

Corruption in Cuba

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Political corruption



Concepts

[Bribery](#) [Cronyism](#) [Kleptocracy](#)
[Economics of corruption](#)
[Electoral fraud](#) [Legal plunder](#)
[Nepotism](#) [Slush fund](#) [Plutocracy](#)
[Political scandal](#)

Corruption by country

Europe

[Albania](#) [Armenia](#) [Austria](#)
[Belgium](#) [Bosnia](#) [Denmark](#)
[Finland](#) [France](#) [Germany](#) [Croatia](#)
[Cyprus](#) [Czech Republic](#) [Georgia](#)
[Greece](#) [Iceland](#) [Ireland](#) [Italy](#)
[Kosovo](#) [Latvia](#) [Lithuania](#)
[Luxembourg](#) [Macedonia](#)
[Moldova](#) [Montenegro](#)
[Netherlands](#) [Poland](#) [Portugal](#)
[Romania](#) [Serbia](#) [Slovakia](#)
[Slovenia](#) [Spain](#) [Sweden](#)
[Switzerland](#) [Ukraine](#)

Asia

[Afghanistan](#) [Bahrain](#) [Bangladesh](#)
[Cambodia](#) [China](#) [India](#) [Indonesia](#)
[Iran](#) [Iraq](#) [Jordan](#) [Kuwait](#)
[Kyrgyzstan](#) [Malaysia](#) [Myanmar](#)
[North Korea](#) [Pakistan](#) [Philippines](#)
[Singapore](#) [South Korea](#) [Sri Lanka](#)
[Thailand](#) [Uzbekistan](#)
[Vietnam](#)

Africa

[Angola](#) [Botswana](#) [Cameroon](#)
[Congo](#) [Egypt](#) [Equatorial Guinea](#)
[Ethiopia](#) [Ghana](#) [Kenya](#) [Liberia](#)
[Mauritius](#) [Morocco](#) [Nigeria](#)
[Senegal](#) [Somalia](#) [South Africa](#)
[South Sudan](#) [Sudan](#) [Tanzania](#)
[Tunisia](#) [Uganda](#) [Zambia](#)
[Zimbabwe](#)

North America

[Canada](#) [Cuba](#) [Haiti](#) [Mexico](#)
[Nicaragua](#) [United States](#)

South America

[Argentina](#) [Brazil](#) [Chile](#) [Colombia](#)
[Paraguay](#) [Peru](#) [Venezuela](#)

Oceania and the Pacific

[Australia](#) [New Zealand](#) [Papua](#)
[New Guinea](#)

Transcontinental countries

[Russia](#) [Turkey](#)

[v](#) [t](#) [e](#)

The 2013 Transparency International [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) ranked [Cuba](#) 63rd out of 177 countries, tied with [Ghana](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#),^[1] and therefore lower than most of the other countries in the Caribbean and Central America, but higher than most of the countries in the Western world.

The state ownership has contributed to rampant corruption. The book *Corruption in Cuba* says that "As in other former socialist countries, when given opportunity, few citizens hesitate to steal from the government. Since the bulk of the productive resources are owned and managed by the state and the vast majority of Cubans work for state-owned enterprises, these petty crimes are widespread".^[2]

Bribes are widespread. To get medical care, patients pay bribes. Musicians regularly pay bribes to be able to perform on tourist areas, where they can earn convertible currency.^[3] A bicycle taxi license is reported to cost \$150 in bribes.^[4]

History

Twentieth century

In 1942, the [British Foreign Office](#) reported that that [U.S. State Department](#) was "very worried" about corruption under [President Fulgencio Batista](#), describing the problem as "endemic" and exceeding "anything which had gone on previously." Batista refused [U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt](#)'s offer to send experts to help reform the Cuban Civil Service.^[5]

Mauricio Augusto Font and Alfonso Quiroz, authors of *The Cuban Republic and José Martí*, say that corruption pervaded public life under the administrations of Presidents [Ramón Grau](#) and [Carlos Prío](#). [Senator Eduardo Chibás](#) dedicated himself to exposing corruption in the Cuban government, and formed the [Partido Ortodoxo](#) in 1947 to further this aim.^[6]

