

# CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2020

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**#cpi2020**

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# CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2020

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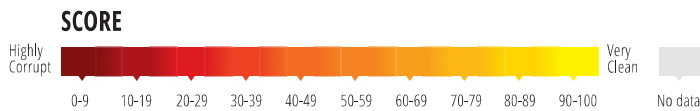
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# 180 COUNTRIES. 180 SCORES.

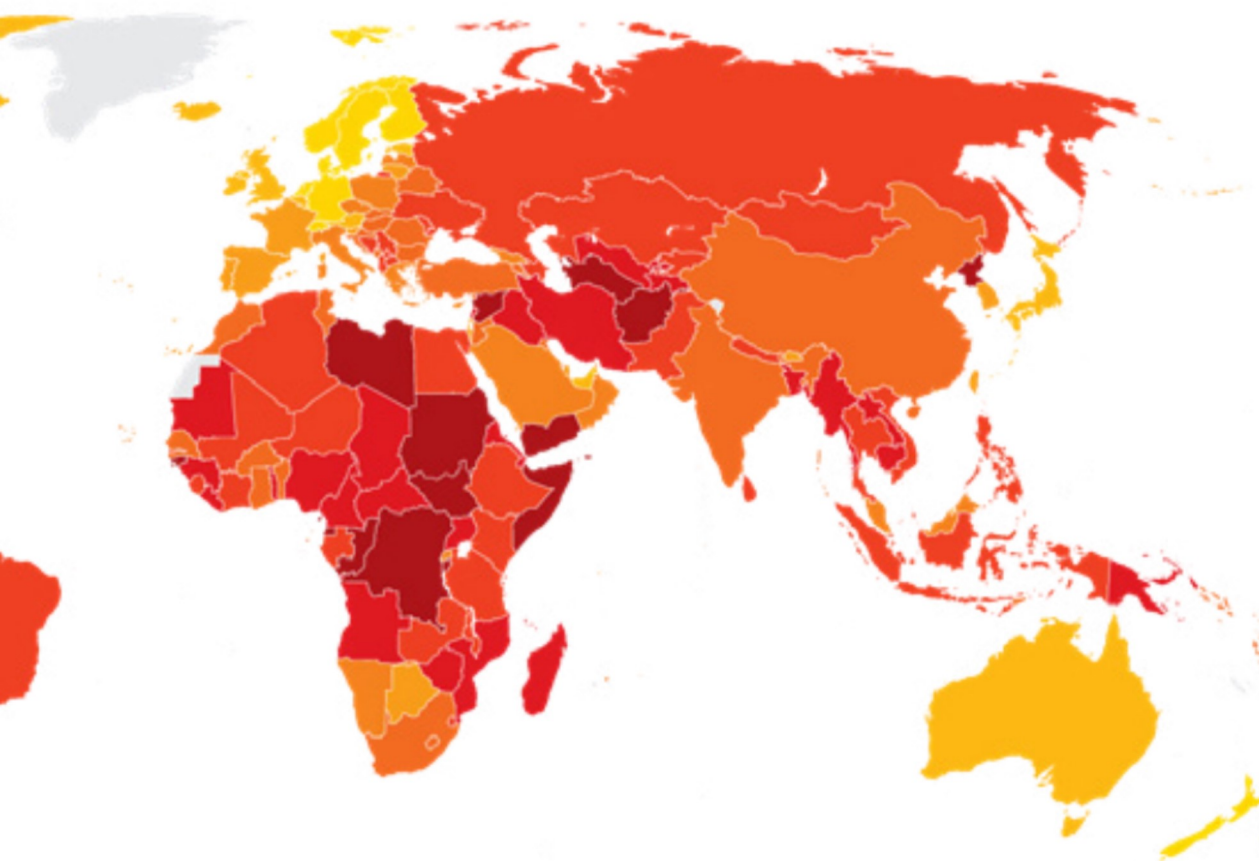
## HOW DOES YOUR COUNTRY MEASURE UP?



The perceived levels of public sector corruption in 180 countries/territories around the world.



SCORE	COUNTRY/TERRITORY	RANK
88	Denmark	1
88	New Zealand	1
85	Finland	3
85	Singapore	3
85	Sweden	3
85	Switzerland	3
84	Norway	7
82	Netherlands	8
80	Germany	9
80	Luxembourg	9
77	Australia	11
77	Canada	11
77	Hong Kong	11
77	United Kingdom	11
76	Austria	15
76	Belgium	15
75	Estonia	17
75	Iceland	17
74	Japan	19
72	Ireland	20
71	United Arab Emirates	21
71	Uruguay	21
69	France	23
68	Bhutan	24
67	Chile	25
67	United States	25
66	Seychelles	27
65	Taiwan	28
64	Barbados	29
63	Bahamas	30
63	Qatar	30
62	Spain	32
61	Korea, South	33
61	Portugal	33
60	Botswana	35
60	Brunei Darussalam	35
60	Israel	35
60	Lithuania	35
60	Slovenia	35
59	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	40
58	Cabo Verde	41
57	Costa Rica	42
57	Cyprus	42
57	Latvia	42
56	Georgia	45
56	Poland	45
56	Saint Lucia	45
55	Dominica	48
54	Czechia	49
54	Oman	49
54	Rwanda	49
53	Grenada	52
53	Italy	52
53	Malta	52
53	Mauritius	52
53	Saudi Arabia	52
51	Malaysia	57
51	Namibia	57
50	Greece	59
49	Armenia	60
49	Jordan	60
49	Slovakia	60
47	Belarus	63
47	Croatia	63
47	Cuba	63
47	Sao Tome and Principe	63
45	Montenegro	67
45	Senegal	67
44	Bulgaria	69
44	Hungary	69
44	Jamaica	69
44	Romania	69
44	South Africa	69
44	Tunisia	69
43	Ghana	75
43	Maldives	75
43	Vanuatu	75
42	Argentina	78
42	Bahrain	78
42	China	78
42	Kuwait	78
42	Solomon Islands	78
41	Benin	83
41	Guyana	83
41	Lesotho	83
40	Burkina Faso	86
40	India	86
40	Morocco	86
40	Timor-Leste	86
40	Trinidad and Tobago	86



40	Turkey	86	35	Panama	111	28	Dominican Republic	137	22	Nicaragua	159
39	Colombia	92	34	Moldova	115	28	Guinea	137	21	Cambodia	160
39	Ecuador	92	34	Philippines	115	28	Liberia	137	21	Chad	160
38	Brazil	94	33	Egypt	117	28	Myanmar	137	21	Comoros	160
38	Ethiopia	94	33	Eswatini	117	28	Paraguay	137	21	Eritrea	160
38	Kazakhstan	94	33	Nepal	117	28	Angola	142	21	Iraq	160
38	Peru	94	33	Sierra Leone	117	27	Djibouti	142	19	Afghanistan	165
38	Serbia	94	33	Ukraine	117	27	Papua New Guinea	142	19	Burundi	165
38	Sri Lanka	94	33	Zambia	117	27	Uganda	142	19	Congo	165
38	Suriname	94	32	Niger	123	27	Bangladesh	146	19	Guinea Bissau	165
38	Tanzania	94	31	Bolivia	124	26	Central African Republic	146	19	Turkmenistan	165
37	Gambia	102	31	Kenya	124	26	Uzbekistan	146	18	Democratic Republic of the Congo	170
37	Indonesia	102	31	Kyrgyzstan	124	25	Cameroon	149	18	Haiti	170
36	Albania	104	31	Mexico	124	25	Guatemala	149	18	Korea, North	170
36	Algeria	104	30	Azerbaijan	129	25	Iran	149	17	Libya	173
36	Cote d'Ivoire	104	30	Gabon	129	25	Lebanon	149	16	Equatorial Guinea	174
36	El Salvador	104	30	Malawi	129	25	Madagascar	149	16	Sudan	174
36	Kosovo	104	30	Mali	129	25	Mozambique	149	15	Venezuela	176
36	Thailand	104	30	Russia	129	25	Nigeria	149	15	Yemen	176
36	Vietnam	104	29	Laos	134	25	Tajikistan	149	14	Syria	178
35	Bosnia and Herzegovina	111	29	Mauritania	134	25	Honduras	157	12	Somalia	179
35	Mongolia	111	29	Togo	134	24	Zimbabwe	157	12	South Sudan	179
35	North Macedonia	111									

