motives of workers cannot reconcile the sizeable gap in income with the minor gap in expenditures and assets. I refer the unexplained discrepancies to bribes.

3. Conclusion

In our days corruption has reached enormous proportions and has become part of every day life in many countries. There is a mass of research that examines the impact of corruption on economic development. And the problem of corruption measurement has become especially relevant.

Measures of corruption based on surveys may be understated as they depend on voluntary disclosure, and respondents in places where corruption is most severe may be less likely to disclose it. Measures of corruption based on case studies may be overstated, as researchers may concentrate on situations where they expect to find corruption. Using micro-level data on the Russian economy, I have demonstrated that the comparison of income and expenditure between sectors might be a possible approach to indicate corruption.

In line with previous research on transition economies, I have found that the wage premium in the private sector in Russia, is economically large and statistically significant. I have also documented a significant negative expenditure-income gap, meaning that households with the same level of income and other observable characteristics, consume less if their members are employed in the private sector. Controlling for reported level of earnings, households with workers in the private sector have shown neither a significantly higher probability of possessing "dachas", cars and computers, nor living in better housing conditions. While in principle one might expect this to be due to a greater propensity to save due to job uncertainty, this hypothesis has not been supported by an analysis of current and accumulated savings. Thus, differences in assets cannot reconcile the expenditure-income gap found. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that this gap is significantly higher in healthcare and education industries, that are known to be the most corrupt in Russia. I claim that employees continue working in the public sector despite their low rate of official pay, because of unreported income they receive.

My paper contributes to the literature corroborating that corruption measurement based on the comparison of workers' earnings and expenditures, might be an effective method of the estimation of a petty corruption in a country. Obviously, this approach has strong assumptions and limitations. In particular, it is assumed that there is no bribery in the private sector. If this is the case, then the found gap is over-estimated. Furthermore, since household surveys are always biased towards low income groups, it is possible to measure only petty corruption and it is not possible to capture top-level corruption. I believe that verification of obtained results using other data, less biased toward low-income groups, is a fruitful avenue for future research.

Журнал НЭА,
№1 (49), 2021,
с. 115–136

Yet, given that nowadays household surveys on observable labor market outcomes and expenditures are available for many countries, this approach may become a worthwhile avenue for future research, making it possible to study the dynamics of petty corruption and its sectoral difference within a country, as well as exercise cross-country comparisons.

APPENDIX

1. Data Description

The data are provided by the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, this is the largest household survey in Russia. The survey is conducted by the National Research University Higher School of Economics and ZAO Demoscope together with Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Institute of Sociology RAS. The data can be accessed from the HSE website[8].

Data have been collected since 1992. Each household was interviewed once per year. In each round there are four questionnaires: household, adult, child and community. In our analysis we used data from household and adult questionnaire for the period 2000–2013. The household is the unit of observation. Below we provide the code of each variable used in the analysis, thus it can be easily found in the questionnaire.

2. Expenditure data

Expenditure data are provided by the household questionnaire. In each interview the reference period for expenditure covers three months or one month (differs according to the type of expenditure) prior to the interview month. We data are reduced to the monthly period. If household refuse to answer the observation is dropped.

Code	Question in the interview
*e*4	How much money did all members of your family spend on eating at home and away from home (outside) in the last 7 days?
*e*6_1	How much did you and other household members spend on the purchase of clothing and shoes for adults during the last three months?
*e*6_2	How much did you and other household members spend on the purchase of clothing and shoes for children during the last three months?
*e*13_2*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for sanatoriums, vacation (vacation venter / rest house), children's camps, travelling etc., excluding cost of transportation?
*e*13_21*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for tickets to the theater, circus, concerts, recreation parks and other forms of entertainment?
*e*13_22*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for treatment or examination in hospitals, military hospitals or clinics, not including payments for medicine?
*e*13_23*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for treatment or examination in a policlinic, not including payments for medicine?

[8] http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms-hse/data

The end of table

*e*13_31*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for medicine, including vitamins and other drugs?
*e*13_6*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for insurance premiums: life, health, car, home etc.?
*e*13_8*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for alimony payments?
*e*13_9*b*	How much did you and other household members spend in the last 30 days for payments of taxes for real estate and vehicles, membership fees, duties, visas and document processing, excluding income taxes and taxes for land?

The data used in the analysis is calculated in the following way:

- *Food* = *e*4×4.
- *Cloths* = (*e*6_1 + *e*6_2)/3.
- *Leisure* = *e*13_2*b* + *e*13_21*b*.
- *Medicine* = *e*13_22*b* + *e*13_23*b* + *e*13_31*b*.
- *Other* = *e*13_6*b* + *e*13_8*b* + *e*13_9*b*.
- *Total current expenditures* = *food* + *cloths* + *leisure* + *medicine* + *other*.

