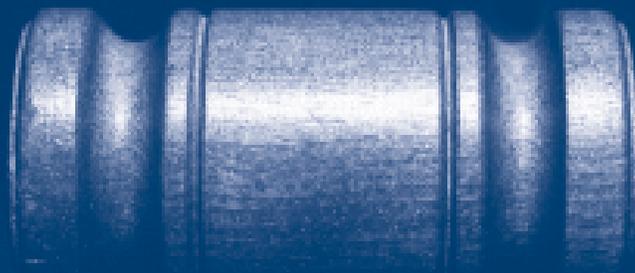


# The Capacity to Combat Corruption (CCC) Index

Assessing Latin America's ability to detect,  
punish and prevent corruption

# 2023



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## WHO WE ARE

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**Americas Society and the Council of the Americas** is the premier forum dedicated to education, debate, and dialogue in the Americas. Its mission is to foster an understanding of the contemporary political, social, and economic issues confronting Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. Views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of AS/COA or its members.

### Control Risks

**Control Risks** is a global specialist risk consulting firm that helps clients create organizations that are secure, compliant, and resilient in an age of ever-changing risk and connectivity. Our experts across 36 offices help clients investigate wrongdoing and resolve crises, and provide the insight and intelligence companies need to realize opportunities and grow.

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**June 2023**



# The 2023 Capacity to Combat Corruption (CCC) Index

Assessing Latin America’s ability to detect, punish and prevent corruption

**T**he 2023 CCC Index reflects an anti-corruption environment under continued strain across Latin America. With democracies and critical institutions under duress in many countries, the Index registered a decline in the regional average score for the first time since 2020. Scores fell, to varying degrees, in ten of the 15 countries studied.

Corruption remains a major challenge across Latin America, with nearly 70% of respondents in the Index’s survey of leading anti-corruption experts agreeing that it is a “top concern for most people in your country.” However, in many countries, other challenges such as violent crime, the slow post-pandemic economic recovery and concern over democratic backsliding have become higher priorities for governments, media and civil society. The net result is an anti-corruption environment that in many countries is less active and mobilized than in years past. Setbacks were generally not dramatic compared to 2022, instead reflecting a steady erosion that has been underway for years.

Declines occurred in countries at both the top and bottom of the Index; in Guatemala and Venezuela as well as Uruguay and Costa Rica, indicating that no country is immune from either stagnation or regression in the fight against corruption.

## **A DATA-DRIVEN TOOL**

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Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA) and Control Risks are publishing the fifth edition of the Capacity to Combat Corruption (CCC) Index. First launched in 2019, the Index assesses Latin American countries’ ability to detect, punish and prevent corruption.

Rather than measuring perceived levels of corruption, the CCC Index evaluates and ranks countries based on how effectively they can combat corruption. Countries with a higher score are deemed more likely to see corrupt actors prosecuted and punished. Continued impunity is more likely in countries at the lower end of the scale.

The CCC Index looks at 14 key variables, including the independence of judicial institutions, the strength of investigative journalism, and the level of resources available for combating white collar crime. The Index relies on extensive data and on a proprietary survey conducted among leading anti-corruption experts from Control Risks, academia, civil society, media and the private sector. For the fourth consecutive year, the Index covers 15 countries, which together represent 96% of Latin America's GDP.

The country with the highest score in the 2023 CCC Index is Uruguay (6.99 out of 10). Uruguay was followed by Costa Rica (6.76), Chile (6.67), Peru (5.53), the Dominican Republic (5.42), Panama (5.39), Argentina (5.07), Brazil (4.83), Colombia (4.78), Ecuador (4.68), Paraguay (4.61), Mexico (3.87), Guatemala (2.86), Bolivia (2.56) and Venezuela (1.46).

#### **AMONG KEY FINDINGS:**

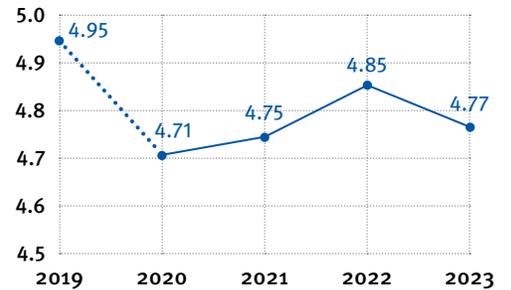
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- Two of the 15 countries saw significant declines in their scores in 2023, and one country saw a material improvement. The remaining countries saw relatively small changes in the scores (up to 6%), although with few exceptions, these variations were all negative.
- Uruguay again ranked at the top of the Index, though it registered a consecutive year of decline. Despite moderate setbacks, Costa Rica and Chile also retained their second and third positions.
- Panama saw the greatest proportional gain in its overall score, driven primarily by improvements in legal capacity. Panama, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay improved their overall scores for the third year in a row.
- Guatemala and Venezuela each had substantial declines in their overall scores. Guatemala and Mexico are the only two countries whose overall scores have decreased every year since the Index was released in 2019.

The CCC Index's goal is not to shame or single out countries, but to foster a policy-driven discussion, helping governments, civil society and the private sector identify—through data and a robust methodology—areas of success and deficiencies to be addressed.

# Overall Score

**Overall Regional Score**



Note: 2019 overall score did not include Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay.

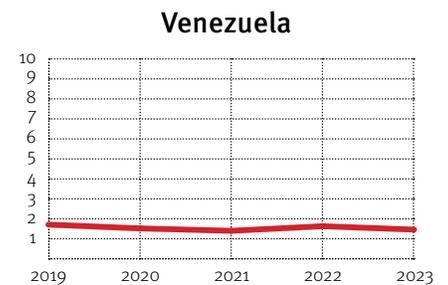
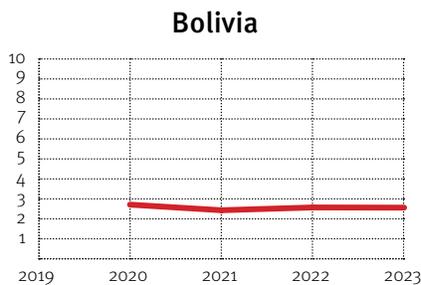
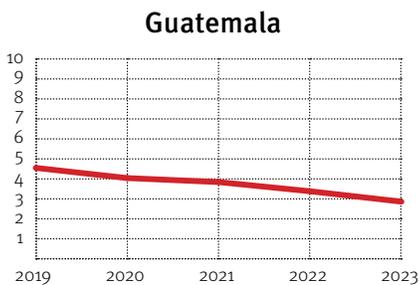
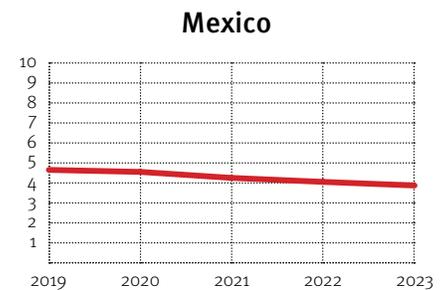
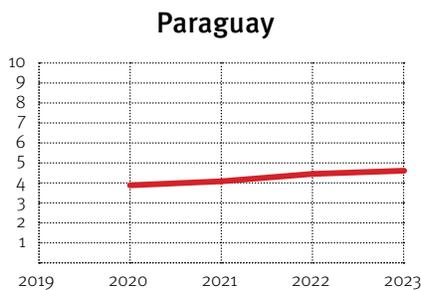
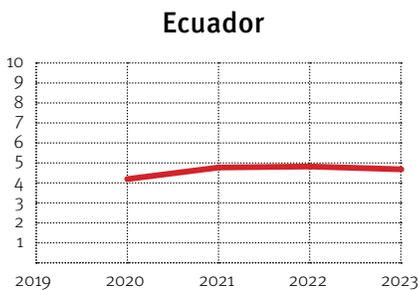
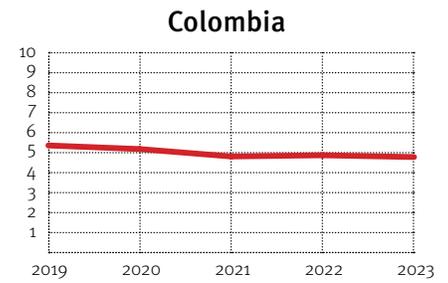
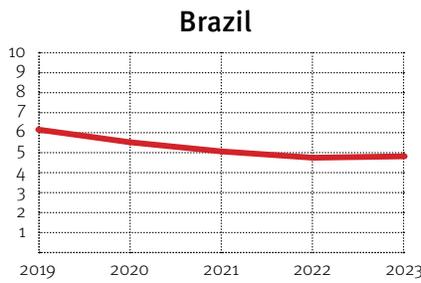
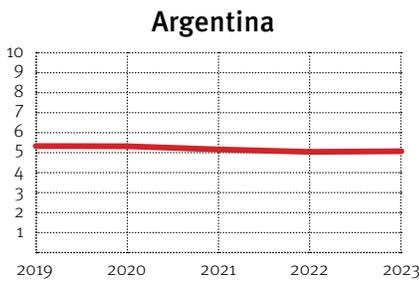
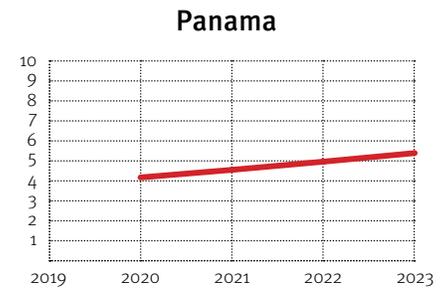
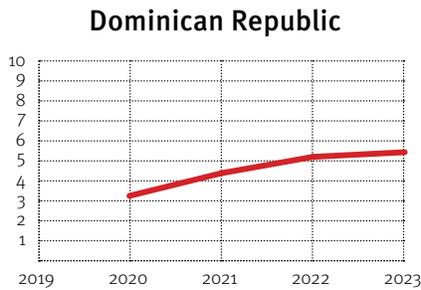
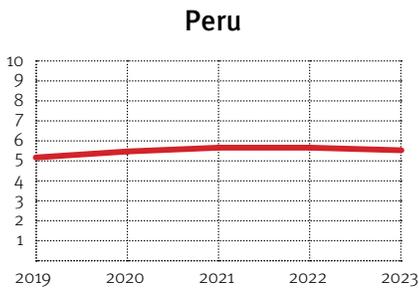
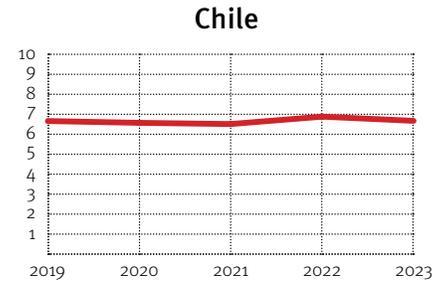
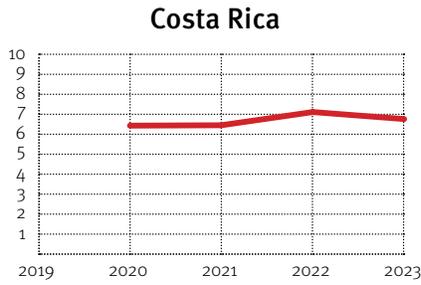


## Overall Ranking

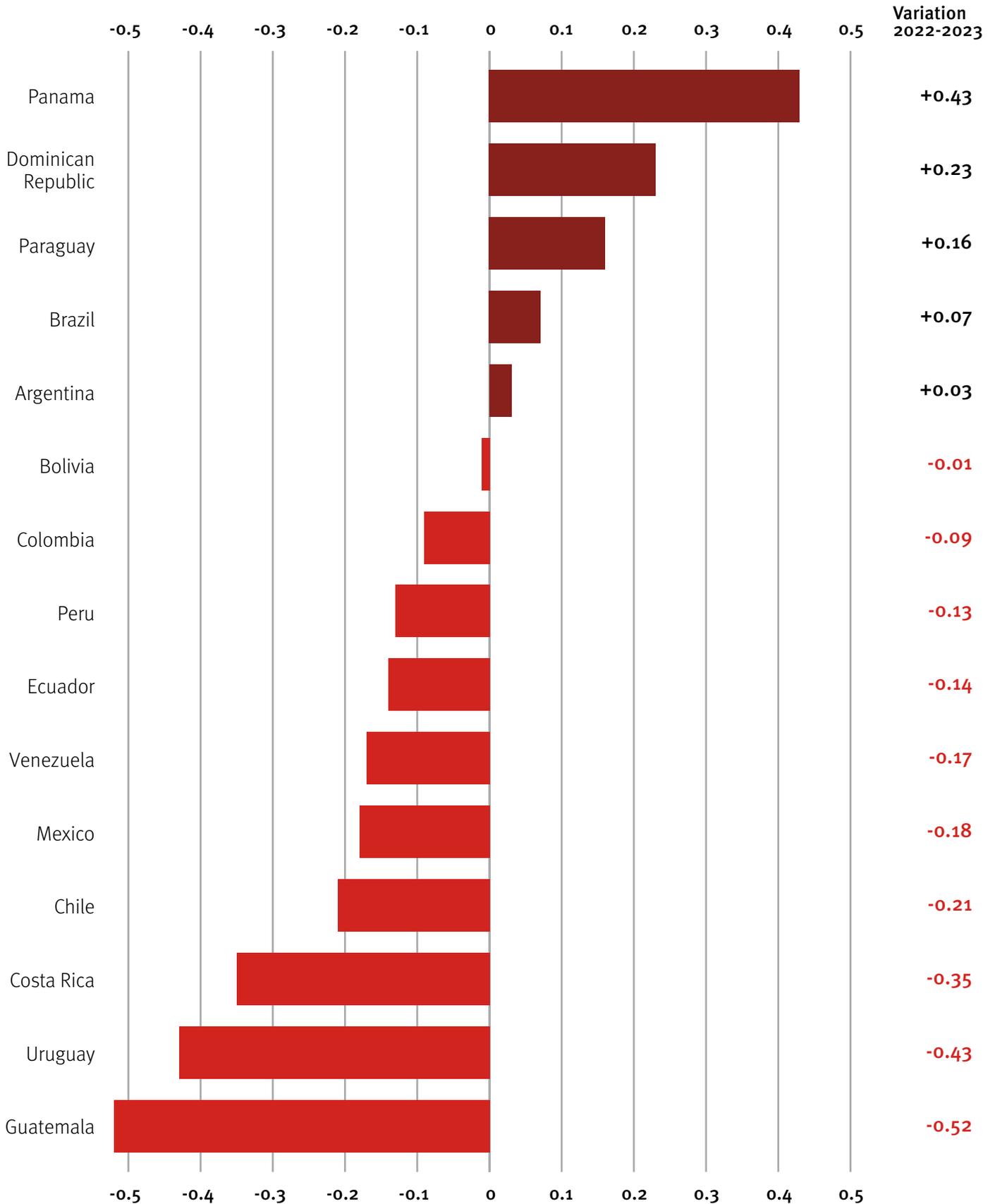
1	Uruguay	6.99
2	Costa Rica	6.76
3	Chile	6.67
4	Peru	5.53
5	Dominican Republic	5.42
6	Panama	5.39
7	Argentina	5.07
8	Brazil	4.83
9	Colombia	4.78
10	Ecuador	4.68
11	Paraguay	4.61
12	Mexico	3.87
13	Guatemala	2.86
14	Bolivia	2.56
15	Venezuela	1.46



