



# CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2021



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**#cpi2021**

**[www.transparency.org/cpi](http://www.transparency.org/cpi)**

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# CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2021

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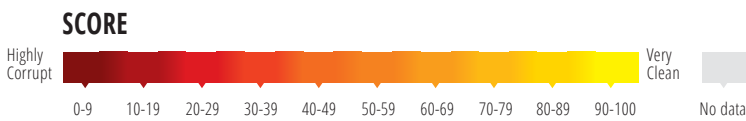
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# 180 COUNTRIES. 180 SCORES.

## HOW DOES YOUR COUNTRY MEASURE UP?

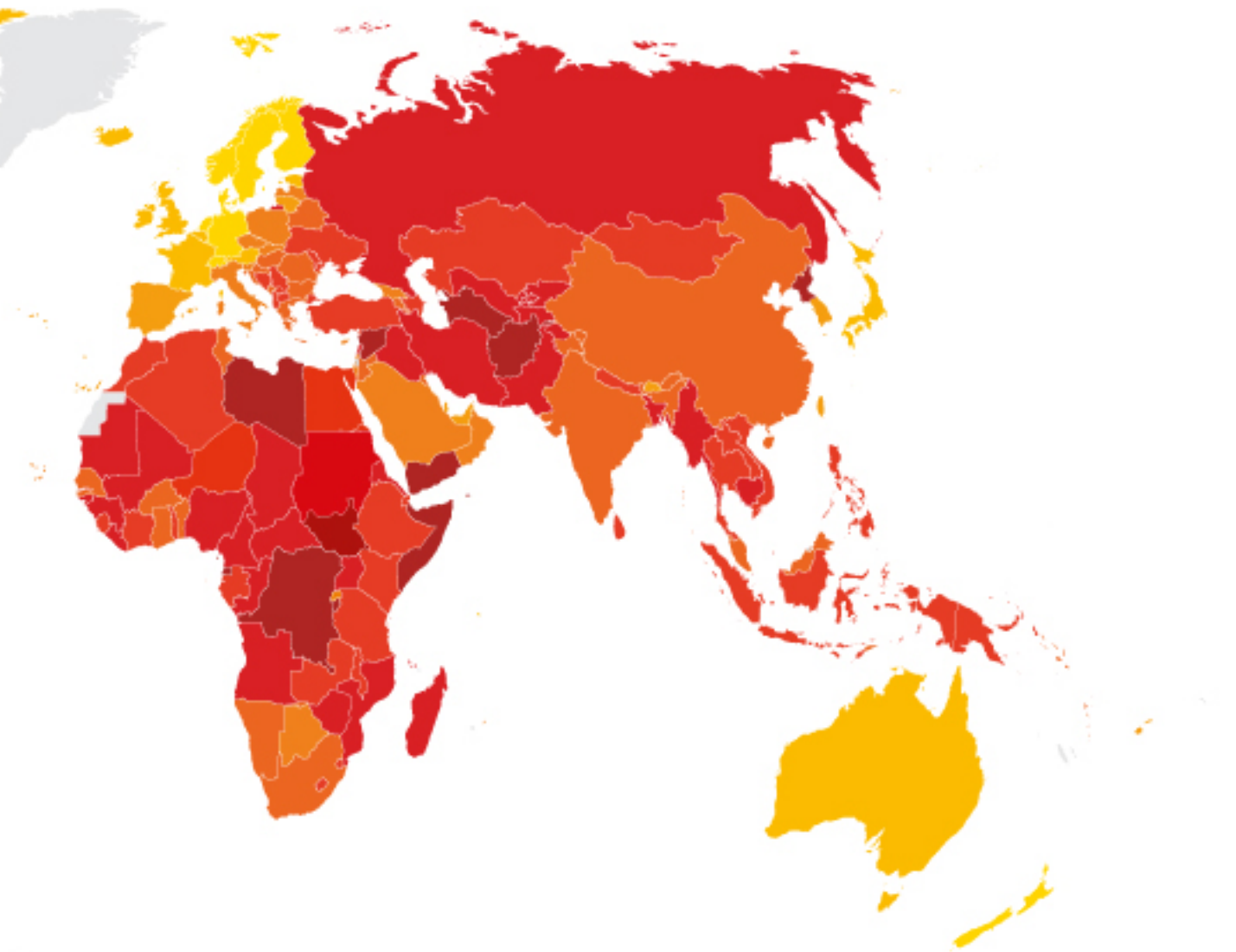


The perceived levels of public sector corruption in 180 countries/territories around the world.



**SCORE COUNTRY/TERRITORY**

88	Denmark	69	United Arab Emirates	55	Dominica	45	Vanuatu
88	Finland	68	Bhutan	55	Fiji	44	Jamaica
88	New Zealand	68	Taiwan	55	Georgia	44	South Africa
85	Norway	67	Chile	54	Czechia	44	Tunisia
85	Singapore	67	United States of America	54	Malta	43	Ghana
85	Sweden	65	Barbados	54	Mauritius	43	Hungary
84	Switzerland	64	Bahamas	53	Grenada	43	Kuwait
82	Netherlands	64	Qatar	53	Cyprus	43	Senegal
81	Luxembourg	63	Korea, South	53	Rwanda	43	Solomon Islands
80	Germany	62	Portugal	53	Saudi Arabia	42	Bahrain
78	United Kingdom	62	Lithuania	52	Oman	42	Benin
76	Hong Kong	61	Spain	52	Slovakia	42	Burkina Faso
74	Canada	61	Israel	49	Armenia	42	Bulgaria
74	Iceland	59	Latvia	49	Greece	41	Timor-Leste
74	Ireland	59	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	49	Jordan	41	Belarus
74	Estonia	58	Cabo Verde	49	Namibia	41	Trinidad and Tobago
74	Austria	58	Costa Rica	48	Malaysia	40	India
73	Australia	57	Slovenia	47	Croatia	40	Maldives
73	Belgium	56	Italy	46	Cuba	39	Kosovo
73	Japan	56	Poland	46	Montenegro	39	Colombia
73	Uruguay	56	Saint Lucia	45	China	39	Ethiopia
71	France	55	Botswana	45	Romania	39	Guyana
70	Seychelles			45	Sao Tome and Principe	39	Morocco



