

Corruption Perceptions Index 2009

Regional Highlights: Americas

Countries/Territories included: 31

Among the 31 countries from the Americas included in Transparency International's (TI) 2009 *Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)*, 10 scored above 5 (out of 10) while 21 scored less than 5 indicating a serious corruption problem. Overall, nine countries failed to exceed a score of 3, indicating rampant corruption. With the exception of **Guatemala**, no country in the region showed a significant increase in its CPI score.

In the group of countries which score above 5, **Canada** remains at the top of the list. It continues to be among the ten countries with the lowest perceived levels of corruption worldwide, serving as a benchmark and inspiration for the Americas. **Chile**, **Uruguay** and **Costa Rica** are the only Latin American countries included in this group, although with lower scores than their Caribbean neighbours in **Barbados** and **Saint Lucia**.

The **United States** (US) score remains stable at 7.5 despite widespread concerns over a lack of government oversight in relation to the financial sector. A swift government response to the financial crisis and moves towards regulatory reforms that include transparency and accountability measures, may play a role in the country's score. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether proposed reforms are far-reaching enough and to what extent they will be implemented. Another reason for concern is that in the US the legislature is perceived to be the institution most affected by corruption, according to TI's *Global Corruption Barometer*, a public opinion [survey](#) published in 2009.

Among the nine countries that failed to exceed a score of 5 are **Brazil**, **Peru**, **Colombia** and **Mexico**, all leading economies in the region which should become anti-corruption strongholds but have been rocked by scandals involving impunity, kickbacks, political corruption and state capture.

Once again **Haiti**, the poorest country in the region, ranks at the bottom though its score improved modestly from 1.4 in 2008 to 1.8 this year. Additional low scorers include **Bolivia**, **Nicaragua**, **Honduras**, and **Paraguay**, all countries facing high levels of poverty and a great need for solid, transparent institutions that could facilitate much-needed economic growth. **Argentina** and **Venezuela** are also among the low performers in the index, an indication that high perceptions of corruption are not exclusively linked to poverty.

Throughout Latin America, which makes up the bulk of low-scoring countries in the region, weak institutions, poor governance practices and the excessive influence of private interests continue to undermine best efforts to promote equitable and sustainable development. Additionally, Latin American journalists face an increasingly restrictive environment with several countries passing or proposing legislation aimed at silencing critical coverage, which hampers overall press freedom and the crucial ability to report on corruption and its impact. Both civil society and the media play a key role in preventing and fighting corruption. Weakening them, particularly at a time when democratic institutions are also being challenged in several countries, limits the possibility of achieving lasting prosperity and reducing inequality.

Although each country has its own particular context, across the board the effects of the financial crisis and the subsequent economic downturn have highlighted the crucial importance of governance in the private and public sectors and in relationships between the two, particularly in respect to stimulus packages which are already pumping large amounts of money into badly affected economies. States across the region – rich and poor – will have to respond by ensuring that these public funds are handled with integrity.

Rank	Regional Rank	Country / Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Confidence Interval		Surveys Used
				Lower bound	Upper bound	
8	1	Canada	8.7	8.5	9.0	6
19	2	United States	7.5	6.9	8.0	8
20	3	Barbados	7.4	6.6	8.2	4
22	4	Saint Lucia	7.0	6.7	7.5	3
25	5	Chile	6.7	6.5	6.9	7
25	5	Uruguay	6.7	6.4	7.1	5
31	7	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	4.9	7.5	3
34	8	Dominica	5.9	4.9	6.7	3
35	9	Puerto Rico	5.8	5.2	6.3	4
43	10	Costa Rica	5.3	4.7	5.9	5
61	11	Cuba	4.4	3.5	5.1	3
75	12	Brazil	3.7	3.3	4.3	7
75	12	Colombia	3.7	3.1	4.3	7
75	12	Peru	3.7	3.4	4.1	7
75	12	Suriname	3.7	3.0	4.7	3
79	16	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	3.0	4.3	4
84	17	El Salvador	3.4	3.0	3.8	5
84	17	Guatemala	3.4	3.0	3.9	5
84	17	Panama	3.4	3.1	3.7	5
89	20	Mexico	3.3	3.2	3.5	7
99	21	Dominican Republic	3.0	2.9	3.2	5
99	21	Jamaica	3.0	2.8	3.3	5
106	23	Argentina	2.9	2.6	3.1	7
120	24	Bolivia	2.7	2.4	3.1	6
126	25	Guyana	2.6	2.5	2.7	4
130	26	Honduras	2.5	2.2	2.8	6
130	26	Nicaragua	2.5	2.3	2.7	6
146	28	Ecuador	2.2	2.0	2.5	5
154	29	Paraguay	2.1	1.7	2.5	5
162	30	Venezuela	1.9	1.8	2.0	7
168	31	Haiti	1.8	1.4	2.3	3