# Overall Scores (2019–2023)

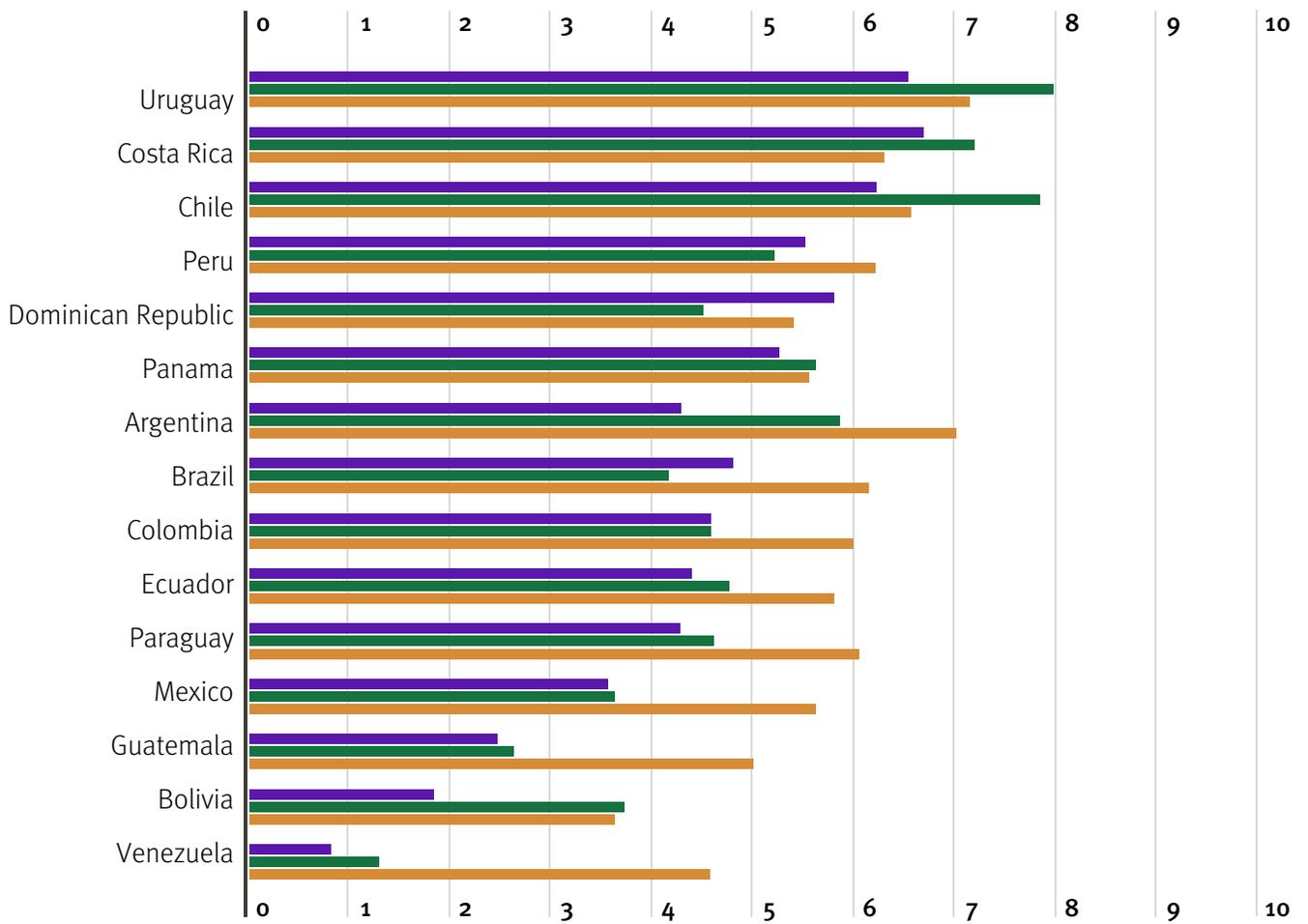


## Overall Score Variation 2022-2023



# Results by Category

■ Legal Capacity    
 ■ Democracy and Political Institutions    
 ■ Civil Society and Media



**Legal Capacity**

**Democracy and Political Institutions**

**Civil Society and Media**





# URUGUAY

**1**  
RANKING

**6.99**

2023 Overall Score

**7.42**

2022 Overall Score

**7.80**

2021 Overall Score

**7.78**

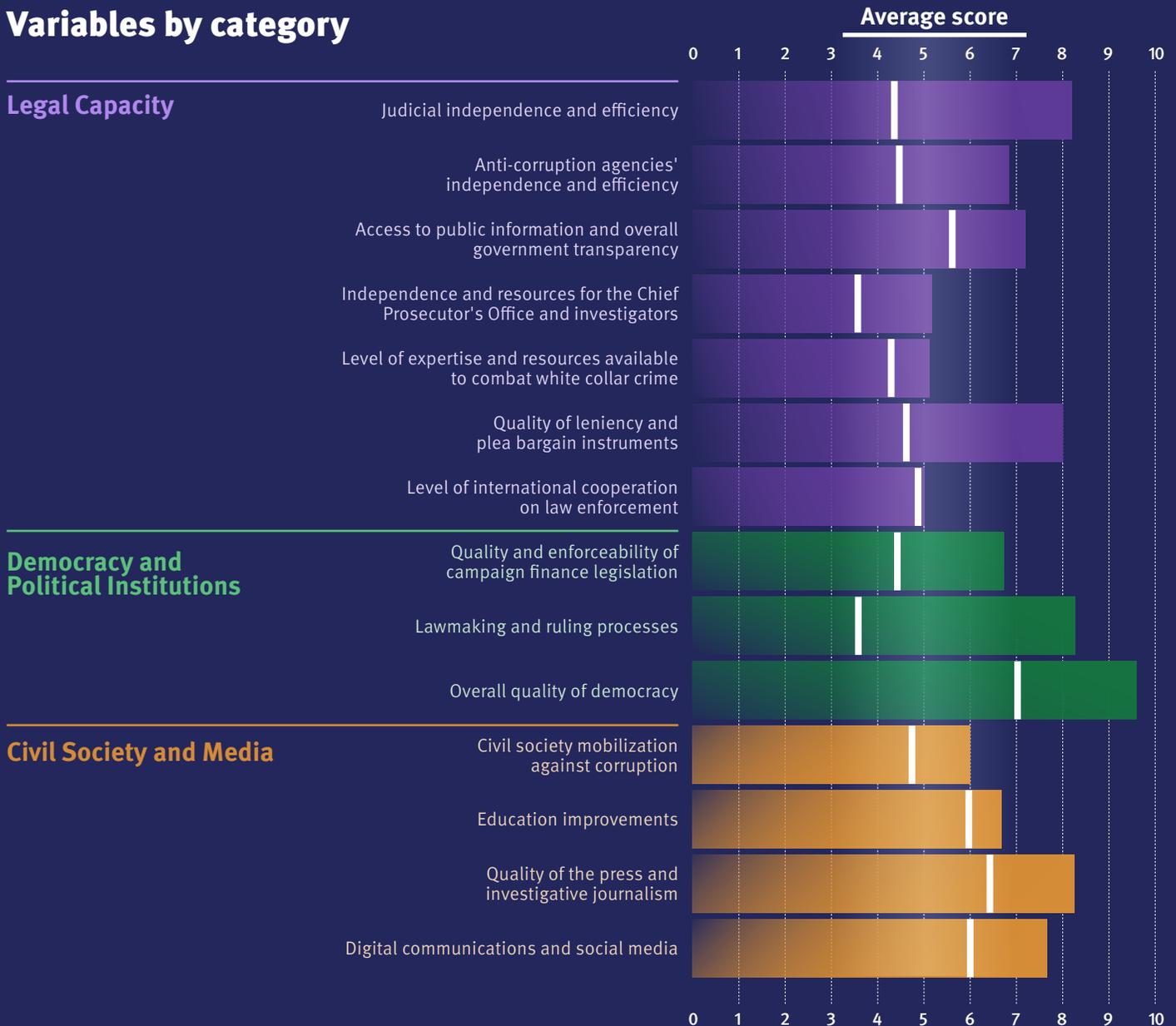
2020 Overall Score

**6.54** Legal Capacity

**7.98** Democracy and Political Institutions

**7.15** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





1

RANKING

# URUGUAY

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Uruguay continues to rank at the top of the Index, despite a 6% drop in its overall score and declining scores in all three categories. Even though the country has seen a slight downward trend since 2021, it still outperforms the regional average in all variables.

Uruguay registered setbacks in key legal capacity variables such as judicial independence and efficiency, the capacity to combat white collar crime and international cooperation on law enforcement. Some observers find that the country’s main anti-corruption agency, the Transparency and Public Ethics Board (JUTEP), remains underfunded, which may undermine future anti-corruption efforts. A former JUTEP president who resigned in November 2022 previously stated that the organization lacked resources and had become politicized.

A corruption scandal involving Alejandro Astesiano, a former chief of security for President Luis Lacalle Pou, led some observers to question Uruguay’s reputation for good governance. Astesiano was accused of falsifying birth certificates to issue counterfeit Uruguayan passports for Russian citizens, and was sentenced in February to four and a half years in prison for influence peddling and criminal association, among other crimes. Lacalle Pou denied any knowledge of Astesiano’s crimes. The Uruguayan press played a key role in bringing the case to light, indicating the power of the country’s journalists to uncover corruption.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR**

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If approved, a bill under discussion in Congress could assign a three-member board of directors to head the Attorney General’s Office. This board would include the current attorney general and two prosecutors appointed by the executive branch, with approval from three-fifths of the Senate. The debate over the bill will remain contentious — the ruling coalition backed the proposal and the opposition is against it due to the perceived risk of political interference.

Uruguay will hold general elections in October 2024, and due to the increased media attention resulting from the Astesiano case, corruption may be an issue in the campaign.



# COSTA RICA

**2**  
RANKING

**6.76**

2023 Overall Score

**7.11**

2022 Overall Score

**6.45**

2021 Overall Score

**6.43**

2020 Overall Score

**6.69** Legal Capacity

**7.19** Democracy and Political Institutions

**6.30** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category

### Legal Capacity

- Judicial independence and efficiency
- Anti-corruption agencies' independence and efficiency
- Access to public information and overall government transparency
- Independence and resources for the Chief Prosecutor's Office and investigators
- Level of expertise and resources available to combat white collar crime
- Quality of leniency and plea bargain instruments
- Level of international cooperation on law enforcement

### Democracy and Political Institutions

- Quality and enforceability of campaign finance legislation
- Lawmaking and ruling processes
- Overall quality of democracy

### Civil Society and Media

- Civil society mobilization against corruption
- Education improvements
- Quality of the press and investigative journalism
- Digital communications and social media





# COSTA RICA

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**D**espite a 5% setback in its overall score, Costa Rica maintained its second-place ranking, and its 2023 score remained above levels from 2021 and 2020. Costa Rica had moderate declines in the democracy and political institutions and legal capacity categories, and it had a slight uptick in the civil society and media category.

Costa Rica experienced setbacks in key indicators related to the chief public prosecutor’s office, campaign finance and the quality of the press, but it retained its top three ranking in those variables. President Rodrigo Chaves, in office since May 2022, ran on an anti-establishment and anti-corruption platform. His administration has proposed legislation to provide protection and, in some cases, financial compensation to those who denounce and serve as witnesses in criminal proceedings related to acts of corruption.

Following the 2022 election cycle, the country had a 9% setback in the variable evaluating the quality of campaign finance legislation. In June 2022, the electoral court announced that a probe into the financing of Chaves’ presidential campaign revealed “a dark financing scheme”, and investigations into several political parties’ financing during the 2022 campaign are ongoing. In September, a special congressional commission began investigating the allegedly irregular financing. Chaves has denied wrongdoing. Costa Rica had a 12% setback in the variable evaluating the quality of the press and investigative journalism, and observers have raised concerns about Chaves’ criticism of independent news outlets.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR**

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Investigations in the *Cochinilla* case (one of the most significant examples of construction-sector graft Costa Rica has seen) will continue. Progress may be slow due to inefficiencies in the judicial system.

In February 2023, Costa Rica was for the first time added to a list of 16 jurisdictions that the European Union designated as non-cooperative for tax purposes. The government has committed to adapting legislation and minimizing the decision’s investment impact. The EU is expected to update this list in October 2023.