39	North Macedonia
39	Suriname
39	Tanzania
39	Vietnam
38	Argentina
38	Brazil
38	Indonesia
38	Lesotho
38	Serbia
38	Turkey
37	Gambia
37	Kazakhstan
37	Sri Lanka
36	Cote d'Ivoire
36	Ecuador
36	Moldova
36	Panama
36	Peru
35	Albania
35	Bosnia and Herzegovina
35	Malawi
35	Mongolia
35	Thailand

34	El Salvador
34	Sierra Leone
33	Egypt
33	Nepal
33	Philippines
33	Zambia
33	Algeria
32	Eswatini
32	Ukraine
31	Gabon
31	Mexico
31	Niger
31	Papua New Guinea
30	Azerbaijan
30	Bolivia
30	Djibouti
30	Dominican Republic
30	Laos
30	Paraguay
30	Togo
30	Kenya
29	Angola

29	Liberia
29	Mali
29	Russia
28	Mauritania
28	Myanmar
28	Pakistan
28	Uzbekistan
27	Cameroon
27	Kyrgyzstan
27	Uganda
26	Bangladesh
26	Madagascar
26	Mozambique
25	Guatemala
25	Guinea
25	Iran
25	Tajikistan
24	Lebanon
24	Nigeria
24	Central African Republic
23	Cambodia
23	Honduras
23	Iraq

23	Zimbabwe
22	Eritrea
21	Congo
21	Guinea Bissau
20	Chad
20	Comoros
20	Haiti
20	Nicaragua
20	Sudan
19	Burundi
19	Democratic Republic of the Congo
19	Turkmenistan
17	Equatorial Guinea
17	Libya
16	Afghanistan
16	Korea, North
16	Yemen
14	Venezuela
13	Somalia
13	Syria
11	South Sudan

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two years into the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) reveals that corruption levels have stagnated worldwide. Despite commitments on paper, 131 countries have made no significant progress against corruption over the last decade and this year 27 countries are at historic lows in their CPI score.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, human rights and democracy across the world are under assault.<sup>2</sup>

This is no coincidence. Corruption enables human rights abuses,<sup>3</sup> setting off a vicious and escalating spiral. As rights and freedoms are eroded, democracy declines and authoritarianism takes its place,<sup>4</sup> which in turn enables higher levels of corruption.<sup>5</sup>

The past year has brought disturbing examples of this, from the killing of human rights defenders<sup>6</sup> and the closing of media outlets,<sup>7</sup> to government spying scandals like the Pegasus Project.<sup>8</sup> Increasingly, rights and

checks and balances are being undermined not only in countries with systemic corruption and weak institutions, but also among established democracies.

Respecting human rights is essential for controlling corruption because empowered citizens have the space to challenge injustice.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has also been used in many countries as an excuse to curtail basic freedoms<sup>9</sup> and side-step

important checks and balances. And despite the increasing international momentum to end the abuse of anonymous shell companies, many high-scoring countries with relatively “clean” public sectors continue to enable transnational corruption.

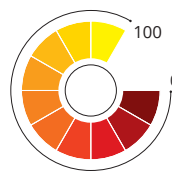
There is an urgent need to accelerate the fight against corruption if we are to halt human rights abuses and democratic decline across the globe.

**180** COUNTRIES SCORED

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

**2/3** OF COUNTRIES SCORE BELOW

**50**/100



THE CPI USES A SCALE FROM **0 TO 100**

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

THE **AVERAGE** SCORE IS

**43**/100



**In authoritarian contexts where control rests with a few, social movements are the last remaining check on power. It is the collective power held by ordinary people from all walks of life that will ultimately deliver accountability.**

**Daniel Eriksson**

Chief Executive Officer, Transparency International Secretariat



Photo: Transparency International

## Recommendations

Corruption may be a multifaceted problem, but it is one we know how to solve. To end the vicious cycle of corruption, human rights violations and democratic decline, people should demand that their governments:



### 1. UPHOLD THE RIGHTS NEEDED TO HOLD POWER TO ACCOUNT

Governments should roll back any disproportionate restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly introduced since the onset of the pandemic. Ensuring justice for crimes against human rights defenders must also be an urgent priority.



### 3. COMBAT TRANSNATIONAL CORRUPTION

Governments in advanced economies need to fix the systemic weaknesses that allow cross-border corruption to go undetected or unsanctioned. They must close legal loopholes, regulate professional enablers of financial crime, and ensure that the corrupt and their accomplices cannot escape justice.



### 2. RESTORE AND STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CHECKS ON POWER

Public oversight bodies such as anti-corruption agencies and supreme audit institutions need to be independent, well-resourced and empowered to detect and sanction wrongdoing. Parliaments and the courts should also be vigilant in preventing executive overreach.



### 4. UPHOLD THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION IN GOVERNMENT SPENDING

As part of their COVID-19 recovery efforts, governments must make good on their pledge contained in the June 2021 UNGASS political declaration to include anti-corruption safeguards in public procurement. Maximum transparency in public spending protects lives and livelihoods.



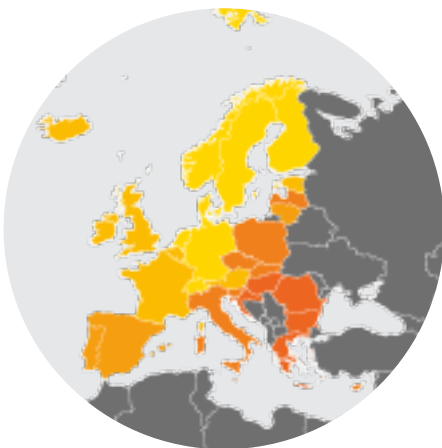
# GLOBAL HIGHLIGHTS

The results of this year's CPI show that countries with well-protected civil and political liberties generally control corruption better. The fundamental freedoms of association and expression are crucial in the fight for a world free of corruption.

The index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people. It relies on 13 independent data sources and uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

More than two-thirds of countries (68 per cent) score below 50 and the average global score remains static at 43. Since 2012, 25 countries significantly improved their scores, but in the same period 23 countries significantly declined.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the scores of several democracies that used to top the index and champion anti-corruption efforts around the world are deteriorating. Many of these high-scoring countries remain safe havens for corrupt individuals from abroad.