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) paints a grim picture of the state of corruption worldwide. While most countries have made little to no progress in tackling corruption in nearly a decade, more than two-thirds of countries score below 50. Our analysis shows corruption not only undermines the global health response to COVID-19, but contributes to a continuing crisis of democracy.

2020 proved to be one of the worst years in recent history, with the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects. The health and economic impact on individuals and communities worldwide has been catastrophic. More than 90 million people were

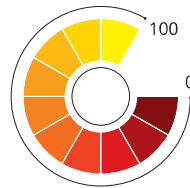
infected, and nearly 2 million people lost their lives around the world.<sup>1</sup>

As the past tumultuous year has shown, COVID-19 is not just a health and economic crisis, but a corruption crisis as well, with countless lives lost due to the

insidious effects of corruption undermining a fair and equitable global response.

Reports of corruption during COVID-19<sup>2</sup> have reverberated across the globe.

**180** COUNTRIES SCORED



THE CPI USES A SCALE FROM 0 TO 100

The CPI scores **180 countries and territories** by their **perceived** levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and businesspeople.

100 is **very clean** and 0 is **highly corrupt**

**2/3** OF COUNTRIES SCORE BELOW

**50**/<sub>100</sub>

THE **AVERAGE** SCORE IS

**43**/<sub>100</sub>

From bribery and embezzlement to overpricing and favouritism, corruption in health care takes many forms.<sup>3</sup> We risk losing even more, however, if we don't learn from previous lessons in times of crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Over the last year, despite COVID-19, people around the world gathered in force to join massive protests against corruption and for social justice and political change. Consistent with public opinion surveys that

show most people are hopeful that they can make a difference in the face of corruption,<sup>5</sup> these protests made headlines and highlighted the power of collective action in speaking out.

The emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic revealed enormous cracks in health systems and democratic institutions, underscoring that those in power or who hold government purse strings often serve their own interests instead

of those most vulnerable. As the global community transitions from crisis to recovery, anti-corruption efforts must keep pace to ensure a fair and just revival.<sup>6</sup>

## Recommendations

To fight COVID-19 and curb corruption, it is essential for countries to:



### 1. STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT INSTITUTIONS

The COVID-19 response exposed vulnerabilities of weak oversight and inadequate transparency. To ensure resources reach those most in need and are not subject to theft by the corrupt, anti-corruption authorities and oversight institutions must have sufficient funds, resources, and independence to perform their duties.



### 3. DEFEND DEMOCRACY, PROMOTE CIVIC SPACE

The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated democratic decline, with some governments exploiting the pandemic to suspend parliaments, renounce public accountability mechanisms, and incite violence against dissidents. To defend civic space, civil society groups and the media must have the enabling conditions to hold governments accountable.



### 2. ENSURE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT CONTRACTING

Many governments have drastically relaxed procurement processes. These rushed and opaque procedures provide ample opportunity for corruption and the diversion of public resources. Contracting processes must remain open and transparent to combat wrongdoing, identify conflicts of interest and ensure fair pricing.



### 4. PUBLISH RELEVANT DATA, GUARANTEE ACCESS

The publication of disaggregated data on spending and distribution of resources is particularly relevant in emergency situations, to ensure fair and equitable policy responses. Governments should also ensure people receive easy, accessible, timely and meaningful information by guaranteeing their right to access information.

# GLOBAL HIGHLIGHTS

This year's CPI shows corruption is more pervasive in countries least equipped to handle the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises.

The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

Like previous years, more than two-thirds of countries score below 50 on this year's CPI, with an average score of just 43. The data shows that despite some progress, most countries still fail to tackle corruption effectively.

In addition to earning poor scores, nearly half of all countries have been stagnant on the CPI for almost a decade. These countries have failed to move the needle in any significant way to improve their score and combat public sector corruption.



HIGHEST SCORING REGION

**WESTERN EUROPE & EUROPEAN UNION**

**66** /100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE

**= SINCE 2018**



LOWEST SCORING REGION

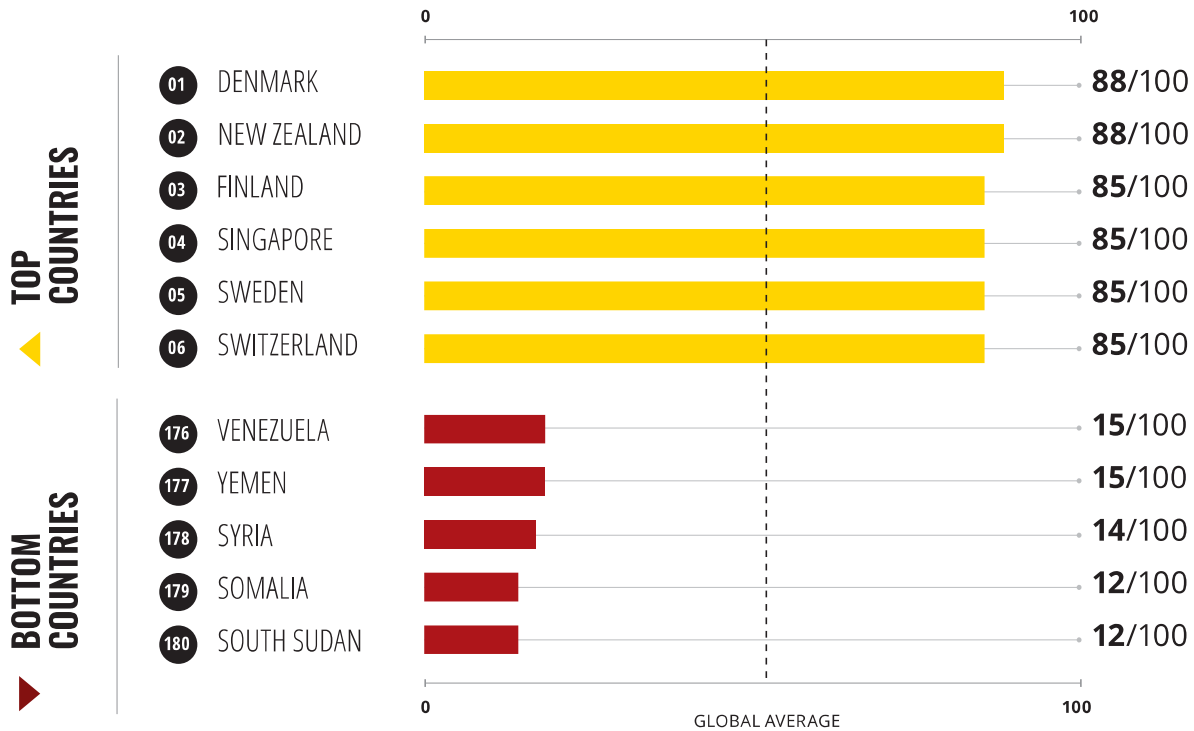
**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**32** /100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE

**= SINCE 2018**





The top countries on the CPI are Denmark and New Zealand, with scores of 88, followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland, with scores of 85 each.