# CHILE

**3**  
RANKING

**6.67**

2023 Overall Score

**6.88**

2022 Overall Score

**6.51**

2021 Overall Score

**6.57**

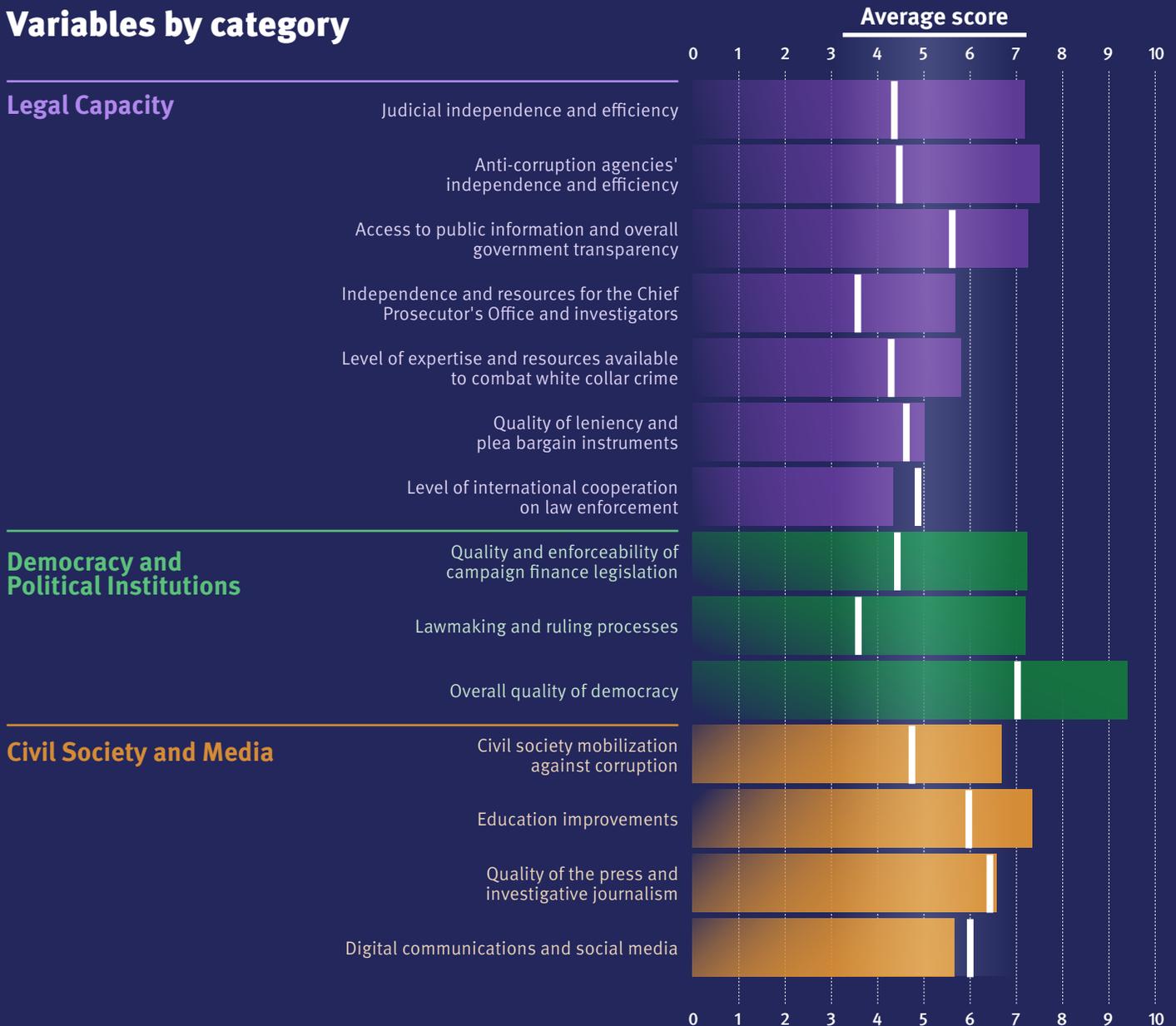
2020 Overall Score

**6.22** Legal Capacity

**7.84** Democracy and Political Institutions

**6.56** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





# CHILE

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Chile's overall score dropped by 3%, indicating a degree of stagnation in its fight against corruption. The country retained its third-place ranking and remains well above the regional average across all three categories. Major corruption investigations continue to advance in Chile, such as those targeting senior military officials. The sustained pace of investigations and indictments indicates that the country's capacity to detect and punish corruption remains robust.

Heightened levels of politicization have affected some institutions over the past year. Following the end of the previous attorney general's term in September 2022, the Gabriel Boric administration unsuccessfully nominated two candidates to replace him. The Senate approved Boric's third nominee in January 2023. Critics described the process to appoint a new attorney general as politicized and lacking in transparency.

Chile's largest category-level setback in 2023 was in civil society and media, down 8%. Chile's media and civil society remain independent and robust, but public interest in corruption is perceived as having diminished in recent years, as issues like organized crime and the economy took higher priority.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR**

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The Boric administration's moves to advance a National Strategy for Public Integrity, including plans to introduce laws addressing conflicts of interest in public office, create a new whistleblower channel, strengthen transparency at the municipal level and improve Chile's lobbying legislation.

Voters rejected a proposed new constitution in the September 2022 referendum, and the Constitutional Council is drafting another document. Probity, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption principles are likely to be part of the new proposed constitution, which will be put to a referendum on December 17.



# PERU

**4**  
RANKING

**5.53**

2023 Overall Score

**5.66**

2022 Overall Score

**5.66**

2021 Overall Score

**5.47**

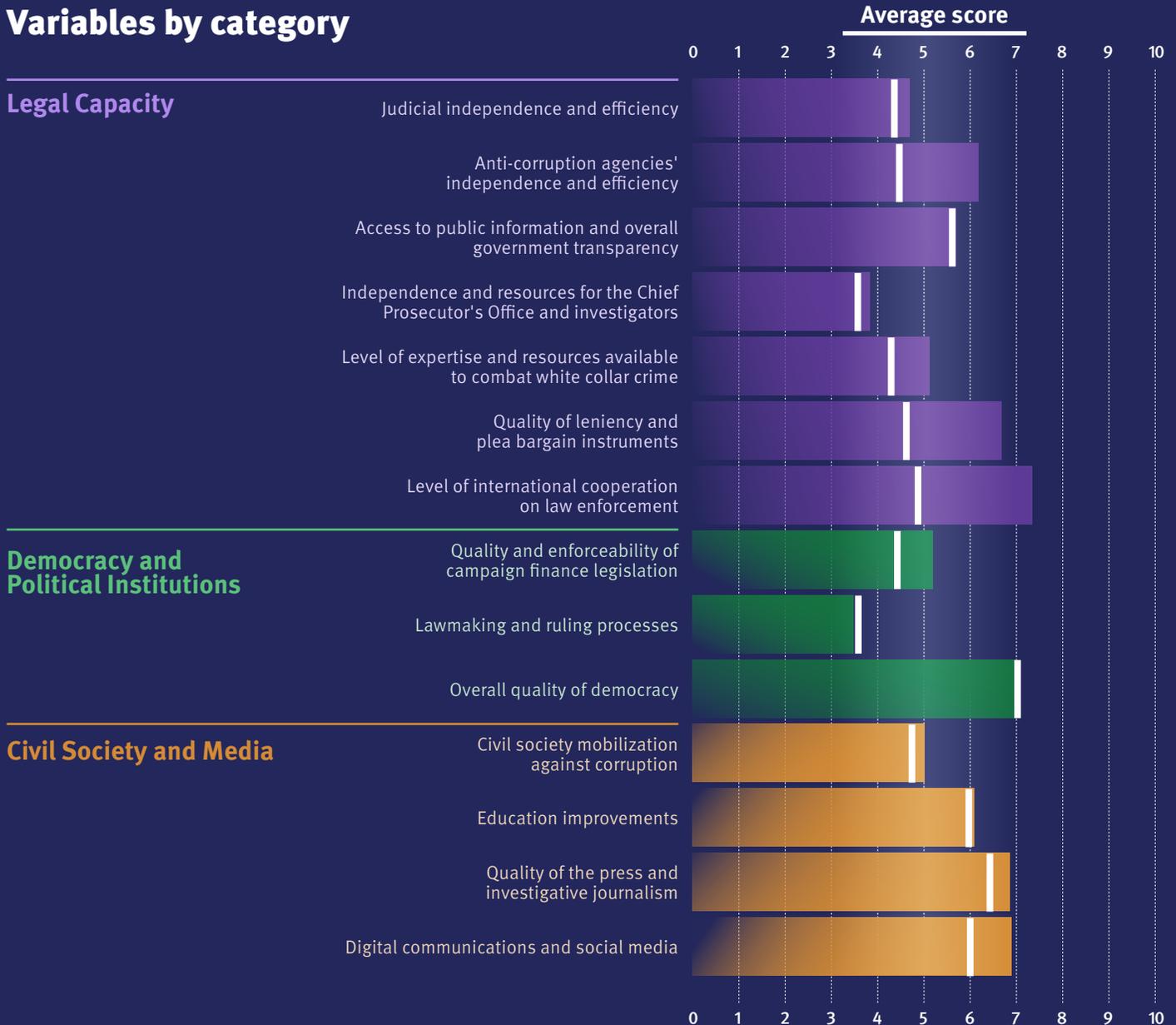
2020 Overall Score

**5.51** Legal Capacity

**5.21** Democracy and Political Institutions

**6.21** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





4

RANKING

# PERU

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Despite slight setbacks across all categories, Peru remained in 4th place in the CCC Index, a position it has held since 2021. Peru's minor year-on-year decline in its overall score (down 2%) indicates that the country has still been able to address corruption amid severe political instability.

The removal of former President Pedro Castillo, who was impeached in December 2022 after attempting to dissolve Congress in a self-coup, has exacerbated existing political tensions. Castillo's impeachment, as well as corruption and inequality, motivated large-scale anti-government protests in late 2022 and early 2023. Castillo is in pre-trial detention on charges of conspiracy and rebellion, and he has denied wrongdoing.

Despite the political uncertainty, Peruvian authorities are still undertaking significant corruption investigations. Prosecutors are investigating Castillo and President Dina Boluarte for allegedly laundering money (Boluarte has denied wrongdoing). Peru ranks third in the region in the variable evaluating international cooperation in anti-corruption efforts, which increased by 10% since 2022. Former President Alejandro Toledo was extradited from the U.S. to Peru in April. Toledo, who is alleged to have received \$20 million in bribes from Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht in exchange for public works contracts during his presidency, has denied the accusation.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

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Boluarte has promised to fight corruption, but limited governability will likely hinder any attempt at passing significant anti-corruption legislation. Security concerns and reports of military and police forces' excessive use of force during anti-government protests will take precedence over corruption issues.

Appointments of key judicial positions in the near future may be marked by polarization. The selection of new members on Peru's National Justice Board (JNJ) is scheduled for 2024. The JNJ regulates the selection of judges, prosecutors and other public officials, among other duties.



# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

**5**  
RANKING

**5.42**

2023 Overall Score

**5.19**

2022 Overall Score

**4.38**

2021 Overall Score

**3.26**

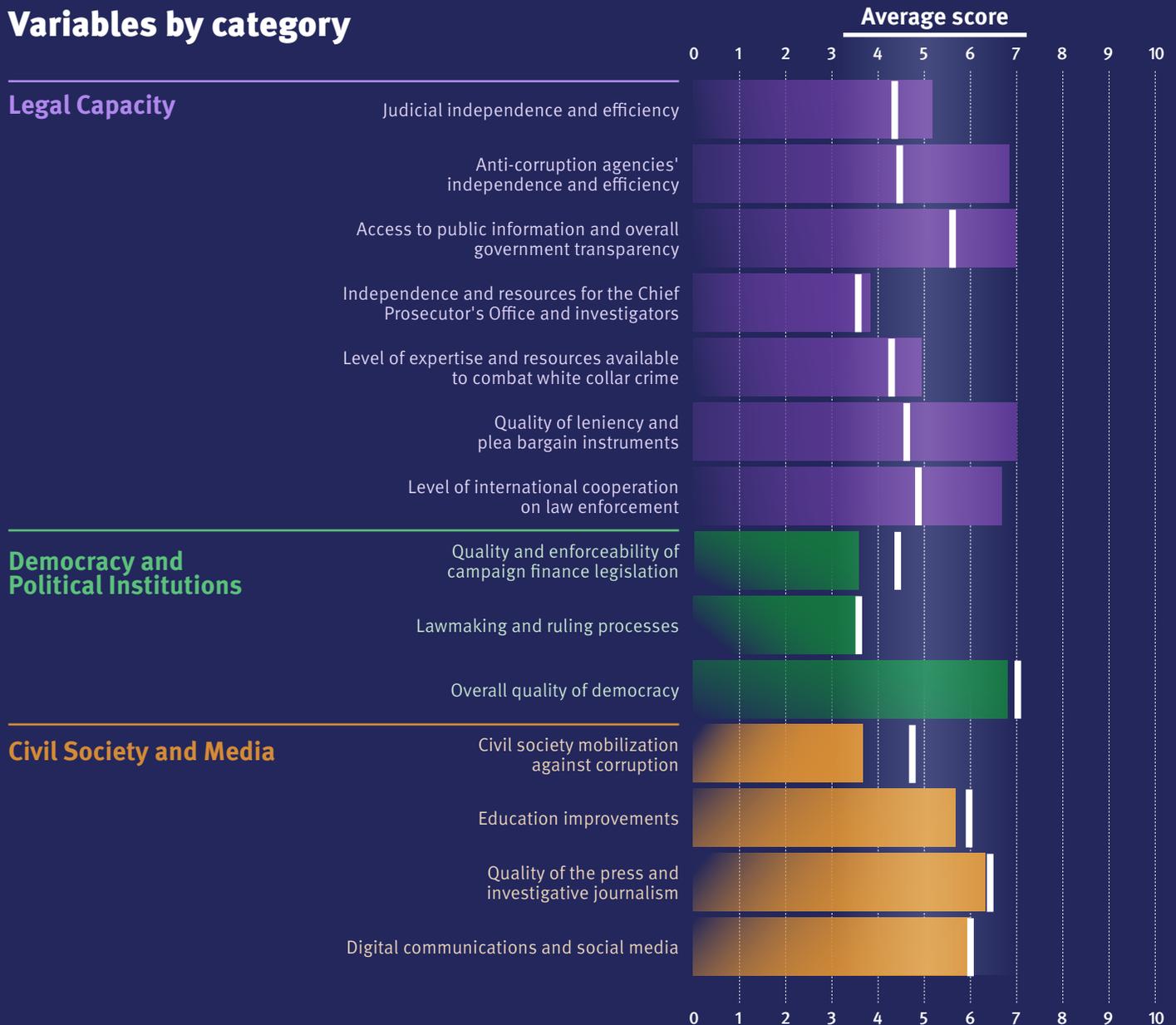
2020 Overall Score

**5.80** Legal Capacity

**4.50** Democracy and Political Institutions

**5.41** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





5  
RANKING

# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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The Dominican Republic has maintained its progress in tackling corruption, reflected in a 4% improvement that allowed the country to retain the 5th place in the Index. Most gains were registered within the legal capacity category, which improved by 11% since 2022, boosted by significant advancement in the variables assessing leniency and plea bargain instruments and anti-corruption agencies. Variables measuring judicial independence and the independence of the chief public prosecutor's office also saw moderate gains.

