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## openDemocracy's corruption revelations see UK plunge in global ranking

Government rule breaches are to blame for UK's corruption nadir, says Transparency International

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Boris Johnson presided over the biggest fall in the UK's CPI ranking. | Amanda Rose / Alamy Stock Photo

**O**penDemocracy's revelations of corruption in UK public life have been cited in a damning new index that ranks perceptions of Britain's transparency at an all-time low.

A 'poll of polls' by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) found industry experts think the UK is more corrupt than ever.

The UK's CPI score is based on data from eight independent sources including the Economist Intelligence Unit and the World Economic Forum, who surveyed experts and business executives for their views on abuses of public office for private gain and bribery in the UK.

Britain scored 73 this year, down from 78 in 2022, on a scale where zero means a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 100 means it is perceived as very clean. The NGO cited several pieces of journalism by openDemocracy as partial explanation for the slump, which saw the UK tumble in the global rankings from 11th to 18th.

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They include revelations in November 2021 that former Tory Party treasurers appeared to be guaranteed peerages so long as they donated more than £3m to the party.

The NGO also pointed to 40 potential breaches of the ministerial code in the last five years that were not investigated as another factor likely contributing to the UK's fall in the rankings.

openDemocracy was cited as revealing four of these breaches, one of which involved the government keeping large payments to the former prime minister Boris Johnson and other ministers secret for up to eight months.

Other potential breaches discovered by this website include an MP failing to disclose that he owns a private PR company, and the blocking of Freedom of Information requests by a department that was then under Michael Gove's watch.

Last year, the Cabinet Office insisted it would radically overhaul an 'Orwellian' government unit, almost two years after openDemocracy first revealed that it was vetting Freedom of Information requests.

Only five of the 180 countries assessed by Transparency for the 2022 Index saw their year-on-year scores drop by five or more points. The UK (-5) was joined by World Cup 2022 host Qatar (-5), Myanmar (-5), Azerbaijan (-7), and Oman (-8).

The countries perceived to be the least corrupt were Denmark, Finland and New Zealand, while those ranked most corrupt were South Sudan, Syria and Somalia.

Transparency International acknowledged that most countries at the bottom of its index were either currently experiencing conflict or had recently done so. It added that although most Western European countries had been ranked higher than African, Asian and Middle Eastern countries, they in fact played a central role in fostering global corruption.

“For decades, they have welcomed dirty money from abroad, allowing kleptocrats to increase their wealth, power and destructive geopolitical ambitions,” the report said.

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