The bottom countries are South Sudan and Somalia, with scores of 12 each, followed by Syria (14), Yemen (15) and Venezuela (15).

Since 2012, 26 countries improved their CPI scores, including Greece, Myanmar and Ecuador. In the same period, 22 countries decreased their scores, including Lebanon, Malawi and Bosnia & Herzegovina\*.

Since 2012:

26



### COUNTRIES IMPROVED\*

Including:

- Greece (+14)
- Myanmar (+13)
- Ecuador (+7)

22



### COUNTRIES DECLINED\*

Including:

- Lebanon (-5)
- Malawi (-7)
- Bosnia & Herzegovina (-7)

\*In these six examples, we report the year between 2012 and 2020 from which the score change is statistically significant.



**THE REMAINING COUNTRIES MADE LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN RECENT YEARS**

# COVID-19 AND CORRUPTION

Corruption undermines an equitable response to COVID-19 and other crises, highlighting the importance of transparency and anti-corruption measures in emergency situations.

While existing research<sup>7</sup> shows that corruption negatively affects people's access to high quality health care, our analysis also indicates that even when accounting for economic development, higher levels of corruption are associated with lower universal health care coverage and higher rates of infant and maternal mortality and deaths from cancer, diabetes, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Corruption is one of the key barriers to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the COVID-19 pandemic is making those goals even more difficult to attain. The long-term effects of corruption on health care systems remind us that corruption often intensifies the effects of a crisis.

Corruption is prevalent across the COVID-19 response, from bribery for COVID-19 tests, treatment and other health services, to public procurement of medical supplies and overall emergency preparedness.

Our analysis shows that corruption diverts funds from much needed investment in health care, leaving communities without doctors, equipment, medicines and, in some cases, clinics and hospitals. In addition, a lack of transparency in public spending heightens the risk of corruption and ineffective crisis response.

Budget transparency, particularly during an emergency response like COVID-19 when speed and efficiency matter, can be difficult to enforce during a crisis.

Transparency is nevertheless key to ensure public resources are spent appropriately and reach their intended recipients. For this reason, robust and transparent procedures for budget allocations, public contracts, and audits must be in place before a crisis hits.

Finally, our research shows that corruption continues to undermine democracy,<sup>8</sup> even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries with higher levels of corruption tend to be the worst perpetrators of democratic and rule-of-law breaches while managing the COVID-19 crisis.

**“ COVID-19 is not just a health and economic crisis. It's a corruption crisis. And one that we're currently failing to manage.**

**Delia Ferreira Rubio**  
Chair, Transparency International

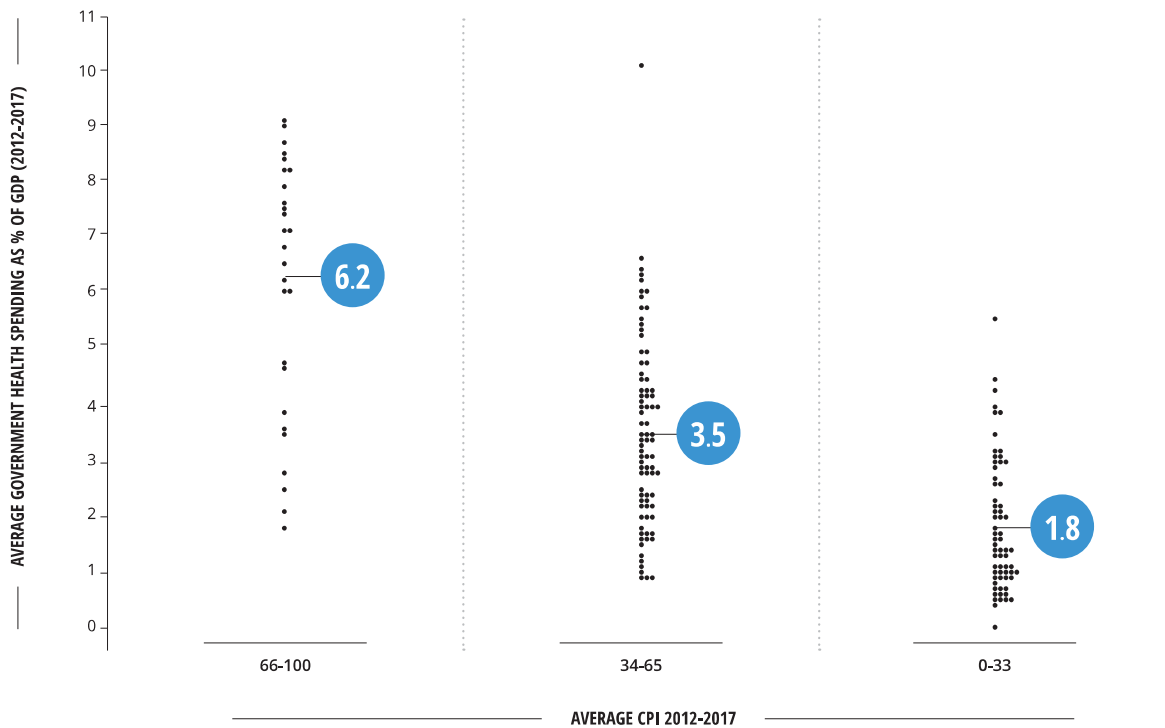


## HEALTH EXPENDITURE

Corruption shifts public spending away from essential public services. Countries with higher levels of corruption, regardless of economic development, tend to spend less on health.

## CORRUPTION AND HEALTH SPENDING

Lower investment in public health is associated with higher levels of corruption. Each dot represents a country's average CPI score (2012-2017) compared to average health expenditures as a percentage of GDP (2012-2017).<sup>13</sup>



### Romania 44

With a score of 44, Romania consistently rates as one of the most corrupt European Union (EU) countries on the CPI. The country's expenditures on health care are also below the EU average. In addition to underfunding, Romania has shortages of medical personnel.<sup>9</sup>

### Uruguay 71

With a score of 71, Uruguay is a top performer on the CPI in Latin America. Government spending on health care is among the highest in the region. The country has a robust epidemiological surveillance system,<sup>10</sup> which has aided its response to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, like yellow fever and Zika.

### Bangladesh 26

With a score of 26, Bangladesh is one of the worst performers on the CPI in Asia Pacific. The government invests little in health care<sup>11</sup> while corruption flourishes. Corruption during COVID-19 ranges from bribery in health clinics to misappropriated aid.<sup>12</sup> In addition, corruption is pervasive in the procurement of medical supplies and contracts between powerful businesspeople and government officials.

## DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

Corruption continues to contribute to democratic backsliding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries with higher levels of corruption rely on less democratic responses to the crisis.

## CORRUPTION AND COVID-19 DEMOCRATIC VIOLATIONS

Democratic violations in response to COVID-19 are more common in countries with higher levels of corruption. Each dot represents a country's CPI 2020 score, and the circles represent the average CPI score for that category of democratic violation.<sup>14</sup>



### United States 67

With a score of 67, the United States reaches its lowest position on the CPI since 2012. The Administration's challenges to oversight<sup>15</sup> of the unprecedented US\$1 trillion COVID-19 relief package raised serious anti-corruption concerns and marked a significant retreat from longstanding democratic norms promoting accountable government.

### Philippines 34

With a score of 34, efforts to control corruption in the Philippines appear mostly stagnant since 2012. The government's response to COVID-19 has been characterised by abusive enforcement<sup>16</sup>, and major violations of human rights and media freedom.<sup>17</sup>

### New Zealand 88

With a score of 88, New Zealand scores top marks on the CPI. The country's response to COVID-19 was lauded for its effectiveness although there are doubts about transparency standards.<sup>18</sup> While the government communicates openly about the measures and policies it puts in place, more transparency is needed around public procurement for COVID-19 recovery.

# REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

While corruption differs in scale and scope across regions, it proved to be a universal obstacle to effectively combatting COVID-19.

At the top of the CPI, the pandemic tested Western Europe and the EU, with many countries lacking full transparency and accountability.

In Asia Pacific and the Americas, some governments used COVID-19 to consolidate power,

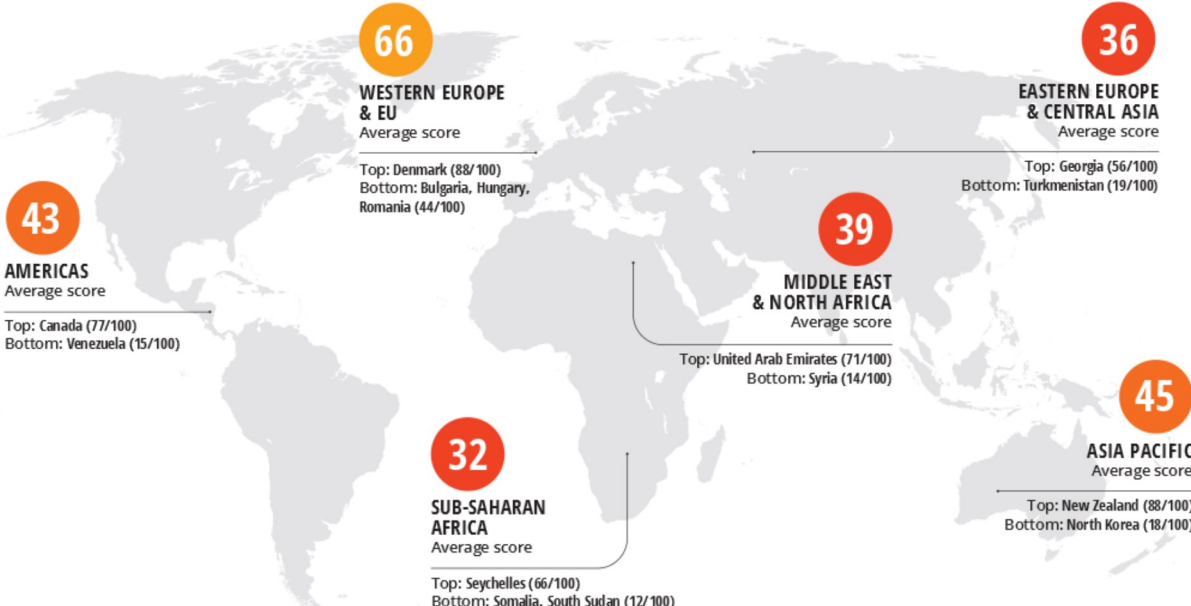
but left citizens without access to emergency aid.

In the Middle East and North Africa, countries weakened anti-corruption measures, while parts of Eastern Europe and Central Asia reduced oversight and curtailed civil liberties.

At the bottom of the CPI, Sub-Saharan Africa responded to COVID-19 with protests against rising costs of living, corruption and the misuse of emergency funds.

## RESULTS BY REGION

Average regional scores, with top and bottom performers in each region.



# AMERICAS

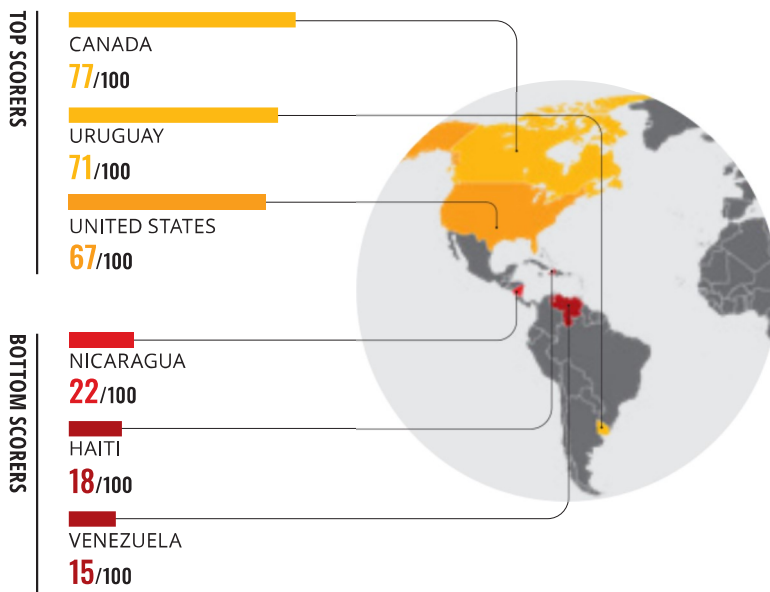
With an average score of 43 for the fifth consecutive year, the Americas showcases corruption and the mismanagement of funds in one of the regions most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

32

COUNTRIES ASSESSED

43/100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



Canada and Uruguay are consistently top performers, with scores of 77 and 71 respectively, while Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela are the worst performers, with scores of 22, 18 and 15 respectively.

In a region already characterised by weak government institutions, COVID-19 has highlighted deep social and economic inequalities, with its disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations, including women, girls,<sup>19</sup> indigenous groups, the elderly, migrants and Afro-Americans. Similar to other regions around the world, governments in the Americas took extraordinary measures to fight COVID-19

in the form of various states of emergency<sup>20</sup> that restricted civil rights. These restrictions curtailed freedoms of speech and assembly, weakened institutional checks and balances, and reduced space for civil society.<sup>21</sup>

An alarming concentration of power in the executive branches in countries like Colombia<sup>22</sup> (39) and El Salvador<sup>23</sup> (36) has contributed to an explosion in irregularities and corruption cases<sup>24</sup> associated with COVID-19 related procurement. Across the region, citizens struggle to access reliable and up-to-date information on health statistics and emergency procurement. A major challenge facing the

region is ensuring that funds and programmes for COVID-19 relief are not lost to corruption and reach the intended recipients. Failure to deliver this aid risks increased social discontent, stokes harmful populism, and creates still greater poverty<sup>25</sup> and inequality.

