

Asia Pacific Anti-Corruption Rankings for 2015

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2015, published by Transparency International (TI) on 27 January, showed an improvement rather than a decline in scores globally, but a generally static position in Asia Pacific.

Of the 27 Asia Pacific countries featured in the CPI 2015, only nine achieved a "passing score" of 50, with the other 18 again scoring below 40. This statistic remains the same as in 2014, indicative of a lack of progress in the region.

The CPI is compiled from expert opinions of public sector corruption, based on reviews of 12 different data sources. The CPI scores countries from 0 to 100, where 0 is perceived to be most corrupt, and 100 is perceived to be least corrupt. Using the scores, TI also ranks the countries from those perceived to be the cleanest (Denmark) to those perceived to be the most corrupt (a tie between North Korea and Somalia).

The CPI for 2015 examines the perception of public sector corruption in 168 countries (compared with 175 in 2014). The lower number of countries included in the 2015 CPI makes trend analysis more complicated. Accordingly, companies operating in the region may find that a country's score is a more accurate indicator of perceived levels of corruption than its relative rankings.

Major climbers

The major Asia-Pacific climbers in the 2015 CPI ranking include: **Mongolia** (up 8 places); **India, Myanmar and Thailand** (all up 9 places); **Timor-Leste** (up 10 places); **China** (up 17

places); and **Indonesia** (up 19 places).

Indonesia's notable rise (from 107th to 88th place) belies the fact that its score actually only improved by 2 points (from 34 to 36 points). However, the improvement may be testament to the growing prominence of Indonesia's independent anti-corruption commission, the KPK, and its forging of links with other international anti-corruption agencies through the Jakarta Statement on Principles for Anti-Corruption Agencies (Jakarta Principles).

Similarly, **China's** ranking rose an equally impressive 17 places (from 100th to 83rd place) although its score improved by only 1 point (from 36 to 37 points). This rise is nonetheless noteworthy when considered against China's dramatic fall 20 places in 2014. Whilst the 2014 plunge may have been attributable to increased enforcement activities revealing the full extent of public sector corruption, the 2015 resurgence indicates that China's well-publicized anti-corruption campaign is having a positive impact on regional and global perception.

South Korea's 6-place rise (from 43rd to 37th place) similarly reflects the central government's efforts to tackle the country's disparate anti-corruption laws and regulations, with the passing of the comprehensive Anti-Corruption

Key issues

- New Zealand is still perceived to be the region's least corrupt country.
- China's rise in the rankings in 2015 is noteworthy and may indicate that China's well-publicized anti-corruption campaign is now having a positive impact.
- The notable rise of Indonesia in the rankings may attest to the growing importance of the country's independent anti-corruption commission.
- North Korea is still perceived to be the region's most corrupt country.

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The unreliable effect of comparing this year's rankings with 2014 is best illustrated by the apparent fortunes of the countries at the bottom end of the table. For instance, **Afghanistan**, which ostensibly rose 6 places (from 172nd to 166th place), is nonetheless second from the bottom in the rankings (with a score of 11 points).

Notable falls

Notable falls this year include the **Philippines** (down 10 places) and **Nepal** and **Malaysia** (each down 4 places).

The **Philippines** fell 10 places in the rankings (from 85th to 95th place). This decline may well reflect its disjointed anti-corruption legislative framework, which does not prohibit small-value gifts or facilitation payments, and is inconsistently enforced.

Malaysia's fall (from 50th place to 54th place) may reflect the impact of the headline-grabbing "1MDB" scandal, in which the Prime Minister Najib Razak has been accused of siphoning money from a state development fund. The Prime Minister's inability to answer questions about the case, coupled with his lavish lifestyle, has undermined confidence in the leadership's commitment to anti-corruption, reversing the country's recent progress up the ranks.

At the top end of the spectrum, **New Zealand** and **Australia**, consistently recognized as two of the least corrupt countries in the world, fell 2 places (from 2nd to 4th place, and from 11th to 13th place, respectively). **Japan** suffered an equivalent decline, dropping 3 places (from 15th to 18th place), tied with **Hong Kong** (down 1 place on 2014).

No change

A large number of countries experienced no change in their scores since 2014. These included **Bhutan, Mongolia, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Laos, Cambodia,** and **North Korea**, which remained at the foot of the table.

The relatively static performance of some countries this year, such as **India** and **Sri Lanka**, may belie the fact that recent governments came to power with very clear anti-corruption agendas and widespread public support for ending corruption. If government commitment to those agendas is genuine, and tangible changes are implemented from the top down, their scores should improve in the not too distant future.

Conclusion

With the fight against corruption dominating the region's social, political and economic agendas in recent years, the importance of ensuring that anti-corruption policies, procedures and controls are genuine, effective and properly implemented cannot be overstated. This year's CPI demonstrates it is not enough to "talk the anti-corruption talk" in the region; all stakeholders need to "walk the anti-corruption walk" as well.

Full Asia-Pacific Rankings

Asia Pacific Country	CPI 2015 Rank	CPI 2014 Rank	Difference in Rank '14 - '15	CPI 2015 Score	CPI 2014 Score	Difference in Score '14 - '15
New Zealand	4	2	↓ 2	88	91	↓ 3
Singapore	8	7	↓ 1	85	84	↑ 1
Australia	13	11	↓ 2	79	80	↓ 1
Hong Kong	18	17	↓ 1	75	74	↑ 1
Japan	18	15	↓ 3	75	76	↓ 1
Bhutan	27	30	↑ 3	65	65	0
Taiwan	30	35	↑ 5	62	61	↑ 1
South Korea	37	43	↑ 6	56	55	↑ 1
Malaysia	54	50	↓ 4	50	52	↓ 2
Samoa	n/a	50	n/a	n/a	52	n/a
Mongolia	72	80	↑ 8	39	39	0
India	76	85	↑ 9	38	38	0
Thailand	76	85	↑ 9	38	38	0
China	83	100	↑ 17	37	36	↑ 1
Sri Lanka	83	85	↑ 2	37	38	↓ 1
Indonesia	88	107	↑ 19	36	34	↑ 2
Philippines	95	85	↓ 10	35	38	↓ 3
Vietnam	112	119	↑ 7	31	31	0
Pakistan	117	126	↑ 9	30	29	↑ 1
Timor-Leste	123	133	↑ 10	28	28	0
Nepal	130	126	↓ 4	27	29	↓ 2
Bangladesh	139	145	↑ 6	25	25	0
Papua New Guinea	139	145	↑ 6	25	25	0
Laos	139	145	↑ 6	25	25	0
Myanmar	147	156	↑ 9	22	21	↑ 1
Cambodia	150	156	↑ 6	21	21	0
Afghanistan	166	172	↑ 6	11	12	↓ 1
North Korea	167	174	↑ 7	8	8	0

Low risk

Medium risk

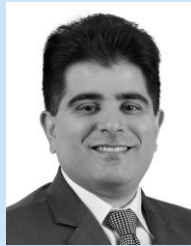
High risk

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