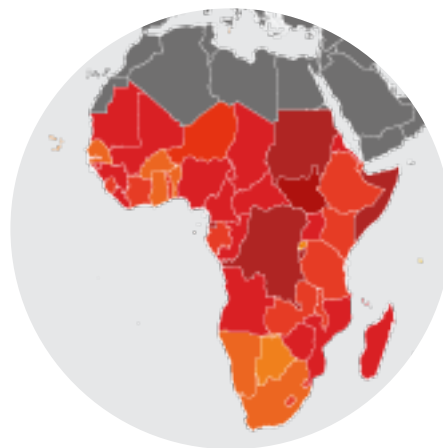


HIGHEST SCORING REGION

**WESTERN EUROPE & EUROPEAN UNION**

**66** /100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



LOWEST SCORING REGION

**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**33** /100

AVERAGE REGIONAL SCORE



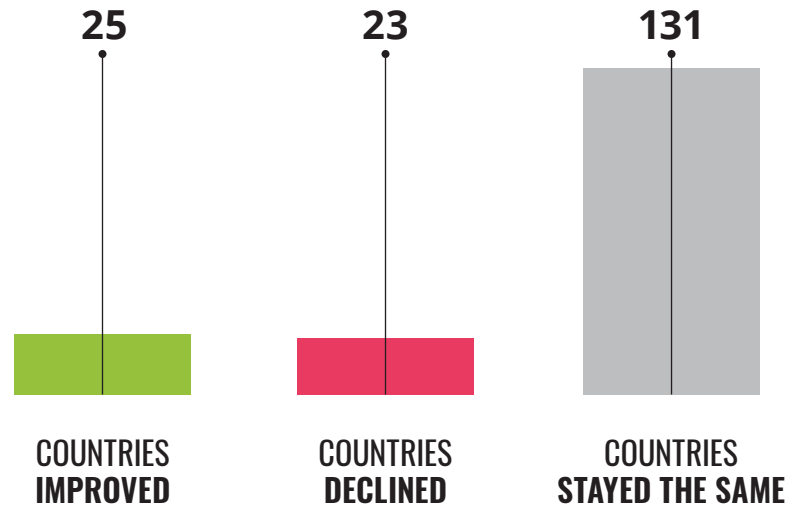
This year, the top countries are Denmark, Finland and New Zealand, each with a score of 88. Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany complete the top 10.

South Sudan, Syria and Somalia remain at the bottom of the index. Countries experiencing armed conflict or authoritarianism tend to earn the lowest scores, including Venezuela, Yemen, North Korea, Afghanistan, Libya, Equatorial Guinea and Turkmenistan.

Overall, the CPI shows that control of corruption has stagnated or worsened in 86 per cent of countries over the last decade.

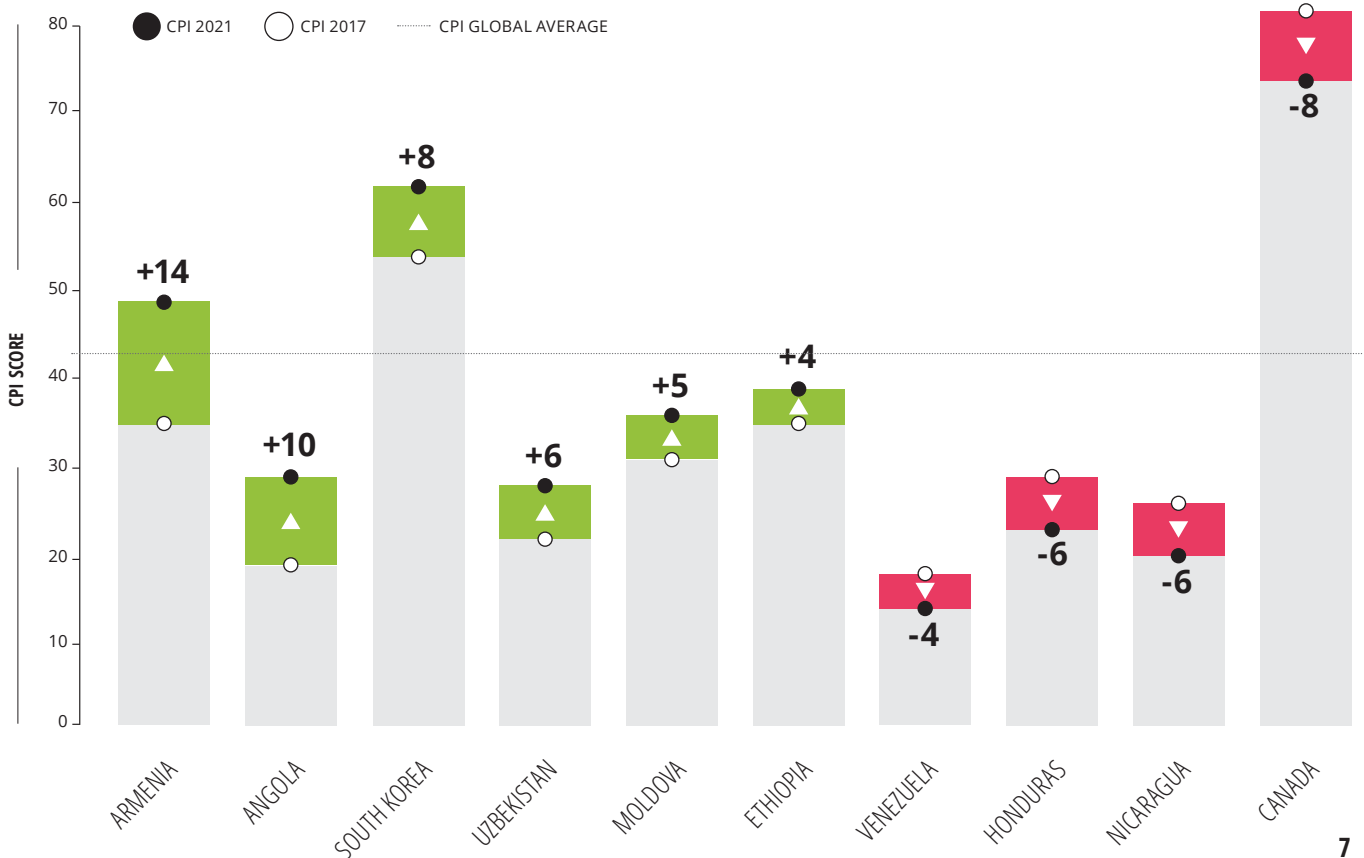
### CPI SCORE CHANGES, 2012-2021

Number of countries that the underlying data sources largely agree improved or declined, over the period 2012 to 2021, for all 179 countries with data available.