Governments must also guarantee that the development, purchase and distribution of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines are transparent and equitable. It is crucial that governments permit civil society organisations and the press to function as watchdogs, holding politicians and businesses to account.

## COUNTRIES TO WATCH

### Peru

With a score of 38, Peru improves two points, but remains relatively stagnant on the index since 2012. Investigations of corruption cases and the recent approval of crucial anti-corruption laws offer some improvements.

Specifically, two laws provide hope. One prevents people

found guilty of corruption from applying to public positions or being designated to positions of trust.<sup>26</sup> The second improves transparency, accountability and integrity in political financing.<sup>27</sup>

The presidential elections scheduled for April 2021 present an opportunity to end impunity and hold power to account in Peru, where social discontent

with corruption, COVID-19 and the resulting economic crisis<sup>28</sup> remains high. Investigations of high-level political leaders and prominent businesspeople should be brought to trial and sentences confirmed as appropriate, to maintain public trust.

**Peru faces structural corruption,<sup>29</sup> impunity and political instability.<sup>30</sup> In less than five years, the country has rejected four presidents, three of whom are under investigation for corruption.**



Photo: © Musuk Nolte

### Honduras

With a score of 24, Honduras declines by two points to reach a new low on the CPI. In the last year, Honduras was devastated by both COVID-19 and the 2020 hurricane season, and continues to suffer from high levels of poverty and inequality.

Weak institutions contribute to a lack of disaster preparedness<sup>31</sup> and a uniform economy creates an overdependence on agriculture and natural resources for income.<sup>32</sup>

The status of anti-corruption efforts is similarly grim. The country lost millions to corruption in the last decade<sup>33</sup> and experienced significant setbacks in the fight against impunity with the termination of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption

and Impunity in Honduras, run by the Organization of American States.<sup>34</sup> Congress also approved a series of laws<sup>35</sup> that promote corruption and hinder investigations.<sup>36</sup>

Reports reveal an alarming lack of planning in the country's COVID-19 related purchases,<sup>37</sup> over-pricing of medical equipment and opaque contractual arrangements<sup>38</sup> in the procurement process for field hospitals.



**In Honduras, transparency is paramount for a successful recovery from COVID-19 and natural disasters.**

Photo: Peg Hunter / CC BY-NC 2.0

# ASIA PACIFIC

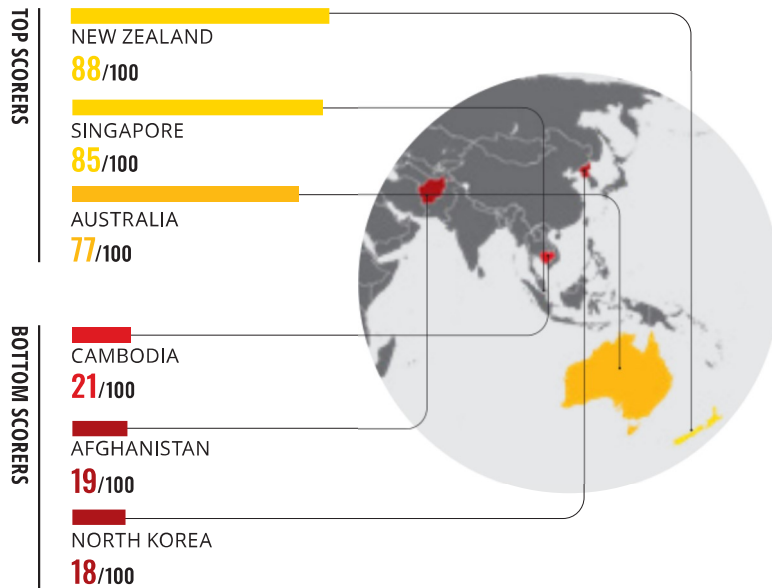
With an average score of 45, the Asia Pacific region struggles to combat corruption and tackle the profound health and economic impact of COVID-19.

31

COUNTRIES ASSESSED

45/100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



With a score of 88, New Zealand is consistently one of the top performers on the CPI, both in the region and around the world. The country is followed by Singapore (85), Australia (77) and Hong Kong (77). Conversely, Cambodia (21), Afghanistan (19) and North Korea (18) earn the lowest scores in the region.

In some Pacific countries, COVID-19 and cyclone Harold exposed several cracks in already weak governance systems.

Civil society actors and allies across Vanuatu (43), Papua New Guinea (27) and the Solomon Islands (42) called for greater transparency and accountability<sup>39</sup>

in the COVID-19 response.

In Papua New Guinea, civil society demanded an audit of emergency funds and procurement<sup>40</sup> to ensure an inclusive process. In the Solomon Islands, little progress has been made since the passing of the 2018 anti-corruption law and, in 2020, key government actors were accused of diverting funds<sup>41</sup> intended to help people struggling during the pandemic.

In Asia, key economies such as India (40), Indonesia (37) and Bangladesh (26) experienced slow progress in anti-corruption efforts, with several government commitments to reform not yet

materialising effectively.

The Maldives (43), which climbed 14 points on the index since last year shows a positive trend on the CPI and experienced advances in democratic space and the removal of several repressive laws.

With a score of 19, Afghanistan is a significant improver on the CPI, increasing 11 points since 2012. The country instituted significant legal and institutional reforms and recently announced plans to establish a new anti-corruption commission.



## COUNTRIES TO WATCH

### Vanuatu

With a score of 43, Vanuatu remains stagnant on the CPI. Highly vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters, it was hit the hardest by Cyclone Harold at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since its independence in 1980, Vanuatu has been politically

volatile, with frequent motions of no confidence filed against the government.<sup>42</sup> The former Prime Minister Charlot Salwai was the first to complete a full four-year term in office in more than a decade. Political instability<sup>43</sup> has contributed to an environment rife with bribery, nepotism, and misappropriation of funds.

In a positive development, the country is taking steps to engage

citizens in public service delivery<sup>44</sup> with the aim of improving efficiency and effectiveness. However, implementation of the necessary legal, policy, and anti-corruption frameworks remains a challenge. For example, difficulties with the implementation of a right to information law<sup>45</sup> highlights concerns over timely fulfilment of information requests.



**In Vanuatu, strong political will is one of the most important factors in addressing corruption and improving transparency and accountability.**

Photo: [ITU/R.Farrell](#) / CC BY 2.0

### Myanmar

With a score of 28, Myanmar is a significant improver on the CPI, increasing 13 points since 2012.

Investigations of high-level officials and the implementation of legal and institutional reforms<sup>46</sup> point to some progress in the country's anti-corruption efforts

and an increased political will to combat graft.

A recent report, *Global Corruption Barometer - Asia*<sup>47</sup>, found that an overwhelming number of Myanmar citizens think their government is doing a good job in tackling corruption, and that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption.

However, despite these improvements, there are legal and structural gaps that hinder anti-corruption efforts. In addition, the military continues to act with impunity<sup>48</sup> and the government does little to protect human rights,<sup>49</sup> including freedoms of expression and assembly.