However, the country had setbacks within the civil society and media category. The Dominican Republic has few NGOs dedicated to transparency and anti-corruption, and lags behind the regional average in the variable assessing civil society mobilization against corruption. Since he entered office in 2020, President Luis Abinader has emphasized tackling corruption, which has contributed to steady progress overall. In July 2022, Abinader signed an asset forfeiture bill into law. However, more resources may be needed for anti-corruption agencies, and resources for actively enforcing anti-corruption legislation across the board remain limited, analysts say.

The Office of the Specialized Prosecutor on Administrative Corruption (PEPCA) has continued several high-profile corruption investigations over the past year, such as *Operación Coral*, *Operación Coral 5G*, *Operación Antipulpo*, *Operación Medusa* and *Operación Calamar*. These investigations have primarily focused on officials from the former Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) administration. Officials from the current government that have been associated with alleged corruption have been fired or resigned.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

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A general election will be held in May 2024, which will increase scrutiny over campaign financing. Although Abinader has not yet announced his candidacy, he is perceived as likely to seek re-election.

PEPCA's corruption investigations will continue but are likely to remain focused on the PLD. This may prompt sporadic demonstrations from the opposition, such as the isolated protests seen in March 2023.



# PANAMA

**6**  
RANKING

**5.39**

2023 Overall Score

**4.96**

2022 Overall Score

**4.55**

2021 Overall Score

**4.17**

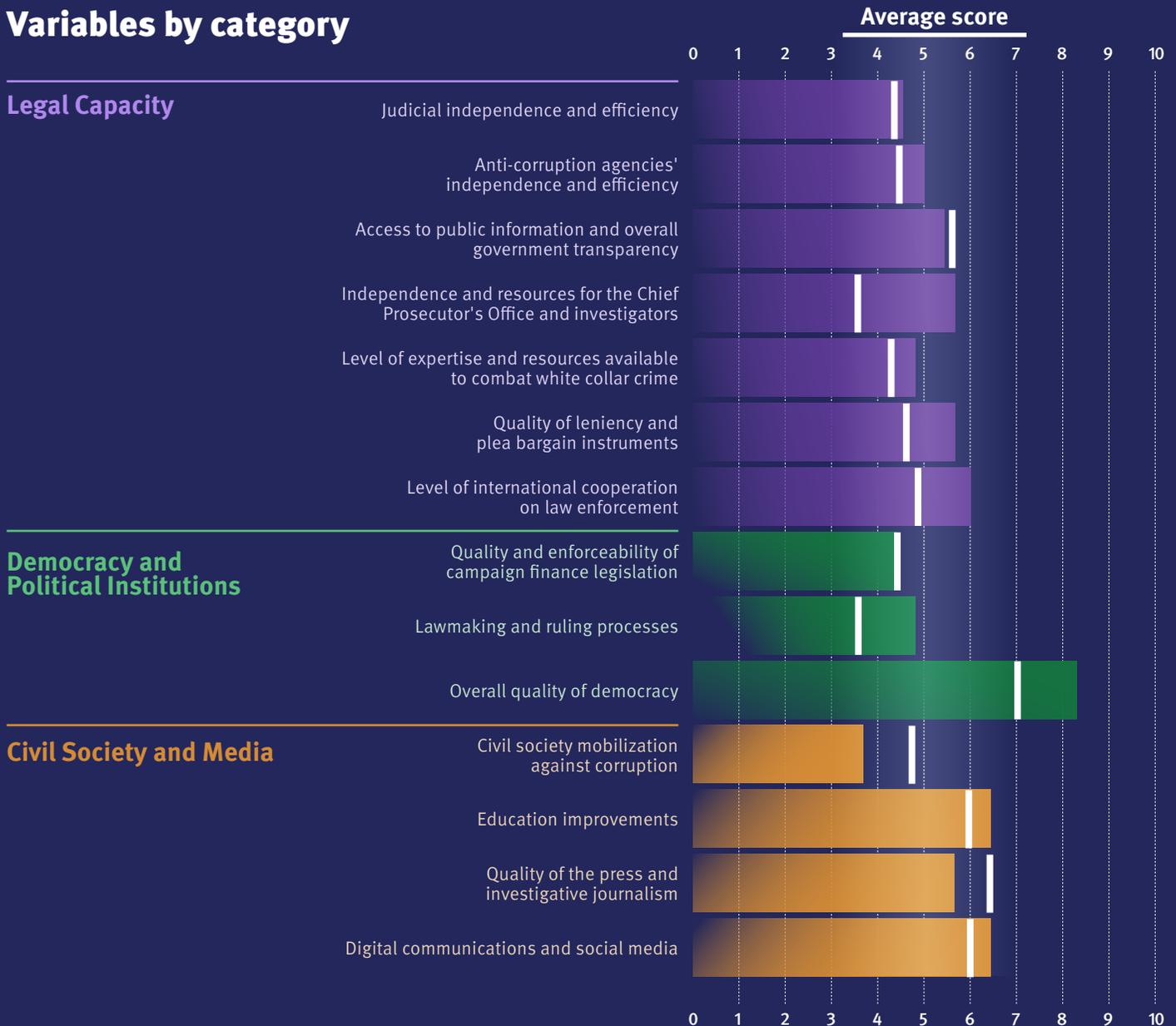
2020 Overall Score

**5.26** Legal Capacity

**5.62** Democracy and Political Institutions

**5.55** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





# PANAMA

Panama's overall score increased by 9% year-on-year, continuing its three-year upward trajectory in the Index. Most gains were registered in the legal capacity category (up by 14% since 2022) — Panama's performance in the other two categories had minor variations.

Over the past year, Panama saw improvements in key variables that evaluate anti-corruption agencies and the chief public prosecutor's office. Investigations into former presidents for alleged corruption have gone forward — Ricardo Martinelli and Juan Carlos Varela have been called to trial over alleged money laundering related to bribes from the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht (Varela and Martinelli have denied wrongdoing). In January, the U.S. designated Martinelli for "involvement in significant corruption" for accepting bribes in exchange for government contracts as president, and a trial against Martinelli and 14 others for alleged money laundering in the "New Business" case concluded in June 2023 (Martinelli has denied wrongdoing).

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global inter-governmental money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog, has maintained its scrutiny over Panama's AML capabilities. Although Panama remains on the FATF's "grey list" of jurisdictions under increased monitoring, the organization noted in June 2023 that Panama had substantially completed its action plan and made key reforms. The FATF will hold an on-site assessment in Panama and an announcement regarding Panama's grey list status may come later in 2023. The country remains part of the European Union's list of non-cooperative countries for tax purposes.

In July and August 2022, teachers' union protests expanded as thousands took part in demonstrations to protest against corruption and the rising cost of living. The administration of President Laurentino Cortizo passed some reforms to address corruption, including a law requiring senior government officials to declare conflicts of interest in affidavits and a decree creating a Citizen Commission Against Corruption.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

A trial for 36 people accused of money laundering in the Odebrecht case, including former Presidents Varela and Martinelli, is scheduled to begin in August 2023.

Panama will hold general elections in May 2024, with primaries scheduled between June and July 2023. Martinelli, who won his party's primary, has been leading early polls.



# ARGENTINA

**7**  
RANKING

**5.07**

2023 Overall Score

**5.04**

2022 Overall Score

**5.16**

2021 Overall Score

**5.32**

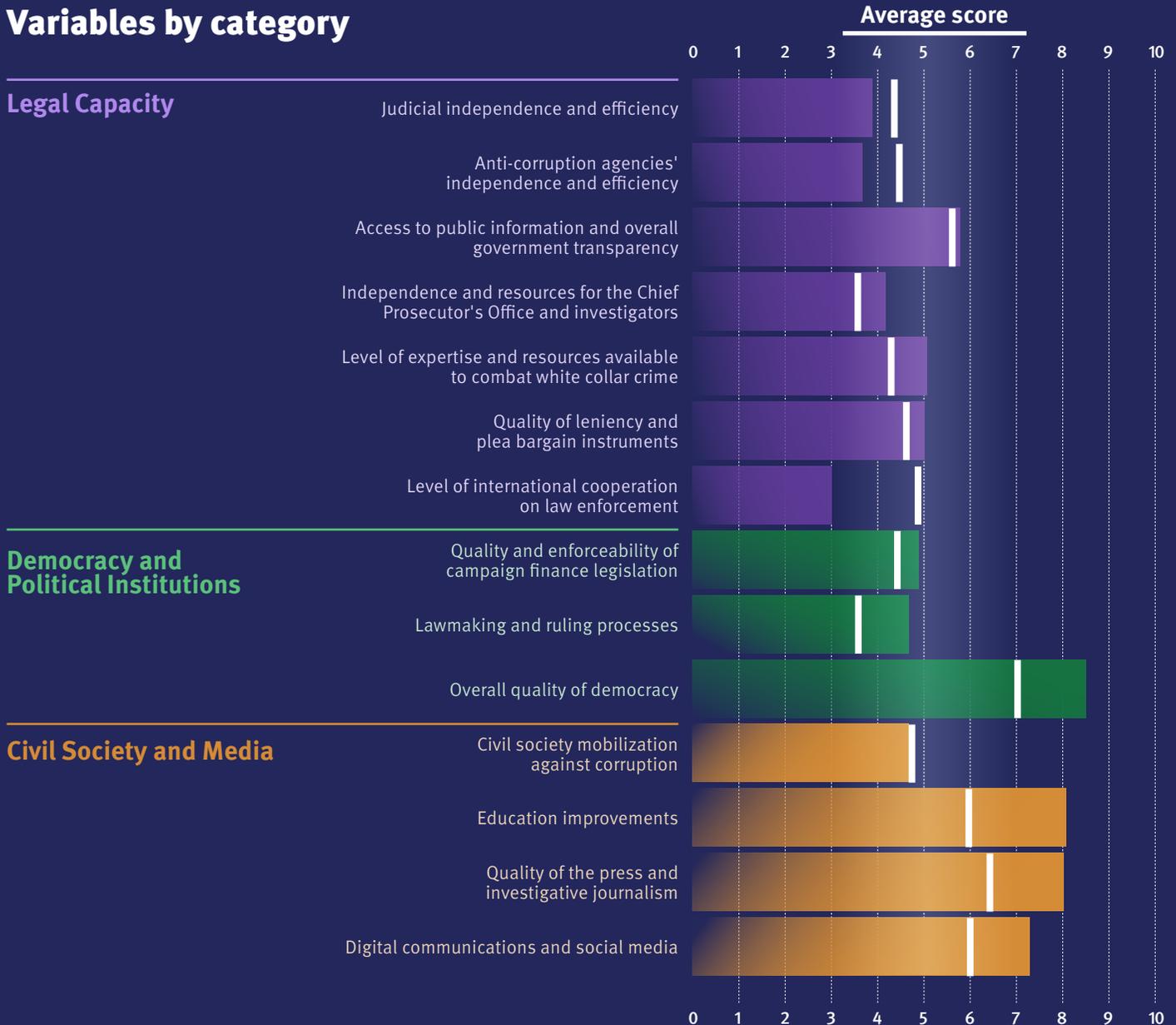
2020 Overall Score

**4.28** Legal Capacity

**5.86** Democracy and Political Institutions

**7.01** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





7

RANKING

# ARGENTINA

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Argentina's score was almost unchanged from 2022, stabilizing after a three-year negative trajectory, although it fell from 6th to 7th place in the overall ranking. Argentina saw minor setbacks in two categories: civil society and media, and democracy and political institutions. There was a 4% year-on-year improvement in the legal capacity category, boosted by an increase in the variable evaluating anti-corruption agencies (although Argentina ranks only 10th regionwide in this variable). Still, Argentina remains behind the regional average in terms of legal capacity.

In December 2022, current Vice President and former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was sentenced to six years in prison and received a lifetime ban from holding public office for alleged fraudulent administration. Kirchner appealed the decision, and the case may be adjudicated for years. Kirchner has denied wrongdoing and has claimed a judicial and political persecution against her.

Executive-judicial branch tensions came to the fore again in January 2023, when President Alberto Fernández announced his intention to impeach the president of the Supreme Court, following a dispute over the allocation of public funds that favored the opposition-controlled city of Buenos Aires. Impeachment would require a two-thirds majority in Congress and is unlikely.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

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Ahead of the presidential election in October, polls indicate that inflation outweighs corruption concerns for most voters. Progress on anti-corruption reforms is unlikely until this election cycle concludes.

The government has announced measures to address violence, organized crime and money laundering in Santa Fe province. In March, the lower house of Congress approved a bill aimed at strengthening Santa Fe's judicial system by creating new positions for prosecutors, public defenders and judges. Local organized crime groups are using increasingly sophisticated money laundering techniques, and Argentina's federal anti-money laundering agency plans to open an office in the province.



