Corruption Perceptions Index 2020: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)?

The CPI scores and ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be by experts and business executives. It is a composite index, a combination of 13 surveys and assessments of corruption, collected by a variety of reputable institutions. The CPI is the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide.

Which data sources are used for the CPI?

The 2020 CPI draws on 13 data sources from 12 independent institutions specialising in governance and business climate analysis. The sources of information used for the CPI 2020 are based on data published in the previous two years.[1] The CPI includes only sources that provide a score for a set of countries/territories and that measure expert perceptions of corruption in the public sector. For a full list of the data sources, the type of respondents and the specific questions asked, please see the entire source list.

Why do we need the CPI if there are 13 other sources that measure manifestations of corruption in the public sector?

There are four properties which make the CPI a valuable governance indicator:

1. The CPI has a global geographical coverage.
2. The CPI is more reliable than each source taken separately because it compensates for eventual errors among sources by taking the average of at least three different sources and potentially as many as 13.
3. The CPI, with its 0-100 scale, can differentiate between perceived levels of corruption with more granularity than sources which, for example, have scales of 1-7 or 1-10 where each country is assigned a full number.
4. Since the underlying CPI sources assess different dimensions and manifestations of public sector corruption, the CPI manages to reconcile different aspects of corruption into one indicator.

Why is the CPI based on perceptions?

Corruption generally comprises illegal activities, which are deliberately hidden and only come to light through scandals, investigations or prosecutions. Whilst researchers from academia, civil society and governments have made advances in terms of objectively measuring corruption in specific sectors, to date there is no indicator which measures objective national levels of corruption directly and exhaustively. The sources and surveys which make up the CPI, ask their respondents questions which are based on carefully designed and calibrated questionnaires. (For a list of all sources and the questions that they ask, please see here.) The CPI contains informed views of relevant stakeholders, which generally correlate highly with objective indicators, such as citizen experiences with bribery as captured by the Global Corruption Barometer.

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[1] The only exception is the African Development Bank's (AfDB) Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), collected in 2018.

Which countries/territories are included in the CPI 2020 and why?
For a country/territory to be included in the ranking, it must be included in a minimum of three of the CPI's data sources. If a country is not featured in the ranking, then this is solely because of insufficient survey information and not an indication that corruption does not exist in the country. This year 180 countries and territories are included in the index.

What is the difference between a country/territory's rank and its score?
A country/territory's score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0-100, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and a 100 means that a country is perceived as very clean. A country's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries/territories included in the index. Ranks can change merely if the number of countries included in the index changes.

Which manifestations of corruption does the CPI capture?
CPI source data captures the following aspects of corruption, based on the specific question wording used to collect the data:
* Bribery
* Diversion of public funds
* Prevalence of officials using public office for private gain without facing consequences
* Ability of governments to contain corruption and enforce effective integrity mechanisms in the public sector
* Red tape and excessive bureaucratic burden which may increase opportunities for corruption
* Meritocratic versus nepotistic appointments in the civil service
* Effective criminal prosecution for corrupt officials
* Adequate laws on financial disclosure and conflict of interest prevention for public officials
* Legal protection for whistleblowers, journalists, investigators when they are reporting cases of bribery and corruption
* State capture by narrow vested interests
* Access of civil society to information on public affairs

For a full list of the questions used by the CPI sources, please see our source description document here.

Which manifestations of corruption does the CPI not capture?
CPI source data does not capture the following aspects of corruption:
* Citizens' perceptions or experience of corruption
* Tax fraud
* Illicit financial flows
* Enablers of corruption (lawyers, accountants, financial advisors etc)
* Money-laundering
* Private sector corruption
* Informal economies and markets

Is the country/territory with the lowest score the world's most corrupt nation?
No. The CPI is an indicator of perceptions of public sector corruption, i.e. administrative and political corruption. It is not a verdict on the levels of corruption of entire nations or societies, or of their policies, or the activities of their private sector. Citizens of those countries/territories that score at the lower end of the CPI often

show the same concern about and condemnation of corruption as the public in countries that perform strongly.

Further, the country/territory with the lowest score is the one where public sector corruption is perceived to be greatest *among those included in the list*. The CPI provides no information about countries/territories which are not included in the index.

Can the score of a country in the 2019 CPI be compared with the previous year?
Yes. As part of the update to the methodology used to calculate the CPI in 2012 we established the new scale of 0-100. Each country score given by the underlying data sources is rescaled using the global mean and standard deviation from the CPI 2012 as the year of reference. Using this scale we can compare CPI scores from one year to the next since 2012. Because of the update in the methodology, however, CPI scores before 2012 are not comparable over time.

For a more detailed description of the change in methodology in 2012, please see Corruption Perceptions Index – An updated Methodology for 2012.

Where can I find the full tables of results in a time series format?
You can find this on our website here.

I want to reproduce CPI results for my own publication – do I need to ask permission?
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Can I compare results from before 2012?
No, due to a change in our methodology in 2012, results from before that year cannot be compared. Only CPI results from 2012 onwards can be compared.

Can you compare countries when they are rated by different sources?
Yes. Through our rescaling process, all our sources are brought closer to the global mean and standard deviation with the baseline of 2012, to allow for cross time comparison. For a full explanation of our rescaling process, please see our technical methodology note.

My country has changed CPI score by one or two points? Does that mean corruption has increased/decreased?
The CPI is a composite indicator, with at least three sources used per country for calculating the CPI score. For some countries the sources give very similar ratings while for other countries the sources give a wider range of ratings. We report this difference using the standard error and upper and lower bounds for the confidence

intervals. Countries which are given similar ratings by the sources will have a smaller standard error, while countries with a range of source scores will have a larger standard error. It is unlikely that a one or two point CPI score change would be statistically significant. Statistically significant changes are reported in our excel tables of results. Please see the excel document labelled "Statistically Significant Changes".

Does the CPI tell the full story of corruption in a country?
No. The CPI is limited in scope, capturing perceptions of the extent of corruption in the public sector, from the perspective of business people and country experts. Complementing this viewpoint and capturing different aspects of corruption, Transparency International produces a range of both qualitative and quantitative research on corruption, both at the global level and at the national level through Transparency International's network of national chapters based in over 100 countries around the world.

Complementing the CPI, Transparency International has a range of global, regional and sectoral research products. Full details can be found on our website.

Have there been any independent checks on the validity of the CPI methodology?
The European Commission Joint Research Centre undertook an independent audit of the CPI 2017 and its methodology. The same audit was conducted in 2012 following the introduction of a new methodology for the CPI calculation. Both audits found that the CPI is conceptually and statistically coherent and has a balanced structure. The full report and recommendations can be found here.

How are statistically significant changes calculated?
Since 2018, Transparency International uses a revised approach to calculate standard errors and effect sizes, based on advice from the European Commission Joint Research Centre. Statistically significant movers are calculated using the effect size, the standard deviation, and the number of sources used for each country. Changes in CPI scores are considered statistically significant using a 90% confidence interval. A full explanation, including all formulas, can be found in the technical methodology note here.

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