



## International And National Methodological Frameworks For Measuring And Assessing Corruption Levels

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the methodological principles underlying the calculation of the Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International. It also aims to justify recommendations for establishing the conceptual and methodological foundations of a national system for assessing the level of corruption. Such a system may serve as a universal and standardized instrument for conducting systematic monitoring of anti-corruption activities in Uzbekistan.

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**Introduction** Corruption has historically existed as a complex and persistent phenomenon within the system of social relations in almost all societies. Its widespread character demonstrates that corruption is not merely an accidental deviation from legal or moral norms, but a deeply rooted socio-economic and institutional problem affecting the development of states. In contemporary conditions, corruption is often interpreted as a consequence of economic instability, institutional weakness, deficiencies in public administration, and the erosion of moral responsibility. At the same time, it increasingly functions as one of the mechanisms supporting the shadow economy, informal patronage networks, favoritism, protectionism and nepotism. For this reason, strengthening international cooperation in the fight against corruption remains one of the most important conditions for improving governance, ensuring transparency and increasing public trust in state institutions.

The systematic assessment of corruption plays an essential role in identifying the real scale, forms and consequences of this phenomenon. It allows states to determine not only the financial losses caused by corruption and the volume of resources removed from official economic circulation, but also the most vulnerable spheres of public administration. Such assessment provides an opportunity to reveal weaknesses in the legislative system, problems in law enforcement practice, shortcomings in the implementation of public policy, and institutional gaps that create favorable conditions for corrupt behavior. Therefore, information on corruption should not be limited to statistical indicators alone; it must also serve as an analytical basis for evaluating the effectiveness of state institutions and anti-corruption measures.

A more accurate and methodologically grounded understanding of corruption enables the government to develop effective political, legal and administrative mechanisms aimed at preventing and reducing corrupt practices. In particular, reliable corruption assessment helps identify deficiencies in the financing system, unequal access to public services, poverty-related risks, social exclusion, money laundering, tax evasion and bribery. Consequently, the measurement and analysis of corruption are not only technical procedures, but also important instruments of public administration, strategic planning and institutional reform. They provide the

state with the necessary empirical and analytical foundation for improving anti-corruption policy and increasing the effectiveness of its implementation.

### **The review of literature on the topic**

The issue of corruption in Uzbekistan has been examined from legal, socio-political, economic and philosophical perspectives by a number of scholars. In particular, the scientific works of Q.R. Abdurasulova, R. Kabulov, B.J. Ahrarov, R.A. Zufarov, M.H. Rustambaev, P. Bakunov, F. Tahirov, A.G. Zakirova, Sh.Y. Abduqodirov, N.S. Salaev, U.M. Mirzaev, T.H. Khasanov, H.R. Ochilov and other researchers have made a significant contribution to the study of the causes, forms and legal mechanisms of combating corruption in Uzbekistan.

At the same time, the socio-cultural consequences of corruption and its influence on the development of society have been analyzed in the works of I. Saifnazarov, S. Otamurodov and A. Muzaffarov. These studies are important because they reveal corruption not only as a legal violation, but also as a phenomenon that negatively affects public morality, social trust, institutional stability and the cultural foundations of society.

The works of Sh.R. Kobilov<sup>1</sup> and B. Khamidov<sup>2</sup> are also of particular importance in the study of corruption, especially in terms of its economic, institutional and practical dimensions. In addition, the philosophical aspects of corruption, its moral foundations, social risks and impact on national development have been addressed in the research of N.A. Shermuhamedova<sup>3</sup>, J.Y. Yahshilikov<sup>4</sup> and N.E. Muhammadiev. Thus, the existing literature shows that corruption in Uzbekistan has been studied as a multidimensional phenomenon requiring an interdisciplinary approach.