# BRAZIL

**8**  
RANKING

**4.83**

2023 Overall Score

**4.76**

2022 Overall Score

**5.07**

2021 Overall Score

**5.52**

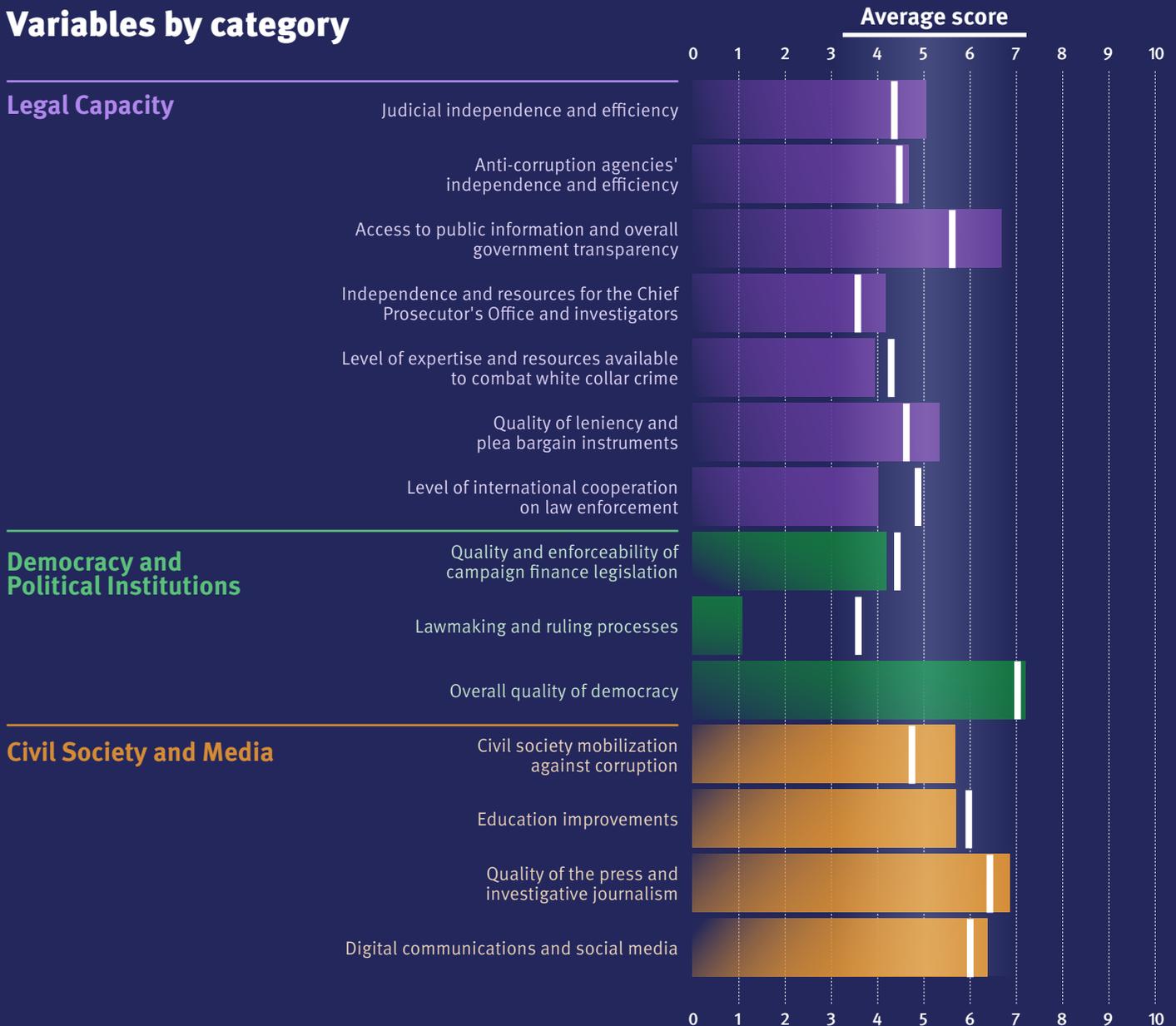
2020 Overall Score

**4.80** Legal Capacity

**4.16** Democracy and Political Institutions

**6.15** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





8

RANKING

# BRAZIL

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Following a three-year decline in the Index, Brazil’s overall score was relatively stable with a 1.5% year-on-year increase. Brazil’s score in the democracy and political institutions category increased, reflecting their endurance after several years of strain. Within the legal capacity category, the country registered improvement in the variables assessing the independence and efficiency of anti-corruption agencies and the judiciary.

Former President Jair Bolsonaro’s attempts while in office to politically influence investigations affected anti-corruption efforts in recent years. It is possible these oversight bodies will regain some autonomy under the current administration. However, potential developments may offset anti-corruption improvements. These include possible changes to the law regulating political appointments at state-owned companies and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s stated intention not to pick the next attorney general from a shortlist to be presented by the National Association of Public Prosecutors, a tradition Bolsonaro also did not follow.

Brazil’s largest variable-level setback was in the quality of lawmaking and ruling processes. While the Supreme Court declared the opaque practice of the “*orçamento secreto*” (secret budget) unconstitutional, negotiations between the executive and legislative branches remain conditioned to pork-barrel practices. Brazil recorded a 4% decline in the category of civil society and media as these actors focused less on corruption and more on concerns about democratic institutions and the legitimacy of the electoral process following the 2022 election and the January 8 riots.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

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Lula has the prerogative to appoint two justices to the Supreme Court in 2023, and these nominations require Senate approval. Current Attorney General Augusto Aras’ term expires in September, and Lula will decide whether to maintain Aras or appoint a new attorney general.

Observers will monitor how the government manages its relationship with federal deputies and senators, and to what extent this relationship develops transparently or if new, opaque mechanisms emerge to replace the secret budget.

Investigations will continue into alleged corruption during the Bolsonaro administration, potentially rendering Bolsonaro ineligible as a candidate for elections in 2026.



# COLOMBIA

**9**  
RANKING

**4.78**

2023 Overall Score

**4.87**

2022 Overall Score

**4.81**

2021 Overall Score

**5.18**

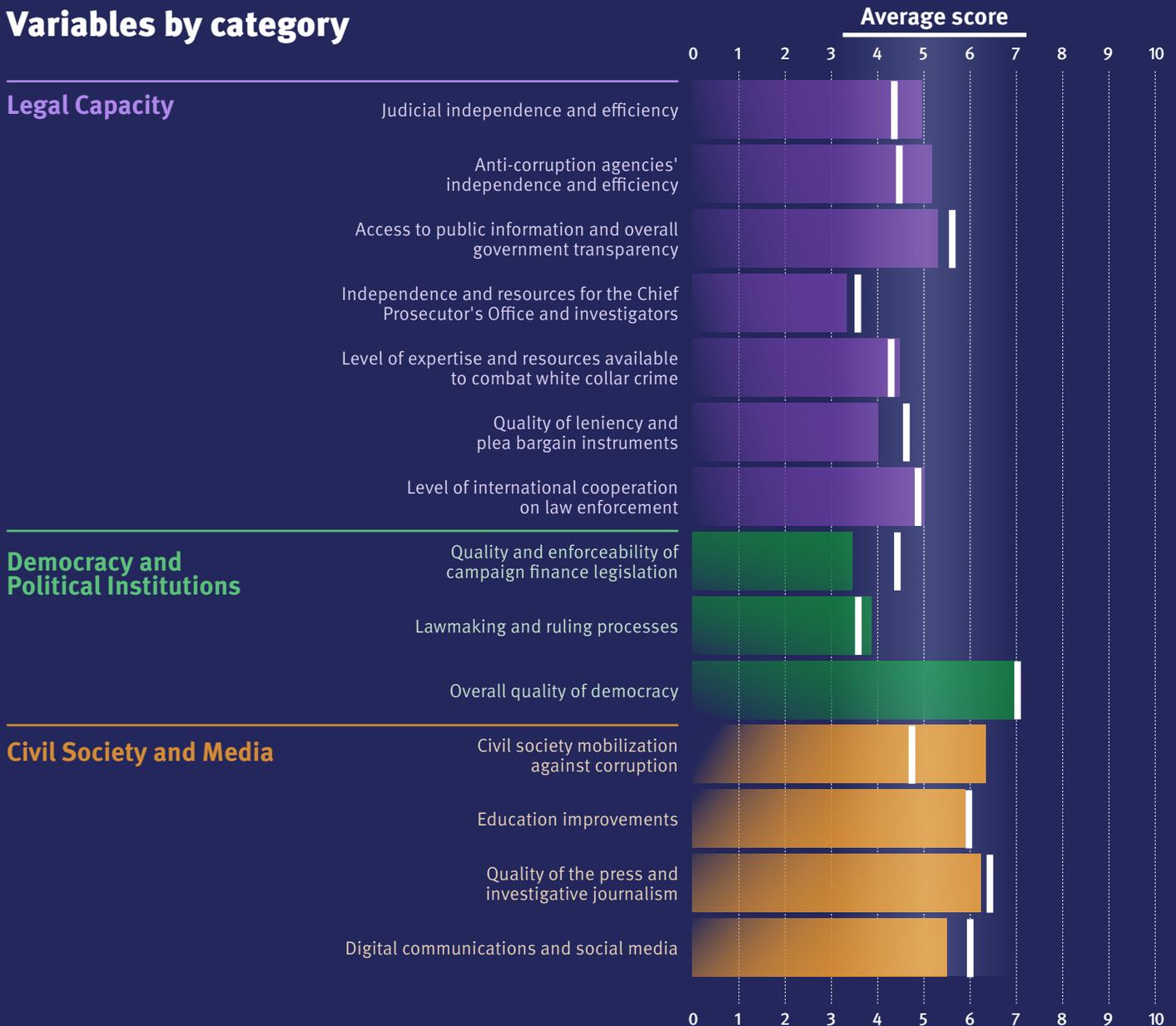
2020 Overall Score

**4.58** Legal Capacity

**4.58** Democracy and Political Institutions

**5.99** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





9

RANKING

# COLOMBIA

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Colombia's score was relatively stable, dropping by 2%, resulting in it falling from eighth to ninth in the overall ranking. Colombia's score declined mainly in the category of civil society and media (down 7%), followed by legal capacity (down 2%). There was moderate improvement in the democracy and political institutions category, reversing a previous downward trend, but Colombia remains behind the regional average in that category.

President Gustavo Petro, in office since August 2022, made combating corruption a key feature of his presidential campaign but so far has not translated these statements into a clear anti-corruption strategy. The government has invested its political leverage to promote other policy priorities, including its “total peace” initiative and major regulatory reforms in key sectors such as health, labor and pensions. Tensions have escalated between Petro and Attorney General Francisco Barbosa. The president said that as head of state, he was Barbosa's boss. In response, Barbosa said the statement infringed upon judicial independence. Corruption allegations have reached the president and his inner circle. The Attorney General's Office opened investigations into Petro's son and brother for allegedly accepting irregular payments. Both have denied wrongdoing. In June, the Attorney General's Office began an investigation into the financing of Petro's 2022 campaign—Petro denied any wrongdoing.

In October 2022, Congress ratified the Escazú Agreement, which strengthens access to information and transparency regarding the management of funds that are allocated for environmental protection, as well as whistleblower protections. Global Witness recorded 65 killings of environmental defenders in Colombia in 2020.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

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The Petro administration's National Development Plan, which Congress approved in May, will guide the national government's public policies, including those related to fighting corruption.

Investigations into bribery in exchange for public works contracts from the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht are ongoing. In February 2023, the attorney general announced that 16 additional people were connected to the case.



# ECUADOR

**10**  
RANKING

**4.68**  
2023 Overall Score

**4.82**  
2022 Overall Score

**4.77**  
2021 Overall Score

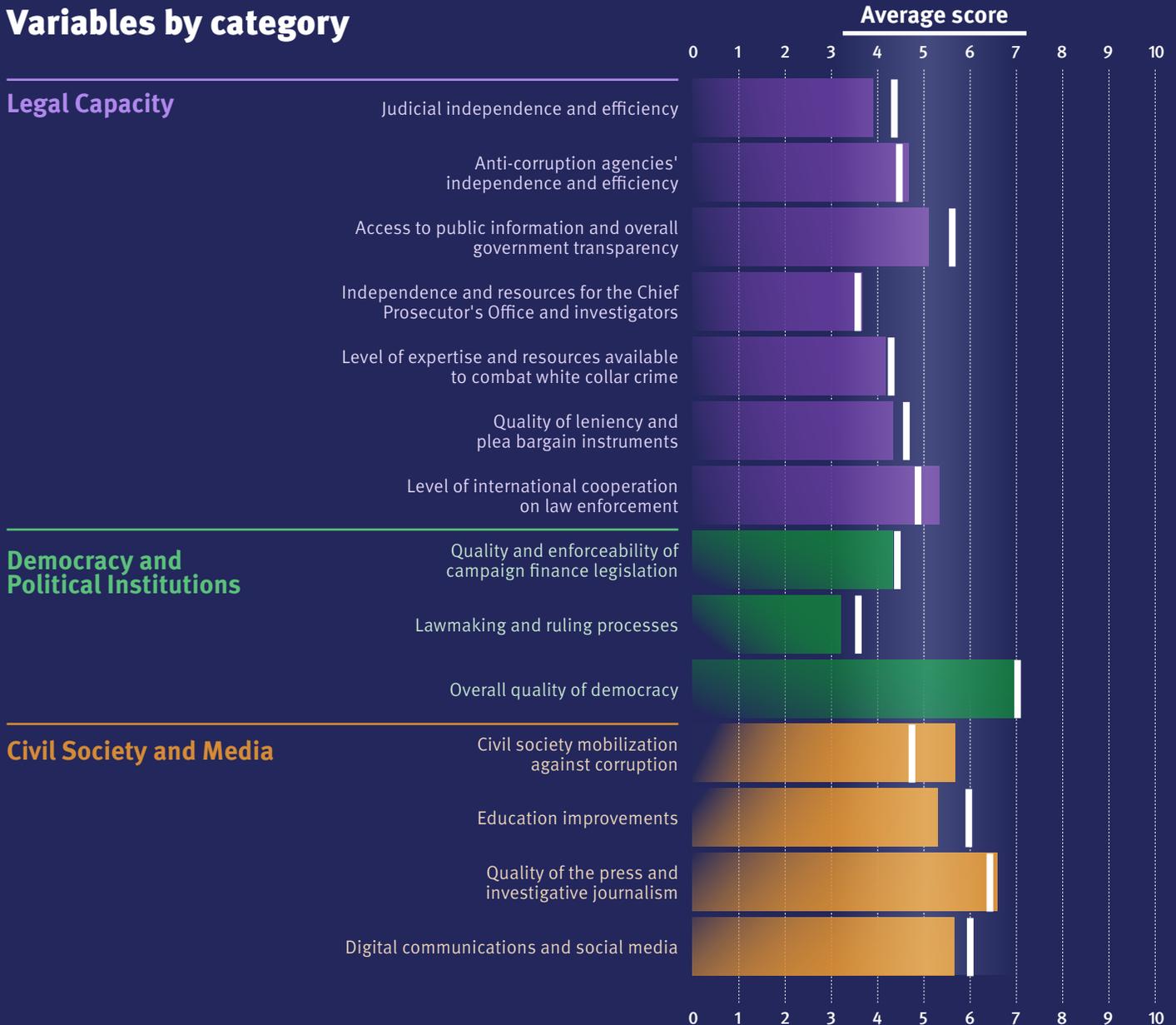
**4.19**  
2020 Overall Score

**4.39** Legal Capacity

**4.76** Democracy and Political Institutions

**5.80** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





**10**  
RANKING

# ECUADOR

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**E**cuator's score had a slight 3% year-on-year decline, causing it to fall from 9th to 10th place in the Index. Despite political uncertainty driven by impeachment proceedings against President Guillermo Lasso, Ecuador's anti-corruption environment was one of relative stability over the past year.