### MOST SIGNIFICANT FIVE-YEAR MOVERS

Countries that the underlying data sources largely agree improved or declined, over the period 2017 to 2021. A full list of all statistically significant changes is available in the CPI 2021 dataset.



# HUMAN RIGHTS AND CORRUPTION

Transparency International's analysis demonstrates that upholding human rights is crucial in the fight against corruption, with countries who violate civil liberties scoring lower on the CPI.

From the repression of opposition supporters in Belarus,<sup>11</sup> to the closing of media outlets<sup>12</sup> and civil society organisations<sup>13</sup> in Nicaragua, the deadly violence against protesters in Sudan<sup>14</sup> and the killing of human rights defenders in the Philippines,<sup>15</sup> human rights and democracy are under threat. Since 2012, 90 per cent of countries have stagnated or declined in their civil liberties score.<sup>16</sup>

Corruption undermines the ability of governments to guarantee the human rights of their citizens.<sup>17</sup> This affects the delivery of public services, the dispensation of justice and the provision of safety for all. In particular, grand

corruption committed by high-level officials usually combines the large-scale, transnational theft of public funds with gross human rights violations.

Our analysis shows that such corruption schemes – often facilitated by advanced economies who score well on the CPI – exacerbate repression by allowing autocrats to:

## 1. Enjoy looted funds.

Employing complicit bankers, lawyers and real-estate brokers in major financial centres, the corrupt can store their illicit gains, reward cronies and further concentrate their power.

## 2. Launder their reputation abroad.

By bribing foreign politicians and employing western public relations firms and lobbyists,<sup>18</sup> authoritarian and kleptocratic regimes soften international pressure on their human rights record.

## 3. Evade accountability.

Through the abuse of secret companies and anonymous investments, the corrupt can hide their wrongdoing from law enforcement or judicial bodies and escape consequences.

“ Human rights are not simply a nice-to-have in the fight against corruption. Authoritarianism makes anti-corruption efforts dependent on the whims of an elite. Ensuring that civil society and the media can speak freely and hold power to account is the only sustainable route to a corruption-free society.

**Delia Ferreira Rubio**  
Chair, Transparency International



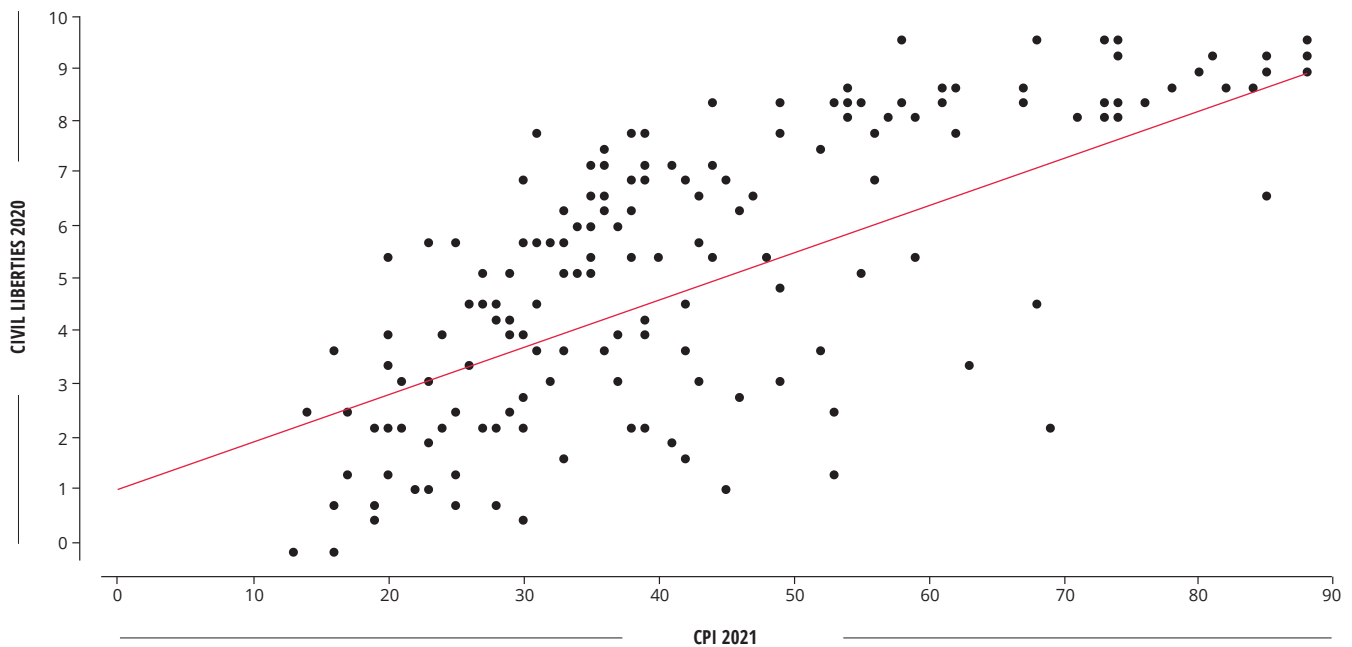
Fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and access to justice guarantee public participation and keep corruption in check. The current wave of authoritarianism is not driven by coups and

violence, but by gradual efforts to undermine democracy.<sup>19</sup> This usually begins with attacks on civil and political rights, efforts to undermine the autonomy of oversight and election bodies, and control of the media.<sup>20</sup>

Such attacks allow corrupt regimes to evade accountability and criticism, creating an environment for corruption to flourish.