### **The methods and methodology used in the research**

The nature of the research problem requires the use of systematic, historical and comparative approaches. The systematic approach makes it possible to analyze corruption as a complex social phenomenon connected with political institutions, legal norms, economic relations and moral values. The historical approach allows the study of corruption in the context of its development, transformation and changing forms in different socio-political conditions. The comparative approach provides an opportunity to examine international experience, compare different models of corruption assessment and identify their methodological advantages and limitations.

The methodological foundation of the research is also based on the principles of formal logic. In this regard, the processes of definition, proof, argumentation, inference and conclusion play an important role in ensuring the scientific consistency of the study. The logical laws of identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle and sufficient reason are used as methodological principles for maintaining conceptual clarity, avoiding internal inconsistency and substantiating the conclusions of the research. As a result, the article seeks to provide a theoretically grounded and methodologically consistent analysis of corruption assessment and its role in the development of anti-corruption policy.

### **Analysis and results**

Data provided by international organizations indicate that Uzbekistan has demonstrated a positive long-term trend in combating corruption. In particular, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, the country has gradually improved its position since 2010. While Uzbekistan ranked 172nd with 16 points in 2010, by 2019 it had risen to 153rd place among 180 countries with a score of 25 points. This dynamic suggests that anti-corruption reforms, institutional changes and measures aimed at increasing transparency have had a certain positive impact on the country's international indicators.

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<sup>1</sup> Кобилов. Ш.Р. Миллий хавфсизликнинг иктисодий муаммолари: Монография. — Т., 2006; Коррупция: келиб чиқиш сабаблари ва унга қарши курашнинг жохон тажрибаси. — Т., 2011. Қобилов Ш.Р. Коррупцияга қарши кураш : иктисодий ,маънавий-маърифий чоралари ва йўллари: Монография. — Т.: Ўзбекистон Республикаси ИИВ Академияси 2015. — 160 б.

<sup>2</sup> Бахтишод Хамидов. Экономическое обозрение №4 (244) 2020 <https://review.uz/oz/post/uzbekistonda-korruptsiya-dinamikasi>

<sup>3</sup> Шермухамедова Н.А. Коррупциянинг турлари ва шакллари. Формирование антикоррупционной культуры в республике Казахстан и в странах центральной Азии: состояние, тенденции и перспективы развития посвящается 20 летию факультета Юриспруденции МО ЮКГУ. Казахстана, Шимкент . 2018–с.67.

<sup>4</sup> Яхшиликков, Ж., Н.Е.Мухаммадиев. 'Миллий ғоя - тараққиёт стратегияси'. Тошкент: Фан. 2017. — б.322.

At the same time, survey data show that corruption remains a serious social and administrative problem. According to Transparency International's 2016 anti-corruption indicators, 18 percent of respondents in Uzbekistan reported cases of bribery, while 23 percent identified corruption as one of the three most significant problems facing the country. Public opinion surveys also revealed that certain sectors were perceived as particularly vulnerable to corrupt practices. For instance, road patrol services were mentioned by 17 percent of respondents who admitted paying bribes, while the education and healthcare sectors were each indicated by 16 percent of respondents. The same surveys also showed that the population's willingness to report corruption remains limited. When asked why they did not report corruption cases, 39 percent of respondents stated that they did not know how to answer this question, while 17 percent referred to fear of possible negative consequences.

The World Bank has also attempted to assess corruption-related risks in the business environment by examining situations in which firms may encounter informal payments in the course of six types of transactions, including payment of taxes, obtaining permits or licenses, and accessing public services. According to this survey, Uzbekistan's indicators appeared more favorable than both the global average and the average for Europe and Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, only 6 percent of surveyed firms reported that they had encountered bribery in their practice, whereas this figure was 17 percent globally and 11 percent in Europe and Central Asia. These results indicate that, at least in terms of business surveys, the level of reported bribery in Uzbekistan was relatively lower than in several comparative contexts.