Ecuador had minimal variation in the democracy and political institutions and civil society and media categories, and the change in its overall score was driven by setbacks in the legal capacity category, which declined by 6% year-on-year. Within that category, Ecuador saw its largest setbacks in the variables assessing anti-corruption agencies and international cooperation on law enforcement. Earlier this year, voters rejected Lasso's eight-question referendum that would have authorized extradition for organized crime. In February, the country passed a new law on transparency and access to public information, an area where Ecuador ranks below the Index average.

Media reports of alleged corruption at public companies led to an impeachment trial against Lasso in May. The president denied wrongdoing. Lasso invoked a constitutional mechanism to dissolve the Congress and call for new presidential and legislative elections and declared he would not be a candidate. Some analysts questioned the strength of the charges against Lasso, whose popularity was low amid Ecuador's recent surge of organized crime-related violence. In a separate case, charges were filed in March against former President Lenín Moreno, along with 36 others, for alleged corruption related to a hydroelectric plant contract. Moreno has denied wrongdoing.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR**

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Ecuador will hold presidential and legislative elections on August 20. The conditions of the constitutional mechanism permit Lasso to govern by decree, subject to approval from the Constitutional Court, until newly elected officials start their terms.



# PARAGUAY

**11**  
RANKING

**4.61**  
2023 Overall Score

**4.45**  
2022 Overall Score

**4.08**  
2021 Overall Score

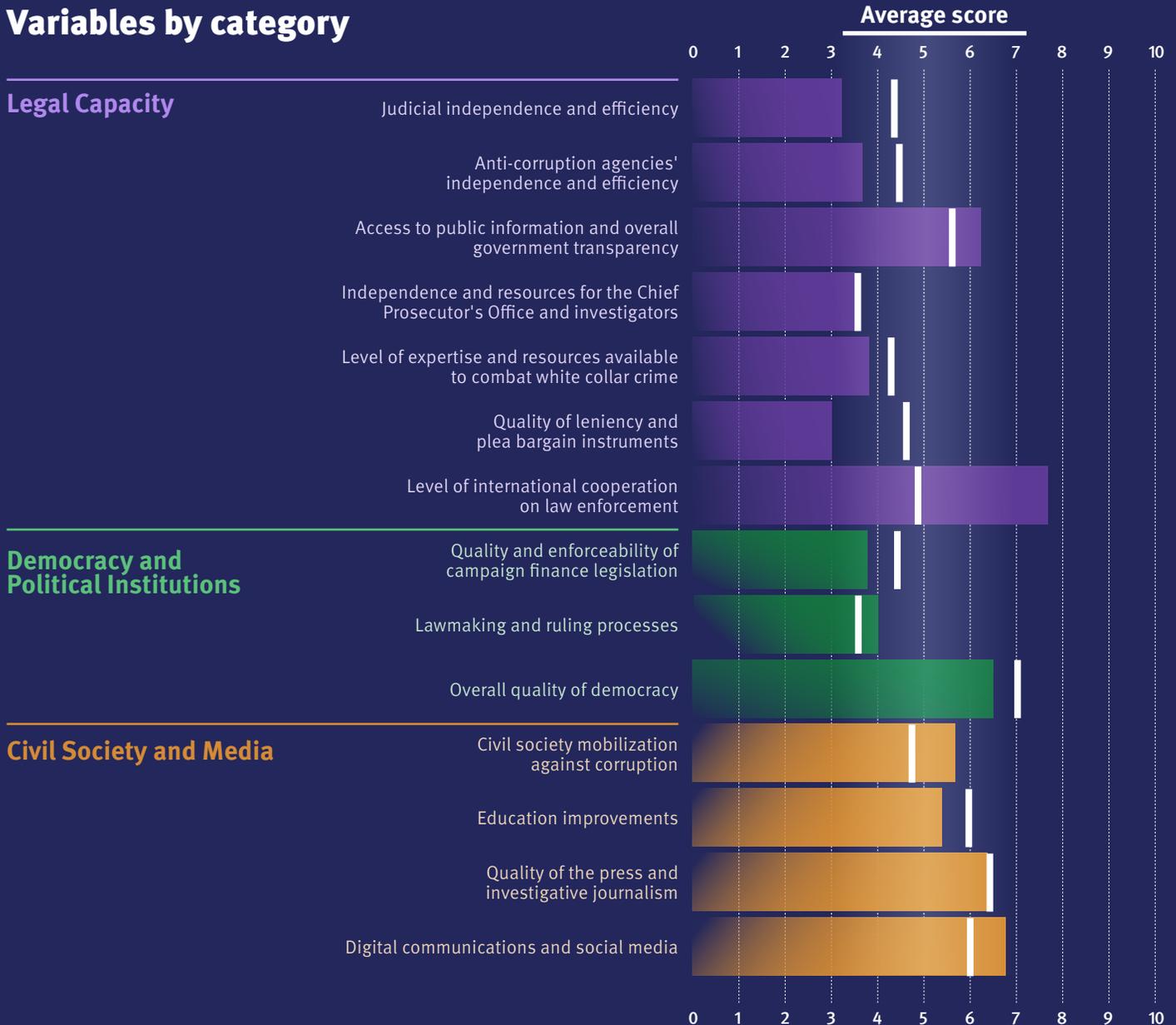
**3.88**  
2020 Overall Score

**4.27** Legal Capacity

**4.61** Democracy and Political Institutions

**6.05** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





11

RANKING

# PARAGUAY

Paraguay's score rose by 4%, continuing a four-year positive trend, though it remained in 11th place in the overall ranking. The country had moderate year-on-year improvements across all three categories. Paraguay surpassed the regional average in the variable measuring civil society mobilization against corruption and continued its upward trajectory in the variable assessing international cooperation on law enforcement, tying with Costa Rica for first place.

This performance came on the back of corruption allegations targeting the ruling Colorado Party. In 2022, the U.S. designated former President Horacio Cartes and current Vice President Hugo Velázquez for “significant corruption”. In January 2023 the U.S. announced further sanctions against Cartes and Velázquez, who have denied wrongdoing. Paraguay's Attorney General's Office initiated an investigation into the U.S. allegations in March 2023.

The country's anti-money laundering efforts have advanced. Following an evaluation from Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT) in 2022 that noted significant improvement in Paraguay's AML/CFT system, the organization did not include Paraguay on its “grey list”.

Despite this progress, Paraguay remains below the regional average in its overall score, as severe issues continue to undermine anti-corruption efforts. Violence and organized crime affect investigations — In May 2022 a prosecutor with an important role in a broad anti-narcotics trafficking operation was assassinated — and politicization is a persistent hurdle. The previous attorney general was the subject of public criticism for perceived unwillingness to pursue corruption cases involving the ruling party.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

The commitment of president-elect Santiago Peña to anti-corruption efforts. Peña, of the ruling Colorado Party, won 43% of the votes in April's election and will take office in August. Peña has close ties to former President Cartes, who is the president of the Colorado Party and wields considerable political influence.

Pressure from the U.S. in the form of corruption-related designations or sanctions may incentivize Paraguay to enhance international cooperation on anti-corruption and anti-organized crime efforts.



# MEXICO

**12**  
RANKING

**3.87**

2023 Overall Score

**4.05**

2022 Overall Score

**4.25**

2021 Overall Score

**4.55**

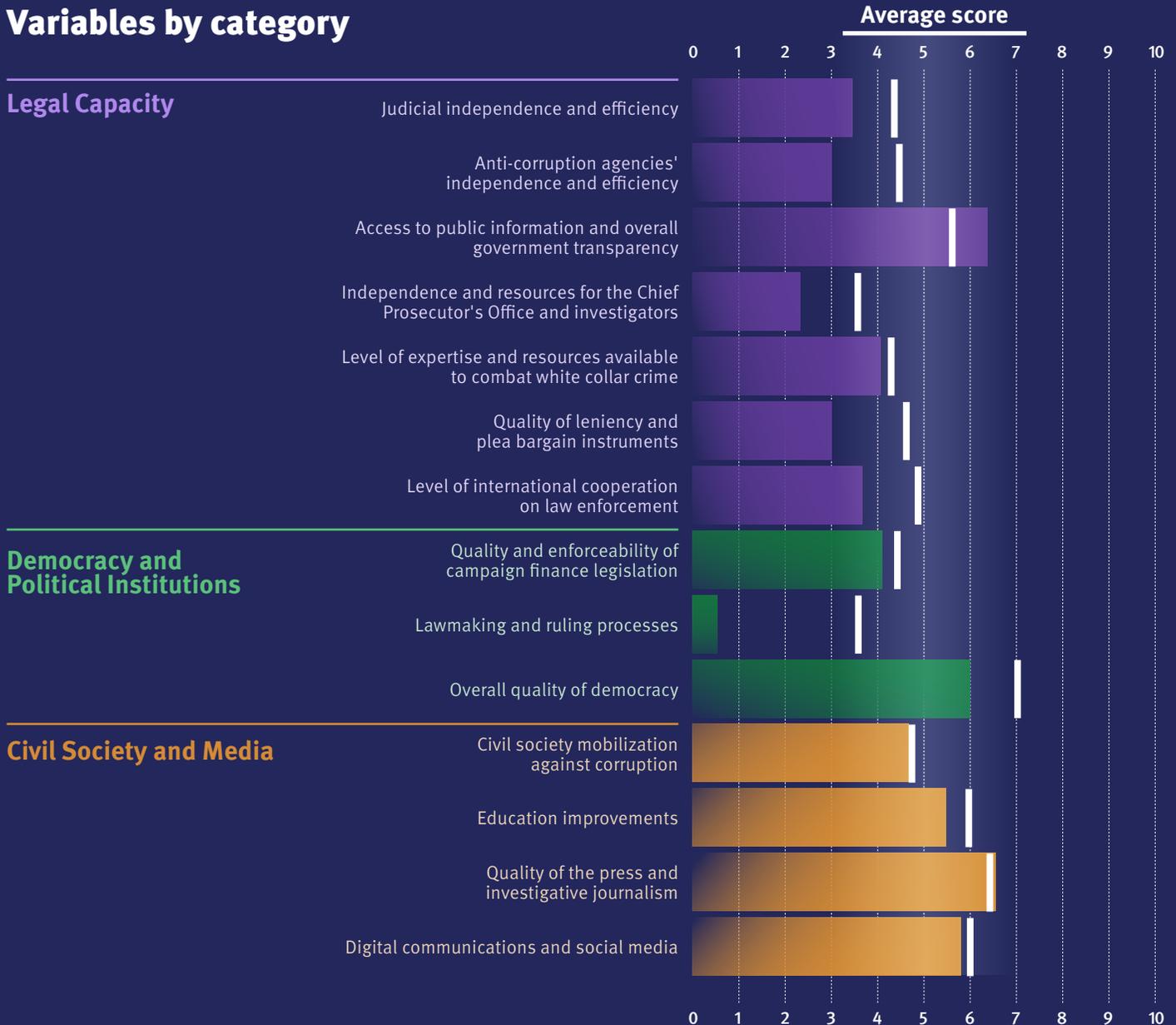
2020 Overall Score

**3.56** Legal Capacity

**3.62** Democracy and Political Institutions

**5.62** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





**12**  
RANKING

# MEXICO

Mexico’s score continued its downward trend for a fourth consecutive year, declining by 4% but retaining its 12th place ranking. The most pronounced downgrade came in the category of civil society and media, as Mexican journalists continue to face adverse working conditions, including the world’s highest rate of violence against reporters outside Ukraine. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) continued to single out journalists and members of civil society for strong criticism, and new allegations emerged of the use of Pegasus spyware against journalists, activists and Mexico’s under secretary for human rights (the government denies wrongdoing). Meanwhile, recent large-scale protests have focused on the president’s controversial reform to cut resources for the National Electoral Institute (INE), while corruption has become less of a focus of protests in recent years.

Mexico lags behind the regional average in the legal capacity category and had a 14% year-on-year setback in the variable assessing anti-corruption agencies. AMLO has continued to criticize independent agencies like the INE and the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data (INAI). That agency has lacked the necessary quorum to operate since April 2023, when AMLO vetoed commissioners that the Senate had appointed. Since early June, the INAI has been able to hold two extraordinary sessions to resolve specific issues through two particular court orders.

In April, the Senate approved a bill that granted the Public Administration Ministry (SFP) oversight over government procurement and public spending, which may affect accountability in purchasing processes. The country’s institutional shortcomings against corruption continue to hamper the resolution of corruption cases.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR**

Despite an increase in the budget for anti-corruption institutions under the National Anti-corruption System (SNA) for 2023, the program continues to face implementation challenges. AMLO remains critical of this mechanism and introduced an initiative to eliminate its Executive Secretariat.