**The protection of human rights in Myanmar, including freedoms of speech, assembly and association, is a critical foundation for good governance and integrity.**



Photo: [Chaton Chokpatara](#) / Shutterstock.com

# EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

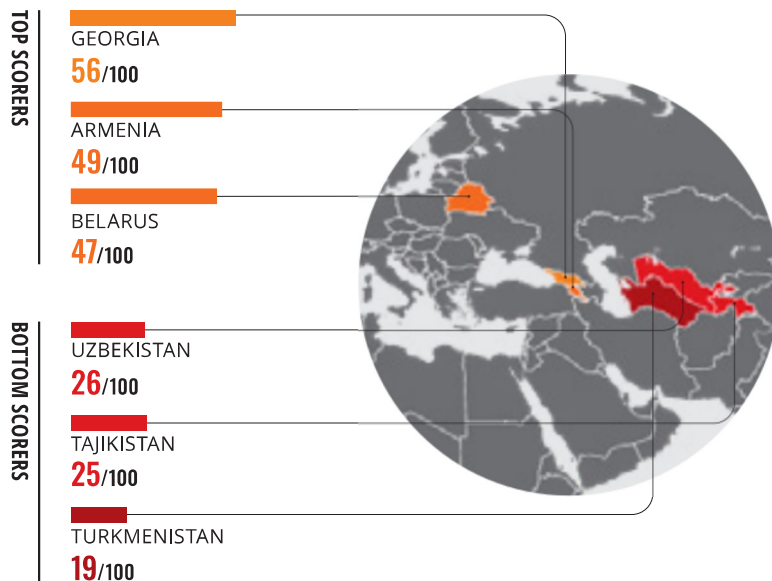
With an average score of 36, Eastern Europe and Central Asia is the second-lowest performing region on the CPI and vulnerable to corruption compounded by COVID-19.

19

COUNTRIES ASSESSED

36/100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



Georgia (56), Armenia (49) and Belarus (47) lead the region, while Uzbekistan (26), Tajikistan (25) and Turkmenistan (19) bring up the rear.

Across the region, COVID-19 exposed ongoing governance and structural problems, highlighted widespread corruption, and exacerbated social discontent. Some political leaders used the crisis to increase their power, add restrictions to already limited access to information,<sup>50</sup> eliminate transparency requirements from public procurement rules<sup>51</sup> and renounce public accountability mechanisms.

COVID-19 provided corrupt and authoritarian leaders with an excuse to reduce oversight of government spending and curtail civil liberties. These efforts decreased transparency of foreign aid spending,<sup>52</sup> making it difficult to track funds and ensure appropriate distribution to the intended recipients.<sup>53</sup> Research shows corruption undermines democratic rights and institutions,<sup>54</sup> such as freedom of speech, access to information and an independent judiciary, and limits citizens' ability to hold their governments accountable.<sup>55</sup>

With a score of 31, Kyrgyzstan is a significant improver, jumping seven points since 2012. However, widespread corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability have undermined an adequate response to COVID-19. With a score of 35, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a significant decliner, dropping seven points since 2012. During the pandemic, the country experienced numerous violations of human and labour rights, as well as discrimination in economic aid distribution and alleged unlawful procurement of medical equipment.<sup>56</sup>

## COUNTRIES TO WATCH

### Serbia

With this year's one-point drop, Serbia (38) earns its lowest score on the CPI since 2012. The country's biggest corruption challenges include serious rule-of-law issues, continued democratic erosion and efforts to silence critical voices.

In response to COVID-19, Serbia took several controversial steps, including suspending Parliament,<sup>57</sup> implementing extensive curfews, and inciting violence against protesters.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, the police arrested and detained an investigative journalist,<sup>59</sup> while the government restricted access to information<sup>60</sup> on the procurement of medical equipment, and retaliated

against health care workers<sup>61</sup> who criticised its response to the public health crisis.

After years of neglect, the country's health system was tested by COVID-19, with dire consequences. Corruption remains an obstacle to medical specialisation and career advancement.



**In Serbia, corruption contributes to challenges with the rule of law, an erosion of democratic norms and the silencing of critical voices.**

Photo: AleksandarS / Shutterstock.com

### Belarus

With a score of 47, Belarus is a significant improver on the CPI, jumping 16 points since 2012. However, in 2020, weekly citizen protests began against the contested presidential election results, with national and international onlookers sounding alarms<sup>62</sup> about police violence and ill-treatment of citizens at the hands of police.

Grand corruption<sup>63</sup> remains a problem in Belarus, where it is concentrated within the highest levels of government.<sup>64</sup> For years, the president's office has exercised authoritative power with little to no legislative or judicial checks and balances while the economy has mostly been controlled by the state.

In 2019, the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, known

as the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), publicly declared<sup>65</sup> Belarus as "non-compliant" for failing to address the vast majority of necessary anti-corruption reforms and recommendations.

**In 2020, mass protests and police brutality rocked Belarus, which continues to struggle with grand corruption and state capture.**

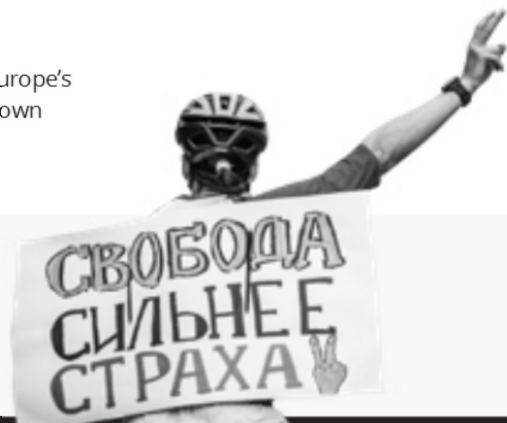


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# MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

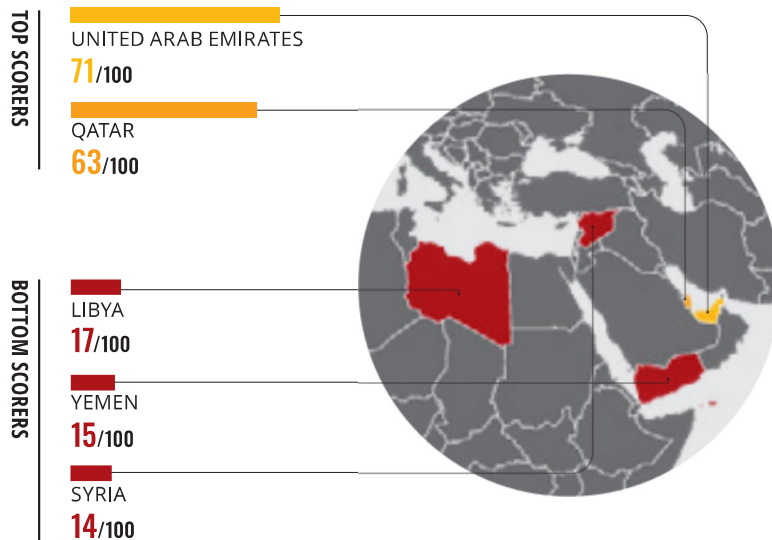
With an average score of 39 for the third consecutive year, the Middle East and North Africa region is still perceived as highly corrupt, with little progress made towards controlling corruption.

18

COUNTRIES ASSESSED

39/100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



The United Arab Emirates and Qatar are the top regional performers on the CPI, with scores of 71 and 63 respectively, while Libya (17), Yemen (15) and Syria (14) are among the worst performers.

