

# **US Score Holds Steady, Still at Low Point in Latest Corruption Perceptions Index**

A press release from the U.S. office of Transparency International  
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Today Transparency International released its latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

The U.S. score of 67 on the latest CPI matches its lowest score since 2012 but stops a multiyear downward trend.

The CPI is the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide. It measures perceptions of public corruption and is published annually. Transparency International ranks 180 countries and territories based on the opinions of experts and business executives. The scale runs from 0 to 100. The lower the score, the greater the perception of corruption.

“While still at a low point, the U.S. has taken steps to stem the declining scores it has received over the last several years,” said Transparency International’s U.S. Director Gary Kalman.

Providing context for the score, Kalman explained:

The violent attack on the nation's capital in January 2021 and attacks on free and fair elections at the state level throughout 2021, combined with the U.S.'s opaque campaign finance system, growing distrust of independent media, and remaining gaps in the U.S.'s anti-corruption architecture likely prevented any progress.

At the same time, on the first day of 2021, Congress passed a new, sweeping anti-money laundering law. In June, the President issued a memorandum recognizing the fight against corruption as a core national security interest, and U.S. agencies then contributed to a

national strategy to counter corruption. Fighting corruption was also one of three priority areas for the U.S.-led Summit for Democracy in late 2021.

Globally, 25 countries saw statistically significant improvements on the CPI in the last decade, while 23 countries saw significant declines. Finland joined Denmark and New Zealand on the list of countries perceived to have the least corrupt governments, while South Sudan, Syria and Somalia were seen as the most corrupt. Looking at various regions of the world, the Middle East/Northern Africa region was the only one with no statistically significant improvers.

This year's CPI found that anti-corruption efforts and respect for human rights go hand in hand. For example, the report cites statistics showing that of the more than 300 human rights workers murdered in 2020, 98 percent of those murders occurred in countries with a CPI score of less than 45 – indicating serious corruption problems.

While the U.S. scores stagnates, other countries have improved. As a result, for the first time in a decade, the U.S. has fallen out of the top 25 countries.

The U.S. has several meaningful opportunities to improve its score in the coming years, noted Kalman:

The Administration has taken several important steps to elevate the fight against corruption, including the designation of corruption as a core national security concern. But to improve, they will need to look internally and adopt reforms to counter attacks on free and fair elections and further the goals of open, transparent and accountable government.

Scott Greytak, Advocacy Director for Transparency International U.S., laid out additional measures the U.S. should take to strengthen its role in fighting global corruption and to counter the abuse of its financial system by corrupt actors:

The Administration must finalize and implement strong new rules to require greater corporate transparency and transparency in the real estate and private investment sectors. At the same time, Congress should pass bipartisan bills to expand our foreign bribery laws and to establish anticorruption rules for those professional

service providers who facilitate access to our financial and political systems.

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Transparency International's U.S. office (TI-US) is part of the world's largest global coalition dedicated to fighting corruption. With over 100 independent chapters around the world, Transparency International (TI) partners with businesses, government, and citizens to promote transparency and accountability, and to curb the abuse of power in both the public and private sectors.

### **Related Resources**

- Explore the [2021 CPI results](#)
- Read President Biden's [National Security Study Memorandum designating the fight against corruption as a core national security interest](#)
- Read the Administration's [National Strategy on Countering Corruption](#)
- Read TI's WSJ [commentary on the Summit for Democracy](#)
- Listen to TI's [commentary on the National Strategy on Countering Corruption](#)

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