## CORRUPTION AND BREACHES OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

Higher levels of corruption, as measured by the CPI, are strongly associated with breaches of civil liberties. Outliers exist, but in most cases the relationship is causal in both directions: more corruption can lead to restrictions on civil liberties, while having fewer civil liberties makes it harder to fight corruption.<sup>21</sup>



### Armenia

Armenia is a success story of the CPI in the last five years, improving 14 points since 2017 to a score of 49. Mass protests in 2018 forced out an entrenched political elite in favour of a reform-minded government.<sup>22</sup> Armenia has since expanded civil liberties, paving the way for more sustainable civic engagement and accountability.<sup>23</sup> Despite progress, the reform agenda has stalled in the past year and the government must recommit.

### Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is one of the most consistent improvers in the CPI, from a score of just 17 in 2012 to 28 this year. Reforms adopted since 2016 contributed to modest increases in civil liberties, particularly freedom of expression.<sup>24</sup> However, Uzbekistan remains an autocracy and much more is needed to achieve lasting wins against corruption.

### Singapore

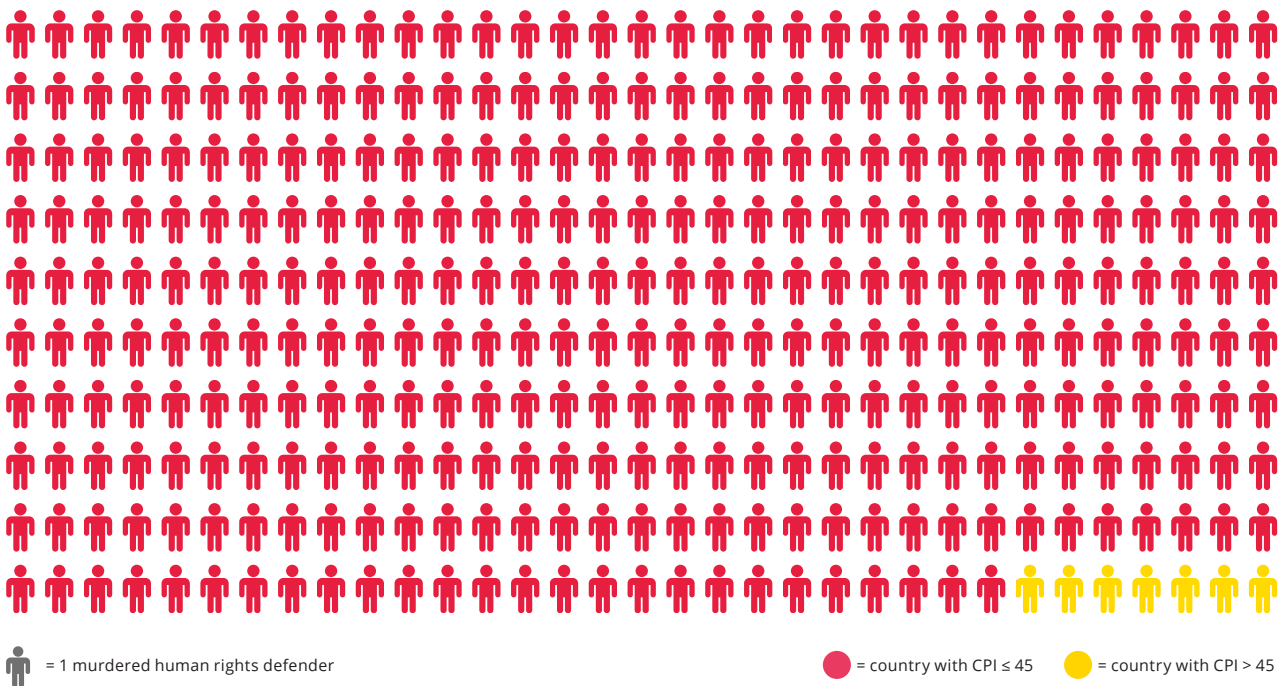
A modernised economy, efficient bureaucracy and strong rule of law all contribute to Singapore's success. However, it continues to fall far behind on human rights such as freedom of expression and association,<sup>25</sup> which means that any anti-corruption success is tied to the political will of the ruling elite and may not be sustainable.

Corruption and impunity make it unsafe for people to speak up and demand justice. Ninety-eight per cent of the 331 murders of human rights defenders in 2020 occurred in countries with high

levels of public sector corruption, as shown by a CPI score of below 45. At least 20 of these cases were human rights defenders specifically focusing on anti-corruption issues.<sup>26</sup>

## CORRUPTION AND MURDERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Highly corrupt countries account for almost all murdered human rights defenders around the world. Corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary, as well as impunity for serious crimes, contribute to a dangerous climate.<sup>27</sup>



### Nicaragua

Nicaragua has dropped 9 points in the index since 2012, to a low of just 20. The long-serving president, Daniel Ortega, has responded to corruption allegations with a crackdown on media, civic space and oversight institutions. Nicaragua's scores on the Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Association and Access to Justice indices have now dropped to record lows.<sup>28</sup>

### Philippines

With a score of 33, the Philippines is a significant decliner, having lost 5 points since 2014. Since the election of Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines has also seen a sharp decline in freedom of association and freedom of expression, making it harder to speak up about corruption.<sup>29</sup> In 2020, it was the country with the second highest number of murdered human rights defenders, with a total of 25 deaths.<sup>30</sup>

### Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has remained in the bottom third of the CPI since 2012, its score oscillating between 25 and 30. In 2017, the Azerbaijani Laundromat investigation<sup>31</sup> revealed how a vast slush fund financed the regime's reputation laundering by making payments – mostly through Danske Bank – to politicians across Europe, while jailing outspoken opposition and media figures at home.

# REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

While corruption takes vastly different forms from country to country, this year's scores reveal that all parts of the globe are at a standstill when it comes to fighting public sector corruption.

At the top of the CPI, countries in Western Europe and the European Union (EU) continue to wrestle with transparency and accountability in their response to COVID-19, threatening the region's clean image.