National public opinion surveys also provide important empirical material for understanding the sectoral distribution of corruption risks. According to the Center for Public Opinion, in 2018 the highest level of perceived corruption and bribery was observed in the healthcare sector, which was identified by 43.7 percent of respondents. The education sector ranked next with 39.4 percent, followed by the tax sphere with 12.2 percent. These data demonstrate that corruption is not distributed evenly across all areas of public life; rather, it is concentrated in those sectors where citizens interact directly and frequently with administrative, social and service-providing institutions.

A similar picture was presented in the survey "Fighting Corruption in the Mirror of Public Opinion" conducted by the same center. According to the results of this study, the healthcare system, recruitment processes, higher education and general public education were among the spheres most affected by corruption in Uzbekistan in 2018. Courts, prosecutor's offices, internal affairs bodies, tax authorities and sanitary-epidemiological control bodies were also mentioned as areas exposed to corruption risks. This confirms that corruption should be analyzed not only as an economic or legal problem, but also as an institutional phenomenon connected with the quality of public administration, transparency of procedures and accountability of officials.

Statistical data on corruption-related offenses in Uzbekistan show that state-owned enterprises and institutions, law enforcement bodies and banks have been among the sectors most frequently associated with corruption crimes. Many of these areas were identified by citizens themselves in sociological surveys. At the same time, official data indicate a certain decrease in corruption crimes committed by officials between 2013 and 2017. During this period, the number of such crimes decreased by 43 percent. From 2015 to 2017, prosecutors investigated 8,572 criminal cases related to corruption offenses: 3,778 cases in 2015, 2,860 cases in 2016 and 1,934 cases in 2017. These cases involved 14,171 citizens in total, including 6,853 in 2015, 4,524 in 2016 and 2,794 in 2017. These figures show both the scale of corruption-related offenses and the need for a systematic approach to their prevention, detection and legal assessment<sup>5</sup>.

The significance of the problem was also emphasized at the highest political level. In response to questions from Salim Doniyorov, editor-in-chief of the "New Uzbekistan" newspaper, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev referred to concrete facts concerning corruption offenses. According to the information cited, in 2020, 1,723 persons were prosecuted for crimes committed by officials at various levels, and the damage caused by these crimes amounted to 500 billion soums. In the first five months of 2021 alone, criminal cases

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<sup>5</sup> <https://review.uz/oz/post/uzbekistonda-korrupciya-dinamikasi>

were initiated against 1,696 officials, with total damage estimated at 450 billion soums<sup>6</sup>. These figures indicate that corruption continues to produce serious economic, legal and social consequences, and therefore requires not only punitive measures, but also preventive and analytical mechanisms.

In contemporary international practice, there are several major approaches to measuring corruption. Each of them has its own methodological advantages and limitations. Obtaining accurate and complete information about corruption is inherently difficult because corruption is usually hidden, informal and mutually beneficial for the actors involved. Individuals participating in corrupt transactions are generally not interested in disclosing such facts. Therefore, corruption measurement cannot rely solely on official statistics; it requires a combination of sociological surveys, expert assessments, institutional indicators, business environment studies and law enforcement data.

Among existing measurement tools, the Corruption Perceptions Index is one of the most widely used. This index is based on assessments of the perceived level of corruption in the public sector and relies mainly on expert opinions and business community evaluations. Its advantage lies in the possibility of comparing countries according to a standardized scale. However, this method also has certain limitations. The quality, openness and reliability of the information available to experts may differ significantly from one country to another. Moreover, expert perceptions may change over time and may not always fully reflect the real scale of corruption experienced by the population.

Survey-based methods are also commonly used to assess corruption. Examples include Transparency International's<sup>7</sup> Global Corruption Barometer and the World Bank's Enterprise Surveys. These methods collect information from citizens, firms and other respondents about their direct or indirect experience with corruption. Their methodological value lies in the fact that they can reveal practical encounters with bribery, informal payments and administrative pressure. However, survey methods also have limitations. Some respondents may avoid giving truthful answers because of fear, distrust or personal involvement in corrupt practices. Others may consider corruption a normal or unavoidable part of administrative relations and therefore may not report it accurately.

