Over half of politicians suspect corruption among colleagues

More than 60pc of TDs and senators believe corruption continues to corrode the Irish body politic, despite long-running efforts to grind out the truth.

Corruption is continuing in the corridors of power, according to a confidential questionnaire of politicians.

Six out of 10 TDs and senators believe graft and payola, is alive and well, despite more than a decade of parallel tribunals into various scandals, according to new figures compiled by the University of Delaware.

More than a quarter (25.3pc) of Oireachtas members surveyed believed that "a few" of their fellow politicians are involved in corruption, according to the survey.

And 37.3pc felt that a greater number than a few, being "some", were cynically in politics for what they could get out of it for themselves.

Taken together, the figure indicates that 62.6pc believe corruption continues to corrode the Irish body politic, despite long-running efforts to grind out the truth about alleged past episodes of bribery and backstairs deals.

The finding came in a broad-ranging survey by the University of Delaware of Irish legislators, a sample of among six European nations that included the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary and Slovakia.

There was a 23pc response rate -- or 50 members of the Oireachtas -- out of 225 TDs and senators. Just 28.2pc thought "almost none" were involved in corruption, while a remaining 9.2pc declined to indicate what they thought.

Yesterday, Labour TD Joanna Tuffy confirmed she was one of the legislators that returned the questionnaire.

Honest

"I thought a few politicians in our country were involved in corruption. I generally would believe that most politicians are honest."

She said obvious corruption had emerged, but there had been no major changes in the law as a result.

"I would be inclined to think there is still some corruption going on even though I would hope there is not," she said.

Speaking as one of the Oireachtas respondents, without knowing the identities of others, she said: "The majority of us replied that either 'a few' or 'some' were currently engaged in corruption.

"There would need to be some action on whatever recommendations come out of the tribunals for me to feel more confident that very few, if any, politicians would be involved in corruption in the future, going on our past history."

Ms Tuffy added: "We need to reform the planning laws so that people can't make a fortune when politicians rezone land for development in future. Because that didn't just give rise to corruption in the past, it has also wrecked our economy."

Other countries reported lower levels of perceived possible corruption. On a more positive note, 57pc of Irish legislators believe that the treatment of people by public officials probably does not depend on who they know.

Meanwhile, 43pc of TDs and senators supported tapping people's telephones as an anti-terrorism measure, while 18pc supported the authorities' having a right to stop and search people on the street.

Some 16pc of respondents felt that the security apparatus should "probably or definitely" have the right to detain people for as long as they want, without putting them on trial.

Legislators here are also split (38pc vs 38pc) between further trade co-operation between states or the perceived need for more protectionism in the current economic crisis.

-Senan Molony Deputy Political Editor