In parts of Asia Pacific, the Americas, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, increasing restrictions on accountability

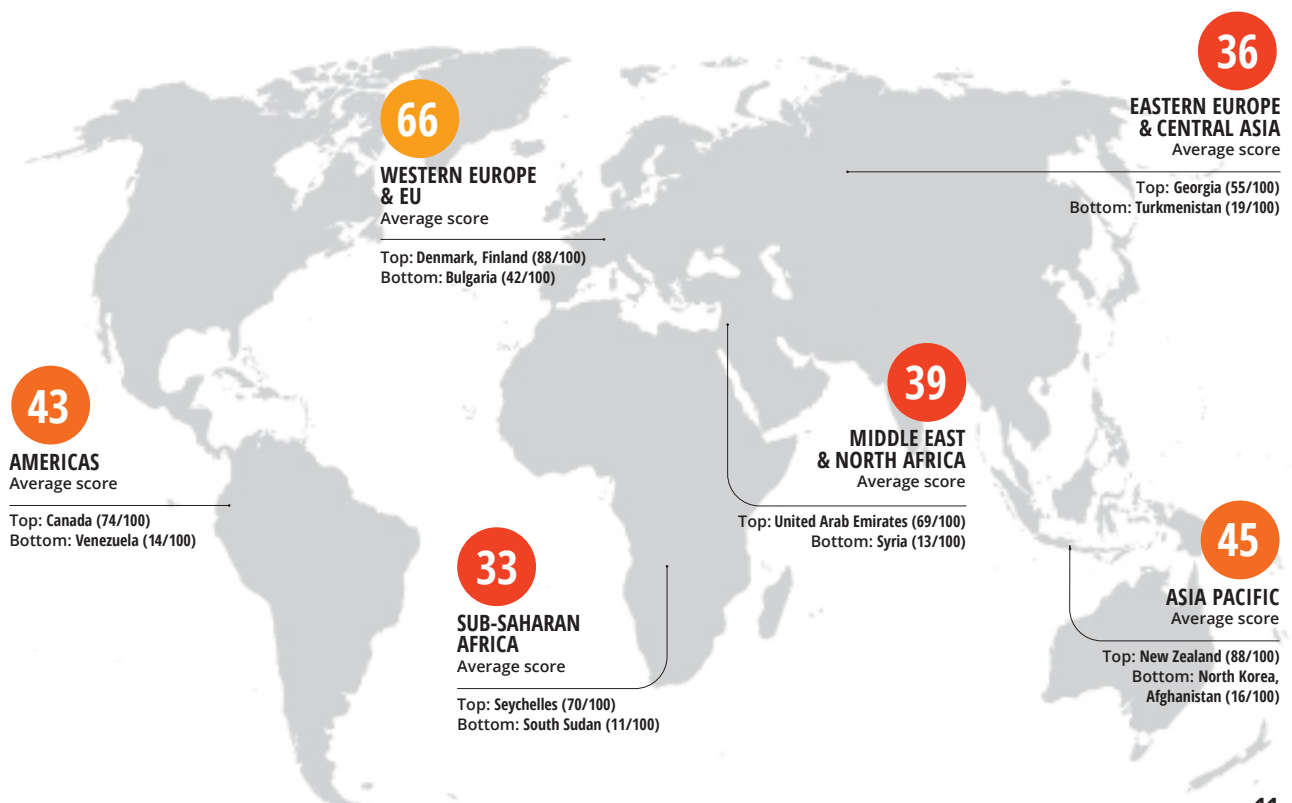
measures and basic civil freedoms allow corruption to go unchecked, and even historically high-performing countries are showing signs of decline.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the interests of a powerful few continue to dominate the political and private sphere, and the limitations placed on civil and political freedoms are blocking

any significant progress. In Sub-Saharan Africa, armed conflict, violent transitions of power and increasing terrorist threats combined with poor enforcement of anti-corruption commitments rob citizens of their basic rights and services.

## RESULTS BY REGION

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

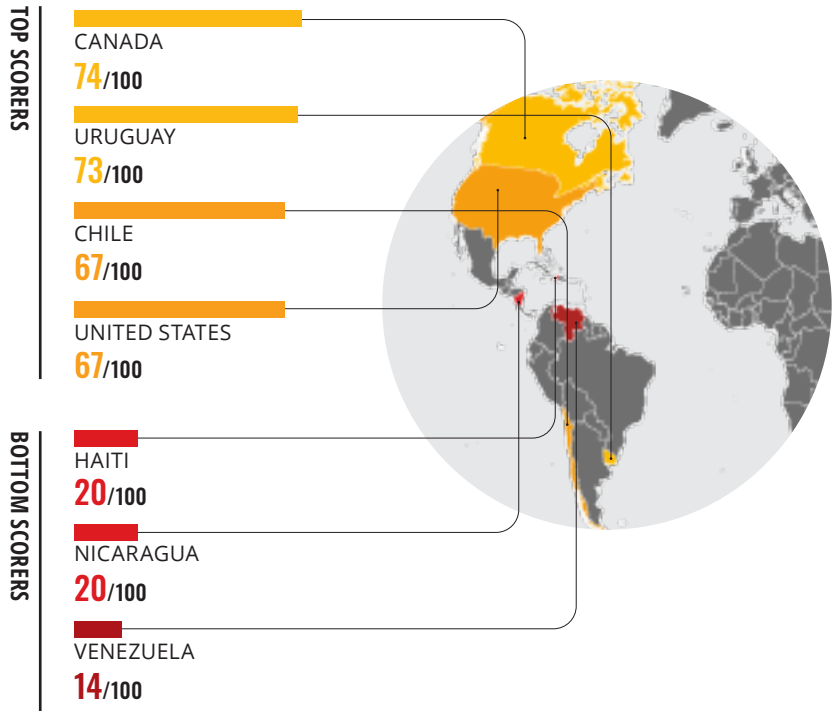


## AMERICAS

With no progress on an average score of 43 out of 100 for the third consecutive year, even high performers in the Americas are showing signs of trouble. While the worst scores in the region belong to non-democratic countries – many of which are facing humanitarian crises – major consolidated democracies have also remained stagnant or fallen down the CPI.