Across the region, years of corruption left countries woefully unprepared to face the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals and health centres lacked the resources and organisation necessary to respond effectively to the first wave of cases.<sup>66</sup> Public hospitals were undersupplied and understaffed, with many health care providers becoming gravely

ill. Trust in the public sector also plummeted when it became clear that there were no good crisis management protocols in place,<sup>67</sup> and that public administrations were too depleted<sup>68</sup> to re-organise quickly and efficiently.

Despite small gains by civil society in the last decade towards building stronger, more sustainable laws to combat corruption and promote transparency, the COVID-19 crisis and resulting emergency measures essentially cancelled these efforts,<sup>69</sup> setting the region back by years.

Political corruption also remains a challenge across the region. In Iraq (21), corruption enshrined in the system<sup>70</sup> deprives people of their basic rights, including access to safe drinking water, health care, uninterrupted electricity, employment opportunities and an adequate infrastructure.

Moving forward, some of the biggest challenges in the region, particularly during the COVID-19 recovery, are issues of transparency and equitable access to COVID-19 treatments and vaccines<sup>71</sup>.

## COUNTRIES TO WATCH

### Lebanon

With a score of 25, Lebanon significantly declined on the CPI, dropping five points since 2012. COVID-19 nearly paralysed the government.

Despite massive protests against corruption and poverty<sup>72</sup> in October 2019, no major

corruption investigations have started, nor have any public officials been put on trial. In addition, the investigations of the August 2020 Beirut Port explosion are ongoing. While some senior officials have been charged in connection to the blast, accountability remains limited.<sup>73</sup>

The courts still lack independence,<sup>74</sup> notwithstanding new laws from Parliament to strengthen the judiciary and address issues of asset recovery. Additionally, despite the recent

adoption of a law to create a National Anti-Corruption Commission, this specialised body has yet to be established.<sup>75</sup>

However, there are causes for hope, including parliament's recent adoption<sup>76</sup> of a law to help address issues of dirty money; a long-awaited bill to improve access to information,<sup>77</sup> and the recent adoption of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.<sup>78</sup> These developments present opportunities to promote anti-corruption.



**In Lebanon, the COVID-19 pandemic and Beirut blast present major challenges to the country's anti-corruption efforts.**

Photo: Hiba Al Kallas / Shutterstock.com

### Morocco

With a score of 40, Morocco drops three points on the CPI since last year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the country imposed a state of emergency<sup>79</sup> that led to restriction of movement and the closure of national borders.

While the government took exceptional measures in response to the health emergency, particularly around public procurement, these measures lacked oversight and allowed for special exemptions for which the government has not been held to account.<sup>80</sup> These initiatives extend to areas beyond health care and pose significant

risks for mismanaged funds and corruption.

There have also been numerous violations of free speech and press, including the arrest and imprisonment of journalists<sup>81</sup> who criticise public authorities, investigate cases of corruption, or highlight a lack of government transparency.



**In Morocco, corruption contributes to the poor health system and a lack of an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Photo: posztos / Shutterstock.com

# SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

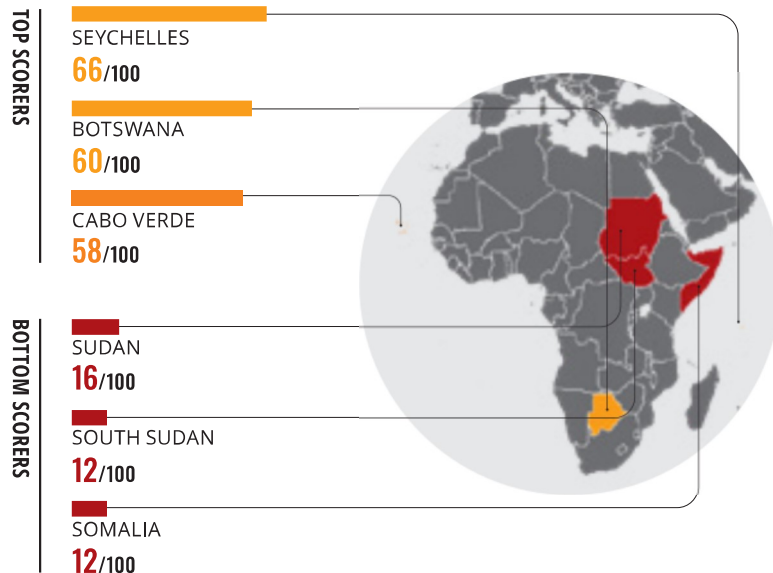
With an average score of 32, Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest performing region on the CPI, showing little improvement from previous years and underscoring a need for urgent action.

49

COUNTRIES ASSESSED

32/100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



With a score of 66, the Seychelles consistently earns top marks in the region, followed by Botswana (60) and Cabo Verde (58). At the bottom of the index are Sudan (16), Somalia (12) and South Sudan (12).

Across the region, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights structural gaps<sup>82</sup> in national health care systems, corruption risks associated with public procurement<sup>83</sup> and the misappropriation of emergency funds.<sup>84</sup> The economic shock of the pandemic led to protests and dissent in many countries, including South Africa (44),<sup>85</sup> Angola<sup>86</sup> (27) and Zimbabwe<sup>87</sup>

(24), about rising costs of living, corruption and the widespread misuse of emergency funds. In South Africa, an audit of COVID-19 expenditures revealed overpricing, fraud and corruption.<sup>88</sup> In Nigeria (25), civil society organisations denounced reports of hoarding of COVID-19 palliatives<sup>89</sup> by states and called on anti-corruption institutions to investigate the allegations. Scoring 36 on the CPI, Côte d'Ivoire has significantly improved, by nine points since 2013. However, the political crisis surrounding the re-election of President Allasane Ouattara, which erupted into violence<sup>90</sup> and human rights violations,<sup>91</sup>

risks derailing progress. With a score of 19, the Republic of Congo significantly declined by seven points since 2012. This performance is reflective of endemic corruption and impunity by the country's political elite.<sup>92</sup> The Republic of Congo has an anti-corruption framework in place, but its implementation remains weak.<sup>93</sup>

To reverse the region's position as the worst performing on the CPI, governments in Sub-Saharan Africa must take decisive action, particularly in those economies already weakened by the ongoing economic recession stemming from COVID-19.



## COUNTRIES TO WATCH

### Malawi

With a score of 30, Malawi is a significant decliner on the CPI, dropping seven points since 2012.

Notorious for the “cash-gate scandal” of 2013,<sup>94</sup> involving high levels of public sector corruption and misappropriation of funds, the country continues to grapple with corruption.

A recent government audit revealed<sup>95</sup> public sector corruption of astronomical proportions, with an estimated US\$1 billion allegedly stolen by the previous government.<sup>96</sup>

A new government elected in June 2020 promises a fresh start, with several investigations into corruption already underway, and some key arrests<sup>97</sup> made in

connection with a cement import scandal.

In addition, the extradition of a high-profile Malawian pastor accused of money laundering in South Africa<sup>98</sup> may be another test of the country's commitment to anti-corruption.



**Malawi has an opportunity to strengthen good governance and promote anti-corruption efforts to reverse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy.**

Photo: [MsTingak](#) / CC BY-SA 3.0

### Zambia

With a score of 33, Zambia is a significant decliner on the CPI, dropping five points since 2013.

Corruption is endemic in Zambia and affects people's access to essential public services.

