

# Singapore ranked least corrupt Asian country and fifth overall of 180 countries and territories



In the 2022 index, Singapore scored 83 points. It was ranked behind Denmark (90), Finland (87), New Zealand (87) and Norway (84). ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI



[Samuel Devaraj](#)

UPDATED  
25 JAN. 2022 5:59 P.M. SGT

SINGAPORE – Global anti-graft watchdog Transparency International has ranked Singapore as the least corrupt Asian country, with the Republic emerging fifth overall in the group's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

However, it achieved this with its lowest score in a decade, since the scoring metric was revamped by Transparency International in 2012 when Singapore scored a high of 87 points.

The CPI surveys experts and business people, and scores 180 countries and territories on a scale of 0 to 100 by their perceived levels of public sector corruption.

In the 2022 index, Singapore and Sweden scored 83 points. They were ranked behind Denmark (90), Finland (87), New Zealand (87) and Norway (84).

[The Republic was ranked fourth in the 2021 index](#), having tied with Norway and Sweden at 85 points, behind Denmark, Finland and New Zealand which all scored 88 points.

In its report released on Tuesday, Transparency International said the 2022 CPI analyses the connection between conflict, security and corruption – taking an in-depth look at how violence and corruption impact one another around the world.

The report noted that the Covid-19 pandemic, climate crisis and growing security threats around the world are fuelling a new wave of uncertainty, with countries failing to address corruption worsening the effects.

The global average score for the 2022 CPI is 43, with two-thirds of the jurisdictions scoring below 50.

Ms Delia Ferreira Rubio, who is the chair of Transparency International, said corruption has made the world a more dangerous place.

“As governments have collectively failed to make progress against it, they fuel the current rise in violence and conflict – and endanger people everywhere,” said the lawyer.

“The only way out is for states to do the hard work, rooting out corruption at all levels to ensure governments work for all people, not just an elite few.”

Singapore was ranked second in the Asia-Pacific region, behind New Zealand (87).

It was trailed by Hong Kong (76), Australia (75) and Japan (73).

The report said the Asia-Pacific region has stagnated for a fourth year in a row, with an average of 45 points.

It said that authoritarianism has been growing in the region, and added that restrictions on civic space and basic freedoms imposed during the pandemic have remained in place.

The report also noted that leaders in Asia have focused on economic recovery at the expense of other priorities.

Ms Ilham Mohamed, Transparency International’s regional adviser for Asia, said Singapore has scored consistently high in the rankings, remaining as one of the top countries globally and in Asia.

She praised Singapore’s Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), calling it an excellent anti-corruption agency with international repute.

But she added that, while Singapore remains among the top jurisdictions in the fight against corruption, it is not perfect and can do more.

Ms Ilham said: “It is not just a two-point drop from the previous year. What we are seeing for Singapore is a stagnation and a slight drop in the last 10 years.”

Asked why this was the case, she said there were two main issues that Singapore needed to manage.

These were illicit financial flows across borders, and having more civic spaces to voice out against corruption.

She said: “For illicit financial flows, many advanced economies in Asia are also failing at this. One key thing in such economies is that they allow for the incorporation of anonymous entities and shell companies which move money around the globe.

“This is used not just by criminals, but also politically exposed persons. And politics is often linked to grand corruption.”

She added that Singapore has “very strong banking systems”, but it has a responsibility to ensure the money held in its financial systems is not dirty.

Ms Ilham said that Singapore also lacked civic spaces for people to whistle-blow publicly.

“There needs to be space for people to speak up, for activists and journalists to safely whistle-blow, demonstrate and point out corruption,” she said.

“If civic space is not given, then you will find that people will not report corruption.

“Reporting and whistle-blowing are essential, even in a perfectly set-up anti-corruption agency.”

She also noted that Singapore does not have many anti-corruption non-governmental organisations.

Ms Ilham said the downside of the CPI is that it can sometimes make it look like the top performing jurisdictions do not have problems.

“The problem with a 0 to 100 score and ranking is that because Singapore is so far ahead of other countries, it makes it look like the country doesn’t have any problems,” she said.

“If you compare it with Afghanistan, North Korea or even Cambodia, you might think Singapore is very clean.

“But Singapore should instead be comparing with what Singapore could be. Singapore can seek to aim even higher.”

Asked if Singapore could ever score above 90 on the CPI, Ms Ilham said she believed it was very possible.

“In terms of administrative competency and capacity, Singapore has all of it. It’s more a matter of enhancing what it already has,” she said.

“I think Singapore can also actively play a stronger leadership role in the region, to be a model country in fighting corruption.”

In a release on Tuesday, CPIB said the corruption situation in Singapore remains firmly under control, and noted that the country has performed well across international indexes for incorruptibility and a clean public sector.

“The Political and Economic Risk Consultancy ranked Singapore as the least corrupt country in its 2022 Report on Corruption in Asia out of 16 economies, a position we have held since 1995.

“In the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2022, Singapore was ranked third for absence of corruption, the top Asian nation out of 140 countries ranked,” said CPIB.

The bureau also noted that 96 per cent of people surveyed in the Republic in 2022 had rated Singapore’s corruption control efforts to be effective, an improvement over the 94 per cent score in 2020.

CPIB said: “Political determination, heavy punishment for corruption offences and a zero tolerance culture for corruption were the top three most important factors that contributed to the low corruption rate in Singapore.”