This year’s Corruption Perceptions Index reveals that the continued failure of most countries to significantly control corruption is contributing to a crisis in democracy around the world.

Corruption chips away at democracy to produce a vicious cycle, where corruption undermines democratic institutions and, in turn, weak institutions are less able to control corruption.

Patricia Moreira
Managing Director
Transparency International.

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.

More than two-thirds of countries score below 50 on this year’s CPI, with an average score of just 43.

While there are exceptions, the data shows that despite some progress, most countries are failing to make serious inroads against corruption.

RESULTS
The top countries are Denmark and New Zealand with scores of 88 and 87, respectively. The bottom countries are Somalia, Syria and South Sudan with scores of 10, 13 and 13, respectively.

While no country earns a perfect score on the CPI, countries that tend to do best also protect democratic rights and values.
In the last seven years, only 20 countries significantly improved their CPI scores, including Estonia, Senegal, Guyana and Côte D’Ivoire.

Equally troubling, 16 countries significantly decreased their scores, including Australia, Chile, Malta, Hungary and Turkey.

**RESEARCH ANALYSIS**

This year, further research analysis shows a disturbing link between corruption and the health of democracies, where countries with higher rates of corruption also have weaker democratic institutions and political rights.
SINCE 2006, 113 COUNTRIES HAVE SEEN A DECLINE IN THEIR DEMOCRACY SCORES*

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT DEMOCRACY WE MEAN:

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS
STRONG AND INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS
POLITICAL RIGHTS, LIKE RIGHT TO PROTEST
CIVIL RIGHTS, LIKE ACCESS TO A FAIR TRIAL

*Freedom House

There are no democracies that score below 50 on the CPI. Similarly, very few countries which have autocratic characteristics score higher than 50.
Exemplifying this trend, the CPI scores for Hungary and Turkey decreased by eight and nine points respectively over the last six years. At the same time, Turkey was downgraded from "partly free" to "not free" by Freedom House (https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/turkey), while Hungary registered its lowest score for political rights since the fall of communism in 1989.

These ratings reflect the deterioration of rule of law and democratic institutions, as well as a rapidly shrinking space for civil society and independent media, in those countries.

Our research makes a clear link between having a healthy democracy and successfully fighting public sector corruption. Corruption is much more likely to flourish where democratic foundations are weak and, as we have seen in many countries, where undemocratic and populist politicians can use it to their advantage.

Dela Ferreira Rubio, chair of Transparency International

Throughout the world, political leaders who run on a populist platform are gaining power and undermining democracy. High corruption rates can contribute to increased support for populist candidates.
OF POPULIST LEADERS ARE ALSO INDICTED ON CORRUPTION CHARGES*

*Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

REGIONAL ANALYSES:

Asia Pacific (https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/asia_pacific_makes_little_to_no_progress_onAnti Corruption)
Eastern Europe & Central Asia (https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/weak checks and balances threaten anti corruption efforts across eastern eu)

COUNTRIES TO WATCH

USA  BRAZIL  CZECH REPUBLIC

With a score of 71, the United States lost four points since last year, dropping out of the top 20 countries on the CPI for the first time since 2011. The low score comes at a time when the US is experiencing threats to its system of checks and balances as well as an erosion of ethical norms at the highest levels of power.

Brazil dropped two points since last year to 35, also earning its lowest CPI score in seven years. Alongside promises to end corruption, the country's new president has made it clear that he will rule with a strong hand, threatening many of the democratic milestones achieved to date.
With a score of 59, the Czech Republic increased two points since 2017 and eight points since 2014. However, events in the past year suggest gains may be fragile. The prime minister has been found guilty of conflict of interest in relation to his media holdings and accused of another conflict of interest over connections to a company that has received millions of euros in EU subsidies.

TROUBLE AT THE TOP

Even top scoring countries like Denmark are not immune to corruption. While the CPI shows the Danish public sector to be one of the cleanest in the world, corruption still exists, as seen with recent scandals involving Danske Bank (https://voices.transparency.org/why-danske-bank-estonia-appears-in-so-many-money-laundering-scandals-424047fe987c).

Read more. (https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/trouble_at_the_top_why_high_scoring_countries_arent_corruption_free)

RECOMMENDATIONS

To help stop corruption and strengthen democracy around the world, Transparency International calls on all governments to:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STOP CORRUPTION

STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONS AND PRESERVE CHECKS AND BALANCES

CLOSE THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP BETWEEN ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGISLATION, PRACTICE AND ENFORCEMENT

EMPower citizens to speak out and hold governments accountable

PROTECT PRESS FREEDOMS so no JOURNALIST has to fear for their lives when reporting on corruption

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Latest

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scoring a 
debilitamiento de la democracia anti-corruption efforts

As in previous years, many of the countries in the Latin American region are struggling in their efforts against corruption. The number of countries in the region that are making progress in tackling corruption continues to be high, but the challenges are significant. In this region, anti-corruption efforts remain a key priority for the governments and civil society organizations.

Former Brazil president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is set to be released from prison on August 9 after the Supreme Court ruled that his 12-year sentence has been served. This is a significant victory for those who have been fighting against corruption in Brazil for years.

Institutions and political rights weaken:

This year’s Corruption Perceptions Index reveals a worrying picture for Africa – only eight of 41 countries score above 50 on the index, with many countries in sub-Saharan Africa falling behind in their efforts to combat corruption. Despite some progress, most countries are still struggling to make headway in combating corruption.

With an average score of 44 out of 100 for three consecutive years, the Asia-Pacific region is making little progress in tackling corruption. This is particularly concerning given the region’s economic importance and the need for transparency and accountability in government.

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For the majority of people living in rural Nepal, getting regular medical care is a challenge. We have seen a series based on the Lava Jato case, but the reality is that getting good medical facilities is difficult. And it is also not easy to get information about the corruption cases.

For the Ministry of Health, an anti-corruption campaign has been launched to rebuild the public’s trust in government and help improve the effectiveness of public services. We are working with the government to implement anti-corruption measures and to increase transparency in the healthcare sector.

Real Lives, Real Stories: Nepal

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