Authorities are investigating a case involving the alleged embezzlement of hundreds of millions of dollars from the Mexican Food Security Agency (Segalmex) between 2019 and 2021.

Mexico will hold presidential, legislative and gubernatorial elections in June 2024. Corruption remains one of voters’ top concerns and may feature in campaigns.



# GUATEMALA

**13**  
RANKING

**2.86**

2023 Overall Score

**3.38**

2022 Overall Score

**3.84**

2021 Overall Score

**4.04**

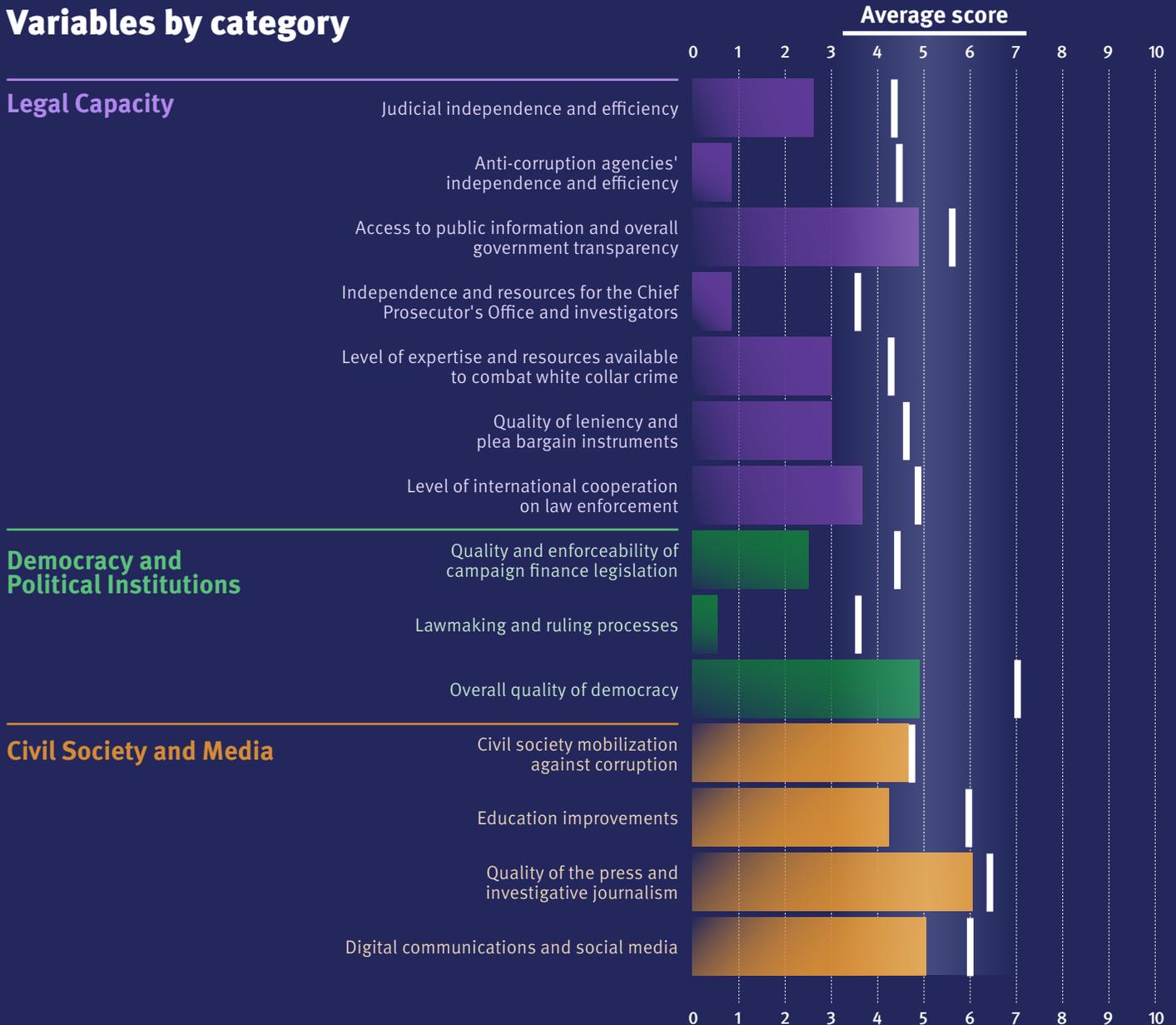
2020 Overall Score

**2.46** Legal Capacity

**2.62** Democracy and Political Institutions

**5.00** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





13  
RANKING

# GUATEMALA

Guatemala had the sharpest decline in the Index of all countries in 2023 (down 15% year-on-year), consolidating a four-year downward trajectory. While Guatemala remained in the 13th position, it now ranks closer to 14th placed Bolivia than it does to 12th placed Mexico. Guatemala recorded especially steep declines in two categories: legal capacity (20%) and democracy and political institutions (16%).

The Index registered substantial regressions in key variables, reflecting perceived democratic backsliding over the past year. These variables assess law-making and ruling processes (down by 56%, hitting the lowest level in five years), the effectiveness and independence of anti-corruption agencies (down by 38%), and the independence of the public prosecutor’s office (down by 50%). The U.S. has designated the attorney general for “significant corruption” and included the head of the Anti-Corruption Unit (FECI) on the Engel list of corrupt actors. The Public Ministry has continued a pattern of judicial persecution and detentions, leading at least 20 anti-corruption judges and prosecutors to flee Guatemala in 2022. Journalists critical of the government increasingly face legal challenges, as the July 2022 imprisonment of *elPeriódico* newspaper director Jose Rubén Zamora illustrated.

Guatemala registered modest improvements in two variables. Advancements in civil society mobilization against corruption (up by 8%) and digital communications and social media (up by 5%) indicate that citizens are demanding accountability. Public demonstrations against perceived corruption and lack of judicial independence, which were well-attended, occurred in August and September 2022 in Guatemala City. The capital also saw small-scale protests in November.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

Following the first round of Guatemala’s June 25 presidential election, Sandra Torres and Bernardo Arévalo will advance to the runoff on August 20. The latter’s emphasis on anti-corruption is likely to become a major theme in the second round.

The next administration, which takes office in January 2024, will likely face significant pressure to address corruption amid rising popular discontent.



# BOLIVIA

**14**  
RANKING

**2.56**  
2023 Overall Score

**2.57**  
2022 Overall Score

**2.43**  
2021 Overall Score

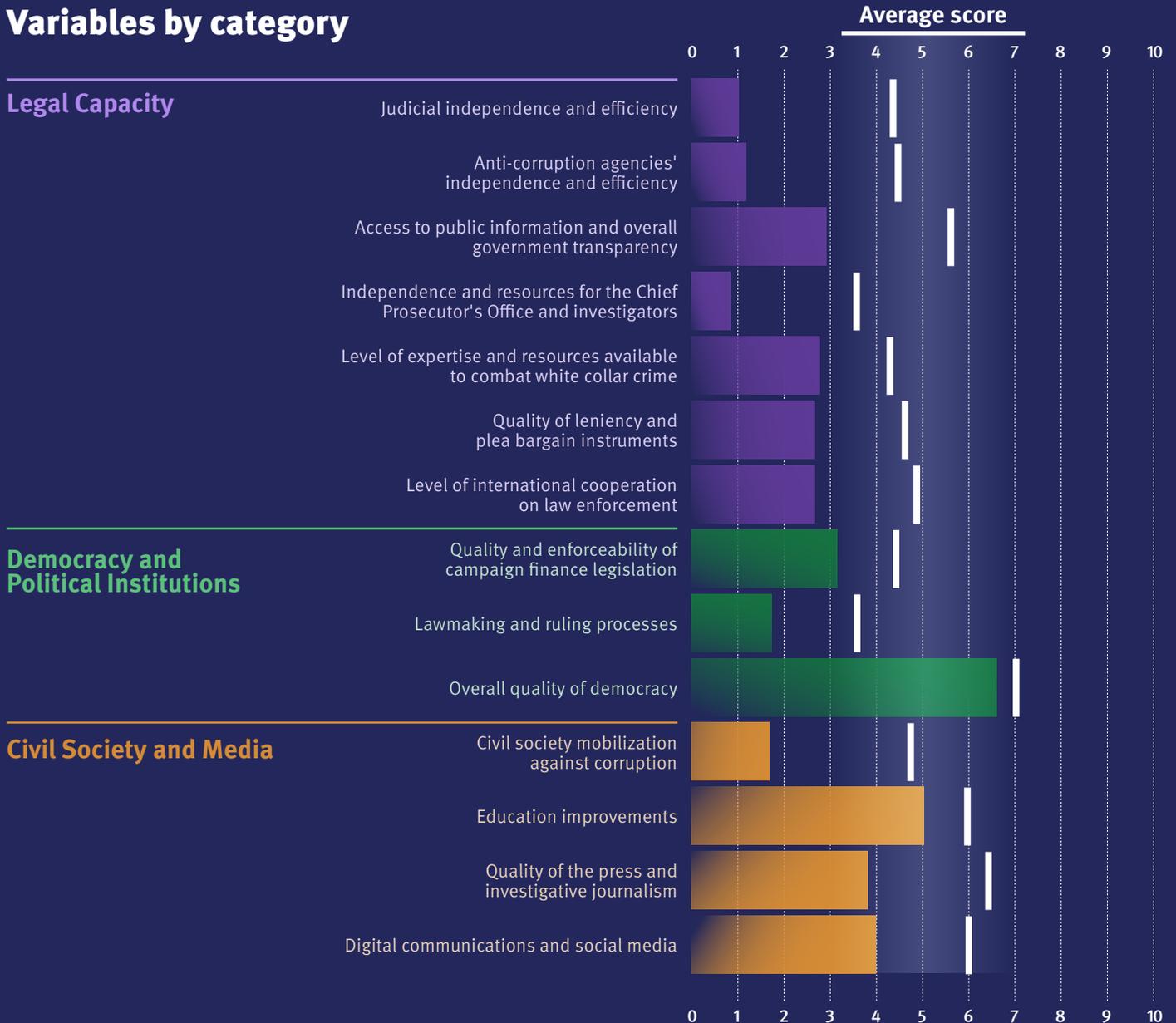
**2.71**  
2020 Overall Score

**1.83** Legal Capacity

**3.72** Democracy and Political Institutions

**3.62** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





14  
RANKING

# BOLIVIA

**B**olivia remained in 14th place in the Index, a position it has held since 2020. The country experienced its most significant setback in the civil society and media category, which decreased by 10%. The decline in the variable assessing the quality of the press reflects how Bolivia’s independent media outlets continue to scrutinize corruption, but lack the resources to carry out investigations on a consistent basis. Bolivia had a setback of 17% in the variable evaluating civil society mobilization against corruption — Amid government restrictions, the few NGOs that deal with transparency have had a limited impact.

Bolivia ranks ahead only of Venezuela in the variable evaluating judicial independence, and analysts have pointed to the continued politicization of Bolivia’s justice system over the past year. Former interim President Jeanine Áñez was sentenced in June 2022 to 10 years in prison for making “decisions that were contrary to the Constitution” as president; she has denied the charges. Santa Cruz governor and prominent opposition leader Luis Fernando Camacho was arrested in December 2022 on alleged terrorism charges in connection with the 2019 ouster of former President Evo Morales. Camacho has denied any wrongdoing. These decisions were described as politically motivated by the U.S., the EU and prominent human rights institutions.

In February 2023, the government approved Supreme Decree No. 4872, or the Plurinational Policy for Fighting Corruption. The measure aims to strengthen the fight against corruption by digitizing information and coordinating with civil society, and recognizes the role of the private sector in promoting compliance.

## CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR

Judicial elections are slated for October 2023, when voters will select the members of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the Agro-Environmental Court and the Judicial Council. Political tensions may increase as the Legislative Assembly pre-selects candidates before the popular vote is held. Previous judicial elections in 2011 and 2017 were marked by abstention and blank or null votes.

Corruption-related investigations against political opponents may continue as divisions within the governing Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party increase.



