



## AS IT IS

# US, Britain Fight Foreign Bribery, But Most Nations Do Very Little

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A new report rates the United States and Britain as the largest exporters most active at enforcing rules meant to stop companies from paying bribes in foreign markets. The report found that many other nations are doing almost nothing to stop bribery.

The study comes from **Transparency** International, the Berlin-based anti-corruption group. It found that only four of 47 countries were actively enforcing laws against foreign bribery in 2019. The four countries -- the U.S., Britain, Switzerland and Israel -- are responsible for 16.5 percent of exports worldwide.

That compares with the seven countries identified as actively enforcing legislation against foreign bribery in 2018.

"Our research shows that many countries are **barely** investigating foreign bribery," said Gillian Dell, the lead writer of the report.

"Unfortunately, it's all too common for businesses in wealthy countries to export corruption to poorer countries, **undermining** institutions and development," she added.

The 1997 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development agreement bans bribes to win business deals, or to avoid paying taxes.

China is the world's largest exporter and did not sign the agreement. The new report found that China had "little or no enforcement," as did India, and agreement signers Japan and South Korea.

Germany, the world's third-largest exporter, also signed the agreement. The report found Germany had "moderate enforcement," as do other major exporters like France, Italy and Spain.

Germany and Italy both fought fewer bribery cases in 2019 than during 2018, while France and Spain improved their performance.

Agreement signers Netherlands, Canada and Austria are the biggest exporters that showed only "limited enforcement," the report said.

"Too many governments choose to turn a blind eye when their companies use bribery to win business in foreign markets," noted Transparency International's head, Delia Ferreira Rubio.

"G20 countries and other major economies have a responsibility to enforce the rules," she added.

Transparency's suggestions include ending secrecy in ownership of companies. The group says secrecy makes investigating foreign bribery difficult. It also is used to protect parent companies from being responsible for the actions of their foreign **subsidiaries**.

I'm Susan Shand.

*The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**transparency** – *adj.* easy to understand, or not hiding information

**barely** – *adj.* the absolute minimum effort

**undermine** – *v.* to attempt to destroy the credibility of a leader or company

**G20** – *n.* a group of 19 countries and the EU whose central bankers meet to discuss economic cooperation

**subsidiary** - *n.* a smaller company that is owned by a larger company

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