# 32

### COUNTRIES ASSESSED

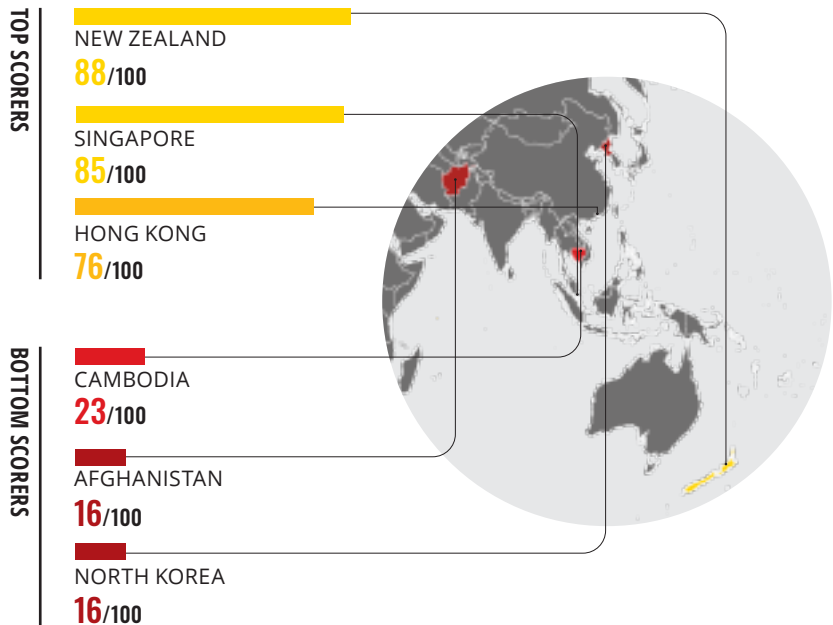


## ASIA PACIFIC

While the Asia Pacific region has made great strides in controlling petty corruption over the last decade, a failure to address grand corruption has kept the average score stalled at 45 out of 100 for the third year running. Some higher-scoring countries have dropped down the index, amid the erosion of the very freedoms that once facilitated successful mass movements against corruption in the region.

# 31

### COUNTRIES ASSESSED



## EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

With an average score of just 36 out of 100, Eastern Europe and Central Asia is still the second lowest performing region on the CPI. In Central Asia, governments have used COVID-19 as an excuse to introduce restrictions on rights and accountability, while populist governments in Eastern Europe have severely cracked down on the freedoms of expression and assembly needed to call out corruption.

# 19

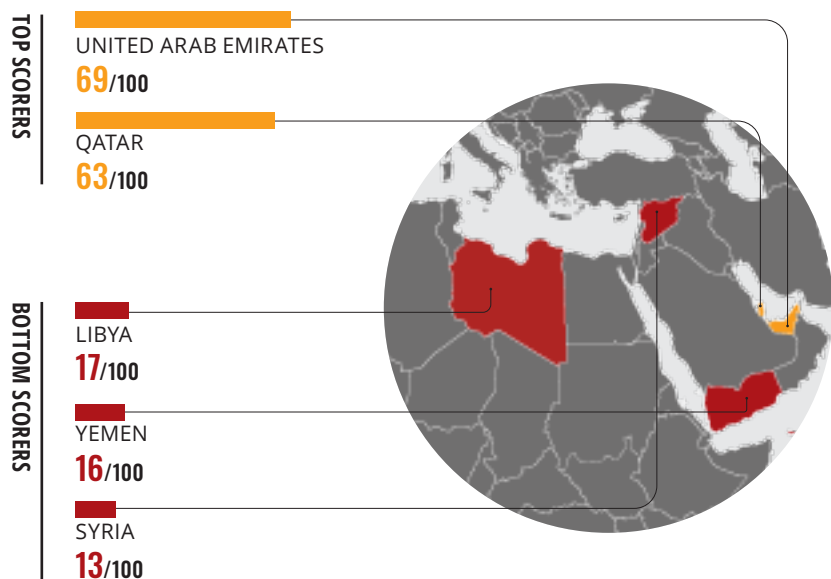
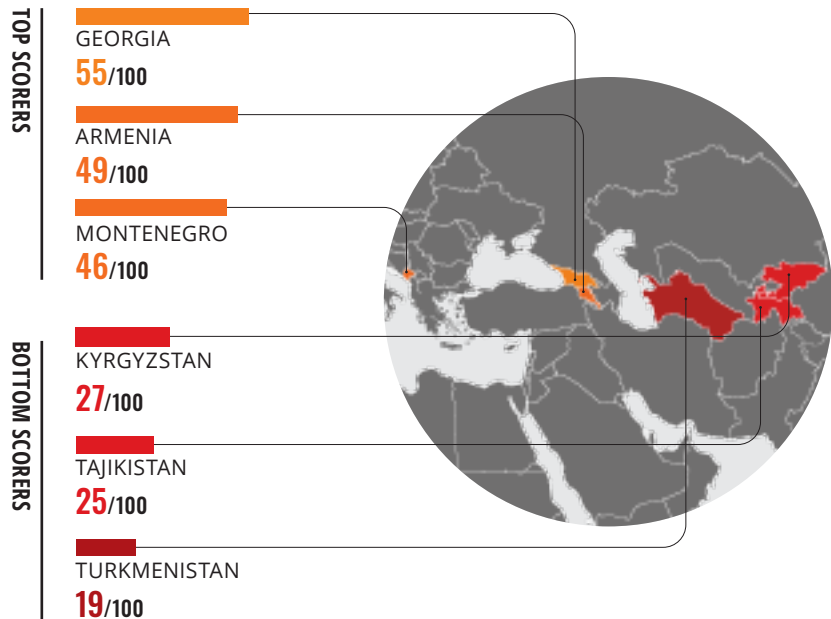
## COUNTRIES ASSESSED

### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

With an average score of 39 out of 100 for the fourth consecutive year, the Middle East and North Africa region is struggling to achieve tangible results in the fight against corruption. Systemic political misconduct and private interests overtaking the common good have allowed the region – already devastated by various conflicts – to be ravaged by corruption and human rights abuses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 18

## COUNTRIES ASSESSED





## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

With an average score of 33 out of 100, Sub-Saharan Africa shows no significant improvement from previous years. The gains made by top scorers are overshadowed by the region's poor performance overall – 44 out of 49 countries still score below 50. This reinforces the urgent need for African governments to implement existing anti-corruption commitments if they are to alleviate the devastating effect of corruption on millions of citizens living in extreme poverty.