# VENEZUELA

**15**  
RANKING

**1.46**

2023 Overall Score

**1.63**

2022 Overall Score

**1.40**

2021 Overall Score

**1.52**

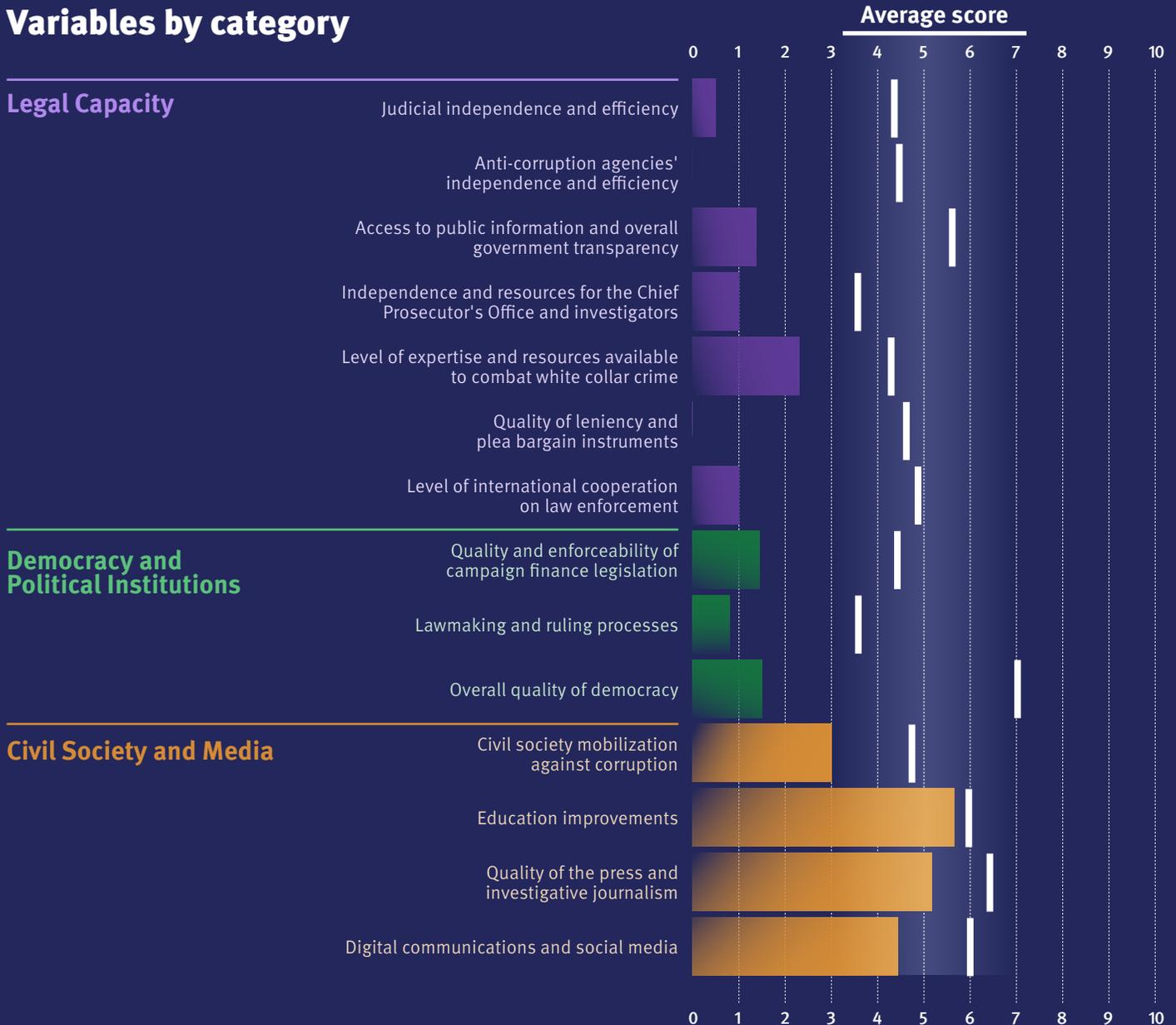
2020 Overall Score

**0.81** Legal Capacity

**1.28** Democracy and Political Institutions

**4.57** Civil Society and Media

## Variables by category





15  
RANKING

# VENEZUELA

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Venezuela placed last in the Index's ranking, marking the country's fifth consecutive year with the lowest score in the region. After modest gains in 2022, Venezuela had setbacks in each of the three categories in 2023.

The variable evaluating civil society mobilization against corruption decreased by 18%, while the variable assessing the quality of the press fell by 15%, placing Venezuela second-to-last in both variables. These changes reflect renewed threats to press freedom and civil liberties from the government of Nicolás Maduro. In January, the National Assembly (controlled by Maduro's PSUV) approved a bill requiring all NGOs to report their assets and disclose their relationships with donors to the government. Several prominent international anti-corruption and human rights organizations denounced the measure, which they fear will facilitate persecution of NGOs. The bill serves as a reminder of the government's willingness to crack down on dissent. Since protests by teachers and public sector workers broke out in 2022, several union leaders, journalists and NGO activists have been arbitrarily detained.

In March, Maduro launched a probe into corruption at PDVSA and other state-owned enterprises that has led to over 60 arrests and the resignation of former Oil Minister Tareck El Aissami. Observers have noted that rather than cracking down on corruption, the probe appears aimed at consolidating Maduro's dominance within the PSUV.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES TO MONITOR**

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Although the Maduro government and the opposition resumed talks in Mexico City in November 2022 that had been stalled since October 2021, prospects for further negotiations are uncertain. In March, the Maduro government demanded the full removal of U.S. sanctions before reaching any agreement with the opposition.

Venezuela is slated to hold a presidential election in 2024, although experts do not expect a free and fair vote. The opposition will conduct a primary in October. Selective persecution of activists, union leaders and opposition politicians may occur amid ongoing protests by public workers and campaigning ahead of the election.

# METHODOLOGY

## STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

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The CCC Index encompasses different aspects of countries' anti-corruption environment—from the independence of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, to the quality of laws governing lobbying and campaign financing. The overall CCC Index score is composed of three categories:

- Legal Capacity (I)
- Democracy and Political Institutions (II); and
- Civil Society and Media (III).

These categories are in turn broken down into the following 14 variables:

### LEGAL CAPACITY

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Judicial independence and efficiency

Anti-corruption agencies' independence and efficiency

Access to public information and overall government transparency

Independence and resources for the Chief Prosecutor's Office and investigators

Level of expertise and resources available to combat white collar crime

Quality of leniency and plea bargain instruments

Level of international cooperation on law enforcement

### DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

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Quality and enforceability of campaign finance legislation

Lawmaking and ruling processes

Overall quality of democracy

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

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Civil society mobilization against corruption

Education improvements

Quality of the press and investigative journalism

Digital communications and social media

Collectively, these 14 variables provide a comprehensive and detailed view of countries' anti-corruption environment – in other words, their ability to uncover, punish and deter corruption. We understand that the 14 variables influence countries' capacity to combat corruption differently, so the variables receive different weightings in the scoring to reflect this reality. For example, we considered judicial independence and efficiency to be more critical than the free flow of information on social media. Consequently, the former variable has a higher weighting in the score of the CCC Index.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

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The data fed into the index's model was drawn from two sources: publicly available data generated or gathered by renowned institutions, and a proprietary survey of Control Risks' and other leading anti-corruption experts on the ground.

## **THE PUBLIC DATA USED FOR THE INDEX WAS DRAWN FROM**

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Basel Institute on Governance  
Freedom House  
Harvard Electoral Integrity Project  
International IDEA  
International Budget Partnership  
Newzoo Global Mobile Market Report  
Reporters Without Borders  
UNESCO  
World Bank  
World Economic Forum  
World Justice Project

The index relies on the latest available data from these institutions. Certain data points from UNESCO and the World Economic Forum were not updated over the past year. In those cases, we used the same data points as in the 2022 CCC Index. Because of this, the survey results had a greater relative weight in determining changes in countries' scores in 2023. In some cases, specific data within the dataset was carved out—for instance, the index only uses the Open Government factor in the World Justice Project database and only the campaign financing variable in the Harvard Electoral Integrity Project repository.

Alongside the publicly available data, we conducted a fact-based survey with anti-corruption experts working on the ground. The survey questionnaire serves two purposes. Firstly, to complement the publicly available data, which in itself does not comprehensively cover all of the areas we intended to assess. And secondly, to gather more specific and detailed information unavailable in the public domain. The end result is a methodology that is a hybrid of “hard” and survey data, granting the

necessary flexibility and accuracy to perform the analysis.

As was the case in the 2022 edition, we consulted three experts per country – one Control Risks analyst plus two independent analysts – compared to two experts in 2019. The advantage of having an additional expert is that we were able to track outliers: when one expert diverged significantly from the other two (by more than two points), we invited the expert to clarify the reasoning behind the response provided.

With more survey data, we were also capable of performing better regional comparisons to spot anomalies. For example, we analyzed the correlation between the “hard” data and the survey data and escalated cases of major divergence to a detailed analysis.

The survey was conducted between mid-March and mid-April and included the following experts: Mauricio Alarcón Salvador (Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo), Fabiano Angélico (Università della Svizzera Italiana (USI)), Ana Luiza Aranha (Global Compact Network Brazil), David Arellano-Gault (CIDE), Miguel Carter (DEMOS - Centro para la Democracia, la Creatividad y la Inclusión Social), Marielos Chang (political consultant and university professor), Hazel Feigenblatt (international anti-corruption consultant), Mercedes De Freitas (Transparencia Venezuela), María Paula Garat (Universidad Católica del Uruguay), María Jaraquemada Hederra (Chile Transparente), Elizabeth Heurtematte (LOVILL), Mariana Labastie Gómez (ICD - Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo (Uruguay)), Leonardo Limanski (independent consultant), Sandra Martínez (Transparencia por Colombia), Gustavo L. Morales Oliver (Maral O'Farrell Mairal), Carolina Muñoz Con (According2Law), Vivian Newman (Dejusticia), Alfredo Ortega Franco (Universidad Rafael Landívar), Bonnie J. Palifka (Tecnológico de Monterrey), Carlos Anibal Peris Castiglioni (Universidad Nacional de Asunción), Cristián Pliscoff (Catholic University of Chile), Denisse Rodríguez-Olivari (School of Transnational Governance - European University Institute), Paola Romero (Certezza Group), Lindsay Sykes (PPO Abogados), Simeon Tegel (freelance journalist), Camila Ulloa Torres (Grupo FARO), Ana Carolina Ureña A. (Trident Trust Panamá) and Geovanny Vicente-Romero (Inter-American Institute on Justice and Sustainability (IIJS)). Two external experts working in Bolivia and Venezuela requested not to be identified. The Control Risks analysts who participated include Joe Beckford, Mário Braga, Sebastián Fernández de Soto, Theodore Kahn, Leandro Lima, Laura Lizarazo, Marina Pera, Karla Schiaffino and Valeria Vásquez.

The above-mentioned experts don't necessarily agree with all the conclusions and opinions expressed in this report.

## **METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS**

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All indices measuring human behavior are imperfect, as they can never capture all elements of a given phenomenon. The CCC Index is necessarily a partial representation based on the model discussed above, with 14 variables, based on limited public and proprietary data. The index's model has some limitations, including subjectivity, overlapping and endogeneity (a causal relationship between some of the variables). Questionnaires to country experts were as factual as possible, but some degree of subjectivity inevitably remained. To reduce subjectivity, we applied rigorous analysis to test consistency of responses and requested that experts interpret and compare the data against regional averages. Overlapping relates to the fact that some variables include the same elements: for instance, the Freedom House score also includes measures of judicial independence. Regarding endogeneity, although we recognize that it may be present in the methodology, it does not undermine the consistency of the results. The same variables, using the same data sources, were analyzed for all countries, so any endogeneity would affect all countries in largely the same way. Last but not least, it is impossible to analyze all elements affecting a country's ability to fight corruption. We selected 14 variables that cover a wide array of topics and which we believe are the key elements shaping the anti-corruption environment. But some aspects may have been left out. In cases where we believed this posed a limitation, we highlighted this factor in the country profile.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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The 2023 CCC Index is the work of over fifty people and we are profoundly grateful to all of them.

At AS/COA, Policy Manager Emilie Sweigart helped manage the project's execution and assisted with editing the report. Research Assistant Jack Quinn contributed to the report editing process. Creative Director Donald Partyka and Design Assistant Anais Gonzalez designed the report and data visualizations. Media Relations Director Claudia Torrens and Communications Associate Daniela Cobos helped amplify the Index's media repercussion.

At Control Risks, Data Analytics Director Edmar Torres and Consultant Nicolas Flores led on the data analytics work, populating the growing CCC Index database and querying the data to inform the report. Senior Marketing Manager Laure le Masson and Marketing Coordinator Juliana Borges collaborated closely with AS/COA's media team to coordinate media coverage and planning of post-launch events. Lina Quintero Guzmán dedicated a significant time of her internship at the firm analyzing the data and providing useful insights.

# Categories

	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
<b>Legal Capacity</b>	4.28	1.83	4.80	6.22	4.58	6.69	5.80	4.39	2.46	3.56	5.26	4.27	5.51	6.54	0.81
<b>Democracy and Political Institutions</b>	5.86	3.72	4.16	7.84	4.58	7.19	4.50	4.76	2.62	3.62	5.62	4.61	5.21	7.98	1.28
<b>Civil Society and Media</b>	7.01	3.62	6.15	6.56	5.99	6.30	5.41	5.80	5.00	5.62	5.55	6.05	6.21	7.15	4.57

# Variables

<b>Legal Capacity</b>	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Judicial independence and efficiency	3.88	1.01	5.05	7.17	4.95	7.05	5.16	3.90	2.60	3.45	4.54	3.21	4.68	8.19	0.49
Anti-corruption agencies' independence and efficiency	3.67	1.17	4.67	7.50	5.17	7.83	6.83	4.67	0.83	3.00	5.00	3.67	6.17	6.83	0.00
Access to public information and overall government transparency	5.78	2.91	6.67	7.25	5.30	6.97	6.97	5.09	4.88	6.36	5.43	6.22	5.69	7.19	1.37
Independence and resources for the Chief Prosecutor's Office and investigators	4.17	0.83	4.17	5.67	3.33	5.50	3.83	3.67	0.83	2.33	5.67	3.50	3.83	5.17	1.00
Level of expertise and resources available to combat white collar crime	5.06	2.77	3.94	5.80	4.47	4.98	4.96	4.17	3.00	4.06	4.80	3.81	5.11	5.12	2.30
Quality of leniency and plea bargain instruments	5.00	2.67	5.33	5.00	4.00	6.67	7.00	4.33	3.00	3.00	5.67	3.00	6.67	8.00	0.00
International cooperation	3.00	2.67	4.00	4.33	5.00	7.67	6.67	5.33	3.67	3.67	6.00	7.67	7.33	5.00	1.00

<b>Democracy and Political Institutions</b>	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Quality and enforceability of campaign financing legislation	4.89	3.14	4.19	7.22	3.45	6.99	3.57	4.32	2.50	4.10	4.39	3.77	5.19	6.72	1.45
Lawmaking and ruling processes	4.67	1.73	1.07	7.20	3.87	5.60	3.60	3.20	0.53	0.53	4.80	4.00	3.47	8.27	0.80
Overall quality of democracy	8.50	6.60	7.20	9.40	7.00	9.10	6.80	7.00	4.90	6.00	8.30	6.50	7.00	9.60	1.50

<b>Civil Society and Media</b>	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Guatemala	Mexico	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Civil society mobilization against corruption	4.67	1.67	5.67	6.67	6.33	4.67	3.67	5.67	4.67	4.67	3.67	5.67	5.00	6.00	3.00
Education improvements	8.07	5.03	5.68	7.34	5.89	6.63	5.67	5.29	4.24	5.47	6.43	5.38	6.08	6.68	5.65
Quality of the press and investigative journalism	8.01	3.81	6.86	6.57	6.23	7.37	6.32	6.58	6.04	6.54	5.65	6.37	6.85	8.25	5.17
Digital communications and social media	7.29	3.98	6.37	5.65	5.49	6.54	5.97	5.66	5.04	5.80	6.44	6.77	6.89	7.65	4.44