

Perceptions of Corruption by Social Classes

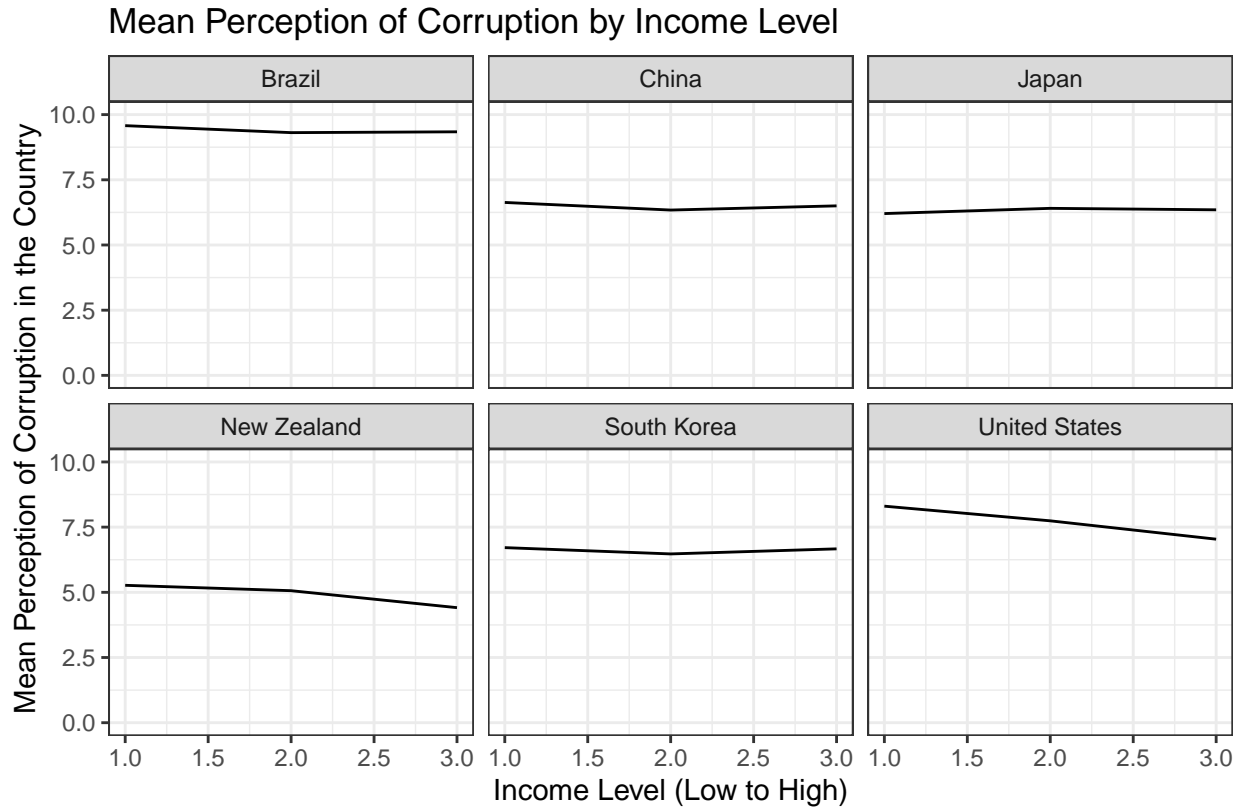
Ansley Hatcher

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Introduction

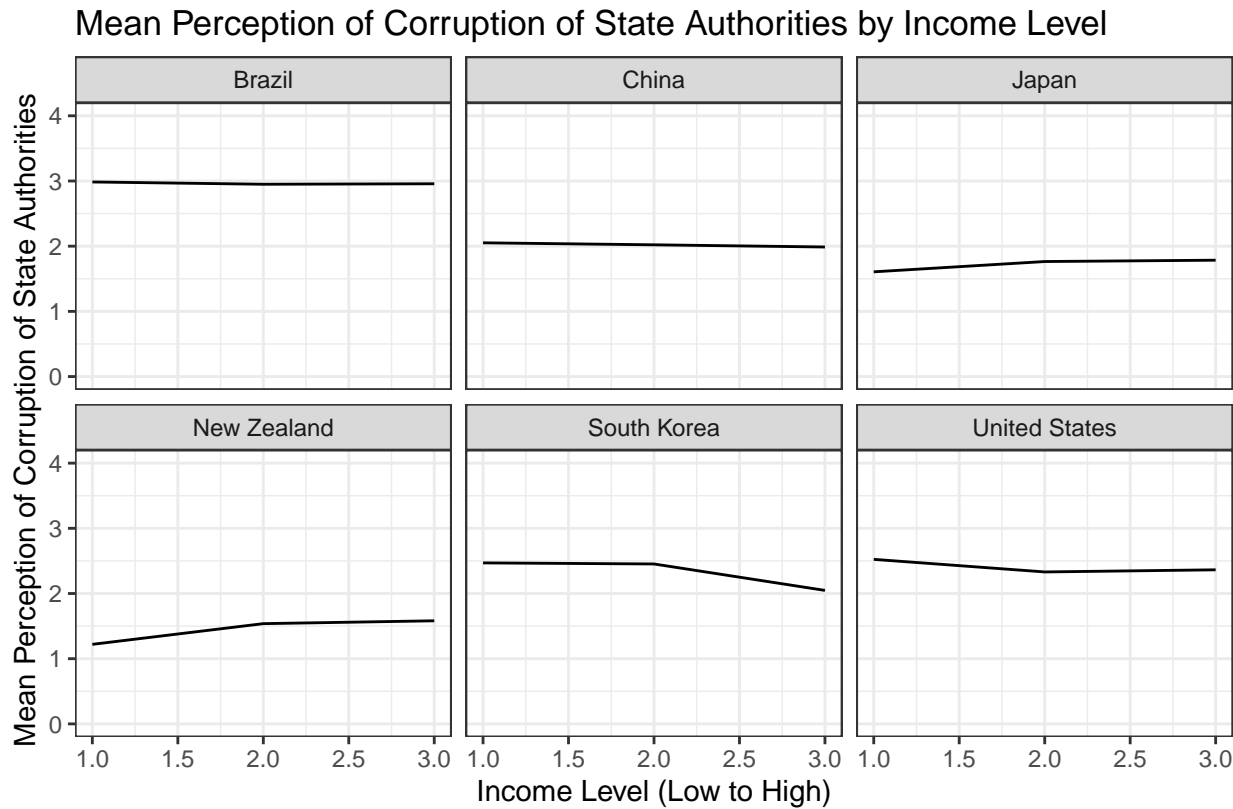
Question Q112 on the World Values Survey Wave 7 asks respondents to record “[their] views on corruption - when people pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor to other people in order to get the things they need done or the services they need” Haerpfer et al. (2020). Respondents placed their views on corruption in their country on a 10-point scale, “where ‘1’ means ‘there is no corruption in this country’ and ‘10’ means ‘there is abundant corruption in this country.’” The survey also has respondents record what income group their household is in by specifying the number of all wages, salaries, pensions, and other income the household collects. The surveyors organized income level responses into three categories: low, middle, and high. I compared respondents’ answers to these two questions and compared trends in responses between countries.

Figure 1



There is a clear trend in the United States where as income decreases, perception of corruption in the country increases. There is a similar trend in Figure 1 for Brazil and New Zealand. In Brazil, this trend is much less significant as perceptions of corruption are high overall. Next, I broke down perceptions of corruption further by examining perceptions of state authorities and business executives.