According to our 2019 report,<sup>99</sup> nearly one in five Zambian citizens paid bribes<sup>100</sup> to receive services like health care or education.

The mounting levels of corruption may be attributable to an inefficient national public procurement system,<sup>101</sup> operating against a backdrop of rising foreign debt and high levels of poverty.

Stronger commitment to procurement reforms and open civic spaces will support greater transparency and accountability,<sup>102</sup> but the upcoming general election will ultimately determine whether corruption will be a priority in the coming years.



**In Zambia, commitment to procurement reforms will support greater transparency and accountability.**

Photo: Boris Mayer / Shutterstock.com

# WESTERN EUROPE & EUROPEAN UNION

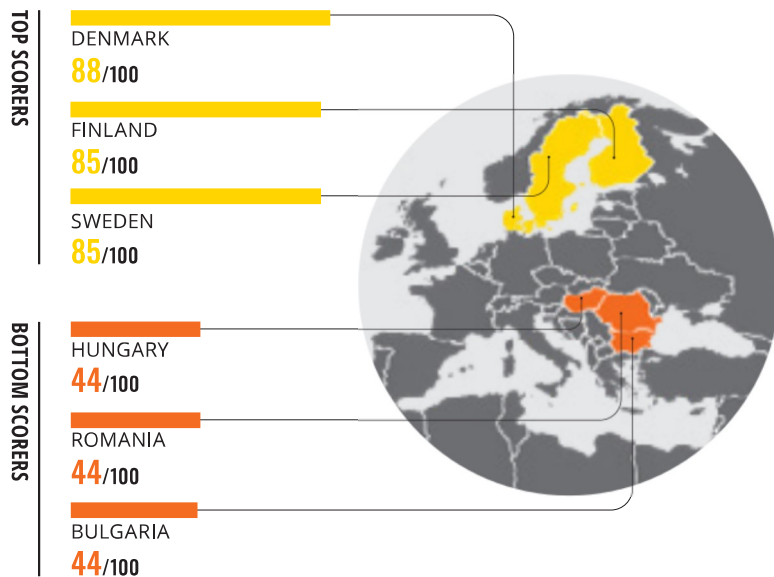
With an average score of 66, Western Europe and the European Union (EU) is the highest performing region on the CPI, but under enormous strain due to COVID-19.

31

COUNTRIES ASSESSED

66/100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



Western Europe and the EU score among the highest countries on the CPI, with Denmark (88) hitting the top spot, followed by Finland (85), Sweden (85) and Switzerland (85). Conversely, the lowest performers from the region are Romania (44), Hungary (44) and Bulgaria (44).

Across the region, the COVID-19 pandemic has put additional and unexpected pressure on the integrity systems of many countries, making it “a political crisis that threatens the future of liberal democracy”.<sup>103</sup>The pandemic has tested the limits of Europe’s emergency

response, and in many cases, countries have fallen short of full transparency and accountability. In Norway (84), the government declared a state of emergency that challenged constitutional regulations.<sup>104</sup>

Following constitutional states of emergency in France (69), Hungary (44), Italy (53) and Spain (62), Democracy Reporting International called out governments for significant human rights restrictions.<sup>105</sup> In addition, due to COVID-19, elections have been delayed in at least 11 EU countries.<sup>106</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed serious issues related to the rule of law across the region, with corruption further weakening democracies.<sup>107</sup>

Although an ambitious EU stimulus package<sup>108</sup> could be instrumental to member states’ COVID-19 response, such an initiative is saddled with numerous large procurement processes, subject to strict deadlines and vulnerable to potential corruption and integrity challenges.



## COUNTRIES TO WATCH

### Malta

With a score of 53, Malta is a significant decliner on the CPI, dropping seven points since 2015 and hitting a new all-time low.

According to an EU report<sup>109</sup> about the rule of law in Malta, “deep corruption patterns have

been unveiled and have raised a strong public demand for a significantly strengthened capacity to tackle corruption and wider rule of law reforms”.

In 2019, a public inquiry<sup>110</sup> into the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia highlighted high-level corruption and led to the resignation of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat.

The PM’s former chief of staff was arrested in September 2020<sup>111</sup> for an alleged kickback scheme to help three Russians obtain Maltese passports as part of the controversial golden passports<sup>112</sup> programme in 2015.

In addition, a European Central Bank report found major failings in Malta’s biggest bank,<sup>113</sup> potentially allowing for money laundering and other criminal activities.



Photo: Thomas Ellmenreich / Unsplash

**Malta faces significant corruption challenges and suffers one of the steepest declines in the rule of law.**

### Poland

With a score of 56, Poland declines significantly on the CPI, dropping seven points since 2015.

The country’s ruling party has consistently promoted reforms that weakened judicial independence.<sup>114</sup> The steady

erosion of the rule of law and democratic oversight has created conditions for corruption to flourish at the highest levels of power.

During COVID-19, the national legislature amended and repealed hundreds of laws, using the crisis as cover to push through dangerous legislation.<sup>115</sup> Parliament also limited access to information for citizens and journalists<sup>116</sup> and allowed for opaque public spending related to COVID-19.<sup>117</sup> An attempt to secure impunity<sup>118</sup> for officials

who broke the law in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the heavy-handed police crackdown on peaceful women’s rights protestors<sup>119</sup> increased tensions in the country and revealed the ruling party’s intentions to further solidify its power, despite growing public discontent.

With their recent pushback against the EU<sup>120</sup> for making the rule of law a condition<sup>121</sup> for EU funds, Polish political leaders put democracy and anti-corruption reforms at risk.



Photo: Lena Ivanova / Shutterstock.com

**In Poland, government leaders exploit the COVID-19 crisis for political gain, undermining democracy, human rights and anti-corruption efforts.**

# METHODOLOGY

The CPI aggregates data from a number of different sources that provide perceptions among business-people and country experts of the level of corruption in the public sector. The following steps are taken to calculate the CPI:

**1. Select data sources.** Each data source used to construct the CPI must fulfil the following criteria to qualify as a valid source:

- + Quantifies risks or perceptions of corruption in the public sector
- + Is based on a reliable and valid methodology
- + Comes from a reputable organisation
- + Allows for sufficient variation of scores to distinguish between countries
- + Ranks a substantial number of countries

- + Considers only the assessments of country experts or businesspeople
- + Is regularly updated.

The CPI 2020 is calculated using 13 different data sources from 12 different institutions that capture perceptions of corruption within the past two years.

**2. Standardise data sources to a scale of 0-100.** This standardisation is done by subtracting the mean of each source in the baseline year from each country score, then dividing by the standard deviation of that source in the baseline year. This subtraction and division using the baseline year parameters ensures that the CPI scores are comparable year on year since 2012. After this procedure, the standardised scores are transformed to the CPI scale by multiplying them with the value of the CPI standard deviation in 2012 (20) and adding the mean of the CPI in 2012 (45), so that the dataset fits the CPI's 0-100 scale.

**3. Calculate the average.** For a country or territory to be included in the CPI, a minimum of three sources must assess that country. A country's CPI score is then calculated as the average of all standardised scores available for that country. Scores are rounded to whole numbers.

**4. Report the measure of uncertainty.** The CPI score is accompanied by a standard error and confidence interval. This captures the variation across the data sources available for a country or territory.

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