3. Income data

Income data is provided by the adult questionnaire and aggregated to the household level. While collapsing data if some household member does not report his income, it is assumed to be equal to zero in the total sum. But in the following analysis such observations are considered as unreliable and are excluded.

We work with four income measures. *Contractual wage* (code *j*13.2) represents the answer to the question: «In the last 12 months how much was your average monthly wage after taxes from your fist job – regardless of whether it was paid to you on time or not. If you have work there for less than 12 months, what has been your average monthly wage for that time? If you receive all or a part of your wage in foreign currency please convert it to rubles». *Actual wage* (code *j*10): «How much money did you receive in the last 30 days from your primary job after taxed?»

We aggregate data to the household level $w_h = \sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i$, where N is the number of working individuals in the household, and w_i denotes actual or contractual wage respectively.

To compute two other measures, *total earnings* and *total income*, we use data from the household questionnaire.

Code	Question in the interview
*d*10	How much did your family receive in the last 30 days from selling crops harvested from your land during the last 12 months?
*d*13	How much did your family receive in the last 30 days from selling living livestock, fowl or bees?
*d*16	How much did your family receive in the last 30 days from selling products of living livestock, fowl or bees that were produced in your household?

The end of table

*d*21	How much did your family receive in the last 30 days from selling gathered mushrooms, nuts, berries or fish?
*f*4	How much money was your family paid additionally for fuel in the last 30 days?
*f*7	How much money did your family receive in the last 30 days as benefits for children aged up to 18 months?
*f*7_2	How much money did your family receive in the last 30 days as benefits for children aged 18 months to 18 years?
*f*12_1*b*	How much money did your family members receive in the last 30 days for pensions?
*f*12_2*b*	How much money did your family members receive in the last 30 days for stipends?
*f*12_3*b*	How much money did your family members receive in the last 30 days for unemployment benefits?
*f*12_5*b*	How much money did your family members receive in the last 30 days for rents on property?
*f*12_6*ab*	How much money did your family members receive in the last 30 days for interests on deposits?
*f*12_6*bb*	How much money did your family members receive in the last 30 days for dividends?

$Total\ earnings = \sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i + 0{,}25\, d10 + d13 + d16 + d21$, where w_i is the actual wage of *i*'s? household member on *all* his current jobs.

$$Total\ income = Total\ earnings + f4 + f7 + f7\_2 + f12\_1b +$$
$$+ f12\_2b + f12\_3b + f12\_5b + f12\_6ab + f12\_6bb.$$

4. Capital and savings data

Capital and savings data is provided by the household questionnaire. We have data on current monetary savings as the answer to the question «How many rubles did your family save in the last 30 days» (*e*17). We also have information about total accumulated savings: «How much did your family manage to save, i.e. what savings does your family have today, at home or in bank deposits, in securities or bonds? If it is in other currency, please, covert in into rubles.» (*f*17).

Households are asked to report «the market value of a residence similar to yours» (*c*1_1), and the housing space: «How much general usable living space does your family have, that is, the total area of bedrooms, living room, kitchen, bathroom etc in the apartment (house)?» (*c*6). We also know whether the household has a computer (*c*9_6_2*a*), a domestic car (*c*9_7_2*a*), a foreign car (*c*9_7_3*a*), a "dacha" (*c*9_12*a*).

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Является ли различие между доходом и потреблением показателем мелкой коррупции?

Аннотация. В рамках Российского мониторинга экономического положения и здоровья населения за период 2000–2013 гг. была получена и обработана информация о доходах, расходах и активах домохозяйств. В ходе обработки полученных данных установлено, что работники государственного сектора имеют более низкие заработки, чем работники частного сектора. При том что домохозяйства, в которых преобладают работники частного сектора, получают более высокие доходы, у них не обнаружено больших материальных активов (квартир, машин, дач, денежных сбережений). Таким образом, различия в активах не могут объяснить обнаруженный значительный разрыв между расходами и доходами «частных» и «государственных» домохозяйств. Исследование также показало, что ни отношение к риску, ни сам уровень риска не различаются между работниками, занятыми в частном и государственном секторах. Создается впечатление, что работники продолжают работать в государственном секторе, несмотря на низкую ставку официальной заработной платы, из-за незарегистрированных доходов, которые они получают, или, другими словами, взяток.

Ключевые слова: *коррупция, взяточничество, Россия, РМЭПЗ-ВШЭ.*

Классификация JEL: J3, J4, D73, P2.

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