Figure 2

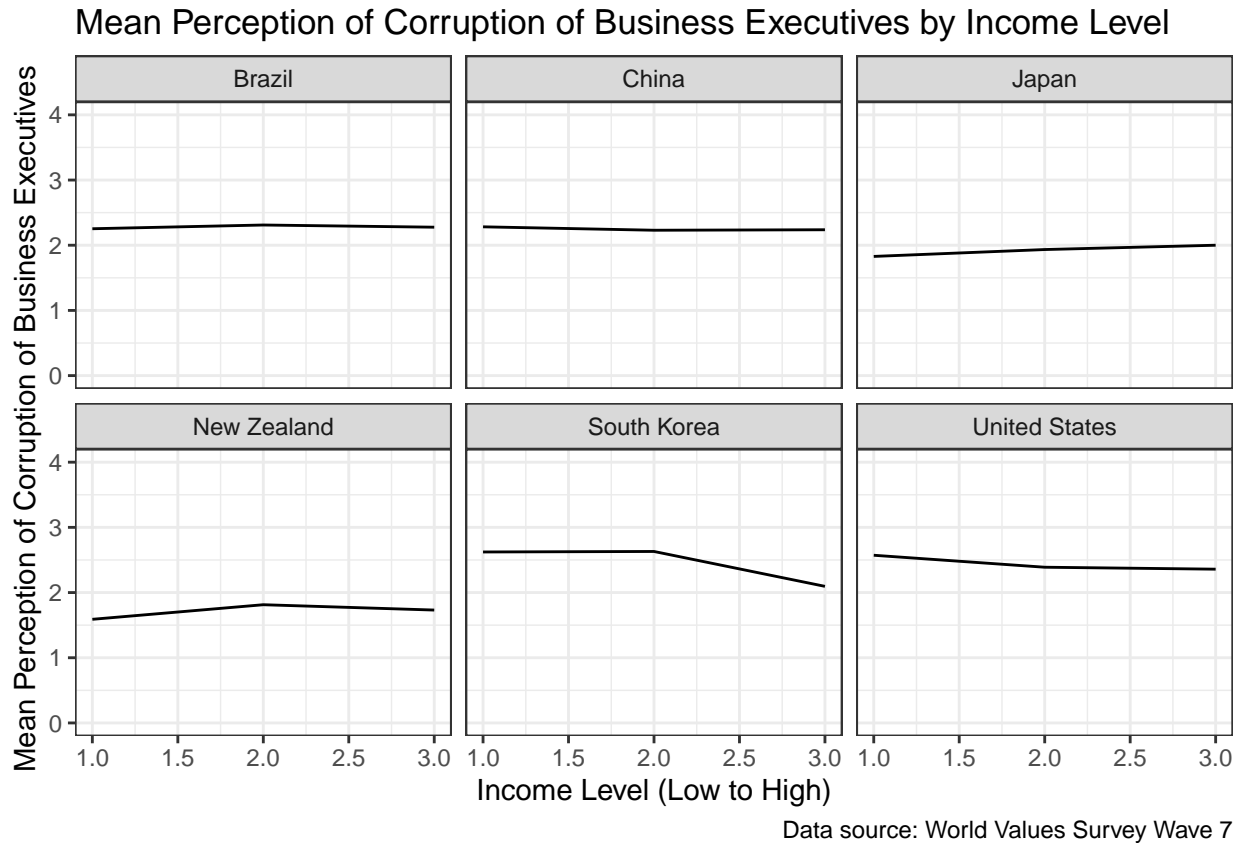


Data source: World Values Survey Wave 7

The survey breaks down perceptions of corruption by asking respondents “Among the following groups of people, how many do you believe are involved in corruption?” Haerpfer et al. (2020) The respondents reported their feelings on a 1-4 scale, where 1 is “None of them,” 2 is “Few of them,” 3 is “Most of them,” and 4 is “All of them.”

The trend in the United States in Figure 2 is similar to Figure 1, where perceptions of corruption are highest among those of lower income. Interestingly, the trend flipped in New Zealand, where those of higher income perceive more corruption among state officials than those of lower income.

Figure 3



One last question from the survey I chose to examine has respondents record their perceived level of corruption of business executives, using the same 1-4 scale. Not surprisingly, the trends stayed mostly the same. In South Korea, there is a sharp decline in perceived corruption by those of a higher income, probably because they are the ones who would be defined as business executives.

Results

For several countries, there is a clear trend of higher perceived corruption among those of lower income. This is probably due to the fact that most of those with lower income are mostly likely to be affected by corruption. Previous research has found similar results, that “those most harmed by corruption - the socioeconomically disadvantaged - should perceive corruption to be more frequent” Maeda and Ziegfeld (2015).

References

- Haerpfer, C., R. Inglehart, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, Ponarin, and B. Puranen. 2020. “World Values Survey: Round Seven.” doi:10.14281/18241.13.
- Maeda, Kentaro, and Adam Ziegfeld. 2015. “Socioeconomic Status and Corruption Perceptions Around the World.” *Research & Politics* 2 (2): 2053168015580838. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168015580838>.