# 49

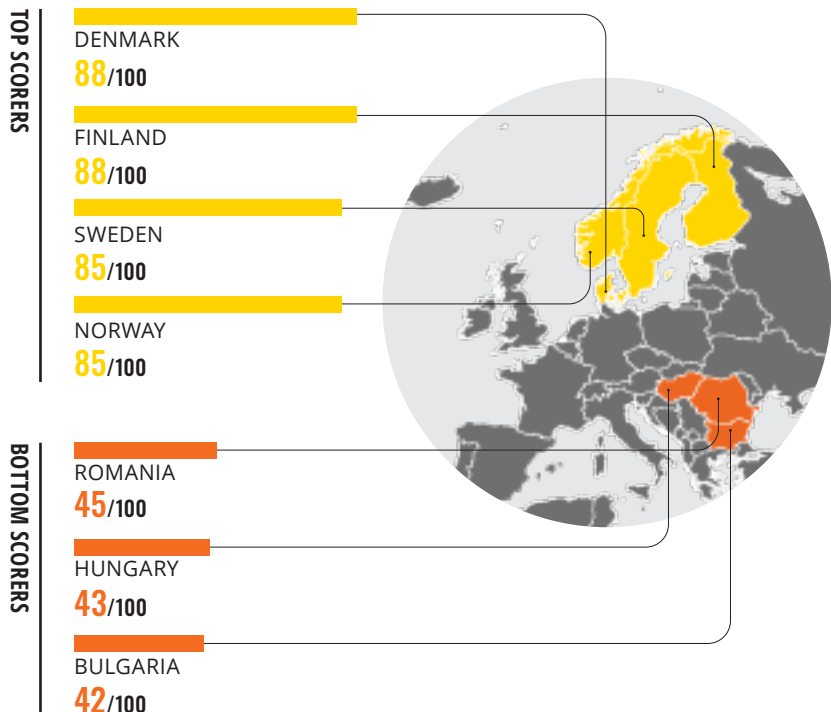
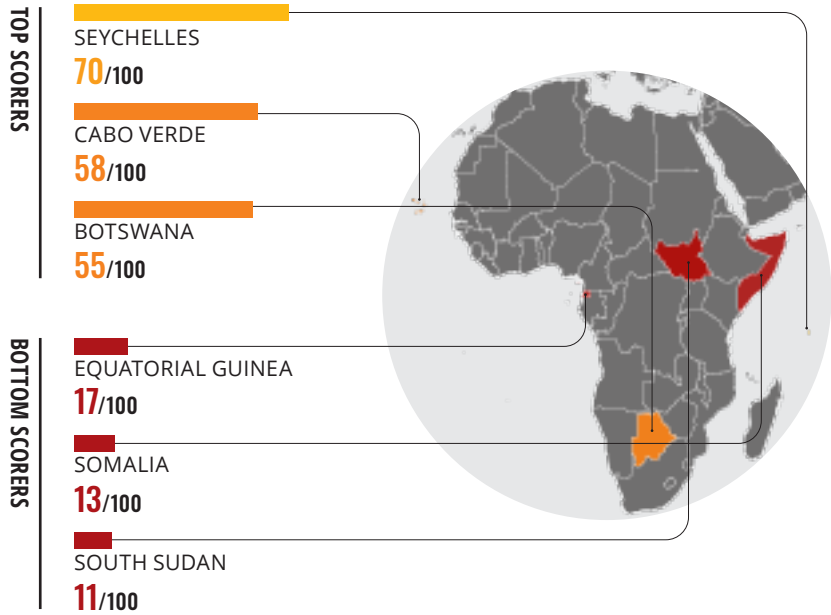
## COUNTRIES ASSESSED

### WESTERN EUROPE AND EUROPEAN UNION

With an average score of 66 out of 100, Western Europe and the EU still tops the CPI, but progress in recent years has flatlined. The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened transparency and accountability across the region, leaving no country unscathed and exposing worrying signs of backsliding among even the region's best performers.

# 31

## COUNTRIES ASSESSED



# 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 business people
- + Is regularly updated.

The CPI 2021 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.

# ENDNOTES

- 1 The 2021 CPI score for each of these 27 countries was the lowest score they had achieved since the earliest comparable year of available data (2012) : Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Comoros, Cyprus, Dominica, Eswatini, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Venezuela.
- 2 Freedom House (2021). Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy under Siege. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege>.
- 3 Transparency International and International Council on Human Rights Policy (2009). Corruption and Human Rights: Making the connection. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1551222](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1551222).
- 4 Lührmann, A. and Lindberg, S. I., Democratization (2019). 'A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?'. Available at: [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029).
- 5 Drapalova, E. (2019). 'Corruption and the crisis of democracy', Transparency International, 7 March 2019. Available at: [knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/corruption-and-the-crisis-of-democracy](https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/corruption-and-the-crisis-of-democracy).
- 6 Lawlor, M. (2020). Final warning: death threats and killings of human rights defenders: report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, United Nations. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3898237?ln=en>.
- 7 Reporters without Borders (2021). 'At least 22 newspapers "murdered" in the past five years'. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/news/least-22-newspapers-murdered-past-five-years>.
- 8 Committee to Protect Journalists (2021). 'Pegasus Project revelations show added layer of risk for corruption reporters'. Available at: <https://cpj.org/2021/07/pegasus-project-risk-corruption-reporters>.
- 9 V-DEM (2021). 'Pandemic backsliding'. Available at: [www.v-dem.net/pandem.html](http://www.v-dem.net/pandem.html).
- 10 This refers to countries that registered statistically significant improvements or declines considering a 90 per cent confidence interval. While other countries may register changes of the same magnitude, their scores show substantial variation among the CPI's underlying sources.
- 11 Euronews (2021). 'Revolt, repression and reprisals: A look back at a year of turmoil in Belarus'. Available at: [www.euronews.com/2021/08/09/revolt-repression-and-reprisals-a-look-back-at-a-year-of-turmoil-in-belarus](http://www.euronews.com/2021/08/09/revolt-repression-and-reprisals-a-look-back-at-a-year-of-turmoil-in-belarus).
- 12 International Press Institute (2021). 'Nicaragua: Crackdown on independent media escalates ahead of elections'. Available at: <https://ipi.media/nicaragua-crackdown-on-independent-media-escalates-ahead-of-elections>.
- 13 AP News (2021). 'Nicaragua orders closure of 15 more NGOs'. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-music-caribbean-nicaragua-705301837f2701bfb2ecf95fbc6da5>.
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