



Comparative Criminology: **BRIBERY**

Ranking Countries as Likeliest for Companies to Pay or Offer Bribes to Win or Retain Business

In this section, we examine findings and conclusions from the Transparency International Annual Report of 2011, which since 1999 has administered among business experts in 28 emerging market countries global surveys regarding the propensity of international companies to offer or pay bribes to win or retain business in their nations.⁷⁴

This comparison is applicable to the chapter in the sense that it provides a relatively recent analysis of the extent to which countries are perceived to be corrupt in terms of soliciting bribes to encourage business opportunities in their countries. The portion of the Transparency International report that we are concerned with here is the ranking of countries based on responses of business experts to the question of how likely the companies from certain countries are to pay or offer bribes to win or retain business in that country. It should be noted that rankings are based on a scale of 10 (zero perceived propensity to pay bribes) to 1 (highest perceived propensity to pay bribes), with higher scores indicating lower likelihood for paying bribes. So the higher the score, the better the country's businesses are rated in terms of ethics, at least as related to offering bribes.

According to the findings in the Transparency International report (see Table 14.1), the countries that scored highest on this rating—meaning they had the lowest levels of perceived propensity to receive bribes—were the Netherlands and Switzerland, which were tied for least corrupt; Belgium and Germany closely followed as least perceived to take bribes.⁷⁵ This is not too surprising given the international respect for

business ethics in these countries, especially Switzerland, which consistently ranks in the top few countries for not being bribe-ridden in their business dealings. However, our focus is on the countries that scored lowest on this measure, Russia and China, the two countries that are consistently ranked by business executives as having the highest propensity to take and receive bribes.

Regarding Russia and China, this low ranking is very much in line with other rankings of corporate corruption, such as bribe taking and ICVS rankings of countries.⁷⁶ Furthermore, neither of these countries are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which was adopted in 1997 after an urgent request by the U.S. government and other nations.⁷⁷ Ratified by the majority of industrialized countries, an obligation from the OECD requires countries to criminalize payment of bribes in their government legislation. Russia and China are not part of that coalition, and, as shown by the results, their reluctance to join is connected to their failure to crack down on bribery tactics.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Which countries consistently rank as least likely to take bribes in their major business practices?
2. Which countries consistently rank as most likely to take bribes in their business practices?
3. Do you see a pattern by region of the world in terms of which countries are ranked least or most likely to accept bribes in their business practices? Why do you think that is?

TABLE 14.1 Ranking of countries based on responses to the question “In the business sectors with which you are most familiar, how likely are companies from the following countries to pay or offer bribes to win or retain business in this country?”

RANKING BY COUNTRY	
COUNTRY	SCORE (10 = NEVER PAY BRIBES, 0 = ALWAYS PAY BRIBES)
Netherlands	8.8
Switzerland	8.8
Belgium	8.7
Germany	8.6
Japan	8.6
Australia	8.5