Post-revolution

Sergio Diaz-Briquets and Jorge F. Pérez-López, in the book *Corruption in Cuba*, argue that the government of [Fidel](#) and [Raul Castro](#) institutionalized corruption with [government monopolies](#), [cronyism](#), and lack of accountability.^[7] High-ranking members of the Cuban [nomenklatura](#) and the [military](#) enjoy privileges unavailable to ordinary citizens.^[7] The Cuban [nomenklatura](#) is also referred to as *pinchos*, *pinchos grandes* or *mayimbes*.^[8]

In 2001, the Cuban Government set up a ministry to investigate corruption and improve efficiency in the Cuban economy. A [BBC news](#) article stated that foreign businessmen in Cuba said levels of corruption were lower than in most other countries in Latin America.^[9] BBC says that "Inspectors went to thousands of state-run enterprises and consistently found customers being short-changed. The offences included beer mugs being only partially filled, taxi rides being charged at almost five

times the going rate, government price lists being hidden, even shoe repairers charging vastly inflated rates."[\[10\]](#)

Under the existing system, even the most basic anticorruption pillars have been eroded. To the extent they are effective, moral and ethical guidelines in most societies always have acted as deterrents against malfeasance. Whatever residual effects moral deterrents can have in Cuba following nearly 43 years of socialist rule are not likely to be strong. Disregard for the rule of law regarding property rights began with the confiscation of privately owned assets in 1959 and the early 1960s. Next came four decades of routine expropriation of the personal property of all permanent emigrants. These two developments alone, it could be argued, have given rise to social attitudes that condone – in Cuba’s environment of scarcity – taking advantage of someone else’s misfortune and assets so long as it is for personal benefit. Added to this is the widespread petty (administrative) corruption that pervades Cuban society, mostly because of the nature of the economic system and the scarcity of goods and services it has created.

— *Díaz-Briquets & Pérez-López : A transparency/accountability framework for combating corruption in post-Castro Cuba*
- *Cuban Transition Project, University of Miami* [\[11\]](#)

Sociolismo

Main article: [Sociolismo](#)

[Sociolismo](#) is the informal term used in [Cuba](#) to describe the reciprocal exchange of favors by individuals, usually relating to circumventing bureaucratic restrictions or obtaining hard-to-find goods. It comes from the [Spanish](#) word *socio* which means business partner or buddy, and is a [pun](#) on *socialismo*, the Spanish term for [socialism](#). It is analogous to the [blat](#) of the [Soviet Union](#). It is a form of corruption in Cuba.[\[7\]](#)

Transparency International

Cuba scored 4.3 for perceived [corruption](#) in [Transparency International](#)'s 2008 [Corruption Perceptions Index](#). The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) rates countries from 0 ("highly corrupt") to 10 ("highly clean"), reflecting perceived levels of corruption. Cuba scored below some [Caribbean](#) island nations such as [Saint Lucia](#) (7.1) and [Barbados](#) (7.0) and some [Latin American](#) nations such as [Chile](#) (6.9) and [Uruguay](#) (6.9), but above most other Latin American nations, such as [El Salvador](#) (3.9), [Colombia](#) (3.8) and [Mexico](#) (3.6) and Caribbean nations such as [Trinidad and Tobago](#) (3.6) and [Jamaica](#) (3.1).[\[12\]](#) Cuba has been assessed by the CPI since 2003, with scores ranging from 3.7 to 4.6.[\[13\]](#)

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13. ["TI Corruption Perceptions Index"](#). Transparency International. Retrieved April 9, 2008.



A world map of the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index by [Transparency International](#)

[v t e](#)

Corruption in North America

[v t e](#)

[Corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

Categories: [Corruption in Cuba](#) [Government of Cuba](#) [Economy of Cuba](#) [Corruption by country](#)

This page was last modified on 28 September 2015, at 04:34.