Thus, the analysis of international and national data shows that corruption assessment must be based on a comprehensive and methodologically balanced system. International indices are useful for comparative analysis, while national surveys and official statistics help reveal sector-specific risks and institutional weaknesses. For Uzbekistan, the development of a reliable national system for measuring and assessing corruption is therefore of particular importance. Such a system would make it possible to identify vulnerable areas, evaluate the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy, improve public administration and strengthen public trust in state institutions.

At present, Uzbekistan does not yet have a fully unified and methodologically standardized system for assessing the level of corruption in all spheres of public life. In particular, the practical mechanisms for calculating corruption risks in different sectors of society and public administration remain insufficiently developed. This situation creates certain difficulties in designing, implementing and evaluating anti-corruption policy. Without reliable indicators and a single methodological framework, it becomes complicated to determine the real scale of corruption, identify vulnerable areas and assess the effectiveness of measures taken by the state.

International experience shows that the development of a national corruption assessment methodology is generally based on two major directions. The first direction involves the integration of international comparative research results into national anti-corruption policy. This approach allows states to use global indices, comparative rankings and international monitoring data as analytical tools for evaluating their own progress. The second direction is connected with the organization of national sociological and diagnostic

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<sup>6</sup><https://yuz.uz/news/yangi-ozbekiston-demokratik-ozgarishlar-keng-imkoniyatlar-va-amaliy-ishlar-mamlakatiga-aylanmoqda?view=turkiya-prezidentiga-hamardlik>

<sup>7</sup> Transparency International is an organization set up to fight corruption, study the level of corruption around the world, and conduct research in this area. The international movement Transparency International was founded in 1993 in Berlin by Peter Eigen, the former World Bank Country Director for East Africa. The organization currently has branches in more than 100 countries around the world

studies. Such research makes it possible to identify corruption risks within the internal institutional environment, taking into account national legal, administrative, social and cultural specificities.

In addition to these approaches, corruption can also be assessed on the basis of information provided by law enforcement agencies. However, such data alone cannot provide a complete and objective picture of corruption in a particular country or sector. Law enforcement statistics usually reflect only those corruption offenses that have been officially detected, investigated and confirmed by a court decision. Therefore, they represent only the visible and legally registered part of corruption, while many hidden, informal and latent forms of corrupt behavior may remain outside official records.

For this reason, the present article focuses on the methodological limitations of constructing a corruption perception index by referring to international experience. Among the existing global instruments, the Corruption Perceptions Index is one of the most widely used methods for assessing corruption. This index is developed by Transparency International and is based primarily on surveys and expert assessments involving specialists, analysts and representatives of the business community.

A country can be included in the Corruption Perceptions Index only if there are at least three independent data sources available for its assessment. These sources must not be general or arbitrary information providers; rather, they should be reputable independent organizations that analyze the quality of governance, the business environment and institutional transparency. Transparency International evaluates the methodology of each source in order to ensure that the data meet the required standards of reliability, comparability and analytical validity.

On the basis of these data, countries are assessed on a scale from 0 to 100 points. A score of 0 indicates the highest perceived level of corruption, while a score of 100 reflects the lowest perceived level of corruption. The Corruption Perceptions Index has been calculated and published annually since 1995<sup>8</sup>. The main purpose of Transparency International is to promote transparency, accountability and integrity in public administration across the world. From this perspective, openness in governmental and institutional activity is regarded as an important factor in reducing corruption and improving the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures<sup>9</sup>.

The methodological framework of the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index shows that the index summarizes information from various independent sources that assess the level of corruption in the public sector from the perspective of experts and entrepreneurs. The calculation of the index includes several interconnected stages.

First, relevant sources of information are selected. Each source used in the calculation of the Corruption Perceptions Index must meet specific reliability criteria. It should provide a quantitative assessment of perceived corruption in the public sector, use a clear and credible methodology, and evaluate different countries according to a comparable scale. The organization preparing the assessment must also have institutional credibility and professional recognition. Moreover, the rating scale should be broad enough to reflect differences between countries, and the research should cover a sufficient number of states. It is also important to determine whether the assessment is based on the opinions of experts, business representatives or other relevant respondents. In addition, the source organization must update its assessment at least once every two years.

