

U.S. is a Country to Watch in the New Corruption Perceptions Index

Continuing downward trend, U.S. Reaches Lowest Annual Corruption Index Score Since 2012

28 January 2021

With a score of 67, the U.S. has reached its lowest score on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) since 2012.

The CPI is the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide. It is published annually by Transparency International and ranks 180 countries on how corrupt their public sectors are perceived to be by experts and business executives. The scale runs from 1 to 100. The lower the score, the greater the perception of corruption.

This year the CPI looked at how corruption impacts countries' ability to respond to a crisis like COVID-19, including how well leaders stuck to the rule of law. Transparency International's analysis shows that countries with lower corruption levels invest more in health care, can deliver wider health coverage, and are less likely to undermine democratic institutions and the rule of law when responding to the pandemic.

"Attacks by the previous administration on a landmark anti-bribery law, on whistleblowers with evidence of fraud and corruption in the government, on oversight of pandemic relief funding, and on the nation's electoral process were all likely factors impacting assessments of corruption in the United States," said Gary Kalman, Director of the U.S. Office of Transparency International. "Add to all that the release of the FinCEN Files documenting failures in the nation's protections against money laundering and it is safe to say it was a difficult and troubling year for anti-corruption advocates."

While this year's 2-point drop may not itself be statistically significant, the multi-year downward trend is significant and troubling to experts. The downward trend has landed the United States on Transparency International's "countries to watch" list.

"With a new administration and a new Congress, the U.S. has a real opportunity to stop our slide toward disunity and dysfunction, and to get back on track," said Scott Greytak, Advocacy Director for Transparency International's U.S. Office. "To turn this trend around, the Biden Administration must work with Congress to pass an ambitious anti-corruption agenda that repairs our democracy at home, and that empowers the U.S. to lead the fight against corruption abroad."

To counter corruption abroad, Transparency International's U.S. Office has drafted a 21-point plan titled *Combatting Global Corruption: A Bipartisan Plan*, to be released in the coming weeks. The plan can serve as a blueprint for boosting the U.S.'s CPI score, and

complements a comprehensive, U.S.-focused democracy reform bill known as H.R. 1 that was recently introduced in Congress.

Despite the results of this year's analysis, the report also cites reasons for a potential reversal in the future. On the first day of 2021, Congress passed a bipartisan, landmark anti-corruption law known as the Corporate Transparency Act, and early positive signals from the new Administration are promising developments.

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Transparency International's U.S. office (TI-US) is part of a global coalition dedicated to fighting corruption. With over 110 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

- Read the full [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)
- Read TI-US's [statement](#) calling on the Biden Administration and new Congress to crack down on corruption
- Read TI-US's [statement](#) on the passage of the Corporate Transparency Act

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