The 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index was calculated on the basis of 13 different data sources provided by 12 independent organizations. These sources reflected perceptions of corruption over the previous two years and served as the empirical foundation for the comparative assessment of countries<sup>10</sup>.

Second, the selected data sources are standardized. Since different organizations may use different scales and methodologies, their results must be converted into a common measurement system. For this purpose, all indicators are transformed into a unified scale from 0 to 100, where 0 represents a very high level of perceived corruption and 100 represents a very low level. The standardization process involves subtracting the mean value of each source from the score assigned to a country and dividing the result by the standard deviation of that source. The normalized values are then adjusted according to the standard deviation and mean value of

<sup>8</sup> <http://transparency.org.ru/indeks-vospriiatia-korruptcii/blog> (Data accessed on August 06, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.transparency.kg/o-nas/o-transperensi-interneshnl.html> (Data accessed on August 08, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl>

the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2012. As a result, data from different sources become comparable within a single index scale.

Third, the average score is calculated. A country or territory may be included in the Corruption Perceptions Index only when at least three valid sources provide assessments for it. The final CPI score is determined by calculating the average of all standardized assessments available for that country. The resulting score is then rounded to a whole number. This procedure makes it possible to produce a single comparative indicator for each country included in the index.

Fourth, uncertainty is reported. Since the Corruption Perceptions Index is based on multiple data sources, the level of agreement or disagreement between these sources must also be considered. For this reason, the index includes information about the standard error and confidence interval of each country's score. These indicators show the extent to which the results provided by different sources vary from one another. Thus, the uncertainty report reflects the reliability and stability of the final score and allows researchers to understand the degree of methodological variation within the assessment<sup>11</sup>.

Overall, the methodology of the Corruption Perceptions Index demonstrates the importance of using standardized, comparable and regularly updated data in the assessment of corruption. At the same time, this methodology also shows that corruption assessment cannot be reduced to a single numerical indicator. For countries such as Uzbekistan, the use of international indices should be combined with national sociological research, sectoral diagnostics, institutional monitoring and law enforcement data. Only such an integrated approach can provide a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of corruption and serve as a reliable basis for improving anti-corruption policy.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

In conclusion, the analysis shows that there is no fully universal methodology for calculating corruption indices or determining a country's exact position in international rankings. However, this does not exclude the possibility of developing a national system for measuring and assessing the level of corruption. On the contrary, the methodological limitations of international indices demonstrate the need to establish a more context-sensitive, transparent and institutionally grounded national assessment framework.

First, it is necessary to create an organizational basis for a national system of corruption measurement. This requires strengthening the authority and responsibilities of competent state bodies that prepare annual reports on corruption and anti-corruption activities. Such reports should be based on a unified methodology, clearly defined forms of corruption and legally established categories of participants.

Second, corruption assessment should be protected from ideological pressure and political manipulation. Reliable measurement tools can prevent the formation of exaggerated public myths and ensure that anti-corruption policy is based on empirical evidence rather than propaganda or subjective perception.

Third, a clear distinction must be made between "measurement" and "assessment". Measurement refers to the use of indicators, indices and empirical data, while assessment involves interpreting these results, drawing conclusions and formulating policy recommendations.

Fourth, corruption should be analyzed at different levels: international, national and local. It should also be examined separately across various spheres of social life, since corruption risks differ depending on institutional, legal and administrative contexts.

Finally, the methodology for measuring corruption must be transparent, publicly accessible and compatible with general standards of state information management. This would increase public trust, strengthen cooperation between the state and civil society, and provide a reliable analytical basis for decision-making. Therefore, the development of a national corruption assessment system should be regarded as an important instrument of public administration and anti-corruption policy.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl>

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